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the paratexts of cpi: emergent findings of an inquiry in iran

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abstract

This article presents the emergent findings of research conducted in Iran. It's main objective was to investigate whether adolescents' thinking could turn polyphonic in CPI and what processes, thinking would go through to achieve this objective. Seventeen adolescents, ten girls, and seven boys participated in fourteen sessions with three Iranian and three foreign novels as the materials of inquiry. The sessions were videotaped and analyzed by the researchers. The findings discovered out of pre-determined objectives revealed that CPI was effective in developing adolescents' polyphonic thinking, and polyphonic thinking processes at work were also revealed. At the same time, some unexpected data emerged which gave rise to some emergent findings, among which was that meaning-making is not limited to what happens "inside" the CPI, but some events before, after, and during the sessions are decisive in meaning-making within this communal circle and formation of CPI. We named them 'paratexts' of CPI that included WhatsApp chats, religious, educational, scientific, and gender discourses, the extension of issues discussed at CPI to school and home, adolescent dialogues before and after the sessions, and their reading of philosophical ideas and literary commentaries on the materials of inquiry. Gérard Genette, giving currency to the term 'paratext', conceives of it as an undefined zone between the inside and the outside of a printed work that forms the complex mediation between book, author, publisher, and reader. It is a border zone in which text and off-text enter dialogue the paratexts associated with CPI directed us to reconfigure the practice in reconsideration of the facilitator's roles and positions. On this account, the facilitator is someone who needs to be able to actively listen both to the voices of the group members and the voices of existing paratexts, and to manoeuvre between multiple roles and positions as the situation demands.

keywords: p4c; community of philosophical inquiry (cpi); paratext; facilitator's roles and positions.

os paratextos da comunidade de investigação filosófica (cif): achados emergentes de uma pesquisa no irã

resumo

Este artigo apresenta os resultados emergentes de pesquisa realizada no Irã. Seu principal objetivo foi investigar se o pensamento dos adolescentes poderia se tornar polifônico na comunidade de investigação filosófica (CIF) e quais processos o pensar passaria para atingir este objetivo. Dezesete adolescentes, dez meninas e sete meninos participaram de catorze sessões com três romances iranianos e três estrangeiros como material de

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investigação. As sessões foram gravadas em vídeo e analisadas pelos pesquisadores. as descobertas a partir de objetivos pré-determinados revelaram que a CIF foi eficaz no desenvolvimento do pensamento polifônico dos adolescentes, e os processos de pensamento polifônico no trabalho também foram revelados. ao mesmo tempo, surgiram alguns dados inesperados que deram origem a algumas descobertas emergentes, entre as quais o fato de que o significado não se limita ao que acontece "dentro" da CIF, mas alguns eventos antes, depois e durante as sessões são decisivos para o significado dentro deste círculo comunitário e para a formação da CIF. Nós os denominamos "paratextos" da CIF que incluíam conversas da WhatsApp, discursos religiosos, educacionais, científicos e de gênero, a extensão das questões discutidas na CIF para a escola e para casa, diálogos adolescentes antes e depois das sessões, e sua leitura de ideias filosóficas e comentários literários sobre os materiais de investigação. Gérard Genette, dando moeda de troca ao termo 'paratexto', concebe-o como uma zona indefinida entre o interior e o exterior de uma obra impressa que forma a complexa mediação entre livro, autor, editora e leitor. É uma zona de fronteira na qual texto e fora de texto entram em diálogo. os paratextos associados à CIF nos orientaram a reconfigurar a prática na reconsideração dos papéis e posições do facilitador. Por este motivo, o facilitador é alguém que precisa ser capaz de ouvir ativamente tanto as vozes dos membros do grupo quanto as vozes dos paratextos existentes, e de manobrar entre múltiplos papéis e posições, conforme a situação exige.

palavras-chave: fpc; comunidade de investigação filosófica (cif); paratextos; papéis e posições do facilitador.

los paratextos de la comunidad de investigación filosófica (cif): descubrimientos emergentes de una investigación en irán

resumen

Este artículo presenta los resultados emergentes de una investigación llevada a cabo en Irán. Su objetivo principal era investigar si el pensamiento de los adolescentes podía volverse polifónico en la comunidad de investigación filosófica CIF y qué procesos seguiría el pensamiento para lograr este objetivo. Diecisiete adolescentes, diez chicas y siete chicos, participaron en catorce sesiones con tres novelas iraníes y tres extranjeras como materiales de indagación. Las sesiones fueron grabadas en vídeo y analizadas por los investigadores. Los hallazgos descubiertos a partir de los objetivos predeterminados revelaron que la CIF era eficaz para desarrollar el pensamiento polifónico de los adolescentes, y también se pusieron de manifiesto los procesos de pensamiento polifónico en funcionamiento. Al mismo tiempo, surgieron algunos datos inesperados que dieron lugar a algunos hallazgos emergentes, entre ellos que la creación de significado no se limita a lo que ocurre "dentro" de la CIF, sino que algunos acontecimientos antes, después y durante las sesiones son decisivos en la creación de significado dentro de este círculo comunitario y en la formación de la CIF. los denominamos "paratextos" de la CIF, que incluyen charlas de WhatsApp, discursos religiosos, educativos, científicos y de género, la extensión de los temas tratados en la CIF a la escuela y al hogar, los diálogos de los adolescentes antes y después de las sesiones, y su lectura de ideas filosóficas y comentarios literarios sobre los materiales de investigación. Gérard Genette, dando vigencia al término "paratexto", lo concibe como una zona indefinida entre el interior y el exterior de una obra impresa que constituye la compleja mediación entre libro, autor, editor y lector. Se trata de una zona fronteriza en la que dialogan el texto y el fuera de texto. Los paratextos asociados a la CIF nos llevaron a reconfigurar la práctica reconsiderando las funciones y posiciones del facilitador. Desde este punto de vista, el facilitador es alguien que debe ser capaz de escuchar activamente tanto las voces de los

miembros del grupo como las voces de los paratextos existentes, y de maniobrar entre múltiples papeles y posiciones según lo exija la situación.

