When Cinderella Goes to College:

A Gender Awareness

Activity from a Critical Literacy Perspective

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【摘要】

本文探討 27 位台灣大一新生之批判識讀語言學習，檢視其對此以性別覺醒為主題之活動的反應。研究以質性資料為主，採用 Luke 與 Freebody 之閱讀模型為分析架構。研究顯示，此學習活動不但吸引學生，也讓學生有思考空間。此外，批判識讀活動應該以學生的知識及生活為出發點，引導學生審視各類教材與練習，讓學生探索與社會相關之議題。

【關鍵詞】

批判識讀語言學習、性別覺醒、多元觀點、灰姑娘

【Abstract】

This research is aimed at (1) exploring the practice of critical literacy for 27 Taiwanese first-year university students and (2) examining students' reactions to a 4-hour activity with an emphasis on gender awareness. Several qualitative data sources were collected and the interpretative model used in the study was Luke and Freebody's (1990) Four Resources Model of Reading. This study found that students considered the activity (1) engaging because it drew on different learning sources and (2) reflective because it made them constantly rethink gender roles. In addition, critical literacy should begin with students' own knowledge and life experience, move to reflection, and end with a critical exploration of relevant issues in society.

【Keywords】

critical literacy, gender awareness, multiple perspectives, Cinderella

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the teaching philosophy "critical literacy" has appealed to many language practitioners in different countries, including Australia, Singapore, New Zealand, the US, the UK, and South Africa (Fisher, 2008; Glazier, 2007; Green, 1988; Mayo, 2007; Newstreet, 2008). In addition to those countries that use English as the first or second language, language specialists in more and more EFL countries have recognized the importance of critical literacy and have introduced the practice of such instruction (Cheah, 2001; Falkenstein, 2007; Ko, 2010; Shin & Crookes, 2005). The aforementioned studies have supported the possibility of incorporating critical literacy into the English-learning classroom. This researcher has a strong belief in critical literacy and assumes that such a teaching orientation should be implemented in Taiwan, an EFL country that should pay more attention to critical literacy.

Specifically, this researcher adopts Pavlenko's (2004) notion that critical educators in ESL/EFL classrooms should encourage students to explore "differences in the discourse of gender and sexuality across cultures and communities" (p. 67). According to Singh (1997), the first step in achieving this goal is to challenge students' lived experiences relating to gender difference. The next step is to invite them to read and write from different positions. A gender awareness activity should be designed to motivate students to be more critically aware of gender roles in their lives. Teachers should offer students literacy activities that can promote students' awareness of the gender identities and inequalities embedded in texts.

The researcher was motivated to devise a project related to feminist critical instruction. Three assumptions were adopted: First, EFL students are usually trained to be learners more for general language proficiency than for critical competency situated within a larger sociocultural framework. Second, gender bias is still prevalent in much currently available children's literature such as classic fairy tales and their Disney counterparts (Christensen, 2001; Louie, 2001). Third, as Davidheiser (2007) indicates, students are exposed to an increasing number of adapted fairy tales such as *Shrek Series I-VI*, *Little Red Riding Hood* (2004), *The Brothers Grimm* (2005), and *Enchanted* (2007).

The current study examines how first-year college students responded to an activity that focused on gender bias and employed different types of learning input.

Classroom instruction involved practices such as introducing four stereotyped traditional female roles, and having students (1) make sense of various versions of Cinderella, (2) discuss the differences among the older and newer versions of Cinderella, and (3) create students' own story of Cinderella. This researcher-instructor considered it important to offer this activity to his students, a group of young adults who had grown up with numerous fairy tales that convey a variety of gender messages. It would also be meaningful to have the activity involve reflective issues from the fairy tale "Cinderella"--one of the best-known fairy tales (Collingwood, 2005).

This study explores how critical literacy can be incorporated into an activity with an emphasis on gender awareness. The researcher will investigate students' responses to the various types of learning input offered in the activity. In brief, this study is aimed at (1) exploring the implementation of critical literacy for Taiwanese first-year university students and (2) examining students' reactions to the activity as a social process.

