



## Utilizing Disney Films in the EFL Classroom: Enhancing Students' Critical Literacy Skills with Animation

Soyoung Lee\*

Ewha Womans University

Young-Mee Suh

Hanyang University

### ARTICLE INFO

Received: 23 December 2021

Revised: 25 January 2022

Accepted: 04 February 2022

Examples in: English

Applicable Languages: English

Applicable Levels: Tertiary

### KEYWORDS

*nature and women/*

*disney films/*

*critical literacy skills*

자연과 여성/디즈니영화/

비판적 리터러시 기술

### ABSTRACT

Lee, Soyoung, & Suh, Young-Mee. (2022). Utilizing Disney Films in the EFL Classroom: Enhancing Students' Critical Literacy Skills with Animation. *Modern English Education*, 23(1), 1-14.

This study aimed to evaluate how English teachers can utilize Disney animation in the EFL classrooms to enhance critical literacy skills with a focus on gender and environmental issues. *Pocahontas* (1995) and *Moana* (2016) have been analyzed and compared through ecofeminist thoughts as these animation movies deal with nature at the forefront with two young women assigned the role of guarding it against destruction. Through content analysis, the two films are analyzed through the central themes of ecofeminism—criticism of male-centered thinking, women's relationship to nature, and women's role as nature caretakers. While both films criticize male-centered thinking and emphasize the two women's role of advocating and protecting nature, *Pocahontas*'s leadership is limited by binary thinking whereas *Moana* grows into a leader where all elements are equal and integral. Based on the analysis, students can train their critical thinking skills to further read cultural texts critically. By incorporating eco-feminist thoughts in a critical reading of Disney's films, students can analyze issues deconstructing dominant and dualist thinking. Disney's abundant film-text sources can serve as valuable resources for enhancing students' English critical literacy skills.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Rather than using textbooks that have been made for the purpose of EFL learners, there has been a move to incorporate material that is authentic in EFL classrooms for learners of English. The focus on English for Academic

Purposes (EAP) has moved to Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), such as English Mediated Instruction (EMI) where content teachers teach their subject in English (Byun et al., 2011; Choi, S. J., 2012; Kang, D. S., 2014; Kim, E. G., 2017; Kim et al., 2017). Following this pedagogical shift, as a bridge between

\* First Author: Soyoung Lee, Corresponding Author: Young-Mee Suh

So young Lee (Assistant Professor)

Global Language Education Office, Ewha Womans University, 52 Ewhayeodae-gil, Seodaemungu, Seoul, Korea

Email: syounglee@ewha.ac.kr / ISNI: 0000 0004 6463 1725

Young-Mee Suh (Lecturer)

Department of English Education, Hanyang University, 222 Wangsimni-ro, Seongdong-gu, Seoul, Korea

Email: ymsuh012@hanyang.ac.kr / ISNI: 0000 0004 6100 1509

EAP and EMI, the university's English program department, where one of the authors of this present study has been teaching since its establishment in 1997, has offered CLIL classes where there has been a focus on both content and language learning. The range of classes differ from Current Issues to Business English, World Women, Literary Themes, etc. One of the classes that the present author has taught is Cinema English. Using films in class has many merits including acquiring cultural background knowledge assumed by the producers of the film. Other reasons for using the film are motivation, encouraging language acquisition, expanding students' language awareness, and developing students' interpretative abilities (Lazar, 1993).

According to Lazar, because a film has a plot, students are motivated to follow the story to the end, and they become engaged in dilemmas with their emotional response aroused. Students feel what they process in the classroom is relevant and meaningful to their own lives and is shared by other viewers. In terms of language acquisition, students are exposed to a great deal of new language which can be an important way to supplement the limited input of the classroom and that such learning can be continued by themselves even in the future. Students are not only exposed to verbal language where they can listen to authentic pronunciation, but they can absorb words both verbally and textually as they can study English subtitles. Visual information and non-verbal information such as music and sound trigger students to comprehend and process the overall context better and students can internalize vocabulary, intonation and even become better aware of collocations and colloquial language. As multiple levels of meaning are possible with a creative work of comprehensive art, students can train to closely analyze the various elements of the film text, infer meaning, and then share and discuss their own interpretations.

In addition, film is a great resource to promote activities such as discussion, presentations, and other forms of critical activities where students share their feelings and opinions. As the film is rich in multiple levels of meanings, students feel that whatever response they have is as valuable and valid as other students or even the lecturer. As learners of a second language, students are not confident in just the new language, but as the film is open to multiple interpretations and there is a great extent of non-verbal information, students feel motivated to actively participate in learning activities rather than in structured lessons where they wait for the instructor to give them the right answer. Finally, film can provide a great opportunity especially for critical literacy activities—"learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations" (Anderson & Irvine, 1993, p. 10 as cited in Garlen & Sandlin, 2016). In L2 language education, promoting critical literacy skill is important and there is a body of research of how to help students pursue different interpretations of given materials in the classroom for individual and social develop-

ment (Luke & Freebody, 1998; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004; Janks, 2010; Janks et al., 2014 for reading and writing; Pavelenko, 2004 for materials and pedagogy; Leistyna & Alper, 2009 for media literacy).

In Korea, several studies have been conducted and reported usefulness of incorporating critical pedagogy in language education (Huh, S., & Suh, Y. M., 2018; Shin & Crookes, 2005; Suh, Y. M., 2019, 2020). Regarding utilizing films in the classroom to promote critical thinking, students can become immersed in activities that expose power relationships and ideology submerged in the film text to undergo transformative educational experiences that will have impact on their lives outside the classroom.

Out of many topics, gender ideology and the theme of environment and how they have changed throughout the times are topics most often dealt with in English classes. To deal with these two topics, a very valuable resource that has proven to be effective and cannot be ignored as educational texts are the films made by the Disney studio. Disney has become an entertainment conglomerate which exerts global influence with films enjoyed by both the young and old. According to 2019 statistics, Disney is a \$240 billion entertainment business, encompassing film, television, theme parks, broadcast, character licensing, and merchandising (Schiele et al., 2020). Not only has Disney become a brand name recognizable globally with multi studios including Walt Disney Pictures, Marvel Studios and Lucasfilm, but also its history of around a century, dating back to 1923, has influenced generations one after each other. The ubiquitous culture of Disney can be said to have influenced how we think and interact through its representations of family values, gender, race, class, community, etc. Especially with the popularity of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) to the more recent *Frozen II* (2019) film, the Disney princesses have become iconic characters that reflect and influence the values of their times not only through the films itself, but with songs and derivative commodities such as dolls, clothing, and accessories. Of these numerous princess films, there are some similar themes running through two animated Disney movies that deal with nature at the forefront and young women's or princesses' role of guarding it from destructive forces, *Pocahontas* (1995) and *Moana* (2016). The two films have also been chosen because they reflect a change in society's and Disney's gender ideology between the 1990s and the 2010s.

Based on the teacher's experience of teaching Cinema English, its' usefulness in terms of language learning and critical literacy skills, this study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) How can the films, *Pocahontas* (1995) and *Moana* (2016), be analyzed and compared in the framework of ecofeminism?
- 2) How can English teachers utilize Disney animation in the EFL classroom to enhance critical literacy skills with gender and environmental issues?