palabras clave: cif; comunidad de investigación filosófica (cif); paratexto; roles y posiciones del facilitador.

the paratexts of cpi: emergent findings of an inquiry in iran

introduction

The idea for this article emerged when Soudabeh Shokrollahzadeh was working on her doctoral dissertation (2018) entitled *The Realization of Polyphonic Processes in the Community of Philosophical Inquiry for Adolescents (P4A) and the Implications of the Theory of Polyphony for This Community*. Her dissertation was an extension of her master's thesis (2014), which found polyphony to represent a common thread in the novels utilized for adolescents and young adults practicing community of philosophical inquiry (CPI)—a reflection of the fact that the polyphonic nature of adolescents arises from inner dualities between which she/he oscillates³. Philosophy is a polyphonic discipline to the extent that it allows for multiple voices (the voices of philosophers and philosophical ideas), and the young adult novel is a polyphonic genre that reflects adolescents' cognitive and emotional ambivalence.

As she started her Ph.D. in philosophy of education, she undertook to examine the M.A thesis' findings in practice. Taking up Bakhtin's theory of polyphony as a blueprint, she posed two questions: 1) Will adolescents' thought turn polyphonic after fourteen sessions of thinking together in CPI? 2)⁴ If so, what processes are involved in achieving this goal⁵? To follow the trajectories of dialogues and changes in nonverbal reactions during the 14 sessions, she used

³ Reviewing theories of adolescent psychology, she concluded that most of them describe adolescents as ambivalent beings who move between two poles, such as blind submission to a leader and rebellion against any authority. Considering each of the poles as an inner voice, she conceptualized the ongoing movement between them as an adolescent existential polyphony.

⁴ The ethical protocol of the research was as follows: In the first stage the Higher Education Committee read the proposal and checked whether it was ethically acceptable and followed the institution's code of conduct. After receiving the Committee's approval and prior to data collection with 17 adolescents, all of whom affirmed their voluntary participation, with the understanding that they could withdraw from the research at any point without feeling coercion to continue. The principle of informed consent mattered. We devoted a session to making the adolescents and their parents aware of the purpose of the research, the expected duration, and information about the research committee. The parents were aware of the time and place of the research, and the participants involved in it. They were in touch with us throughout the process of this inquiry. We assured the participants that we held to the principle of anonymity and used pseudonyms instead of their real names in the research report.

⁵ We wish to express our deep gratitude towards Professor David Kennedy, for accepting to be the co-supervisor of this dissertation. He was available for dialogue at any time and his presence and ideas were very encouraging for us.

multiple data gathering methods, including asking participants to write stories before and after the sessions, conducting focus interviews, and making video recordings. The criteria for data analysis consisted of the components of the polyphonic novel as drawn from Bakhtin's works, and the methods of data analysis were both deductive and deductive-inductive content analysis. She analyzed not only the verbal modes of communication but also nonverbal signals, such as glances, eye contact, vocal nuance, proximity, gestures and facial expression, as well as the silences of the participants and facilitator. The participants were seventeen adolescents—ten girls and seven boys. The materials for inquiry were six young adult novels, three Iranian and three foreign (Canadian, British, and American) novels. Two cameras from two different angles recorded all the sessions. Data collection and data analysis worked hand in hand, as we were constantly reviewing the videos in order to correct and improve the facilitation procedures and to adopt new strategies whenever necessary.

The dissertation took up Bakhtin's notion of “polyphony” as a guiding concept. The main reason for this was its alignment with the findings of the thesis (2014), where polyphony was found to represent a common thread running through both the communal discursive event of CPI, through the young adult novels that triggered our discussions, and as a tendency in the ideation of adolescents in general. Bakhtin identifies polyphony not only as an inherent characteristic of the genre of the novel but as a kind of thinking in which viewpoints contradictory to those of authors are allowed to co-exist. Furthermore, polyphony is one of the characteristics of CPI (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2011). Identifying polyphony in Dostoevsky's novels Bakhtin defines it as:

A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event.

(Bakhtin, 1984: 6-7)

Regarding this definition, the answer to the first question —will a group of adolescents’ thinking turn polyphonic after fourteen sessions of thinking together?

--was positive. The findings demonstrated that most adolescents were in the process of becoming-polyphonic. As for the second question—What processes are involved in polyphonic thinking? --two types were discovered. The first helped to realize polyphony directly and the second type indirectly. The first included combinational process⁶, the facilitator's summarizations, the internalization of externally presented ideas, the oscillation between centration and decentration⁷, and getting to know each other.⁸ The second consisted of experiencing the "moves" of CPI discourse such as building on each other's ideas, agreeing or disagreeing with each other, imagining consequences, exemplifying, and categorizing, finding similarities and distinctions, focusing simultaneously on two positions, and using examples and counter-examples.

how the idea of paratext emerged in this research?