2. Literature Review

As Steven and Bean (2007) indicate, critical literacy is an approach to literacy that stresses a learning process in which students are encouraged to pay attention to the relations among language use, social practice, and power. Its concepts are rooted in the critical tradition in Western philosophy, i.e., one that sees literacy practices as an individual and social transformation. Specifically, the term critical literacy historically stems from the work and life of Paulo Freire (1921-1997), who argued that becoming literate requires developing the ability to understand, analyze, and criticize one's own social milieu (Freire, 2000). The prerequisite for critical literacy is to "provide students with opportunities to use their own reality as a basis of literacy" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 151)

Critical researchers and instructors employ different theoretical frameworks and instructional philosophies in their studies and classrooms, so critical literacy has not been defined as a unitary approach with regard either to theory or to practice (Clarke & Whitney, 2009). But many critical literacy approaches begin with Freire's (2000) viewpoint that critical literacy should take advantage of students' knowledge and life experience, and critical literacy employs unconventional language practices in

contrast to traditional literacy practices based on transmission pedagogies. As Freire (2000) suggests, these traditional teaching approaches implicitly compare education to banking, a system in which the teacher is a "depositor" (p. 73) because s/he is the source of knowledge in the classroom. Students then become "depositories" (p. 73) because they receive, memorize, and repeat the knowledge. In contrast, critical literacy encourages students to approach texts through their personal experiences and to become active learners in search of knowledge by themselves during a literacy process.

Different theoretical perspectives underlie different aspects of critical literacy and its pedagogic concerns, but their instructional strategies all involve a reflective approach to literacy practices in the classroom. To critical practitioners, the goal for students in learning a language is not only to master the four skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) but also to understand the world through critical awareness. This aim suggests that critical literacy is connected with language and education, and education, according to Crookes and Lehner (1998), is often ignored in ESL/EFL contexts: "In general, ESL/EFL teachers have not been encouraged to address sociopolitical issues that educators like Paulo Freire have placed within the very heart of educational purposes" (p. 320). Specifically, critical literacy sees the entire learning process as a form of social change, through which learners can explore new ways of acting, relating, and being in the social world. According to Beck (2005), a transformative learning process usually involves three key dimensions that feature a lesson from a critical perspective: (1) dialogue, (2) reflection, and (3) a focus on socio-political issues and social justice through textual critique.

First, critical scholars employ "dialogue" as a tool for students to construct meaning from texts. A critical classroom may be initially teacher-oriented, but student-oriented lessons will quickly emerge and engage students in more discussions, responses, and interactions with the teacher or among students themselves. The second feature of critical literacy is "reflection", which encourages students, by adopting a critical attitude, to make sense of the text that they encounter. As Beck (2005) says, one of its methods is to pose open-ended questions (e.g., "What kind of language does that author use?" and "What has been left out of the texts?") for more interconnection between students' real-life experiences and the text. Third, critical instruction focuses on sociopolitical issues through textual analysis to achieve the

goal of social critique. There are many ways to fulfill this task, two of which are to have students (1) closely examine specific words in the text and (2) consider who is served or not served through the language the author uses.

To sum up, critical literacy attempts to empower students by teaching them how to read the "word and the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987) and by making students active learners. As Pennycook (1994) adds, critical literacy should be thought of as "education grounded in a desire for social change" (p. 297), given that classrooms are not neutral sites where curricular knowledge can be passed on to students without any struggle. Rather, classrooms are cultural and political sites where different cultural, ideological, and social forms are perpetually contested. As a result, critical literacy represents ways of teaching that are both person- and society-oriented, helping students to be able to reflect on, act on, and change their lives.

3. Methodology

3.1 The Setting and Participants in the Study

The activity discussed in the paper was implemented at a private university in Taiwan. It was offered for 4 sessions during the 2008 fall semester. The school emphasizes English language instruction for all first-year students. English is the only language used in English classes. All first-year students whose major is not English are required to take an English-proficiency placement test as soon as they matriculate. Students are assigned to different English classes according to their performance on the placement test. Each class consists of students from the same college, such as Engineering, Management, or Fine Arts. English levels include low, middle, high-mid, and high. Students in each class are required to participate in four hours of regular class and one hour of language lab each week. The course is designed to improve students' English fluency in the four skills. At the same time, instructors are allowed flexibility in adopting textbooks or in selecting handouts, classroom materials that reflect individual instructor's teaching philosophy.

The informants in the study were 27 first-year students (18 males and 9 females) from the College of Science. Their English level was between the high and middle levels, so-called high-mid level in the program, according to their performance on the placement test. Their average age was 18 years. They had received formal English instruction in a school setting for approximately 6 years from junior to senior high

school, apart from different experiences in elementary school.