We selected two representative Disney animation, *Pocahontas* and *Moana*, for this study since Disney depict their heroines as lovers and supporters of nature who fight against its appropriation and destruction by male figures. The daughter of Native American chief, Pocahontas is set against the colonizing forces of the English Ratcliff and John Smith who view nature and the Native Americans as uncivilized elements that need to be tamed. Smith begins to share Pocahontas' close ties with nature, and the two become a bridge between the two conflicting races. Moana is also the daughter of a Polynesian tribe chief. As the island begins to suffer from blight, the ocean chooses her to restore the heart which was stolen by the male demigod, Maui to Te Fiti, Goddess of Life. As princesses, they take up their role with a sense of responsibility to protect and restore nature and place their people in harmony with it. The two films serve as good educational material to teach critical thinking skills of gender and the environment.

For the research purpose, this study is based on central concepts of ecofeminism to analyze and compare the Disney films: criticism of male-centered thinking, women's relationship to nature, and women's role as caretaker of nature. The rationale of using ecofeminism as a tool of analyzing and comparing the two films is that both films deal with issues of the environment and gender which can be critically analyzed through eco-feminist theories.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ECOFEMINISM

Eco-feminists focus on the human beings' domination of the nature brought on by oppressive patriarchal conceptual framework which try to maintain relationships of domination and subordination (Tong & Botts, 2017). According to Tong and Botts, distinctive features of ecofeminism are hierarchical thinking, valuing of dualisms, and oppressive modes of thinking; there is a binary division between oppositional and exclusive things rather than seeing things as being complementary and inclusive with higher value given to things historically identified as male, and a logic that leads to justifying subordination. Patriarchal way of thinking places men as the lord of nature and positions women with nature to be subdued and controlled by men (Warren, 2000). Binary divisions such as masculine/feminine, culture/ nature, reason/emotion, and spirit/body which are both human-centered and male-centered have been adhered to. Especially, with the progress of civilization, people's thought of nature as a benevolent nurturing mother who freely gave her bounty to them had changed to conceiving it as an inert object that they could abuse. According to Carolyn Merchant, the scientific revolution of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries brought the "death of nature" to communities which had been close-knit, cooperative, and organic. Before, earth and nature were identified as a nurturing mother, "a kindly beneficent female who provided for the needs of mankind in an ordered planned universe" (as cited in Warren,

2000, pp. 22-23). However, to continue the processes of commercialism and industrialism, the organic worldview was replaced by a mechanistic world view which saw nature as wild and uncontrollable, calling forth the modern idea of domination and mastery of nature.

In patriarchal conceptual framework, women's position is likened to that of nature; "women have been naturalized and nature has been feminized" (Warren as cited in Tong & Botts, 2017, p. 205). Patriarchy has historically identified women and other human others with nature, rationalizing and justifying the domination of human others with nonhuman nature. It is not easy for women to disassociate themselves from nature because virtually all societies believe women are closer to it than men for three reasons: first, women's body breeds and nurtures humanity's future and thus is associated with life, women's role is to transform infants and nature into cultural beings and products, and finally, women's psyche tends to be more relational (Tong & Botts, 2017). It is such ties women have with nature that ecofeminists reaffirm, to celebrate a more organic relationship with life-giving and creative sources while the logic of domination and exaggerated focus on reason and rationality has made the rational, male part of the dichotomy divorce itself from the other realm of emotion, body, nature, and the physical. Women's different relationship with nature through their social and bodily experiences such as childbearing and rearing brought about a different consciousness and different ways to knowing which have been undervalued. The female culture with life-giving powers can be emphasized rather than the death-dealing powers of men who try to control and destroy all that is natural including women. Women's "gyn/ecology" is about "living, loving, and creating ourselves and our world, affirming that everything is connected" (Tong & Botts, 2017, p. 213).

Based on the affinities of the role of women in biological production and the archetypal "Earth Mother" in giving life to and creating all that exists, some ecofeminists called for "a change to a more relational and integrated paradigm reflecting the nurturing forces of nature" (Tong & Botts, 2017, p. 209). According to their beliefs, nature is an interwoven and interdependent life system where if one part becomes diseased, the whole system would perish. It is important not for a particular part to persist, but the whole to continue. Human and non-human life on earth have intrinsic value in themselves; richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values. However, human interference with the non-human world has been excessive and an ideological change of appreciating life is needed. These demands call for a new way of thinking and relating with our environment and respect for all elements. Haraway (1988) critiques that existing knowledge has assumed nature as a passive object of study in the patriarchal ideologies of domination and control. However, when we acknowledge "nature as an active subject," there can be new epistemic relationships and re-conception of science practice that are in conversation with nature. "Perhaps our hopes for

accountability, for politics, for ecofeminism, turn on re-visioning the world as coding trickster with whom we must learn to converse” (p. 596). She calls for a new way of thinking that respects the agency of nature and its various elements that transcends the boundaries of dichotomies, acknowledges the subjectivity of nature, to enter a power-charged social relation of conversation. As Haraway states, “feminist objectivity makes room for surprises and ironies at the heart of all knowledge production; we are not in charge of the world” (p. 594). A change in thinking starts from changing our views about nature and other elements that we have appropriated as the other and entering a relationship of mutual conversation which might not proceed the way we had planned at all.

Given women’s position as being closely tied to nature, we can consider women’s role as to act as mediator, performing synthesizing or converting functions between nature and culture. Rather than perpetuating the division of women as nature and men as culture, it is important to involve both men and women equally “in projects of creativity and transcendence” (Ortner as cited in Tong & Botts, 2017, p. 213). Eco-feminists believe that women must learn not only to speak for themselves but for the natural world, rejecting the exploitation of nature and women and instead, seek conversation with all elements and bring about the possibilities inherent in each element. In the end, we can recognize women’s role to be a caretaker of nature: to help humanity overcome the male patriarchal thinking of oppression and domination and recognize that humans and non-humans are all an interdependent whole which exist through its diversity. Women can play a vital role in connecting both men and women to our naturalness so that all can share the creative and liberating power of nature and eliminate the destruction

and death that our social constructs have brought. There needs to be a new envisioning of our perception of and relationship with nature, acknowledging its agency and our vital tie with its existence.

### III. METHODS

With the framework of eco-feminism (Haraway, 1988; Tong & Botts, 2017; Warren, 2000), this study analyzes and compares the two films to present how English teachers can utilize them in the classroom to enhance students’ critical literacy skills. In this sense, this study is not an experimental study, but rather a content analysis study. We analyzed and compared the two films based on the central themes of ecofeminism—criticism of male-centered thinking, women’s relationship to nature, and women’s role as caretaker of nature. TABLE 1 shows ways of analyzing the two films in ecofeminism framework.