Before the formal beginning of the sessions, Soudabeh, the facilitator of the research, created a WhatsApp Group to inform the community members of any probable changes in date or time due to unpredictable events such as students' exams. After the end of the first session, which was dedicated to introducing the practice of CPI, she handed out the first novel, *The White Mountains*, and instructed participants to read it for the upcoming session. The next day, a community member named Ehsan sent this message on WhatsApp:

⁶ The combinational process occurred when the interlocutors took multiple thinking moves to develop a theme. Taking the moves of classifying, differentiating, clarifying, exemplifying, disagreeing, and identifying assumptions, for instance, led to the development of "supporting transgender voices".

⁷ They are two mutually complementary mental movements in Khosronejad's theory of "the oscillation between centration and decentration." Centration means the mind's tendency to focus on one phenomenon or one dimension of a phenomenon and to get absorbed in it, while decentration tends to create distance from the focused phenomenon, moving towards another phenomenon or another dimension and level. This endless oscillation leads to comprehensiveness, penetration and flexibility which are the key components of philosophical thinking. (Khosronejad, 2011: 19).

⁸ Due to the cultural conditions of the research context, male and female students could not make eye contact during the conversations. Boys only looked at the boys and girls at the girls. This issue mattered, as it was related to the recognition of voices in CPI, where the inclusion of all voices is important. Over time, when they got to know each other, it resolved, and both sexes established a friendly relationship with each other, responded to each other, and even called each other by their first names in the final sessions. This process, influenced by their exposure to each other, was called the process of getting to know each other.

I've finished reading the book [*The White Mountains*] and analyzed the whole thing. I made some conclusions. Then by googling the book, I realized that it is a four-part series. When I read the summary of the second book, I found my whole conclusion wrong.

Several interesting points lay within Ehsan's message. One of them was that after reading the text, some members of CPI had searched the internet for more information, reviews, and commentaries. It provided them with new data, which might change their ideas and questions about the materials. And in the WhatsApp chats that resulted *after* the first session of discussing *The White Mountains*, we found that adolescents searched issues raised in the session--not only practical issues related to the inquiry, but philosophical questions, statements, and ideas--and then posted and expanded them on WhatsApp. As such, the application was acting as another community, parallel with the real CPI, a virtual community in which conversations were going on in the same way as in the in-person CPI. We promptly started recording WhatsApp chats, and from then on encouraged dialogues within both virtual and real spaces, and noted the interactions between the two.

The early inclusion of WhatsApp chats had the effect of opening a space for adolescents to express themselves with more freedom and sincerity. Girls in the "real" CPI (henceforth referred to as RCPI) were shy of interacting with boys due to sociocultural norms such as gender segregation at school and the cultural imperative that girls and boys lower their gaze when in each other's presence. Given these constraints, they remained silent for long periods during RCPI; but those same girls voiced their thoughts, ideas, and feelings more openly on WhatsApp (henceforth referred to as VCPI or "virtual" CPI) and participated more dynamically. The introduction of WhatsApp created, then, an inclusive space for marginalized voices to be heard and gender boundaries to be blurred. When we raised the issue of WhatsApp's advantages and disadvantages. Maryam, one of the girls whose activity in RCPI was less dynamic in comparison to her presence in VCPI, said:

In my opinion, here [on WhatsApp], we can articulate our ideas much more easily and more frankly and honestly, and I was personally more comfortable. Perhaps in the classes, the presence

of boys created certain restraints for the girls, and vice versa, but here everything was gender-free. That's why I think this was better, and I feel that if this question [the question about love] were raised in the class, people wouldn't be able to express themselves freely, but you can see that here it's easier. The very fact that neither you nor your interlocutors see each other makes the conversation that much easier.

As Maryam mentions, feeling shy or a sense of shame shrouded the voices not only the girls but also the boys in the group. In this regard, Erfan (a boy) wrote:

We sometimes feel embarrassed when talking face-to-face with the opposite sex. We all know it's wrong, but we're afraid of being judged by others. We're worried about how they'll think of us. It is a weakness, but it's a part of society. Society does not understand. Many of us never had much social experience of speaking in public and exchanging opinions, especially in the presence of the opposite sex. But it seems to me that it's easier to talk in the [WhatsApp] group because there is no embarrassment or shame, and we can say whatever we like. But it is difficult in class. Here, because we are talking to a virtual presence, we are different from our real persona. [In WhatsApp] maybe we can talk more or talk about everything, but we do not talk about anything in the real world. In virtual space perhaps you're judged too, but it doesn't matter because we'll never see that person, or we don't see their judgmental look after we say something.

This inclusive, gender-free space also fostered self-expression and self-confidence, as evidenced in the messages that students left on WhatsApp⁹. In societies where there is a clear border between public and private space, such an arrangement helps the facilitator to become aware of deep layers of participants' beliefs and perceptions. WhatsApp helped adolescents practice being different and to celebrate diversity, which made them feel a greater sense of self-efficacy, and also provided them with the possibility of getting to know each other better, and assisted them in talking with each other with more self-confidence. Field observations, as well as individual and focus group interviews revealed that this self-confidence had gradually transferred to the RCPI, where we observed higher levels of participation.

