

THE FEMINISM MESSAGE IN THREE LATEST WALT DISNEY PRINCESSES AND ITS IMPLEMETATION INTO THE LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAM IN VIETNAM

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Abstract. The movement of feminism has turned our modern world to the new chapter with changes striking almost every aspect of the social life. This is a matter of consideration not only limited within any specific domain but also spread out to be a globally-based one. Gone in line with this tendency this is a high time for it to be exploited in the field of language training in the context of Vietnam. The reasons as well as the suggested approaches for it to be included in the training programs in language colleges in Vietnam will be demonstrated through the detailed analysis of three female characters in the latest animated artworks manufactured by Walt Disney cooperation, who are Miranda, Anna and Moana in Brave, Frozen and Moana listed in order. It can be concluded that by doing so, the language learners in the higher level of education system in Vietnam will definitely be well prepared with a quality brought by feminism to thrive themselves to contribute to development of the society as a whole.

Keywords: Feminism, feminist, movement, tendency, animated.

1. Introduction

The term of feminism is believed to be coined by Charles Fourier, a French philosopher, and socialist thinker, in 1830s (Offen [1; p.126]) which means “the belief in social, economic and political equality of the sexes”. In spite of its origin from the West, this notion has become worldwide and backed up by a number of prestigious international organizations with commitment to women’s benefits (Brunell & Burkett [2]).

According to Dorey-Stein [3], the movement of feminism is categorized with four periods of time. The first one started from 1830’s and lasted up to early 1900’s during which equal contract and property right were the targets to fight for. After the world war II, from 1960’s to 1980’s, workplace, sexuality, family and reproductive rights became the main concerns as the society (specifically the US society) had come out of the war time and tried to reconstruct itself. Turning to the third period from 1990’s to 2000s, it

Received January 17, 2019. Revised May 5, 2019. Accepted June 2, 2019.

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is when women continued to defy inequality in payment between them and the men as well as to stop violence against them everywhere around the world. Since then up to now, the wave of feminism is being spread out across the nations' borders with metoo movement empowered by the internet linkage. In the newest period the main issues for concern are rape, harassment and discrimination-related ones, in addition to the ones mentioned in the previous periods.

In regard to Walt Disney, there is a fact that after the diplomatic re-establishment between the two governments (US and Vietnam), Disney Corporation has arrived in the latter country with their commercial ambition. They have cooperated with the local businesses to manufacture consumer products with Disney themes. With this business strategy they hope for an access to the new markets in Indochina. Apart from the commercial purpose they also intend to expand influences of the Disney characters among the young audiences. (Do [4]).

Considering Disney animated movies, this is undoubtedly true that they are being loved by a wide range of audiences throughout the history. The heart- touching love stories or life value lessons in those art works done by Disney corporation are welcome in every corner of the world with no boundaries of age, gender, religious and political views (Smikic [5]). Those art works have come out of the circle of entertainment and stepped in the academic field as references for researchers to complete their analysis. However, in the context of Vietnam, those Walt Disney animated movies probably are still viewed as the shows for the target audiences who are low- aged or the premier shows to hit the weekly or monthly revenue records at the cinema ticket offices but not yet the sources of references or even the target work of analysis in the academic environment. Therefore, within this essay, three latest Walt Disney princesses (Miranda, Anna, and Moana) in *Brave*, *Frozen* and so-called *Moana*, respectively, are chosen for the further research on how the question of feminism is being conveyed through these female characters as well as explanations on why and how feminism can be included in foreign language training programs in colleges in Vietnam.