Section IV, “Male Violation and Appropriation of Nature,” deals with how male figures in both *Pocahontas* and *Moana* have an antagonistic attitude and disrespect towards nature. In their way of dichotomous thinking, the male figures view nature as being hostile, which needs to be tamed and controlled. They rely on their weapons or tools to dominate or appropriate nature for their desires for power and wealth. Section V, Women as Life-giving Nature, shows how female figures enjoy a more organic and interactive relationship with nature and their community. Instead of seeing nature as an object to dominate, they respect nature as an active subject and have insight into nature that transcends human-centered thinking. Their relationship with nature is mutual and integrated, where both nature and humans nurture and support one another. Final-

**TABLE 1**  
Procedures of Analyzing *Pocahontas* and *Moana*

Key comparison words from analysis	
Criticism of male-centered thinking and dominance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disrespect for nature; an object to appropriate for power</li> <li>- Antagonistic toward nature</li> <li>- Values hierarchy; Human/White/Land superior to Nature/Native/Ocean</li> <li>- Reliance on human weapons and tools to dominate</li> </ul>
Women’s relationship to life-giving powers of nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interconnectivity and organic relationship with nature and community</li> <li>- Respect for nature as an active subject</li> <li>- Insights transcend male-centered dichotomies</li> <li>- Nurturing and supportive mutual relationship with nature</li> <li>- Incorporate male counterparts into interconnectivity with nature</li> </ul>
Women’s role as caretaker of nature	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Both accept their role as leaders</li> <li>2) Pocahontas is limited in her leadership                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Caught up in the dichotomy of the male/female, white/ethnic other</li> <li>- Defined by patriarch definition in a heterosexual relationship</li> </ul> </li> <li>3) Moana grows to be a new kind of leader                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grows beyond given role to become a way founder</li> <li>- Reciprocal relationship with male counterpart and nature</li> <li>- New reality which transcends dichotomies and all is integral</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

ly, the female figures incorporate their male counterparts into an interconnectivity with nature. Section VI, Women's Role as a Caretaker and Mediator, discusses the female leadership that the female protagonists demonstrate. While both act as mediators between their community and nature, there are limits for Pocahontas. She is still caught up in the dichotomy of male/female and white/ethnic other as she is defined by the heterosexual relationship with Smith. She is depicted as the romantic and exotic other and cannot truly act as a mediator between her people and the white colonizers. In contrast, Moana can take on her role as caretaker and mediator because she achieves a reciprocal relationship with Maui, her male counterpart. She grows beyond her given role to achieve insight into herself, her community and nature. The new reality that is achieved is one where all is integral and dichotomies are transcended, where even Maui also becomes an integral part. Through the comparative analysis of the two films, this paper aims to suggest ways to trigger students' critical thinking and become aware of gender and environmental issues in future cultural texts.

#### IV. MALE VIOLATION AND APPROPRIATION OF NATURE

The English male colonizers in *Pocahontas* and the demigod Maui in *Moana*, as well as other male forces, have antagonistic relationship with nature and try to violate it for their self-interests. First, in *Pocahontas*,<sup>1</sup> Disney takes a critical look at the patriarchal, colonizing forces that is symbolized by Ratcliffe, the governor for the Virginia Company. He is shown as an arrogant figure who has set out for the New World in search of the gold, looking upon his men as not fellow pioneers, but "witless peasants" needed to dig up his gold. The thematic song that represents Ratcliffe, "Mine, Mine, Mine" shows his greed and ambition. He orders his men to "mine, mine, mine" the land so that the gold could be "Mine! Mine, mine for the taking." Ratcliffe's first priority is to reap in gold so that he will be knighted and he can see how "his rivals will squirm when they see how he glitters," with no consideration for the land or people. He instills the vision of reaping in gold in his men so that they will keep digging up the land and when none is to be found, he connives them to think that the Indians are hiding it and to attack them.

The settlers who have come to the New World show that they have aspirations of becoming rich, singing that they have "sailed the open sea/For glory, God and gold," equating gold as their god. They vision the New World as having "silver rivers flowing and gold you pick right off a tree." With their ships to reach the virgin land, shovels to dig for

gold, and guns to kill any Indians that serve to stop them, the British men regard the New World as awaiting them to be conquered and taken. The Indian shaman, Kekata foretells the future with smoke images of men with long guns, claiming that the English are not men like them, but prowl the earth like ravenous wolves, consuming everything in their path with weapons that spout fire and thunder. Disney's filmmakers clearly depict the new settlers as having no respect for the earth and its inhabitants but considering them as objects for their appropriation armed with their apparatus of civilization, their guns and shovels.

While Ratcliffe is clearly described negatively as an avaricious and arrogant man, John Smith is described a bit more ambivalently, as representing the spirit of America. He is drawn as an adventurous and dashing blond hero who puts out his life to save his men. When Ratcliffe says that he is counting on Smith to make sure that the natives, "the filthy heathens," don't disrupt their mission, Smith answers that he has much experience fighting with "savages" before. Armed with his gun and compass, he adventures out to learn about the New World but tells Pocahontas that the English settlers will "show how to use this land properly... make the most of it." He shows a patronizing stance to Pocahontas saying that the natives are uncivilized while the English have improved the lives of "savages" all over the world.

Filmmakers have said that they have conceived of the Pocahontas story as a Romeo-Juliet type of story of lovers from different racial and cultural backgrounds (The Making of *Pocahontas*, 2012). As the hero of the romance, Smith is drawn in a positive light. Because of his love for Pocahontas, he is shown as changing his viewpoints. However, the film identifies first with the English settlers rather than the Native Americans, as it starts with the story of London as a civilized society and follows their difficult journey across the Atlantic. As Jhappan and Stasiulis (2005) has argued, before meeting the Powhatan Indians, the audience would have identified with the stance of Smith first. Due to Smith's change and sacrificial attitude, Ratcliffe's negative tendencies are shown to be that of an isolated individual and Smith's position becomes one of a prototypical and normative default norm. Audiences would first identify with Smith who neutralizes the first settlers' position as ravenous colonizers and pardon the greed of Ratcliffe as the fault of an individual. As the story starts with the stance of the English colony first, the audience identifies with Smith as the subject rather than with Pocahontas or the native Indians.

Whereas *Pocahontas* was based on a legendary but historical person, *Moana* starts out with the retelling of the Polynesian legend of the heart of Te Fiti, the mother island, being stolen by the shape-shifting demigod Maui to attain the power of creation. Legend has it that Te Ka, a

<sup>1</sup> *Pocahontas* is an 80-minute film which unravels like a musical with the story quite compact and much of the portrayal of characters and issues compressed into the many songs. The film did go through a process of historical research but took much poetic license in portraying history to consider and appeal to the general audience. For example, although Pocahontas was about the age of 10 when she met John Smith, Disney has her set up as a more mature woman in the twenties who could represent the values of her people and enter a romantic relationship with a man of John Smith's stature. (The Making of *Pocahontas*, 2012).

demon of earth and fire, struck Maui, and the heart of Te Fiti and Maui's hook, which gave him powers to change form, became lost to the sea. From that day, Te Ka and the demons of the deep still roam about, spreading darkness that drained life from sea. Through the more simply drawn Polynesian legend of Te Fi and Maui, human disrespect of natural forces and resulting environmental problems are clearly drawn in *Moana*. The three male forces of Tui, Maui, and Tamatoa show a world view that is antagonistic to the mother island and her creative energy.

Moana is the daughter of Tui, the chief of the Polynesian island of Motunui. Due to his personal experience of losing his friend to the sea, Tui does not allow his people, especially Moana to venture further than the reef. As a chief, he holds onto tradition and educates Moana to follow the traditional way of life, telling her that Montunui itself is a paradise and there is no need to venture out into the ocean. Tui conceives the island separate from the sea and is not willing to give up his beliefs and look for a fundamental solution even when a blight strikes the island drying up all the coconuts and there is no fish to be found. Tui cannot look beyond his island at the greater interconnected structure of nature, holds onto patriarchal values of hierarchy, and values his own experience and reason.

As a demigod, Maui believes that he deserves worshiping from humans for helping them control nature, "stealing fire, lassoing the sun, and harnessing the breeze to sail." To become a hero to humans and satisfy their desires, he had stolen the heart of Te Fiti to give humans the power to create life themselves. Abandoned by his human parents, he attempts to gain humans' love by giving them everything they want, pulling up islands and finally stealing Te Fiti's heart. However, he finds that there was no end to human satisfaction. It could be said that Maui's desire to be glorified by humans and their endless acquisitive nature led to the theft of Te Fiti's heart, causing the discord of the environmental elements.