⁹ When conducting our research, and even after its completion, the research participants sometimes messaged Soudabeh privately to pour out their hearts and talk freely. Her friendly relationship with the students has continued since then. And in a recent communication, she discovered that it was not only the facilitator for whom they had left private messages. One of the boys told her that he had formed an emotional bond with a girl co-inquirer via VCPI: another unexpected finding of this research!

VCPI opened up other possibilities for the participants as well: 1) It provided more data to support their claims, and those who disagreed with an interlocutors' argument might find counter-examples to question them. 2) When a conversation in the RCPI was left unfinished or when students were interested in more deliberation, they continued and expanded their dialogues in VCPI; and when they were eager to discuss topics that did not arise from the materials of inquiry, but rather reflected their lived concerns and interest, they discussed them in VCPI. 3) Within VCPI, the students could pose any question and express any opinion at any time, day or night). 4) As facilitators, we never intervened in their decisions on what to talk about in VCPI. For instance, if they shared an animation or a movie to discuss, we accommodated them. 5) Not all participants joined VCPI conversations concurrently, and depending on the time they needed for thinking and typing out their thoughts, they participated in group discussions. In comparison with RCPI, these possibilities made dialogue in VCPI much more dynamic, and took into account individual differences and preferences to a greater degree.¹⁰

Regarding the role that WhatsApp was playing in meaning-making in CPI, we found the concept of "paratext", a notion that maintains a special place in literary theories as a metaphor to describe the ways meanings were constructed in this communal circle, to be especially helpful. And it is that concept to which we now turn.

what is a paratext?

"Paratext" is a term developed by the French literary critic Gérard Genette (1997). For Genette, paratexts consist of the accompanying productions or materials surrounding the main text. Paratext, which varies in extent and appearance, is constituted by two components: peritext and epitext. The former includes items such as the illustrations, dedications, epigraphs, foreword and epilogue, dustcover, the title, etc., that are generally associated with what is *inside* the book. On the other hand, epitext consists of "the distanced elements [...]"

¹⁰ Our notion of VCPI is different from online CPI, which some practitioners organize to facilitate collective thinking in a distance learning environment.

located *outside* the book" (ibid.; our emphasis). They include interviews, letters, diaries, correspondences, reviews, and articles written about the book. As such, on the account of literary theorist John Stephens (2010: 222-2230) who credits Genette with the origins of the term, "a printed text does not stand alone but is accompanied by a number of textual, and even non-textual objects that are exterior to the text itself yet impact upon a reader's approach to the text." In Genette's words, paratext is a "threshold," an "undefined zone," between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the outward side (turned toward the world's discourse about the text), an edge, or, as Philippe Lejeune puts it, "a fringe of the printed text which in reality controls one's whole reading of the text" (Genette, 1997: 2). It should be noted that according to Genette, all readers do not need to know what paratextual elements are at play. But as paratext is "at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it" (ibid, 2), those who know them will read a work differently. In a similar way, taking the paratexts of CPI into account brings about different and deeper readings and understandings of meaning-making.

VCPI as paratext

We conceptualize the phenomenon of CPI *in itself* as an emergent narrative text through which meanings are constructed. Here the conception of "text" extends beyond the printed page. The characters of the text of CPI (the participants and the facilitator) develop like the characters of a novel. Thus in much the same way as with a literary narrative, its themes can be identified through an in-depth analysis of character development. In addition, the text of CPI is polyphonic or, at least, is placed somewhere on a spectrum between monophony and polyphony at the other. Applying polyphony as a criterion, the characters in CPI – at least as the findings of our research indicated – develop in such a way that they will move toward becoming increasingly polyphonic. Each character goes through some degree of this process based on her/his dispositions.

In this inquiry we found that the text of CPI and the process of meaning-making in it are influenced by various external and internal factors—paratexts—one of which is the emerging community of WhatsApp, a phenomenon that drew our attention to the possibility of discovering other paratexts.

other paratexts

1. educational and religious discourses

We detected other paratextual elements operating in CPI, including the voices of discourses such as religion and education, and sometimes the amalgamation of both. From the first sessions, for instance, we observed that participants referred to the Qur'an, Islamic *hadiths*, and Islamic religious traditions in support of their claims and in disagreement with some arguments, which naturally led to confusion between religious discourse and philosophical dialogue. One illustrative example was observed in a session in which generational gaps and conflict between parents and children were the topics of inquiry. One of the participants spoke about the issue of respect for parents by referring to religious texts. The dialogue went as follows:

Maryam: the respect recommended is not that necessary. That is, the Qur'an says that even if your parents were unbelievers and asked you to withdraw from your religion, you have no right to leave them, which is completely wrong in my opinion. We don't need to respect them so much.

Zahra: Qur'an does not say if they ask you to withdraw from your religion, respect them. It says resist them but with respect, and follow your own religion.

Ahmed: This is also the prophet's hadith.