3.2 Data Collection

In the study, data were collected in the classroom at different times. The researcher attempted to enhance the trustworthiness of the study by triangulating these data sources. First, the instructor kept a teaching journal in English as a reflection on this activity. The activity was conducted on Tuesday and Thursday of Week 10 in 2 successive sessions, i.e., 4 sessions in total; each session lasted 50 minutes. Therefore, there were two teaching entries. Second, two classroom discussions occurred during the activity. The first was designed to elicit students' previous knowledge of Cinderella. The second had students compare the older and newer versions of Cinderella, texts that the students had encountered during the activity. Students were offered a discussion sheet for keeping a record of their ideas before they worked with their partner. Third, after the activity was completed in Week 10, students were asked to work together to write a new version of Cinderella and to submit it in Week 12. There were 27 students in the class, so for this task students were divided into 12 pairs and one group of three. In the following discussion, when "pairs" are referred to, it is understood that the term also includes one group of three. Students were encouraged to write an original and creative story by changing the storyline and having different characters involved in their story. Students' stories will be analyzed with regard to gender representations and stereotypes. Fourth, in Week 13, one week after each group of the students had submitted their written work, all students were asked to write a reflection paper in Chinese for 30 minutes about what they had learned and what they thought about the activity as a whole. All quotations from this data source will be translated into idiomatic English. In brief, data in the study included two teaching entries, two different types of classroom discussions, 13 group writing works, and students' reflection papers.

3.3 Data Analysis Method

Luke and Freebody's (1999) Four Resources Model of Reading serves as an analytical framework in this paper. According to Iyer (2010), this model refers to a dynamic process that enables readers to acquire a deep comprehension of texts and to explore them in multiple ways. Therefore, the researcher intends to use this model to

examine how critical literacy was incorporated into the activity that addressed gender issues.

Figure 1: The Four Reading Practices
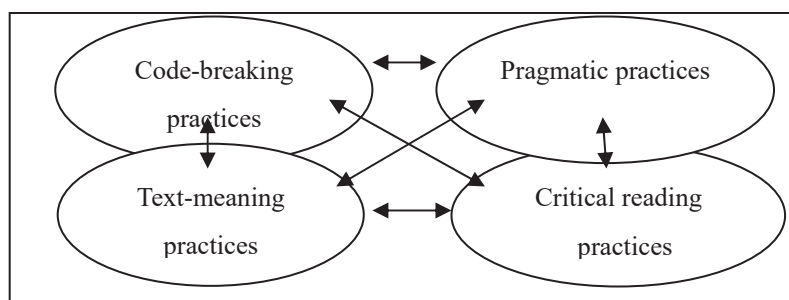
Many studies (Exley, 2006; Heffernan & Lewison, 2003; Ko, 2010; Santoro, 2004) have shown that this model is a useful framework for the practice and analysis of critical literacy. The model divides reading into four social practices: code-breaking, text-meaning, pragmatic, and critical practices; learners then take up four different roles, including code breakers, text participants, text users, and text analysts. Luke (2000) suggests that this model does not imply a "developmental hierarchy whereby one moves from coding to the critical; from the basics to higher order thinking" (p. 454). The model also does not imply a one-way sequence of instruction. Rather, these orientations are not detached from but are connected to one another to varying extents. (Figure 1) For the purpose of organization, the present activity will be analyzed according to the different tasks in the activity.

Task 1: Encouraging students to bring up their childhood memory of Cinderella (Session 1, Tuesday, Week 10)

In code-breaking practices, the reader plays a code-breaker role not only in establishing the relation between the sounds and the symbols but also in comprehending the patterns and conventions of writing (Luke & Freebody, 1997). Such a notion of reading as decoding can be seen during Session 1, especially when each student was asked to write a version of Cinderella from his/her memory by using words, phrases, or sentences.

The first two sessions were offered during Tuesday of Week 10. At the beginning of Session 1, each student was given a discussion sheet. During the first 15-20 minutes of the session, each student was asked to work on the top section of the discussion sheet. Students needed to answer suggested questions such as "Can you remember any part of the story of Cinderella from your childhood?", "What characters are there in the story?", and "What kind of girl is Cinderella?". Students were asked to write down their understanding of the story either with some key words/phrases (e.g., glass slippers) or with some sentences such as "A poor girl needs to do a lot of housework". While students were working individually, the instructor walked around the classroom and stopped by a student whenever s/he needed help. As a teaching entry indicated, while some students asked help for the spelling of words such as pumpkin and coach, some students wanted the teacher to help them to translate sentences from Chinese into English. As S5 (i.e., Student 5) pointed out in his reflection paper, he felt comfortable with this exercise because this work involved (1) a story well-known to him and (2) flexibility in which students could express their ideas through words, phrases, sentences, etc.