Not only does Maui's sense of self depend on being hailed as a hero, but he relies on the power of his magical hook which enables him to change his form into all kinds of being, big or small. He believes he can only be a hero with his hook and is nothing without it. He can only see Te Ka as a violent and uncontrollable natural spirit that he needs to vanquish with his hook. As his identity is dependent on the powers of the hook, when his hook becomes cracked, he deserts Moana and their mission to return Te Fiti's heart. Maui's dependence on his hook and its magical powers can be seen as representing human's reliance on technology as did the guns and shovels in *Pocahontas*.

Another symbolic critique on acquisitive human civilization is through Tamatoa, who says he was once "a little drad crab," but has gained happiness because he is now clad with shiny treasures. He relies on his existence as being able to "strut his shiny stuff" and having others see him "dazzle like a diamond." He leads an easy life thanks to the many fishes who are drawn to him by his glitter, which he gobbles up once they get near. He has attained Maui's hook for its glitter not its power. As there is no end to his desire to covet,

Moana can easily trick Tamatoa to let go of Maui by showing him a shiny replica of Te Fiti's heart. Tamatoa's greed, expressed in his theme song "Shiny," evokes the materialistic avarice expressed by Ratcliff in his song "Mine, Mine, Mine." They are both drawn to things that glitter and desire attention as an expression of their power.

The relationship represented by the male forces of Tui, Maui, and Tamatoa is not a reciprocal one of care, but one that is focused on oneself and a desire for self-extension. As with *Pocahontas*, whether it be their way of governing, source of magical power, or materialistic wealth, male forces worship and rely on their methods and tools rather than respect life and the creative order of nature. They need to control, steal, and hoard while viewing the elements of nature as challenging their power. The relationship they have with nature and others in it are antagonistic, threatening their way of existence. They cannot see beyond their perspective or immediate territory and are blinded by their desires and fears. The similarities can be summarized as in the following TABLE 2.

**TABLE 2**  
Male Violation and Appropriation of Nature

In <i>Pocahontas</i>	In <i>Moana</i>
- Smith's and the English settlers' belief in appropriating nature with shovels and guns	- Maui's belief in conquering nature with his hook
- Smith's belief that the English civilization taming nature is superior than the Indians' respect for nature	- Tui's belief that the island is safe and separate from the sea
- Ratcliff's greed for gold and honor	- Tamatoa's greed to hoard shiny objects

## V. WOMEN AS LIFE-GIVING NATURE

As the counterpart to Smith, Pocahontas, the daughter of the Powhatan Indian chief, represents the Native Indians that inhabit the New World. They are drawn to be a big tribe, settled on and farming their land. In the song, "Steady as the Beating Drum" the Powhatans are shown to be living in harmony with each other and nature, reaping in the corn, fruit, and "all the earth our Mother gives" and fish from the sweet and clean waters as seasons come and go. They recognize a great spirit who allows them to "walk in balance all [their] days" with the rhythm and changes of nature. The numerous members of the tribe are drawn as small figures against towering forests and sparkling streams, showing them as another element of nature.

Pocahontas is first shown portrayed to be a part of nature on top of a cliff, with the wind blowing through her hair. She is drawn to be a "spiritual person, someone who had connection with nature all the time and whose thoughts run deeper than the surface" as the filmmakers have stated (The Making of Pocahontas, 2012). Not only does she have intimacy with the Powhatan people, but her pet raccoon and

hummingbird and other elements of nature are also shown to be her companions. When her father tells her that he wishes for her to marry Kocoum for he would build her a good sturdy house and protect her from harm, she turns to the river and Grandmother Willow, a spiritual talking tree, to seek wisdom about her future. The wind is also portrayed as being part of Pocahontas' existence, a supporting spiritual guide that is associated with the spirit of her mother. Pocahontas is depicted as part of nature which fortifies her to be true to herself and follow her own path.

Pocahontas advocates her view of nature against Smith's idea that the English know more about using land "properly" and have "improved the lives of savages all over the world" through her song, "The Colors of the Wind," questioning if the savage one is she or he. As she criticizes his world view of European superiority/native inferiority ("You think the only people who are people, are the people who look and think like you."), she invites him to be more accepting of other world views and "walk the footsteps of a stranger." She criticizes Smith's thought of nature as a thing to take and own ("You think you own whatever land you land on; The earth is just a dead thing you can claim") and offers an alternative view of nature where each element is met with respect ("But I know every rock and tree and creature has a life, has a spirit, has a name"). Instead of wondering "what they're worth," she invites him to "roll in the riches of nature that surround him," and believes that both the "white or copper-skinned" need to know that they are part of nature and connected to each other. As she sings these words, Smith joins in with Pocahontas in a communion with nature. Although a short moment, the lyrics of the song and the artistic portrayal of nature with humans small against its vast extent (see APPENDIX A1) allows the audience to understand the view of nature that Pocahontas advocates, as Smith also becomes humbled and accepts her views.

Smith joins Pocahontas' world little by little; first, interacting with Pocahontas' pet raccoon and hummingbird, then meeting and winning the approval of Grandmother Willow. Ultimately, Smith stands up to Ratcliff when Ratcliff wants to kill the Indians to get the gold he believes them to be hiding by retorting that the land is the Indians' and attempts to meet Pocahontas' father. Both Pocahontas and Smith want to stop the fighting and act as the bridge between the two divided groups of people. When Kocoum is killed by Thomas, Smith allows the Powhatans to capture him in Thomas' stead without a fight. In the song "Savages, Savages," the white settlers sing "Their skin's a hellish red. They're only good when dead. Drive them from *our* shore! They're not like you and me which means they must be evil," claiming the land to be already theirs, while the Powhatans sing "The paleface is a demon; The only thing they feel at all is greed; beneath that milky hide, there's emptiness inside," pointing out the English's avarice. Both sides believe that they must go to war because their opponent is different from them and so cannot be trusted. When Smith is about to be killed in the hands of Pocahontas' father, the chief, she throws herself over Smith, opposing the path of hatred and requesting her

father to reconsider the way of love. Inhaling the blowing wind, Powhatan accepts her wisdom and claims to all that there will be no more killing from this day forward which brings about a change in all as both the white and Indians set down their weapons. We can also see that Pocahontas' determination has a profound influence on Smith for he also shields Powhatan when Ratcliff attempts to shoot him and is hit in his stead. In the end, not only is Smith influenced by Pocahontas' decision against the struggle for power, but the white and the native are also, even if momentary.

While both Pocahontas' and Moana's fathers curb their daughter's horizons and want them to follow the ways of their culture, Moana's grandmother, Tala, is a life-giving nurturing figure who supports Moana's quest as had Grandmother Willow supported Pocahontas. Tala shares Moana's love for the expansive sea and what lies beyond. She is pictured dancing near the sea, connected to nature and Motunui's glorious past as voyagers of the sea. It is she who reveals the boats representing their heritage to Moana, witnesses the ocean choosing Moana, and sets her off to restore Te Feti's heart. When Moana is deserted by Maui after the fight with Te Ka and gives up her mission by forfeiting Te Feti's heart, it is also Tala who appears in spirit as a stingray and comforts her. As Ellis (2017) states, Tala does not put pressure on Moana to sacrifice herself or to finish the mission but leaves it up to Moana to look inside and discover who she is for herself.