In this excerpt, Maryam first referred to the Qur'an, then Zohra corrected Maryam's understanding of the Qur'anic verse in question, and finally Ahmad connected it to a saying (*hadith*) from the Prophet. At that moment, the issue of generational conflicts, which should have been discussed philosophically, turned into a situation for further investigation into the perspective of religion on that issue, conducted theologically. Here, a confusion of disciplinary discourses took place. To avoid it, and to help the adolescents fully understand the objectives and methods of philosophizing in CPI, we discussed differences in religion, science,

and philosophy for a whole session. This strategy helped to some extent and affected some more flexible and knowledgeable participants, but proved impractical for others. Consequently, the theological method of discussion endured, more or less, in the following sessions.

Philosophy is a rational and logical activity that should not be confused with religion, whose foundations are built on revelation. This is not to say that there is a sharp disjunction between philosophy and theology, or that theology cannot draw on philosophy, or that philosophy cannot discuss theological issues. Historically, philosophers such as Ibn Sina, Maimonides, and Thomas Aquinas have addressed theological issues philosophically. However, these philosophers have not cited Qur'an, Bible, or Torah to justify their claims, but rather have relied on human reason. Epistemologically, the source of religion is revelation, while philosophy is grounded in reasoning, but for some of our participants the Qur'anic verses were the criterion for evaluating philosophical statements.

One origin of students' confusion in this regard is Iran's formal education system, which treats the issue in ways that create conceptual and paradigmatic confusion. In Iran's Islamic and centralized education system, religious discourses direct all components of education and school curriculum. Subjects such as science, math, social science, art and literature are considered valuable only to the extent that they lead to the realization of the Qur'anic concept of *Hayate (life) Tayyaba* (holiness or goodness), considered to represent the ultimate goal of education, as stated in Iran's *Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE)* (2011). According to this document, Hayate Tayyaba is:

An ideal condition for all dimensions and stages of human life, based on the Islamic norm system (foundations and values accepted by the divine religion of Islam), realization of which shall lead to the ultimate goal of life, i.e. to draw near to God. Such a life requires a conscious and optional relationship with the reality of creation (Almighty God) and intensification of such relationship at all individual and social dimensions, based on the Islamic norm system. (para. 10).

Accordingly, the function of the academic disciplines in the school curriculum is seen against the backdrop of this worldview. Unsurprisingly, the students might conceive the disciplines as a hierarchy with religion at the

pinnacle, and see religious texts as a knowledge map that can offer answers to all questions. As such, the findings of disciplines such as philosophy and science are acceptable and noteworthy only to the extent that they accord with religious principles, and are legitimated by religious authorities. This worldview presupposes that every question has only one predetermined answer. Since it was not possible, even given the facilitator's increasing both direct and indirect interventions, to reach a conclusion on the issue of this disciplinary confusion, one of the authors (Morteza) finally wrote a short text on the differences between philosophy, science, and religion. The text was posted on the VCPI (WhatsApp), then discussed in the RCPI, in hopes that it would motivate students to differentiate between philosophical, scientific, and theological methods of thinking.

The significant effect of religious beliefs as a paratext in RCPI was not limited to the abovementioned problem, but manifested itself in other situations. It was especially marked in low female participation in conversations, and even to one girl leaving the group. The participation problem was partially solved with the emergence of VCPI and by the (female) facilitator's efforts to create a calm and safe atmosphere for the girls, but the efforts to address this issue in the RCPI were not successful. The girl's leaving the group clearly reflected the influence of certain religious discourses on adolescents' thinking. Here she gives the reasons for her withdrawal from the group:

To tell the truth, I talked to religious authorities and clergymen, and they didn't say that there was a problem with the [CPI] class itself. Honestly, I am afraid of losing my faith. [...] Girls and boys talking together scare me a little. I love Islam. I love my faith. I'm afraid of the day I lose it... We do not know how to defend Islam [in CPI] and talk about it. Influenced by my words, some people might leave religion. If so, I have committed a sin.

The quotation above demonstrates the impact of prevailing religious discourses in educational settings in Iran, where boys and girls even talking to each other can be considered a loss of faith. Even the fact that the sessions were held in a public library, an official place where the facilitator was also one of the participants, could not reduce her genuine concern.

2. internet, school, family and community

Through conducting individual and focus group interviews, we realized that the dialogues which took place in the RCPI did not conclude with the end of class. Some students searched the internet for more information on the issues discussed in the classroom, thereby expanding and deepening their recently constructed knowledge. Interaction with the internet provided them with new data, which they applied to the issues discussed in the RCPI: they posted messages on WhatsApp calling on group members to discuss their findings. For example, after several sessions dedicated to a discussion of Plato's Allegory of the Cave, they listened to related audio files or watched videos, then shared the new information in following sessions. The introduction of this independently resourced data enhanced the group dynamics and made it clear that the paratext of the internet was playing a role in the way meanings were being constructed.

Dialogues were not limited to the RCPI and VCPI, but were extended to family and school. A participant named Pariya shared that she and her brother discussed the topics raised at RCPI at home, and most of the students stated that they continued discussing the ideas presented in both forms of CPI with their classmates. Some of them tried to apply the P4C method to the school curriculum. In the focus group interviews, participants Ava, Setare, and Rihanna said they thought that it should be possible for them to talk about everything at school, just as they did in CPI, but that the teachers resisted and they had to continue with intermittent dialogues with their close friends.