2. Content

2.1. The Sense of Independence in Thinking

From watching the movies about three latest Disney princesses (Miranda, Anna and Moana), it is obvious that the story settings are dated back to the old times of the human history. It is also hard to define the exact time as the stories are works of fiction. This can be obviously seen from the outfits the characters put on and the traditional customs held in the story flows. Regarding the outfits, they are the lady dresses or men's clothes worn with traditional materials like fiber or tree leaves. Besides, the ceremonies like worship, presentation of the suitors, archery performances, sleigh on ice in the remote northern faraway, or yachting journey on the vast ocean remind a lot of the long time in the past. In other words, these newest Disney princesses are coming from the history. But they all share the same qualities of strong women in all times of the human life. The very first quality worth being mentioned is that they all speak up for their own and let no one make decisions on their own lives. For Miranda in *Brave*, she denies her parents' placement for marriage by saying to her mother: "I don't want my life to be over. I want

freedom!", "It is unfair! The whole marriage is what you want? I am not going to be like you!". Or Anna in "frozen" said to her sister Elsa: "you don't have to protect me, I am not afraid. Don't shut me out! Don't slam the door". In the similar situation of Miranda in Brave, Anna is also being prevented from her true feeling toward the young prince Hans. But she insists to be on her own even though her true feeling might be set to a wrong person. In the meantime, Moana in the so-called movie behaves in the same way like the two above-mentioned princesses. When being forbidden by her father to go beyond the reefs, she still determines to do so as she wants to save her tribe from harvest failure. Even more she wants to go the dark cave to find the answer for the question "who you are meant to be?"

Through the main female characters in those Disney animated movies it can be recognized that feminism is being expanded in an indirect but the most efficient manner. At the first glance it might be any common teen problem in any family from the primitive time to the present time when female children refuse their parents' arrangement even, supposedly, in their favors. But this is more than that, this is a strong need of the ladies to define themselves, to voice up to be in the way they actually are without being controlled by others (Biddle [6]). And they do not only want to be like that but fight their hardest to turn their thoughts into actions even they know there will be challenges ahead. This quality of the young ladies is being exploited in many forms of arts or analyzed in many academic researches. And it might not be the typical one among all the young females but it must be the representative for their own gender in all periods of time in history. Therefore, it should be taken into account not only in forms of paper works or any kinds of arts but also in practices of any family, community, society or culture. The young girls, after all, are the major part of the future life. As soon as they are defined by themselves when being still young, there will be a high chance for them to be resilient in the later life without being left behind by their counterpart gender even though, so far, they still are (Kaita [7]).

The Source of Inspiration for Others

Regarding the second quality that should be recognized among these fictional young ladies, it is surprising that they all have a strong inspiration on people around. Miranda in Brave can attract her younger brothers at the dinner table with her strong emotional expression ("one swip, his sword shattered, the chomp!") while they are half-sleeping listening to their father's story at the same time. Or even more, when she makes a speech in front of kings from other kingdoms, she convinces them with her reasonable thoughts making them burst out to tears. Meanwhile Anna in Frozen, even though being denied by her sister Elsa, she still can melt her "frozen" sister with compliment "you look beautifuler, well, I mean not beautifuler, fuler, but more beautiful!". And in her attempt to save Elsa she is not alone as with her convincement all of her friends Sven, Olaf, Kristoff get involved in helping her. They all trust her when she confirms that "I am not leaving without Elsa!". For Moana in Moana, she is like the other female characters in her ability to convince others. She is seemingly lonely in every action but by the end she is always able to make others believe in her. For example, she is successful in encouraging Moai to teach her on how to sail as she is so assertive by saying to herself: "I will sail across the sea and restore the heart of safety!". And when she is back to village from her voyage on the vast ocean, she makes the villagers trust

her in doing fish farming and practicing sailing skills. As for now she is no longer a little girl from the village, but a skillful voyager.

Being little girls in families, All Miranda, Anna and Moana can inspire people living around them not because of their charms of being beloved daughters in the families but their own quality of strong determination, righteous reasoning or even their hardheadedness or whatsoever. These are the good reason for them to stand by men in all life operations. These are also the strong ramp pushing up feminism to be practiced across the world as women are naturally not inferior to men in all aspects of life. They can prove that they are qualified in physical actions like archery, sleighing, or sailing as described in the movies or conquering empirical sciences, governing in offices or creating arts in the life reality. They can think big, do big and then succeed, therefore, deserve to be a source of inspiration for others. Feminism to some extent is only a goal for any society or culture to address at. It is not yet comprehensively practiced all around the world (Zarar et al. [8]). That is why it is being referred to as a top-hot issues in all international platforms. For instance, it can be seen in the fields of cinematography (Setoodeh [9]) medicine (Ramakrishnan et al. [10]), or politics (Schetzer [11]) to name a few.