The ocean is depicted as a subject and having agency, playing with Moana as a toddler and choosing her to be the one to restore Te Feti's heart, the waves parting for her and revealing Te Feti's heart. The ocean is drawn as a separate character in the film (see APPENDIX A2), reflecting the beliefs of Polynesian culture which considers the ocean as part of the land, an entity that connects everything, to which you must speak gently to. The ocean has a central role in the film; even the title of the film *Moana*, actually means ocean (*Moana* 2016 Behind the Scenes/Voice of the islands, 2020). Moana grows up drawn to the ocean and after she sets ahead for her journey, the arms of the water help her to continue on, placing her back onto the boat whenever Maui tries to throw her overboard. Finally, the waves part at Moana's request so that Te Ka may approach Moana and regain her heart. The ocean is not just a setting but a personal friend that understands and encourages Moana.

Moana shows a keen insight and respect for nature. She understands that when crops begin to dry up and there is no fish in the village, all is connected, and a fundamental solution is needed. She sets out to deliver Maui to Te Feti so that he could restore Te Feti's heart. While Maui tries to fight with Te Ka with force and is defeated with her mighty blows, Moana realizes that Te Ka cannot move beyond water and finds a way around her. When Moana finally reaches where Te Feti should be lying and discovers she is missing, with her insight and compassion, she asks the ocean to clear a path so that Te Ka can come to her. Instead of fearing the forces of Te Ka, crawling and spurting out lava as she approaches Moana, Moana sings:

I have crossed the horizon to find you;  
 I know your Name.  
 They have stolen the heart from inside you;  
 But this does not define you.  
 This is not who you are; You know who you are;  
 Who you truly are.

Understanding the relationship between Te Feti/Te Ka, Moana allows Te Ka to come close. She acknowledges and soothes Te Ka, as her grandmother had soothed her before, by placing her forehead onto Te Ka’s (see APPENDIX A3). After Moana restores the heart to Te Ka, Te Ka metamorphoses back into the green and radiant Te Feti. We are to understand Maui’s violation of Te Feti had transformed her into the dark Te Ka. With her vital and creative powers, Te Feti acknowledges Moana with a forehead greeting (see APPENDIX A3) and returns to her original position. With Moana’s return, life and vitality is restored to the vegetation on Motunui island, and the Motunui people regain their identity as voyagers and communion with the ocean.

Nature is drawn as a female goddess who is bountiful but with the violation done to her, she had changed into a vicious and frightening monster which cannot be fought, even with the magical powers of a demigod, Maui. Te Feti/Te Ka embody the ideas Carol Christ has discussed in her concept of the “Goddess,” a “symbol of life, death, and rebirth” which gives insight to the “changing phases of our lives as holy.” She is also a symbol of “legitimacy and beauty of women’s power to nurture and create but also to limit and destroy when necessary” (as cited in Warren, 2000, p. 33). Viewers, including children, can easily infer that when nature is violated, it can strike back in uncontrollable and frightening form. The film advocates that a deep understanding of and respect for nature as an interwoven and interdependent life system is important for each entity’s well-being, and its violation should stop. The Polynesian respect for nature, “You don’t own the land, the land owns you” is well depicted through the female goddess of Te Feti/Te Ka. A harmonious life with nature and recognition of its value is vital to people to continue being who they are.

Pocahontas and Moana are portrayed as having close relationships with life-giving forces of nature, respecting them as an active subject. Their insights transcend male-centered dichotomies, and they enjoy organic relationships with the elements of nature that surround them, including their community which are cooperative and close-knit. The natural elements of their community nur-

ture and support them, and they in turn protect and restore nature and their communities, incorporating even their male counterparts into a creative and liberating interconnectedness. The similarities can be summarized as in the following TABLE 3.

## VI. WOMEN’S ROLE AS A CARETAKER AND MEDIATOR

Pocahontas represents the forces of nature and has offered an alternative to the civilized’s exploitation of nature and seeking of violence to amend racial conflict. Pocahontas can be seen as a different type of female princess from her fore-runners in films such as *Snow White*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty* as she fully represents the worldview of her culture and plays an active role in stopping the conflict triggered by the aggressive and acquisitive nature of the whites and the violent response of her own people. She does not passively wait for a Prince Charming to awake her from her sleep and is true to herself in choosing who to love. Pocahontas is also very different from the princesses of the other Disney movies of her time. She embodies a force that brings about influence on her society while the roles of Ariel in *Little Mermaid*, Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*, and Jasmine in *Aladdin* are limited in their hetero-sexual love stories. Ariel is willing to give up her voice, change her body and leave her home and family so that a handsome stranger would take notice of her. Belle is willing to exchange her freedom for her father’s to be imprisoned by someone she doesn’t know, and Jasmine is first a captive by her restrictive dad, then Jafar, and a conquest for her sweetheart (Reilly, 2016). Contrary to other princesses, Pocahontas has much more agency and a “remarkable amount of acuity when it comes to choosing a romantic partner—to the point where she’s able to let him go rather than sacrifice her happiness” (Gilbert, 2015, para. 13). Pocahontas does not follow Smith back to England at his invitation and chooses her path to stay with her people and the white settlers to be a bridge amongst the two people, a role that only she can play as she can communicate with the two groups.

Historically, this is the part she has played in American history although Disney took poetic license with historical accounts made mostly by John Smith in his autobiographies and how he was rescued by Pocahontas. She had been made into the symbol of the good Indian who sacrifices her life to save a white settler (Gilbert, 2015). Aleiss (1995) writes that “her offer of sacrifice, her curvaceous

TABLE 3  
 Women as Life-giving Nature

In Pocahontas	In Moana
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Represents Native Americans who live in harmony with nature</li> <li>- Gets support from Grandmother Willow</li> <li>- “Colors of the Wind” sings of human’s communion with nature</li> <li>- Brings about change in Smith</li> <li>- Brings about reconciliation between the Native Americans and the white settlers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Represents Polynesian culture which sees the ocean as their friend</li> <li>- Gets support from Grandma Tala who appears as a spirit of sting-ray</li> <li>- Moana’s song to Te Ka/Te Feti shows insight of nature</li> <li>- Brings about change in Maui</li> <li>- Restores life to Motunui island and their identity as sea voyagers to its people</li> </ul>

figure, and her virginal stature have come to symbolize America's Indian heroine," (para.1) and refers to many instances in which the female Indian character has been trapped into a patriarchal definition that has become a popular legacy of American culture. Reilly (2016) also views Pocahontas as being an exotic representative of an ethnic group to serve Disney's purposes. She is "positioned to have to represent a great deal to their audiences—both to their respective ethnic communities hoping to finally see themselves validated on the screen as well as to the Western gaze that has served as Disney's default viewer" (pp. 54-55). Because she is charged with being the Native American Disney princess, she is shown as the exotic other who represents Disney's idealized version of a Native American female protagonist. In addition, Pocahontas is drawn with not only positive inner strengths such as courage and sacrificial love, but also physical beauty—she has been transformed into a "bucks-kin-clad Barbie—doe-eyed, docile, and utterly romantic" (Jhappan & Stasiulis, 2005, p. 161). Compared to her friend Nakoma, Pocahontas is depicted as having an hour-glass figure (see APPENDIX A4) and as with the most princess characters, to later be merchandized into a Barbie-doll as well as other Disney commodities for girls. Envisioned as a part of nature, she is still caught up in the dichotomy of the male/female, white/ethnic other by the 1990s Disney.