In short, we found CPI to be a multi-layered narrative that extends beyond the scope of the classroom and it is constituted by the following communities: the community created on WhatsApp; the community of religious and educational authorities in terms of official dominant discourses; the community created on the internet (dialogues among the participants, philosophers, and literary critics); the school community (dialogue between the participants and their friends); and the community created at home (dialogues between the participants and their family members). Therefore, CPI is not limited to the discourse taking place strictly within its confines (that is, within the RCPI). Similar to claim of John Stephens that

the text does not “stand by itself,” CPI is also accompanied by a range of ever-shifting paratexts. In this way, understanding and interpreting CPI and what happens in it requires an understanding and awareness of all the discourses and communities surrounding it.

In light of contemporary social changes and, in particular, the special place of technology and cyberspace, which are gaining ground every day, the concept of CPI has become more complex. Once again, literary theories--those concerning children's literature in particular-- help in explain this transformation. We borrow the idea of extended narrative from Peter Hunt (1991), a theorist of children's literature who states:

We are in a transitional phase towards widespread hypermedia thinking, and we have to accept that the MUDs (Multi-User Domains) which allow for multiple authorship; the annotated texts, the websites, and magazines that elaborate on narratives old or new; are all now part of the narrative. What was previously thought of as external or extraneous items . . . become part of the 'narrative' (Hunt, 1991: 110).

the role of the CPI facilitator reconsidered

The emergent findings related to the CPI's paratexts directed us to reconsider the role and position of the CPI facilitator. In this section, we discuss how paratextual elements affected it. Given the concept of polyphony as one intrinsic characteristics of CPI (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2011), and our knowledge of the facilitator's roles and positions as addressed by the scholars of the field, we began this project with the idea of the facilitator as someone who does not intervene in order to transfer any knowledge or content to the inquirers, but rather, who monitors the CPI to see that the process of dialogue is going on dynamically, who encourages participants to examine statements and concepts critically, and who tracks where the inquiry is going. The facilitator is expected, in other words, to lead CPI in a completely dialogical way. We assumed that this concept of facilitation would respect the egalitarian structure of power relations in CPI, where the participants could experience the freedom to express their ideas and find their voices. However, it didn't take long before we realized that we needed to expand our notion of the facilitator's role. As mentioned earlier, we

noticed that in CPI, where our students were prompted to think philosophically, they sometimes thought theologically. This happened not only in relation to philosophy, but also when discussing science. For instance, our adolescent students thought that they could prove the concept of God scientifically. In this connection, they sent a message on WhatsApp that they intended to design an experiment to prove God. Focusing on this event did matter because the issue of disciplinary confusion in a philosophical community led, we believed, to distorted thinking. Furthermore, we considered that helping the participants recognize and respect the differences between disciplinary voices contributed to adolescents turning polyphonic¹¹. As such, we were faced with the necessity of expanding the facilitator's role beyond pure dialogue.

The confusion between the voices of philosophy, religion, and science endured until the fifth session. To help participants become aware of this confusion, the facilitator asked if they knew what the difference between these three disciplines was. With this type of questioning, the facilitator intended to show them indirectly that there was something wrong with the method of their discussion. In spite of the fact that the participants were able at times to correctly differentiate between the three methods, they could not understand what was wrong with their original approach or why the facilitator was asking such a question.

To solve the problem, we organized a session (the seventh) to discuss this issue. The day before the session, the facilitator asked them to think about the similarities and differences between the three disciplines and engage in conversation about it on WhatsApp. After the students shared, she summarized the differences between the disciplines, and asked the participants to pay attention to them in the future. But the same confusion arose again and again. The frequency of this phenomenon suggested that we should not consider it

¹¹To answer whether adolescent thinking turns polyphonic, we extracted the components of polyphonic thinking from Bakhtin. These components are: recognition of the thoughts and feelings of others, flexibility, having an equal relationship with others, supporting the voices of others, expressing thoughts and feelings, and recognition of different perspectives. Furthermore, in the course of sessions, other examples of polyphonic thinking emerged. as follows: recognition of the voices of the disciplines (philosophy, religion, and science), recognition of the opposite sex, and acceptance of the possibility of multiple answers to a single question.

accidental. In fact, it made it clear that the voice of religion had been so rooted and internalized in the participants that the demarcation of disciplines' voices seemed difficult and artificial. Through the adolescents' body language, we understood that it was not an interesting topic for conversation and thus we took another strategy. A text that explicitly pointed out the similarities and differences between the three disciplines was written and posted on WhatsApp. The students were asked to read it. Then, at the beginning of the 10th session, the facilitator read the text aloud and asked them if they had any questions about it. And in fact this last strategy was so helpful in solving the problem that, after the end of the 10th session, we noticed no more confusion between philosophy, science, and religion.

Here, two important points should be made. First, in this instance, the facilitator did not close down opportunities for dialogue around the text in question, but instead, she asked the participants to think together about any questions that arose from that and to discuss them in the next session. However, they did not raise any questions. The reason was clear to us: the text was written by a scholar in the philosophy of education, whom the participants considered an authority in the field. In an authoritarian, content-orientated education system, where the students are not accustomed to a pedagogy of questioning and expect to find definite, pre-existing answers to all questions, questions about the text of an expert, regarded as the owner of knowledge and power, seemed unlikely. Secondly, the absence of disciplinary confusion in students was not accomplished simply as obedience to our authority, but as a change in their inner convictions. That we tried to teach them the difference among the three disciplines as a traditional teacher delivering knowledge to students directly did not, in this case, position them as passive learners obliged to accept knowledge presented by the teacher. Rather, since they considered us to be flexible individuals, ready to accept and correct our mistakes, they tended to welcome the text. As mentioned earlier, we frequently invited them to raise questions and concerns about the issue.

