

## “Good citizenship” through Bilingual Children Literature: Arabic and Hebrew

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Received: May 23, 2013

Accepted: June 9, 2013

Online Published: July 12, 2013

doi:10.5539/jel.v2n3p71

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jel.v2n3p71>

### Abstract

The aim of the research has been to evaluate the contribution of the genre of bilingual literature, Arabic and Hebrew, to citizenship education. Since the Israeli society is a multicultural society comprised of both nations, Arabs and Jews who live in conflicted environment, one must regard those textbooks as civic agents. Literature is a socialization agent and as such it is an active influential factor in children's mental environment. Choosing literary pieces adapted to children's life is important, since literature, by its essence, is about values, and its function is to mold the child's character as an adult citizen. According the typology of Westheimer and Kahne (2003), the notion of being a good citizen is comprised of three types: the responsible citizen, the participatory citizen and the justice citizen. The content analysis procedure, based on Krippendorff (2004), revealed that most the stories, hence, ten out of the thirteen deal with the two elevated types of citizenship, namely, the participatory citizen and the justice citizen. Inspire of the fact that we are dealing with children's literature, the authors of bilingual children literature do not belittle the capacity of children to grasp their role as citizens in multicultural society.

**Keywords:** civic education bilingualism, bilingual literature- Arabic and Hebrew

### 1. Introduction

The new genre of children's books, namely, bilingual literature - in our case Hebrew and Arabic simultaneously is characterized by the writing of two different authors who represent their mother tongues, or a sole bilingual author. This article, based upon a literary research, aims at setting aside a unique place for books that were conceived as bilingual from their very inception as one organic unit, and not written first in one language and later translated into another. The advantage of a text that was conceived as a Hebrew-Arabic text from the very beginning is that one is spared the problems arising from translating from one language into another (Shavit 1996). Mutual writing creates a different set of rules: there is no coercive or coerced text.

The aim of the research has been to evaluate the contribution of the genre of bilingual literature, Arabic and Hebrew, to citizenship education.

#### 1.1 Typologies of the “Good Citizen”

In his "Ethics", Aristotle (384-322 BCE) describes the happy life intended for man by nature as one lived in accordance with virtue, and, in his "Politics", he describes the role that politics and the political community must play in bringing about the virtuous life in the citizenry. The "Politics" also provides analysis of the kinds of political community that existed in his time and shows where and how these cities fall short of the ideal community of virtuous citizens. Although in some ways we have clearly moved beyond his world, there remains much in Aristotle's philosophy that is valuable in our world today. In particular, his views on the connection between the well-being of the political community and that of the citizens who make it up, his belief that citizens must actively participate in politics if they are to be happy and virtuous, and his analysis of what causes and prevents revolution within political communities have been a source of inspiration for many contemporary theorists. Several studies examined how Israeli youngsters perceive what a “good citizen” is. Ichilov and Nave (1981) report that youngsters relate citizenship mainly to the political sphere rather than defining it as a broader commitment to the community as well, and that they tend to emphasize obedience and loyalty more than active participation in the political

process. Arab respondents viewed personal characteristics such as being truthful, ethical, and considerate of others, as well as the commitment to the family and community as more important for good citizenship than both passive and active attachment to the political sphere (Ichilov, 1988b). Nevertheless, religious youth also projected stronger ethnocentricity, and negative perceptions and attitudes toward Arabs (Zemach, Zin, 1984). According to Ichilov (1993) teachers' grasp of the role of "good citizenship" includes three dimensions: character virtues as tolerance, morality and altruism; Active participation within one's community and obedience and loyalty to the motherland.

According to typology of Westheimer & Kahne (2004) the definition of good citizenship contains three components: The personally responsible citizen, The participatory citizen and - The personally responsible citizen acts responsibly in his/her community contribute time, money, or both to charitable causes: For example, picking up litter, giving blood, recycling, volunteering, and staying out of debt. The personally responsible citizen works and pays taxes, obeys laws, and helps those in need during crises such as snowstorm or floods. The personally responsible citizen contributes food or clothing to less fortunate. Educational Programs that seek to develop personally responsible citizens hope to build character and personal responsibility by emphasizing honesty, integrity, self-discipline, and hard work.

The participatory citizen actively takes part in the civic affairs and the social life of the community at local, state, and national levels. . Educational programs designed to support the development of participatory citizens focus on teaching students about how government and other institutions work (e.g., community based organizations, synagogues and mosques) and about the importance of planning and participating in organized efforts to care for those in need.