It is possible to read Pocahontas as being more progressive than her princess predecessors as she has achieved her own identity apart from her relationship with Smith; she puts her identity and her heritage first rather than sacrificing herself for love. Even *Mulan* (1998) who had fought as a warrior alongside male Chinese soldiers against the Huns later decides to return home and eventually marry her commander, Captain Shang. However, there is a limit to her female leadership as Pocahontas is also defined by her role in a heterosexual love relationship. Because the producers could only imagine a love story for their princess, she is confined in the patriarchal role of a woman. As Ariel and Belle had sacrificed themselves in their relationships for their male partners, Pocahontas is defined by and does not go beyond her love for John Smith. As a result, the colonialization of the Native Americans becomes beautified due to this interracial love. There is still much weight given to the depiction of the heroine's personal love rather than her possibilities as a female leader in this 1995 film. Thus, what had started out with radical questioning of the acquisitiveness and violence of the English becomes erased in portraying their beautified love relationship, with the last message an invitation and welcoming of the colonizing forces by nature and the indigenous people. Although a transitory peace has been forged through Pocahontas and Smith's sacrifice, with Smith sailing back to England and Pocahontas left alone, it doesn't seem as if Pocahontas has achieved enough growth to resolve the differences between the two groups of people single-handedly. Although there is potential for Pocahontas to serve as a leader of her people, the film fails to envision it throughout the work.

Whereas prior princesses up to the 2000s were involved

in hetero-sexual relationships, with most marrying their lover, the princesses in Disney films after 2010s such as *Brave* (2012) or *Frozen I* (2013) are not defined by patriarchal figures or a love relationship with a man. Reflecting the progress of women's rights, the princesses' "choices are to be her own, not predetermined for her by her kin, culture, or obedience to tradition" (Reilly, 2016, p. 56). Similar to these current princesses, we can observe that Moana does not follow her father's path or leave it up to Maui to fight Te Ka but can think flexibly and out of the box when life dries up on her island or when she needs to face Te Ka herself. Whereas her father adheres to tradition and passively relies on the dying island to survive, Moana locates her people's identity with their relationship with the ocean and decides to voyage out across the reef. When the eminent blight strikes her island, she knows that there is a deeper cause to the problem, one that is related to Te Fiti's loss of the power to life. Moana sets upon her path to restore Te Fiti's heart because she realizes that the elements of nature are all interconnected. She perceives that Te Ka is the violated Te Fiti, raging with a sense of loss, and does not look upon Te Ka as a force to overcome as had Maui, but to heal and restore.

Moana's original mission had been to deliver Maui to Te Fiti so that he could return what he had stolen back to her. However, when Te Ka flings a mighty blow and cracks Maui's hook, Maui can only give up as he had depended on his hook as the source of his powers. If Moana had kept to the traditional role as a chief's daughter or a princess, she also would have given up for she would have just adhered to her given role. However, with the help and support of her grandmother's spirit, Moana can see how far she has come and that the seed for possibilities is inside her: "I am everything I've learned and more... That come what may, I know the way". She perseveres and grows to be the leader she is by looking into herself and embracing her heritage of navigators, who observe and rely on their knowledge of the changes in nature and the stars. Through her experiences as a way-finder and interaction with Maui, she has found the way to who she is.

Whereas Pocahontas' heterosexual relationship with John Smith defined and limited her, and her most courageous act being self-sacrificial, Moana shows a relationship that is on equal terms with Maui, with no love interest. Pocahontas' relationship with Smith does not develop thoroughly; they fall in love just in a few scenes because they follow the typical role of a princess and prince of past Disney movies, with limited agency given to Pocahontas. Moreover, it is only she who instantly learns the language of the white male; Smith nor other natives or settlers cannot communicate with each other. However, Moana's relationship with Maui is traced with much detail of how both share a reciprocal relationship in which they learn from each other. At first, Moana is afraid to face Maui, a demigod. Nevertheless, she is not fooled by his words of self-glory and is determined to fulfill her mission. Because she saves him and retrieves his hook from Tamatoa through her courage and wisdom, Maui acknowledges her while Moana shows compassion towards Maui's insecurity

and encourages him to affirm his inherent self. Moana has a nurturing effect to help Maui achieve his own identity and continuously disproves his wrong perceptions, so that he also comes to respect himself, Te Fiti, and Moana. Maui has a turn of heart and comes back to defend Moana from Te Ka, risking his hook to be broken permanently. He learns to not be dependent on extraneous power and to respect the subjectivity of other elements of nature, including Moana.

In the end, it is through facing obstacles that Moana grows to become a new kind of leader. She shows insight of natural elements, can embrace her roots as a sea voyager, and learns to be a way-finder through her interactions with Maui. She does not need to depend on him to be the Motunui’s way-finder because she has grown into one herself. She shows patience and tolerance in her relationship with Maui so that they can both learn from each other and work as a team; “she chooses to be a forward-thinking leader of her people on her own terms, rather than a stereotypical princess in need of rescue” (Limere, 2016, para.2). When they finally part, they part as equals with respect for each other. Each component seems integral in the community; from Te Fiti to Moana’s companion chicken, Hei-hei, all have a role in preserving the harmony and life of the world. Moana’s relationship with her world is not confined by human-made binary divisions but her relationship with nature and Maui is one that transcends divisions and respects the subjectivity of nature and each element. While Moana is similar to Pocahontas in that they both do not adhere to the given gender roles of their community, the contrasts between the two heroines as caretaker and mediator of nature can be summarized as in TABLE 4.

**TABLE 4**  
Women’s Role as a Caretaker and Mediator

In <i>Pocahontas</i>	In <i>Moana</i>
- Validated on the screen as the good, sacrificial Native American heroine; immediately speaks English	- Learns to be a way-finder on her own; does not depend on Maui and has insight into nature
- Envisioned as the romantic and exotic other in a heterosexual love—hour-glass figure princess	- Is on equal terms with Maui, not defined by heterosexual love; depicted as a healthy and courageous youth
- Still caught up in the dichotomy of the male/female, white/ethnic other	- Reciprocal relationship with Maui and Te Ka/Te Fiti helps Maui achieve self-respect and respect for nature
- Does not achieve growth as a female leader	- Grows to be a leader where all is integral in community

## VII. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study analyzed and compared the Disney films, *Pocahontas* and *Moana*, to provide possibilities in utilizing animation in the English classroom to enhance students’ critical literacy skills. For this purpose, the two films are analyzed

in terms of ecofeminism with three themes (Haraway, 1988; Tong & Botts, 2017; Warren, 2000): the criticism of male-centered thinking, women’s relationship to nature, and women’s role as caretaker of nature. Based on the analysis, we propose the following pedagogical implementation of Disney films in the English classroom.

The proposed lessons can have students list the similarities and differences of *Pocahontas* and *Moana* and share their findings in discussion or in writing. Both films deal with female protagonists who have roles as female leaders in their community. As a native Indian and Polynesian, Pocahontas and Moana and their people both have a close reciprocal relationship with nature, living with love and respect for and intuitive understanding of nature rather than appropriating it. However, as rulers of their people, their fathers want them to take their place among their people following the traditions of their ancestors rather than strive their own paths as caretakers of nature. In contrast to male figures who adhere to patriarchal thinking and have an antagonistic relationship to nature, both Pocahontas and Moana see nature not as an object to take and own, but an interdependent commune all are a part of. While men adhere to binary division or self-glorifying principles and self-serving purposes, the female protagonists have intuitive understanding of all the elements of nature and embraces differences and achieves reconciliation.