Thus, in distancing ourselves from the facilitator's "outside" position—that is, the common image of the facilitator as someone who offers the least possible content intervention—to an "inside" position (the facilitator as content deliverer))

she played a dual role. When she was facilitating group discussions on the issue of disciplinary confusion, she was approximating the Socratic position, and when she handed them a predetermined text, the traditional teacher as teller. It struck us that the way we dealt with that emergent situation had affinity with the findings of Eugene Matuasov concerning Socratic dialogues in his *Journey into dialogic pedagogy* (2009). In the context of a discourse analysis of *Meno*, Matusov identifies at least two kinds of Socratic dialogues: dialogue with the free, rich, and respected Athenian citizens, and dialogue with the slave. Socrates' interactions with free citizens is relatively dialogic, dramatic, improvisational, challenging for Socrates himself, and often unsafe for his public reputation, while dialogue with the slaves is relatively monologic, decontextualized, hierarchical, contrived, rigidly pre-designed, non-challenging for Socrates, and safe for his public reputation. Matusov remarks that

“in all the dialogues, I did not find any evidence of Socrates' seeking truth and learning something new himself from participation in these dialogues. Rather, he tried to bring other participants to something that he already knew” (2009: 46).

Seemingly, what we did in the first move is nearly similar to the first type of Socrates' dialogues: while having the answer in mind, the facilitator tried her best to be dialogic, and the dialogues were more or less dramatic, improvisational and challenging for the facilitator herself. While it seemed that the second move was exactly the same as what a traditional teacher does, more reflection changed our mind, given the fact that the facilitator had handed out the text after extended discussion on the differences between the disciplines. As such, it was a “cumulative” move which appeared gradually, not a single move that a traditional teacher usually offers as a final answer to a problem. After being exposed to all these discursive situations we concluded that in content-oriented and centralized education systems like Iran, a purely dialogic approach is not always possible, and that the facilitator is better served by moving within or oscillating on a continuum between nearly monologic methods and strategies to almost fully dialogic ones. In the above situation, we were at a point where our method was neither completely dialogic nor completely monologic – addressed neither to the citizen nor the slave.

Another oscillation occurred when the participants asked the facilitator to participate in the conversations themselves. Irfan wrote to her on WhatsApp: "Why don't you yourself participate in the conversations?" At the end of the third session, Zohreh also asked the facilitator: "You yourself don't have any idea?" Echoing Zohreh, Sarah wrote, "we would like to hear your opinion." The facilitator participated in conversations, but she emphasized that they had to see her ideas in the same way as they saw the ideas of any other participant. Her ideas, in other words, could also be questioned and criticized. Here the facilitator shifted to the position of the participant.

In sum: the facilitator takes up different positions and roles according to the situation. In content-oriented educational systems (such as one finds in Iran), one way to form the habit of questioning and thinking in students derives from the facilitator's oscillation between these positions and roles. This oscillation demands that the facilitator moves on a continuum between the dialogic and monologic poles, a movement which is more inclined to the dialogical side. The group also guides the facilitator, and the tasks once performed by her/him are distributed among the group. We noticed this emergent mutuality when the facilitator misunderstood one of the participants and Mojtaba, another participant, corrected her. The critical reasoning move of clarification or correction, once modelled by the facilitator, was made by the participant at that moment. Distributed facilitation also took place both in the RCPI and VCPI. Ehsan sent this message on WhatsApp: "Everyone should participate in discussions. Keeping quiet does not allow us to be familiar with all viewpoints. Please talk and let others know your ideas and the ways you think. Inclusive participation makes the conversations much more interesting." Just as a facilitator encourages dynamic participation and the inclusion of all voices, Ehsan also did the same. In another situation, he wrote on WhatsApp: "I am very happy to see you guys show the flexibility for change. At first, I was afraid that no one would change her/his mind at all, but it's pretty obvious we all are thinking and changing. It's very interesting." Here he appeared as a facilitator who monitors the progression and changes in the group, attempting to discern where the inquiry is leading.

In the course of the inquiry, we also came across the question of what are the characteristics of competent facilitation, and found the facilitator's philosophical knowledge, "aliveness," and metacognition to be important criteria. Philosophical knowledge is especially relevant when in dialogue with adolescents, because some of them are acquainted with philosophy as an issue of interest, and they link the conversations already discussed with their own philosophical ideas. As adolescence is a stage of life ripe for more abstract thinking, adolescents find philosophy to be a place where they can satisfy this inclination.

Displaying aliveness and exercising metacognition are two other important requirements of good facilitation. By aliveness we mean the facilitator's ability to dance in tune with the emergent nature of CPI. As facilitators, we need to be flexible enough not to be bound by predetermined goals. We need to welcome emergent moments and newborn thoughts. Exercising metacognition implies that along with monitoring where the group inquiry is leading, the facilitator needs to maintain awareness of her/his own intellectual development, the strengths and weaknesses of her/his facilitation, the challenges s/he is exposed to, and to search for ways to overcome weaknesses in these areas. Ideally, such an awareness is transferred to the students, and represents an important step toward the formation of their subjectivity. In this way, the facilitator, through ongoing movement in or oscillation between cognition and metacognition, respects the "alive" nature of CPI, and provides a working model for the participants.