As Santoro (2004) suggests, many learning activities can develop and support students across two or more of the roles in different ways. This was the case in the aforementioned discussion. When students were required to write a brief version of Cinderella from their childhood memories by using words, phrases, and sentences, students were not only code breakers but also text participants. Specifically, students were invited to approach the traditional fairy tale again by making sense of the story as they remembered it. Further, when they were asked to exchange their story with their partner, students experienced code-breaking and text-meaning practices simultaneously.

As one teaching entry suggested, when students were asked to have a discussion in English with their classmates at the beginning of the semester in another activity, many students said that it was difficult and even challenging. Most of them had not had similar experiences in their junior or senior high school. Even though the present activity was implemented in Week 10, some students, as their reflection papers indicated, still considered it not easy to share with their partner the ideas they had just written on the discussion sheet. The instructor asked students to listen to their partner and to take notes in the bottom section of the discussion sheet. Students were

encouraged not to exchange their discussion sheets or not to write down their partner's ideas directly from the sheet. Therefore, some students sometimes paused in the middle of the pair discussion and asked their partner for the spelling or meaning of a specific word. When students had difficulty in understanding the story offered by their partner, students moved from the role of a code breaker to the role of a text participant. Students expressed their ideas, asked questions, and made sense of the version of Cinderella given by their partner.

At the beginning of Session 2, the instructor spent about 20 minutes inviting individual students from several pairs to share their partner's perspective. The instructor then wrapped up students' ideas and had students approach the story of Cinderella again from other groups' viewpoint. Such a classroom discussion supported students as text participants; students were invited to understand the Cinderella text through students' personal knowledge and other cultural experiences.

Overall, Task 1 supported students as code breakers and text participants, and both coding practices and text meaning practices were emphasized during this task.

Task 2: Inviting students to examine different female roles from a feminist perspective (Session 2, Tuesday, Week 10)

During the following 10 minutes in Session 2, students were told about four traditional female roles prevalent in literature. According to Moon (1999), when women are positioned as objects, they are usually described in one of the following four ways: (1) caregivers; (2) dutiful daughters; (3) sexual women; and (4) bad women. These four categories represent different female positions in Western cultures. To introduce students to these four stereotypes was to provide them with a competing discourse, an alternative way of thinking that could help students approach classroom texts/discussions from a different perspective. At this point, students were invited to move from text-meaning practices to pragmatic practices. Students were encouraged not only to become familiar with the Cinderella story but also to understand the purpose of the text. These four female roles, as S27 said in his reflection paper, made him "rethink the function of many traditional fairy tales and the stereotyped female roles in these stories".

To challenge students' prior concepts of female representations, the instructor had the class discuss ten female roles for the rest of Session 2. During these 30

minutes, students were offered a list of ten female roles suggested by Moon (1999, p. 59). The instructor then asked all students whether each of these ten female roles could be placed into any of the four categories of the women portrayed in many traditional literary works. Table 1 is the results of the classroom survey with regard to the responses of 27 students to the female roles and stereotypical divisions.

Table 1: Students' Responses to the Survey

	caregivers	dutiful daughter	sexual woman	bad woman
barmaids	5	1	20	2
successful businesswomen	4	21	4	1
adulterous women	0	0	16	14
unmarried mothers	9	3	5	10
nuns	18	10	0	2
nurses / schoolmistresses	21	9	11	0
prostitutes	0	0	20	10
childless women	16	6	2	6
secretaries	3	22	7	0
actresses	3	6	23	2

As indicated in S27's reflection paper, it was stimulating for students to use the four categories to examine ten different female roles because none of the students had ever been asked to do such work in their previous English classrooms. In addition, this discussion made students relate their concepts of different female roles to their lived experiences outside the classroom. From the instructor's perspective, this discussion was thought-provoking because it helped students (1) to reconsider different female roles from a feminist perspective and (2) to investigate students' own perspectives through the comparison of different opinions from other classmates. As one teaching entry suggested, students not only showed great interest in a discussion on female roles from a feminist perspectives but also became reflectively literate when they exchanged and modified their viewpoints:

Like all the students, I laughed when one male student said that barmaids should be beautiful and sexy. I asked him why he had thought that. While he was hesitant in answering my question, another male student cut into the discussion. He exclaimed, "Guys will not go to a bar if its barmaids are ugly". All the students and I, again, burst into laughter.