In regarding the differences, instructors may point out that Pocahontas sacrifices herself to save Smith which is returned in a reciprocal act by him, bringing momentary peace between the two groups of people. However, as the relationship adheres to the binary dualism of traditional heterosexual love, there are limits to their acts of sacrifice. There is not much change in other people, Smith leaves for England, and not much is shown about what Pocahontas’ role would be as the chief’s daughter. As she is portrayed as a love interest of the handsome English hero, Pocahontas is shown as a beautiful, exotic woman, fetishized in a short dress revealing a voluptuous figure. She cannot transcend the dichotomy that deprives her of her agency. In contrast, Moana shares a friendship with Maui in which each help the other to overcome their weaknesses and develop themselves into sound, independent selves in harmony with other elements of nature. Moana enters into a mutual relationship that recognizes the agency of nature and all its elements, learning to converse with the “trickster” that Maui and nature are. As Moana’s positive features such as determination and hope are reflected in her exterior appearance, she is shown as a healthy and able figure, contrasting with how earlier princesses have been drawn. Because the film traces how Moana develops into being a way-finder and restorer of life, audiences can imagine what role she would play as the future chief of her people. As she had acknowledged Te Feti with her forehead greeting, Te Feti and Maui acknowledges Moana likewise as a life-preserver. Compared to the 1996 *Pocahontas* film, Disney’s producers have self-reflectively overcome their view of women to be defined by her role in a heterosexual relationship and embraced the idea of the interconnectivity of humans with nature in *Moana*.

By the comparative study of the two works, students will realize that a critical reading of the humanities and popular culture can provide “a synthesizing re-perception of contem-

porary socio-biospheric reality and [that there is a] need for a radical restructuring of socio-biospheric relationships, that is to say, the interdependence of the earth's biosphere and the human societies that are affected by and in turn affect it" (Murphy, 1988, p. 87). By incorporating eco-feminist thoughts in a critical reading of Disney films, students can be offered opportunities to not only analyze issues of gender and the environment, but also of other issues deconstructing dominant ideology and dualist thinking, including ethnicity, consumerism, etc. (Garlen & Sandlin, 2016). The two films of *Pocahontas* and *Moana* viewed through eco-feminist thoughts can provide excellent opportunities to enhance critical literacy abilities of students.

Especially, critical thinking can be enhanced through Disney animation films as Disney has taken a new turn in embracing changes in society such as environmental consciousness, respect for ethnic diversity, and gender issues. In particular, instead of adhering to dichotomies, there has been a trend to revision women in their diversity. Female villains or aberrant women such as Malificent (in *Malificent* 2014), Cruella (in *Cruella* 2021), and Elsa (in *Frozen*, 2013) are given a story of their own that deviate from traditional ideas of 'evil women,' rewriting their narratives by explaining the underlying reasons for their incomprehensible actions with an emphasis on their talents, energy and capacity to love others. What is more, princesses in the remake films who seem to be similar on the surface to traditional princesses such as Aurora (in *Malificent* 2014), Jasmine (in *Aladdin* 2019), and Anna (in *Frozen*, 2013) take the initiative and prove themselves to have the courage, maturity and wisdom needed to be the queen and leader, not just be worthy of love and wait for the prince to rescue and marry her. Whereas former villains were elderly women who could be labeled as a witch, the villains that the new princesses face are men who would abuse women to realize their ambitions. A great difference can be found in the heroines of Disney's film before and after the 2000s in their diverse aspirations other than matrimony. Protagonists such as Merida in *Brave* 2012, Elsa in *Frozen* as well as Moana are not given a love interest. It would be desirable to pair two films, one from before and one after the 2000s and have students discuss, make presentations, or write about the differences that can be observed in the original films and their spinoffs or remakes such as *Sleeping Beauty* 1959 vs. *Malificent* 2014, *101 Dalmatians* 1961 and *101 Dalmatians* 1996, vs. *Cruella* 2021, *Aladdin* 1992 vs. *Aladdin* 2019, *Beauty and the Beast* 1991 vs. *Beauty and the Beast* 2017, and *Mulan* 1998 vs. *Mulan* 2020. The change in the gender ideology, thoughts about nature, and ethnic diversity become apparent through the contrast and will stimulate chances for critical thought and discussion in the English classroom.

To motivate students' critical response, teachers can select not only topics that will be meaningful to students' lives and are of their interest but try to select works that would complement each other for their classes (Suh, Y. M., 2019). Instructors may try to pair up works together to create a contrasting framework so that students can approach the film texts more critically than when focusing on one work, as can be seen in the pairing of *Pocahontas* and *Moana*. Sometimes it could be two films with

different perspectives on the same issue such as gender or two films that show different aspects on the same topic, such as that of the American dream. It is suggested that instructors show different film versions of the same films, such as film adaptations of a certain work made at different points in time. As the production of the films reflect the culture and the beliefs of their times, it is a great way to see how each film interpret a work or an issue differently according to the beliefs of the times. For example, a film adaptation of *Jane Eyre* emphasized on the domestic duties of the heroine in the 1940s, while another emphasized on the heroine's romantic desires in the 1990s, and another on the fear of survival in the 2010s depending on the gender ideology of the times (Lee, S., 2018). Numerous adaptations of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* focus on the different conflicts of the times such as racial conflict, corruption, and abuse of authority and power which can become intriguing topics for discussion and critical thought.

When teaching English classes dealing with films, it is important to give a few weeks' lessons on the history of the film, the elements of the film, and ways to analyze the film text such as analyzing the mise en scene, camera angle and editing. Then when introducing each film, the cultural and social background of the times and how it is reflected in the film's production should be emphasized. For example, the studio system of Hollywood in the 1920s to 1960s was dominated by male filmmakers and would generally cast women in a passive role to complement the male protagonist. With this framework, students are ready to not only discuss themes and issues, but later analyze films of their choice with group members to give a presentation and then individually write on films critically and analytically. This way of analyzing films within the social context can help students in other classes such as literature or sociology class as students have used films as texts to study the different interpretations and how films reflect the society of different times. When analyzing films, students should be encouraged to listen to the dialogues without subtitles, and then with subtitles, and finally, looking at scripts when available to take a closer look at dialogue and narration and cite parts when necessary. Thanks to the various elements of films, students' interest and motivation can be stimulated so that students can not only learn expressions and vocabulary with visual, audio, and textual context, but they can absorb how the expressions are articulated verbally and even do shadowing exercises to attain natural intonation and pronunciation. Students should be encouraged to study difficult vocabulary and expressions on their own but are welcome to ask questions about language that they find hard to comprehend. Comprehension questions may be given to students before they watch film segments and discussion questions to answer after they finish watching the segments. These questions will guide students to focus on central issues and view film content more critically. In addition to dialogue and narration, various elements of the film such as visual composition and actors' expressions help students comprehend and infer meaning better, enabling students more confidence when sharing information and opinions in L2. Usually, there are thematic songs that catch the main ideas of the film creatively, so class time should be allotted for analyzing the inferred meaning of the lyrics. As film has so many diverse aspects,

there are endless elements for students to critically analyze, share their opinions, and engage themselves with processing meaning at different levels. Especially, Disney's films prove to be great material for critical literacy activities in CLIL classes, not only due to the various elements that could be discussed, but also because Disney itself realizes the developing critical aptitude of their audiences and their own responsibility for the global society and is becoming more critical of the works they put out and how they are reflecting various ideologies.