While the personally responsible citizen would contribute in a given campaign or initiative, the participatory citizen might organize those campaigns. In other words while the personally responsible citizen may act passively the participatory citizen may act actively.

A third image of a good citizen, the justice-oriented citizen, is, perhaps, the perspective that is least commonly pursued. The justice-oriented citizen is one that calls explicit attention to matters of injustice and to the importance of pursuing social justice goals. Justice-oriented citizens critically assess social, political, and economic structures and consider collective strategies for change that challenge injustice and, when possible, address root causes of problems. Like the participatory citizen, he is related to the life and issues of the community. However, he refers to general policies and criticizes them.

Educational programs in that category, emphasize preparing students to improve society by critically analyzing and addressing social issues and injustices, more likely to teach about social movements and how to affect systemic change. (Westheimer & Kahne , 2004).

Is it possible for Palestinian citizens of Israel to be Good Citizens within the Jewish state paradigm? According to (Khoury, 2012), Palestinian citizens cannot be Good Citizens under the present paradigm, without it conflicting with the main features of their identity. If a state is to be defined based on ethnic characteristics, it must include components from its indigenous minorities' collective identity, if they are to be invested in its development and prosperity.

Logically, Classic democratic theory holds that the majority should decide on the parameters of the state. Meaning, the state should adapt to the majority, and the minority must adapt to the parameters set by the majority. But According to Khoury's view the structure, nature and overall identity of the political entity, cultivated at the formation stage of civilian life by considering the ramifications of decisions on all social groups.

So how can the identity, as a Palestinian who is also a citizen of Israel, who in some respects shares the same values as fellow Jewish citizens, not stand in contradiction to the state's identity? According to (Khoury, 2012) under the premise of the state's Jewish identity, any attempt to be a virtuous citizen through my cultivated Palestinian identity will fail. A choice must be made between the two.

## **2. Children Literature and Its Qualities**

### *2.1 Literature as Ideological Agent*

Political behavior studies show that patterns of political behaviour, such as support for a certain political party, tolerance of minorities and support for freedom of speech are formed and internalized by the individual during his childhood and early adolescence (Ichilov 1984, 2001). During these early stages of life, literature is considered a strong political socializing agent among many others, such as family and school. Children's stories range from stories with a didactical content, at one end of the spectrum, to neutral content stories that apparently have no didactical intent at all at the other end. When these contents are carefully examined, they provide an insight into the code of values of a society. According to the Marxist dialectic of education, school texts, as part of society's

organized body of knowledge, create the pupils' social reality, inculcate in them beliefs, norms, ideologies as well as moral concepts, and transmit social ethos from one generation to the other. Accordingly, when societies undergo ideological and political changes, school books are rewritten so as to fit the new beliefs and concepts (Zamir 2005). Similarly, children's books reflect the ideological process existing in a given society. Textbooks have the potential to play a crucial role in either peace education or, it's opposite, education that normalizes pupils, future citizens, to ideological narratives that foster conflict and violence.

According to Stephens (1992), it is those stories that have a neutral didactic content that more easily influence the reader ideologically; Latent ideology in the story leaves the author above suspicion of political or ideological bias, so that it is easy for the readers, whatever their political views, to open their minds to the author's writing. Latent ideology is more easily absorbed by the reader since it does not meet with his immediate resistance. Therefore, inexplicitly stated ideology is often considered, and wrongly so, legitimate. Even stories that are apparently free of any ideological content will impart some kind of ideology; for example, a tale presenting a protagonist's way of life, which is supported by the author may assimilate ideological statement about what is and what should be. The values, constructing the ideology, touch upon the past, the present and the future: the traditional values, the prevailing ethics of the present, and the wish to create the values of the future (teaching values to children who will be tomorrow's grown-up citizens) in order to improve society (Stephens 1992).

### *2.2 The Nature of the Bilingual Genre of Children's Literature*

Bilingual literature is a tool for understanding the "other". One of the obstacles faced by an immigrant society is acquiring the new language of the host country (Cohen & Spector, 2003). On one hand a bilingual text can be a tool for acquiring the new language by having the graphic and parallel presentation of two languages side by side, and on the other hand it can be a direct means of preserving a language and an indirect means of preserving an ethnic identity.