The Ability to Deal with Challenges

There is also one more respectable quality that these Disney princesses hold. This is their agility when coping with challenges. In any hardship they may appear at first like the girls indulged by their parents but right after they behave like the real fighters. In the attempts to dispel the woodcarver's spell to rescue her mother Mirada in Brave is so nimble and quick-minded. Observing how she arranges to shelter her mother-bear from night darkness by putting the logs together or how she fights to save her mother from the attacks of other kings it cannot be denied that Mirada is a resourceful girl, she can handle any job with skillfulness and flair. Anna in Frozen is a girl with the same quality. In her journey to bring back her sister Elsa from the world of loneliness and emotional separation from the community she is like a skillful rescuer. The way she pulls a man out off the snow cliffs or climbs the high snowy mountains in the next episode of the movies is impressive. It is unbelievable that she is a girl with a royal background. In contrast to Mirada and Anna -the other peers from the royal families Moana is coming from an ordinary family of a fisherman. But she is still a beloved daughter of her parents. She lives a happy life in her family and her fishing village. She is adored by everyone around with her charm and wittiness. However, when being pushed into hardship she becomes incredibly agile and mindful. Watching her struggling to get out of the cave to get back the canoe, fighting with the coconut skull to get back the heart of safety, fighting with the fire monster to save Moai, or sails the canoe skillfully, it is no doubt that she is doing a great job even though she might be thought as an inexperienced girl with an easy life with her parents.

Here again, when analyzing the princesses in the latest Disney animated movies it can be seen that in the shade of the young girls' stories, there underlies an issue of feminism. If with the two first qualities they hold which are the sense of independence and source of inspiration, their ability to manage in difficulties and succeed is the last mosaic for a complete glass picture about a female portrait. They are not only strong in thinking by determining to control their life free from others' influences or by inspiring

others with their own thoughts. But they also prove themselves in the concrete situations with concrete actions and succeed with concrete outcomes. This is the most convincing fact to confirm that women and men are born equal with equal capabilities then both two parties should have the same life opportunities and social recognitions (Mackow-Mcguire [12]). This is a message to call for this movement (feminism) to be expanded practiced and maintained with no cultural or geographical borders.

Feminism anyway is still an issue in the theory in many parts of the world. It can be somehow actualized in many other parts but its drasticality is still limited (Epstein [13]). In some specific countries where feminism is viewed stronger than in the rest there are still many street demonstrations to demand the gender equality in every aspect of life. In any circumstance, feminism is definitely a human mission in the modern world. It should be leveled up the same as economy, politics, healthcare or education. It will promote a sustainable development on the global scale because cause-effect theory is certain. Any gap in the process of development is always paid with a high cost.

The Reasons and the Suggestions on Implementation of Feminism into Language Classes in Colleges in Vietnam

There will definitely be a question on why and how the message of feminism can be inserted into language or English (namely) teaching in the context of college education in Vietnam. In spite of the historical vicissitudes English has been always being taught in a county like Vietnam for a variety of purposes, academic, commercial, diplomatic, political or even personal (Do [14]). It has never been considered as minor subject in any political institution in a country with a long record of historical events like Vietnam, alongside with other languages such as French, Russian or Chinese (Do [14]). Even more, it has always been viewed as a key to life achievements for any individuals ranging in ages, genders, social background, or economic status (Panwar [15]). However, that English is being taught in Vietnam with a traditional approach is no longer a new question of concern. Fairly speaking, it cannot be denied that the methodology of English teaching in Vietnam has been much far improved with the great efforts from both authoritative and teaching parties. English competence of the Vietnamese on a large scale has been graded up far much higher in comparison with that of the past. And it is escalating time by time with statistical report in different social surveys thanks to the teachers' innovative methodology (Saigoneer [16]). However, it seems still insufficient in a stream of globalization. As English teaching and learning are no longer a process of grammar and vocabulary transmission or acquisition (in a traditional manner) or even more, a stimulation of workshop, conference or group project in classroom with strong interaction between teachers and students or among students (in a more updated manner). English learning and teaching should be upgraded to the next level of requirement when political messages or humane values are expected to be conveyed to the learners. So far this study process has possibly reached the level of cultural studies but still far away from the one of humanity. Therefore, it is urging for the latter one to be taught through the channel of English teaching/learning to make it a comprehensive process of academic examination or discovery. More specifically, feminism wave is supposed to be expanded to a larger extent, in a livelier form (supposedly movie shows), to make the message sent to the learners in the mildest but most effective way. It can be certain that by watching the movies with supportive