Asked by the instructor, the student explained that such an image of barmaids stemmed from many movies that he had seen. The instructor then asked several students if that was their perception of barmaids. After second thoughts, some of these students pointed out that a sexy barmaid might be an image powerfully enforced by Hollywood films. As S2 said in her reflection paper, "Discussing different female roles from a reflective stance was cool. I didn't know that a new generation like us, males or females, still entertains many gender stereotypes such as adulterous women as evil women."

What has discussed suggests that students enjoyed (1) learning how to examine texts from a feminist perspective and (2) discussing different female roles such as barmaids and actresses. This task made students become texts users because they were encouraged to use the four female stereotypes to analyze the ten female roles. Finally, the discussion on barmaids suggests that this task also supported students as text critics. Students became more aware of their understanding of female roles from a feminist perspective through a reflective class discussion.

Task 3: Exposing students to alternative versions of Cinderella (Session 3, Thursday, Week 10)

Sessions 3 and 4 were implemented on Thursday of Week 10. During Session 3, the instructor offered each student a handout (Appendix 1) about the story of a Popeye cartoon that the instructor was about to play. He spent 10 minutes explaining the story and relevant information in the handout. Then he played the 7-minute cartoon, a parody of Cinderella in which Olive is a princess who holds a ball to choose her mate. She is bullied by Bluto and is of course rescued by the spinach-eating Popeye at the end of the story. The instructor showed this cartoon to students in order to expose students to different versions of Cinderella for more

reflection, especially a version in cartoon format that could be more engaging to students.

Afterwards, the instructor gave each student a copy of Babette Cole's (1997) picture book Prince Cinders. By cutting and pasting, he had consolidated the written text, along with selected illustrations, onto fewer pages, so the copy was a shortened version. Students were asked to read the text individually for about 15 minutes. Then the instructor showed the book to students in Power Point format during the rest of Session 3. This version changes Cinderella into a male protagonist--little Prince Cinders who is left at home doing the laundry while his three mean big brothers are heading off to Princess Lovelypenny's party. Helped by an incompetent fairy godmother, Prince Cinders is turned into a big hairy gorilla. The story ends when the ape-like Prince Cinders fits into the trousers he had left behind earlier and marries the princess.

Different data suggested that students showed great interest in *Prince Cinders* as learning material. In their reflection papers, most students maintained a favorable attitude toward the picture book, but responses to the cartoon varied among students. S10 did not think that she had increased her listening ability too much while watching the Popeye cartoon. She further explained: "I paid most attention to the images in the cartoon because the characters in the cartoon spoke too fast. I could only try my best to guess what the characters said as the story proceeded." But S25 thought that watching this cartoon was full of surprises: "The entire activity made me realize that there are so many different versions of Cinderella. My favorite one was the Popeye version because its plot was extremely different from that of the old version I had heard of. It was like watching a move with an unpredictable ending."

These comments reflect two different attitudes toward literacy practices. S10 was a code breaker, stressing the fundamental features of a language such as alphabets and sounds in words. S25, on the other hand, assumed a more holistic role—a text participant who drew on his prior knowledge about Cinderella in order to comprehend another version of the story. In fact, coding practice and text meaning practices were both emphasized in the task such as (1) when the teacher helped students develop a preview notion of the cartoon from the supplementary handout (Appendix 1) and (2) when the instructor helped students pay attention to some words or phrases that students did not understand while making sense of *Prince Cinders*. The instructor's

biggest concern was to support students as text analysts, making students become more able to approach different Cinderella versions from a critical stance. That is, this task also intended to help students think and act as critical readers and this goal was achieved as seen in S1's comment on the task: "It was a new idea to create different versions of Cinderella. These new versions, the cartoon and the picture book, could help students come up with new ideas on older versions and with new ways of thinking."

Task 4: Having students compare older and newer versions of Cinderella (Session 4, Thursday, Week 10)

During Session 4, 24 out of the 27 students were divided into 12 pairs and the last 3 students were in one group. Students in each pair and the group were asked to discuss the differences between the version of Cinderella from their childhood memories and the newer versions they had just read. The activity was similar to what students had done on Tuesday. Students needed to write their ideas on a discussion sheet and then share them with their partners. Finally, the pair-discussion was followed by a classroom discussion as a wrap-up. Before the activity was completed, each group was required to write a new version of Cinderella. Students were asked to submit their group work in Week 12.

Many students' reflection papers indicated that students enjoyed working with others to compare different versions of Cinderella. Some students pointed out that discussing different versions of Cinderella was engaging. Some thought that such a discussion task helped students to gain multiple perspectives from others on the interpretation of the story. In her reflection paper, S13 said that different versions of Cinderella had made her more aware of gender issues and more creative in writing a different version of the story: "Cinderella has been a story that we have known since we were born. However, discussing the story, exchanging ideas, and experiencing different versions of the story made me more reflective about gender roles and inspired me to be more imaginative".