The essence of bilingual literature is the presentation of a work of literature preconceived as a bilingual text whether written by one writer or by two co-writers working on the writing process simultaneously sharing a common ideology. The bilingual story constitutes one organic unit, unlike books that were originally written in one language, and were only later translated into another. The advantage of a text that was conceived as a Hebrew-Amharic text from the very beginning is that one is spared the problems arising from translating from one language into another (Shavit, 1996). Mutual writing creates a different set of rules: there is no coercive or coerced text

Bilingualism should be looked upon as an interdisciplinary area, including linguistics, as well as behavioral sciences like sociology, psychology and anthropology. They all contribute considerably to understanding language assimilation and socialization processes in a given society. According to Nevo and Olstein (2008) bilingual situations can be discerned: bilingualism or multilingualism is concerned with a few languages spoken in the home ground/environment (home or country); sequential bilingualism is concerned with acquiring a foreign language within the educational system, and acquired bilingualism as a result of immigration processes. As far as such two languages are concerned, the archaic definition of the term bilingualism, that is, equal competence in two languages', seems unsubstantiated, since an equal level of any linguistic competence is, actually, almost impossible. Therefore, the appropriate definition of bilingualism has to involve a consciousness of several types' sequences: a sequence of linguistic knowledge, that is, linguistic, syntactic and grammar structures, a language vocabulary and also a linguistic usage sequence, referring to the patterns of the linguistic utterance according to the social context.

Israel Hebrew and Arabic children bilingual books,, point to evidence to a multicultural process. Despite the scant number of books in this genre, it is important to examine the phenomenon. It accentuates how much the inter-lingual dialog is not obvious, compared to countries in which bilingualism is obvious and congenital, such as Belgium, Canada, or Switzerland.

Bilingualism is also demonstrated in the relation between bilingualism and literacy skills (Nevo and Olstein, 2008). The role of bilingual literature and its contribution to the enhancement of literacy have not yet been researched. Children's stories are a starting point for cultivating linguistic skills, since they are an experiential envelope for engaging language, its components and its complexity.

There is a strong correlation between identity and language. Analysis of this correlation assumes that the amount of a learner's success in acquiring a new language might be influenced by attitudes and beliefs towards the new culture and language (Ben-Rafael, Olshtain & Geijst, 1998). The individual structures the world and his identity through language and words. Gee (1996) emphasizes that this discourse constitutes the identity of a human being. Discourse is the whole complex of common relations that define the usage of language and other symbolic utterances and their by products: thinking, feeling, beliefs, values and activities one can use to identify oneself as a

member in a meaningful social group or a social net in order to convey to others one's meaningful social function .

### 3. Method

**The research** corpus includes bilingual children books written in Hebrew and Arabic.

According to Lapidot's typology (2011) Israeli children literature can be divided into 4 types: the first type includes books which are allegories about the Israeli-Arab conflict. the second type includes books that discuss the Israeli Arab conflict directly. The third type includes bilingual books written in Arabic and Hebrew: even though those stories do not discuss the continuous conflict the very essence of Hebrew and Arabic standing together, convey the essence of dialog. The fourth type includes a literature story that takes place within Arabic society and its culture. Even though they do not discuss the Arab- Israeli conflict, they open a channel for the Jewish Israeli reader to learn about the Arab world.

Our research cuprous focuses on bilingual children literature that can be related to each of the above types.

The research method is based on a hermeneutic analysis that examines the social and cultural processes that influence the reader's point of view. The discussed texts are narrative texts. These are analyzed according to the scheme theory principle that maintains that a narrative text is characterized by a plot structure, and thus employs earlier knowledge and experience in order to realize a process of understanding (Shimron 1989), and that texts based on familiar scenarios create a high explicitness level (Sarig 2002). Underlying the reading process is the assumption that reading is an interaction between the reader and the text, and it assists the reader in the following channels: as a process of looking for significance, as a process of building up significance and as a means of applying diverse kinds of knowledge.

The methodology used in our study is content analysis; a series of procedures is used in analyzing the text aimed at arriving at significant diagnoses and generalizations from the sub text (Weber, 1985). Compared to other tools of measurement, this methodology has two advantages:

Content analysis is not invasive; contrary to other techniques such as interviews, responding to questionnaires and projection tests, content analysis is free of errors resulting from the experimenters' presence and expectations.

Content analysis is able to deal with puzzling data; while in techniques such as interviews and questionnaires the data is obtained in a structured manner so that every category being investigated is known beforehand. In content analysis the analyst may not be able to predict all the categories before conducting a preliminary check of the text.

Content analysis is context sensitive; the interpretation of the data in the process of content analysis is supposed to reflect the processes of reality, including political processes. The technique can deal very well with a great quantity of data such as data occurring in textbooks (Krippendorff, 2004). The extent to which the quantitative and qualitative methods are blended depends on the inclinations of the researcher; in the present study we will use a synthesis of both the qualitative and quantitative methods with emphasis on qualitative analysis.