As Disney's influence on popular culture is becoming greater and greater, it has also received much criticism and is going through self-reflective changes. As an example, Disney has tried to portray princesses that are not just of the Western image but from diverse ethnic backgrounds such as Pocahontas (native American), Moana (Polynesian), Mulan (Chinese), Jasmine (Middle Eastern in *Aladdin*, 1992), Tiana (African American in *The Frog Princess*, 2009) and Raya (South-Asian in *Raya and the Last Dragon*, 2021). Even now, Disney is in the process of remaking *The Little Mermaid* (2023) which casts an African American as the heroine, Ariel. In addition, whereas filmmakers of *Pocahontas* beautified historical truth for the purposes of the film, extensive research is being done when portraying ethnic groups such as the Polynesians in *Moana* or the Sami in *Frozen II*, making sure a version of the film is even made in their native language. Respectful attitudes towards different groups of people portrayed in the films' many elements such as the setting and music, as well as the creation of diverse kinds of heroines, are attempts at transcending colonizing dichotomies long held by society.

As Disney's themes of women and nature reflect the changes of the public's thoughts and have great impact globally, critical reading of the films and active discussion where multiple voices are heard is essential. The comparison of Disney movies in the EFL classes or CLIL classes not only contribute greatly to enhancing students' English literacy expression competence but will also help their critical literacy skills that would provide them with a firm basis for other English-taught or EMI classes in their future college studies. Disney's abundant film-text sources and their practice of self-reflection in rewriting and subverting their own traditions can serve as valuable and creative resource not only in the classes such as Cinema English but also in any class dealing with issues of gender, nature, ethnicity, and society (Garlen & Sandlin, 2016).

## REFERENCES

- Aleiss, A. (June 24, 1995). *Community Comment: Maidens of Hollywood: 'Pocahontas' is the pure expression of filmmakers' fantasies about Indian women*. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1995-06-24-me-16519-story.html>
- Byun, Kiyong, Chu, Huijung, Kim, Minjung, Park, Innwoo, Kim, Suhong, & Jung, Juyoung (2011). English-medium teaching in Korean higher education: Policy debates and reality. *Higher Education*, 62, 431-449.
- Choi, Soo Jung. (2012). English as an instructional medium in Korean higher education: Focusing on the perspectives of professors. *English Language & Literature Teaching*, 18(3), 25-51.
- Clements, R., & Musker, J. (Director). (2016). *Moana*. [Film]. Walt Disney Animation Studios.
- Ellis, L. (July 17, 2017). *Pocahontas was a mistake, and here's why!* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ARX0-AyIFI>
- Gabriel, M., & Goldberg, E. (Director). (1995). *Pocahontas*. [Film]. Walt Disney Feature Animation.
- Garlen, J., & Sandlin, J. (2016). *Teaching with Disney*. Peter Lang Publishing.
- Gilbert, S. (June 24, 2015). *Revisiting Pocahontas at 20: The movie has attracted considerable criticism, but its impact on how Disney heroines are portrayed is notable*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/06/revisiting-pocahontas/396626>
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 15(3), 592-593.
- Huh, Seonmin, & Suh, Young-Mee. (2018). Preparing elementary readers to be critical intercultural citizens through literacy education. *Language Teaching Research*, 22(5), 532-551.
- Janks, H. (2010). *Literacy and power*. Routledge.
- Janks, H., Dixon, K., Ferreira, A., Granville, S., & Newfield, D. (2014). *Doing critical literacy: Texts and activities for students and teachers*. Routledge.
- Jhappan, R., & Stasiulis, D. (2005). Anglophilia and the discreet charm of the English voice in Disney's *Pocahontas* films. In M. Budd & M. H. Kirsch (Eds.), *Rethinking Disney: Private control, public dimensions* (pp.151-177). Wesleyan UP.
- Kang, Doo Syen. (2014). How international students build a positive relationship with a hosting country: Examination of strategic public, message and channel of national public relations. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 43, 201-214.
- Kim, Eun Gyong. (2017). English medium instruction in Korean higher education: Challenges and future directions. In B. Fenton-Smith, P. Humphreys & I. Walkinshaw (Eds.), *English medium instruction in higher education in Asia-Pacific: From policy to pedagogy* (pp. 53-69). Springer.
- Kim, Eun Gyong, Kweon, Soo-Ok, & Kim, Jeongyeon. (2017). Korean engineering students' perceptions of English-medium instruction (EMI) and L1 use in EMI classes. *Journal of Multilingual & Multicultural Development*, 38(2), 130-145.
- Lazar, G. (1993). *Literature and language teaching: A guide for teachers and trainers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, Soyoung. (2018). The change in the female image in three film adaptations of *Jane Eyre*. In J. W. Oh, et al. (Eds.), *Gender and representation* (pp. 230-250). Ewha Woman's Univ. Press.
- Leistyna, P., & Alper, L. (2009). Critical media literacy for the twenty-first century: Taking our entertainment seriously. In A. Darder, M. Baltodano & R. D. Torres

- (Eds.), *The critical pedagogy reader* (pp. 501-521). Routledge.
- Limere, C. (Nov. 22, 2016). *Moana review*. <https://www.roger-berbert.com/reviews/moana-2016>.
- Luke, M., & Freebody, P. (1998). *Constructing critical literacies: Teaching and learning textual practice*. Routledge.
- McLaughlin, M., & DeVoogd, G. (2004). *Critical literacy: Enhancing students' comprehension of text*. Scholastic.
- Moana 2016 behind the scenes/Voice of the islands*. (Nov. 24, 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRw7oQUIN2A>.
- Murphy, P. D. (1988). Introduction: Feminism, ecology, and the future of the humanities. *Studies in the Humanities*, 15(2), 85-89.
- Pavelenko, A. (2004). Gender and sexuality in foreign and second language education: Critical and feminist approaches. In B. Norton & K. Toohey (Eds.), *Critical pedagogies and language learning* (pp. 53-71). Cambridge University Press.
- Reilly, C. (2016). An encouraging evolution among the Disney princesses?: A critical feminist analysis. In J. Garlen & J. Sandlin (Eds.), *Teaching with Disney* (pp. 51-63). Peter Lang Publishing.
- Schiele, K., Louie, L., & Chen, S. (2020). Marketing feminism in youth media: A study of Disney and Pixar animation. *Business Horizons*, 63(5), 659-669.
- Shin, H., & Crookes, G. (2005). Exploring the possibilities for EFL critical pedagogy in Korea—a two-part case study. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 2(2), 113-138.
- Suh, Young-Mee. (2019). A case study of critical reading in action with Korean university students in an EFL context. *English Teaching*, 74(4), 225-248.
- Suh, Young-Mee. (2020). A study about pre-service teachers' English textbook modification utilizing a critical approach. *Modern English Education*, 21(4), 58-74.
- The making of Pocahontas. (June 1, 2012). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-78sG39u-3g>
- Tong, R., & Botts, T. F. (2017). *Feminist thought* (5th ed.). Westview Press.
- Warren, K. J. (2000). *Ecofeminist philosophy*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

APPENDIX

A1 Pocahontas and Smith in Communion with Nature



Note: taken from Gabriel, M., & Goldberg, E. (Director). (1995). Pocahontas. [Film]. Walt Disney Feature Animation

A2 The Sea as a Central Character



Note: taken from Wikipedia  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moana\\_\(2016\\_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moana_(2016_film))

A3 Moana's insight and interaction with Te Ka/Te Fiti



Note: taken from Clements, R., & Musker, J. (Director). (2016). Moana. [Film]. Walt Disney Animation Studios.



A4 Pocahontas' hour-glass figure



Note: taken from Wikipedia  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pocahontas\\_\(character\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pocahontas_(character))