Students' responses to the various Cinderella stories show that they could recognize some differences between the older and newer versions. Students used words, phrases, or sentences to fulfill this task and focused their analysis mostly on differences in gender (Cinderella vs. Princess Cinders/Popeye), characterization (evil

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stepsisters vs. hairy stepbrothers / the prince vs. Princess Olive), setting (Cinderella meeting the prince at the ball vs. Popeye/Cinderella meeting the princess at the bus stop), plot (beautiful vs. funny / glass slippers vs. trousers / pumpkin coach vs. car), etc. Some students spent these 20 minutes completing a paragraph and critiquing these versions of Cinderella from their own perspective. If we take a look at S21's response in Figure 2, we will understand that students were able to examine a text set (see below) of Cinderellas on their own. S21 pointed out that while other girls were invited to the ball, Cinderella went to the ball by herself. S21's reflection was thought-provoking because he not only compared and contrasted different versions of Cinderella, but also brought up the issue of dependence vs. independence.

Figure 2: S21's Response to Different Versions of Cinderella
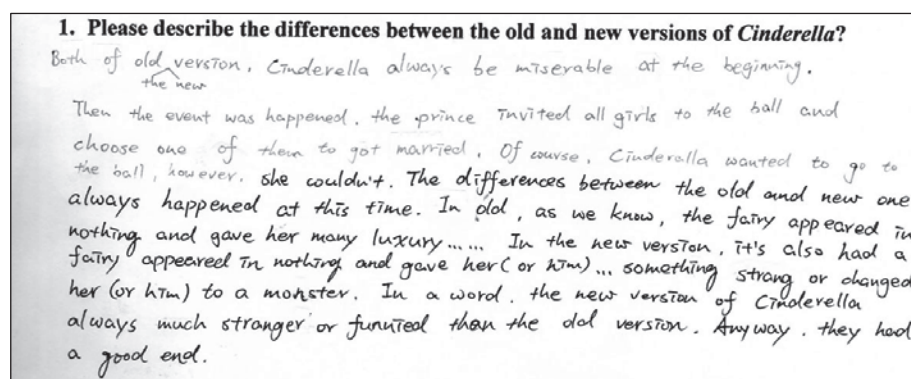
In one teaching entry, the instructor said that the idea of exposing students to different versions of Cinderella was based on the reading device "text sets" commonly used by many critical practitioners (Harste, 2000; Leland, Harste, Ociepka, Lewison, & Vasquez, 1999; Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996). Text sets mean that by having students read and discuss a set of different texts (e.g., print/nonprint material) relevant to a particular theme, genre, or issue, students are able to recognize multiple attitudes. As the analysis of the activity shows, the current task invited students to critically analyze different Cinderella stories and to take up gender issues from various perspectives. In brief, this task created opportunities for students to become text critics through the notion of text sets.

Task 5: Asking students in pairs to complete their own version of Cinderella (Week

10-Week 12)

Students in pairs were asked to complete their own version of Cinderella outside the classroom and to submit it two weeks later. Each student had to write one or two paragraphs (totaling approximately 300 words). In their reflection papers, most students said that this task was creative, engaging, and meaningful. As S18 said, "The pair work was challenging and took me lots of effort, but the completion of such work gave me a sense of achievement. If it had not been Cinderella, the writing task would have been boring". S13 said that he disliked this task because his partner tended to be late for their meetings. As indicated in his teaching entry, the instructor hoped that students in pairs would brainstorm and have more ideas in their work. Such a pair writing would have students (1) draw on background experiences and (2) construct a Cinderella text from a personal and social perspective.

The purpose of this task was to have students reconstruct the meaning of Cinderella rather than to have them deconstruct the meaning of different Cinderella roles. As some scholars (Luke, Comber, & O'Brien, 1996) suggest, producing an alternative rewriting of a text can help students take an active learner role and express their world view. This task encouraged students to become a text critic and to foster a critical stance toward the original text. However, before we examine whether or not students in pairs or the group could create an alternative Cinderella story, we should recap what students had thought of Cinderella at the beginning of the activity.