The categories of analysis are based upon the theoretical basis: The responsible citizen, the participatory citizen and the justice citizen.

### 4. Finding

We located on the shelf 13 books, written in both Hebrew and Arabic (see detailed bibliography). Below there are the findings that analysed according to the typology of Westheimer and Kahne (2003).

The **responsible citizen category** is portrayed in the following books:

The protagonists act responsibly in his/her community. He/She obeys rules and regulation, acts kindly to his surroundings and occasionally donates out of his/her own resources:

- **Rim, the Girl from Ein Hud:** Rim wants to adopt a black dog and a ginger cat. Her parents reject her wish, arguing that dogs and cats are enemies and cannot possibly live together. Rim tries to convince them, and finally succeeds.
- **Father's large library:** Father large library contains 4000 of books. And he is looking for one missing book. It was one missing volume of an encyclopaedia. Father looked at his diary and found out that he loaned it to one of his friends from Jaffa. The lesson that was taught was that one should act responsibly and return books.
- **Furadis:** The children decided to take care of a wounded eagle and let it free after it recovered.

The **participatory citizen** actually participates in the social life of the community, at local, state and national levels by joining established systems/The **participatory citizen category** is portrayed in the following books:

- **The magic fiddle:** Fiona, the protagonist, has decided to save deserted seals that she found on the sea shores of western Scotland
- **The Green Ridley Turtle:** The book describes the struggle of the green Ridley turtle to survive, after being caught in a fishermen's net, its escape from captivity, and the laying of eggs, from which new green Ridley turtles will hatch
- **Garbage can:** The children decided to take care of the equilibrium of nature in ordinary way rather than chemical spraying and killing of animals.
- **The Olive Valley** In this story, the spring in the village cannot supply the needs of the inhabitants, whose main livelihood is agriculture in general and the olive orchard in particular. Thus, they build water reservoirs that utilize purified sewage.
- **Juggling in Jerusalem:** Ibtisam and Neta, a Palestinian and an Israeli girl, are the stars of the Peace Circus, based in Jerusalem, in which youngsters from both peoples juggle together for audiences from across the world.

The **justice citizen** calls for attention to matters of injustice and to the importance of pursuing social goals.

The **justice citizen category** is portrayed in the following books:

- **Seeds of Peace:** Tom, the book's protagonist, discusses with his parents the origins of evil, violence, and hatred in the world. His parents provide him with the knowledge, that the best way to defeat those phenomena is to sow seeds of peace and reconciliation.
- **Yusuf's Dream:** Yusuf's story is told from a child's point of view, and focuses on drawing competition in Gaza. He decided to draw the collective dream of the Palestinian people, namely, "the right of return".
- **Commemoration Flowers:** The biography of the late Itshak Rabin. Descriptions of blooming flowers are interwoven with descriptions of war. The book introduces the choice between blooming flowers and war as a metaphor for the choice between peace and war.
- **The marvelous children of glow:** A story of warm friendship between Gali, a Jewish little girl who decides to cross the defense wall near her house a Tareck, an Arab boy who lives across the wall. Together with their friends they light hearted shape candles on the thresholds of all the houses around the wall.
- **Aftershock:** Fourteen-year-old Ella's life is turned upside down when she is injured in a terrorist attack. While Ella is in hospital, she makes friends with Mahar, an Arab boy injured in a motorcycle accident. She discovers that he is asking similar questions and the two have very open, intense discussions. Although Ella's father cuts off their relationship after she goes home, they manage to meet in secret. Their experiences along the way create a strong bond between them, and help Ella cope with her trauma.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Reviewing the bilingual children's literature in Israel suggests that all the books of that genre can be regarded on the scale of citizenship. Surprisingly enough, most the stories, hence, ten out of the thirteen deal with the two elevated types of citizenship, namely, the participatory citizen and the justice citizen. Inspire of the fact that we are dealing with children's literature, the authors of bilingual children literature do not belittle the capacity of children to grasp their role as citizens in multicultural society.

Hebrew-Arabic texts provide the child not only with a wider aesthetic experience derived from reading the literature itself, but also gives the reader role models of good citizens. In addition, the texts introduce the personality of the 'other' through portraying his graphic dimension including his own language. Nonetheless, the Hebrew-Arabic texts studied here, try to contribute to the young readers, at the content level, the ideas of good citizenship as well as coexistence that is an inherent component of the citizenship in Israel.

The message of good citizenship according of the typology of Westheimer and Kahne (2003) is conveyed sometimes by the implied author and sometimes by the protagonists of the story.