reviews from the professional critics and positive feedbacks from the audiences like Frozen, Brave or Moana, students will definitely enjoy the class. They will soon find the class a hilarious experience instead of daily (or maybe life) duty which they have to take charge of. Moreover, it is suggested that feminism or any other humanity messages can be conveyed in English classes of different divisions of the faculty, where the classes are still either paper/chalk and board-based or creative assignment-deprived. Examples are taken for granted, feminism is highly recommended in four main language skill division in the approach of movie show preceded by the critical review which seems to be missing in the writing classes. Or in cross-cultural communication classes, it is advised to include feminism in the syllabus as a cultural essence of English-speaking countries. It is similar to the division of English literature, feminism should be taught through the literature works in addition to metaphor or personification. Definitely, in translating and interpreting division, where the classes are conducted with the topic-based approach, feminism deserves an essential point in the list.

The wave of feminism has reached out far on the global basis, therefore, there is no excuse for the language teachers to stay aside. In the context of language training schools like in Vietnam, where the majority of the learners are female, it is a matter of great importance for the target students to take consciousness of feminism to lead their life independent, confident and righteous. If this mission is completed, the society's expectation for gender equality will be no longer a paper work project or far-reaching dream. When the females achieve the actual recognition which they deserve the benefits do not only lie in their own hands but also in the sake of the whole society. Besides, in the era of constant changes in any aspects of society, the language teachers are supposed to perform not only as the knowledge transmitters but more than that. They are expected to be the inspirers, the story tellers for the students look into them and define the life values. In order to do so the teaching staffs are advised to keep themselves updated with the stream of social issues and then combine them with classes in the most flexible way possible. By mentioning this, there is a fact that the language teachers seem to prefer to stay in their comfort zones to teach the knowledge of language for its own sake regardless of the current social events or news. From the existing events-based classes, students' independent thinking is formed. They will soon find themselves as a large part of the social life but not the outsiders. Like anywhere in the world, the Vietnamese students are required to be made up with analytical mindsets, or critical thinking, but not only the adult learners with the spirit of passive obedience. For this to be done, there should be a great contribution of the language teachers in their attempt to bring social issues into their classes.

3. Conclusions

In conclusion, to a large extent the inclination to feminism is being reflected through three newest princesses (Miranda, Anna and Moana) in three art works created by Walt Disney (Brave, Frozen and Moana) in the liveliest and most alluring way. Three young girls with three different social backgrounds all share three qualities making them icons among the young viewers. They are three young ladies with a strong determination to hold their own lives under their own control without being dependent on others. Also, they are able to step up higher to the level that only the unique

personalities can be to inspire others with their beautiful minds. Additionally, not only being recognized with their thinking principles, those princesses also still are with their performances in life practices. They are so strong, resourceful and reliable with a vivid image of feminists. For all of these, they all deserve to be transmitted from their own domain of entertainment into the sanctuary of scholars and researchers for the academic validity to be extended. And specifically, in the environment of foreign language training in Vietnam, this is urging to bring in feminism (in any art form) into classes. With the earlier-recommended approaches feminism will reach the learners in a shortcut but target exactly at what they are striving for in the long walks of their life.

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