Task 1 invited students to share their prior impressions of Cinderella. Most students recalled their Cinderella as an innocuous bedtime story and portrayed Cinderella as a submissive character constantly yielding to other's wishes (e.g., wicked stepmother and stepsisters) and doing good deeds. S2's narrative in Figure 3 can serve as a representative version. From the feminist perspective mentioned previously, we can analyze S2's Cinderella and find some female stereotypes. Cinderella was (1) a caregiver (taking care of the household and her mean stepsisters), (2) a dutiful daughter (fulfilling her responsibilities even though her stepmother was cruel to her), and (3) a passionate woman (attending the ball chosen by the charming prince). Like S2, most students produced a conservative discourse that reflected traditional values of men/women and put women in a subordinate position.

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Figure 3: S2's Portrayal of Cinderella from Her Childhood Memory

In contrast to this stereotypical depiction of Cinderella, students' collaborative works invested their story with creativity and represented Cinderella dramatically. Students were able to produce alternative versions about female roles in comparison with their initial perceptions of Cinderella. As a whole, students' pair writings can be divided into three groups.

First, 6 out of the 13 writings (46%) involved gender transformation, perhaps because students had recently experienced the discussed gender-based activity. For example, Group 1's students changed their Cinderella and Fairy into two males, Happy and Together. Happy was teased by his three stepsisters for being too feminine and was rescued by his Fairy. At the end of the story, Happy and Together lived together. Group 2 also played with the gender issue in its story in which Cinderella became a boy living with three transsexual stepbrothers. In this story, Cinderella was chosen by the princess because he was a male rather than a transsexual. In Illustration 1, we can see the summaries of three pair works also related to gender switch; students showed their originality and gender awareness through teamwork.

Second, 4 writings (31%) focused on an evil Cinderella, a change in characterization from submissiveness to competitiveness. A bad-girl Cinderella made students' works more imaginative and provocative. Specifically, pair writings of this kind emancipated Cinderella from being a good woman whose happiness depended on other people to an energetic female who was ambitious and sophisticated. In

Group 3's work, Cinderella was a girl jealous of her two beautiful stepsisters. Cinderella knew that her stepsisters had been invited to a ball where the prince would be looking for a wife, so Cinderella "put the toxicant [sic] into the dinner, made her stepsisters ate [sic] the dinner, and ruined their beautiful faces". Cinderella then became beautiful with the magic of a wicked fairy. Finally, Cinderella took the prince's heart away at the ball and lived happily ever after in the palace with the prince.

Illustration 1: Summary of Four Gender-Switch Cinderella Stories

Group 5	While his two stepbrothers were handsome, Cinderella was an ugly boy in charge of the household chores. Then this retelling of the Cinderella story was interpolated with Aesop's fable, "Mercury and the Woodsman". The story ended at a ball held in the palace in which the princess chose Cinderella Boy because of his inner beauty and honesty.
Group 8	Cinderella was treated badly by her stepsisters. Before they went to the ball where the prince would show up, Cinderella became the handsome god Apollo because of the fairy's mistake. Everyone at the ball was surprised because it turned out that the prince was a homosexual and liked Cinderella. In the end, Cinderella would maintain her new identity as a male, because s/he would like to live with the prince.
Group 9	Cinderella became a boy named Peter. He had a stepbrother, Tom. When Peter was abused by his stepmother, Tom tried to help Peter. Finally, Peter and his new family all lived happily ever after.
Group 10	Cinderella was a college student. She did not have nice clothes to wear to the school's graduation party. Helped by a fairy-like male boss who owned a dress store, Cinderella put on beautiful clothes and met a prince.

The work by Group 4 was another example that differed from the traditional version of a beautiful and nice Cinderella, a smart and even manipulative girl trying to be in charge of her own life. She pretended to be naïve in front of her three kind-hearted stepsisters and won the prince's heart after she beat the prince in a

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computer game at the ball. The prince thought that Cinderella was "cool". Making Cinderella a villain gave students an opportunity to create a twist on the fairy tale and to make Cinderella more realistic and vivid. For example, Group 6's Cinderella was a parody of the traditional version. Cinderella was fat and jealous of her beautiful stepsisters. While her stepsisters were friendly to her, Cinderella resented them secretly. Asking a wicked witch for help, Cinderella changed her stepsisters into ugly women and stopped them from attending the ball. Cinderella was still refused by the prince because of her weight. However, such an alteration in Cinderella's character made this girl transform from a symbol of innocence into a figure of strong-willed womanhood.

Third, 3 writings (23%) stressed neither gender transformation nor a vicious Cinderella. For example, Group 7's work was more like a farce in which Cinderella killed the prince by mistake at the ball after she threw her slippers at him. In the end, Cinderella was put behind bars. In Group 13's work, the setting of the story was the school where the students were studying. In their retelling, Cinderella was a geek-like girl and met her prince at a masquerade held for first-year university students.