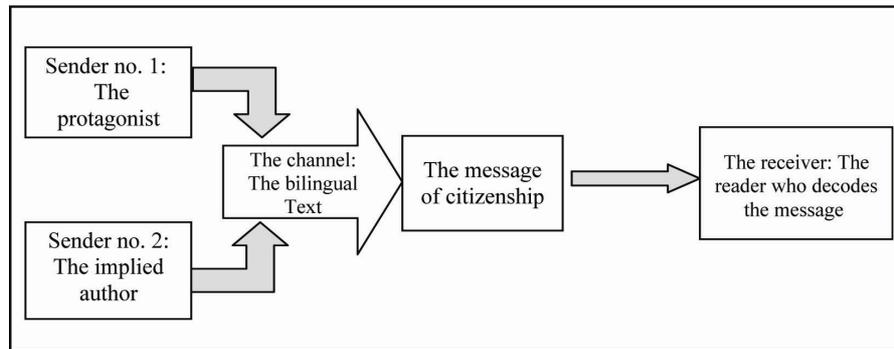


Figure 1. The message of good citizenship conveyed in a flow diagram

The texts, being written bilingually, serve as agents of socialization, educating towards good citizenship in a multicultural societies. These are texts that conduct a discourse from a point of view of equality between the two languages is in itself evidence of a multi-cultural world view.

The variegated typology of good citizenship is evident in all the stories. The first type, that is the responsible citizen, includes three books that convey normative citizenship of every day life like taking care of pets and returning loaned book to the library.

The second type, hence, the participator citizen can be find in 5 stories which focus on the actual social initiatives as protecting the environment and the essence connected to the quality of life. However the third type, the justice citizen, criticises wrong deeds, stands up against political conventions and even protests against unjust and archaic norms. Those are evident, for example in the book Yusuf's Dream which raises the refugee's question and the book Aftershock which brings about the love affair between Jews and Arabs.

The stories, being responsible texts, should be seen as ideological texts trying to imbue an outlook of good citizenship combined with world view of coexistence between Arabs and Jews. The texts, being written bilingually, serve this ideological orientation. The texts demonstrate that there is no escape from a process of coexisting in a common society, and thus it cannot escape the question of building just society dwelling in a situation of majority and minority.

Derived from our research is a new extended model of good citizenship enlarged by a fourth type of a citizen : **a world reformer**. The necessity of the fourth type derives out of the very fact that the third type namely "the just" citizen can't be perceived as the ultimate type of a good citizenship since it lacks revolutionary deeds that show certain contribution to society.

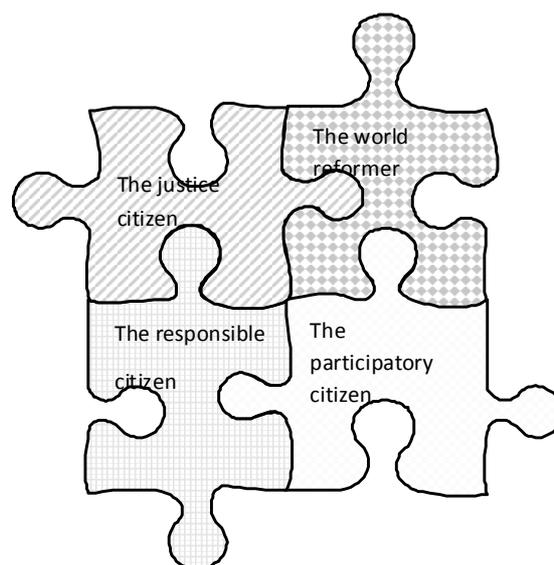


Figure 2. An extended model of good citizenship

Thus, the differentiation between the message of the Implied author and the message of the protagonist is a crucial one; While the Implied author can easily transfer the notion of the ultimate mode of good citizen he avoids doing so. Perhaps portraying an infant protagonist as a reformer becomes incredible and unreliable due to his young age and his limited status in society. Perhaps the short duration of the bilingual Hebrew- Arabic books has not allowed it to fully grow and evolve beyond the three types of Westheimer and Kahne (2003) typology.

This genre of bilingual Hebrew- Arabic books for children is still absent of stories as The Emperor's New Clothes by H. C. Andersen which let the child be the authentic voice of the reformer. Hence our suggestion is to bring about the fourth type of good citizenship which is essential to complete the optimal education to good citizenship. The most advantageous type would be the reformer citizen based upon the previous three levels: responsibility, participation and criticism.

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