In sum, the process of constant oscillation between internal and external positions and between text and paratext, requires that the facilitator move on a spectrum between "weak" monological and more dialogical methods, between cognition and metacognition, and finally between the expected and the unexpected. What s/he does is analogous to a form of play, in which s/he maintains a constant movement between centration and decentration. From this perspective, the facilitator is a multi-voiced consciousness operating within the boundaries of CPI, where s/he enacts the constant play of indwelling and separation.

final remarks

Our respect for the emergent nature of CPI opened us as investigators to both its pedagogical and research dimensions. The latter includes two items: the process of thinking together in which the participants gain new insights into the problem they are discussing; and the facilitator's new insights into the ongoing reconceptualization of the nature of this communal circle. When starting the research, we intended to follow our pre-determined objectives of developing polyphonic thinking through communal dialogue. Here, we were working in line with much research in the field of P4C/CPI, which aims at examining whether different kinds of thinking develop in CPI. But as the research continued, we noticed that we had to pay attention to other emergent objectives such as disciplinary differentiation and gender equality. Against the backdrop of this situation the issue of CPI objectives came to the fore. Given the emergent aspects of CPI, Khosronejad (in press) suggests that we need a comprehensive and flexible model that respects the objectives of the P4C program as proposed by the founders of P4C, and at the same time paves the way for future developments of this program. As such, he has found Elliot Eisner's tripartite division of educational objectives to represent a suitable model for this purpose.

Eisner divides educational objectives into three broad categories: instructional (behavioral), problem-solving, and expressive. Instructional objectives “specify unambiguously the particular behavior (skill or item of knowledge, etc.) the student is to acquire after having completed one or more learning activities” (Eisner, 2005: 33). They are clearly stated and evaluated by the teacher, who expects the students to achieve them completely in a predictive way. In the problem-solving category, a given problem is carefully defined in advance, but the solutions are not clear, and each student can solve the problem in different ways. The third objective, “expressive outcomes,” identifies learning situations but does not specify what must be learned. They invite exploration of and inquiry into those aspects that may be interesting or important to the individual, aiming not for homogeneity, but for diversity of response (Eisner, 2005). This kind of objective is in harmony with the creation of art. On this view, the objectives do not precede but

are formed in the process of the activities in question. According to Eisner, it is the aesthetic quality of teaching that elevates educational practice to the position of art, and the teacher to that of an artist, a position that reflects John Dewey's well-known maxim, "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself."

In applying Eisner's model to the theory and practice of P4C/CPI, we might suggest that the instructional objectives in question are those that Lipman intended the program to achieve, namely, developing critical, creative, and caring thinking. These forms of thinking are mainly achieved through philosophical moves such as questioning, listening to others and responding, respecting different points of view, and identifying alternatives, among others. The facilitator can model and encourage the use of all or some of them depending on the characteristics of the CPI in which s/he acts and its paratexts. Sometimes, it is possible to add other objectives to Lipman's, based on a special philosophical system the facilitator has chosen, as well as on the characteristics of the participants and the socio-cultural conditions in which the CPI is located.

While the instructional objectives move toward convergence and homogeneity, those of problem-solving and expressive outcomes lead to divergence, difference, and personality development. In this mode, the problem is carefully defined in advance, but the answers are individual and, to some extent, unpredictable. In other words, they lead to new, personalized learning. Expressive outcomes, on the other hand, are achieved neither by defining a predetermined objective nor clearly defining a problem, but by engaging in emergent activities that prompt inquiry. Eisner's change of the term from "objective" to "outcome" in the phrase "expressive outcomes" emphasizes the importance of engagement and experience. In this connection, he asserts that "outcomes are essentially what one ends up with, intended or not, after some form of *engagement*" (Eisner, 1979: 103; our emphasis).

Khosronejad believes that the problem solving objective and expressive outcome in particular which he prefers to call "emergent," have much in common with what happens in CPI. In addition, the terms Eisner uses in explaining expressive outcomes are reminiscent of current debates in CPI scholarship

regarding the concept of philosophy and issues surrounding the instrumentalization of CPI as well. As Eisner puts it:

An expressive objective describes an *educational encounter*: it identifies a situation in which children are to work, a problem with which they are to cope, a task in which they are to engage; but it does not specify what from that encounter, situation, problem, or task they are to learn. An expressive objective provides both the teacher and the student with an invitation to explore, defer, or focus on issues that are of peculiar interest or import to the inquirer. An expressive objective is evocative rather than prescriptive [...] In the expressive context the teacher hopes to provide a situation in which *meanings become personalized* and in which children produce products, both *theoretical* and qualitative, that are as diverse as themselves.
(Eisner, 2005: 34)

In the end, and re-invoking Dewey's remark that "education is not preparation for life; education is life itself," we conclude that CPI, like life itself, is an amalgam of rule-based and predictable routines and emergent, chaotic and unpredictable moments that sometimes elude any set rules, prescriptions, and predictions. Such a perspective invites us to approach the ongoing newness of the world with more flexibility, wonder, and openness, as it is a world that moves restlessly in a direction of which we are not completely aware.

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