If we compare students' own works with the description of Cinderella from their memory, we can see that students demonstrated the ability to take a critical perspective in their writings. They became more aware of the messages being transmitted by the traditional text "Cinderella". Cinderella was no longer weak, submissive, and caring. More possibilities in the portrayal of Cinderella were explored. The writing assignment allowed students not only to make sense of the traditional fairy tale but also to update the original text from multiple perspectives. Students were encouraged to be text users and text critics at the same time. Finally, students were invited to reflect on gender roles while being asked to evaluate their learning. Specifically, many students in their reflection papers indicated that approaching female roles through different tasks and from multiple perspectives made them willing to express their opinions and critiques concerning a significant issue.

4. Conclusion and Implications

This study has shown that the implementation of critical literacy in Taiwan is feasible. The instructor had students experience various tasks and developed students' resources in different roles, including code breakers, text participants, text users, and

text critics. As indicated previously, critical literacy should begin with students' own knowledge and life experience. This activity began by inviting students to bring into the classroom their memories of Cinderella. Next, the activity used "dialogue" as a tool that had students interact with the instructor, their classmates, and various texts from multiple viewpoints. The notion of "reflection" was employed when students were encouraged to approach female roles from feminist perspectives and to contemplate different versions of Cinderella from a critical stance. Reflection on gender roles also occurred when students were asked to show their attitude toward the entire process. Finally, students were stimulated to address "sociopolitical issues" through a collaborative writing assignment.

This project confirmed for the instructor the importance of students becoming critical and reflective learners. He believes that these types of literacy experiences can help students acquire a deeper understanding of other people and of themselves. In addition, the findings of the study made him think (1) that there is potential in the practice of critical literacy in Taiwan and (2) that students can feel comfortable with activities that lead them to be active learners. However, the present study should be seen as a small step toward the implementation of critical literacy focusing on gender issues. Obviously, much more needs to be done in the classroom than a 4-session exercise and 3-week period (from Week 10 to Week 12) permit. With this in mind, the researcher-educator has some ideas that should be considered in the future for those who are interested in the research and practice of critical literacy:

(1) The study does not guarantee that the present activity can be applied in totally to other teaching contexts with different student levels/ages, majors, cultural backgrounds, etc. However, the activity can be seen as a type of inquiry for reference and as a starting point for some follow-up activities in the spirit of critical literacy for an entire semester or school year.

(2) In addition to gender issues, other reflective themes can be included in the future classroom. Students can be exposed to a variety of issues related to their lives inside and outside the classroom. For college teachers, issues can be divided into those related to students themselves (e.g., self-image, body-image, and who you are), to students and their family (e.g., students' relationship with their parents and siblings), and to students and their

friends (e.g., friendship and relationship with students' boyfriends/girlfriends).

(3) More popular culture texts from students' lives can be used in the classroom. Texts such as films, pop songs, YouTube clips, music videos, online communications can enhance critical reflection and increase student engagement.

(4) Modified generalizations will be achieved if we see the results of this research as a springboard and replicate the research in different contexts. But we should bear in mind that what critical literacy truly emphasizes is the uniqueness of students and the particularization of human minds.

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Appendix 1: Popeye / "Ancient Fistory" (1953)

Characters:

1. Popeye: The sailor who gets strong when he eats spinach
2. Olive:　The love of Popeye
3. Bluto:　The villain who always tries to steal Olive away

I'm Popeye the sailor man / I'm Popeye the sailor man / I'm strong as can binache / 'Cause I eat my spinach / I'm Popeye the sailor man

(Popeye also goes toot-toot on his pipe after the 1st, 2nd, and last line. 'Binache' is a nonsense word based on 'be' (I'm strong as can be') to rhyme with spinach.)

Plot Summary:

The cartoon is a Cinderella-like story that (sort of) happens in the Middle Ages. In the story, Popeye is employed in the kitchen of Bluto's restaurant, working as hard as Cinderella. Bluto is going to the ball (a large and formal party) where Princess Olive will choose her mate. Popeye's fairy godfather appears and helps him attend the ball as a prince with fancy clothes. At the ball, Bluto bullies (bully: to threaten to hurt someone or frighten them, especially someone smaller or weaker) Olive to marry him and he gets a lesson from Popeye after Popeye eats a can of spinach and become strong. The cartoon is a reverse (the exact opposite of what has just been mentioned) of the story of Cinderella.