

The Multiaccentual Child Discourse and Border Crossing in Hosseini's the Kite Runner

Dr. Amna Saeed
Assistant Professor
Department of Humanities
COMSATS, Islamabad

Abstract

*This qualitative research focuses on the effects of adult discursive structures on the consciousness, identity formation and development of worldview of children in *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hossieni. Using Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to CDA, the text is interpreted and analysed from the perspective of children, with an emphasis on children's multiaccentual understanding of adult discourses, their cognitive border crossing and understanding of adult ideologies like religion in the prevalent socio-political context. The findings of this research aim to challenge the monoaccentual adult discourse, which having cultural, religious and political factors as its markers, silences the multiaccentual voice of children as a separate group in the society.*

Introduction

The imperialistic stance of the west, its power dynamics and religious outburst of the 21st century, is imposing closure on the human race. The child today, is fighting a war of its own kind; reaching out for disclosure in a world that is determined by the adult, making sense of the world through the lens of war, violence, racism, abuse and extremism at the cost of his/her personal, spiritual, cultural, religious and psychological identity. Millions of children have been killed in battle, left disabled, homeless, orphaned or separated from their families, and as a result of their continuous vulnerability to armed conflict and violence, they suffer from psychological trauma that leaves them wounded, helpless, vulnerable for all times. As a result, the child becomes an 'other' to his/her own self psychologically and spiritually while being physically held in diaspora and exile.

The language of the suffering child that is, the marginalized child who is a subject of war, violence and abuse, is the reflection of the child's understanding of the contemporary adult war-torn world and its impacts on him/her. Child's consciousness is not controlled by borders, for children will run into the neighbor's backyard to pick pebbles; they will not understand why a black man can be inferior to a white, or that a Muslim can be more violent than a non-Muslim. Children are border crossers, free and imaginative in spirit, imagination and meaning making; the child perceives beyond the preconceived meanings of the adults and treads into domains whose boundaries are fixed by adults. This freedom and creativity of the border crossers is brought to a discursive closure when placed in the adult system of signification. Borders are enacted by adult minds to ensure dominance and power play of certain social groups. By not knowing the borders in the first place, children live as border crossers and gate keepers of discursive disclosure. They challenge the boundaries of dominant adult discourse, and in this world of conflicting boundaries and interests, children operate as human agents, and construct their own consciousness and what they consider as true.

The Kite Runner (2003) by Khaled Hosseini, tells the story of Amir, a young boy from the Wazir Akbar Khan district of Kabul, who befriends Hassan, the son of his father's Hazara servant. The story is set against a backdrop of tumultuous events, from the fall of Afghanistan's monarchy through the Soviet invasion, the mass exodus of refugees to Pakistan and the United States, and the rise of the Taliban regime. The plight of Hassan in the first part of the book and of Sohrab in the second reflects the crisis hit, diasporic child in the present day. Amir is exposed to his father's strict criticism and forced to draw out on attitudes expected of an honourable "pakhtun", this not only leads to frustration but confused world view as well.

The servant boy Hassan is tagged as the "Hazara" which not only gives him a societal and cultural identity but also decides his place in society and his social role.

The next part of the book, which covers the Taliban invasion focuses on the confused and horror filled boy, Sohrab, the son of Hassan. Sohrab witnesses the brutal murders of his parents and becomes a victim of abuse and war, which leads to a shattered identity and loss of touch with anything associated as the blissful life. The book also focuses on Amir's plight as a confused and scared adult because of his childhood confusion. As the writer claims, "There are a lot of children in Afghanistan, but little childhood" (Hosseini, 2003).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is employed as the strategy of analysis and interpretation, of the selected text, in this study. To achieve the objectives of this study, I have selected van Dijk's (1993) socio-cognitive analytical framework within the domain of CDA, for the Analysis and Interpretation. Dijk bases his methodological framework/s on his socio-cognitive approach to the *micro level* and *macro level* structures of the social order. The socio-cognitive approach to discourse analysis holds that *discourse*, *society* and *cognition* are interrelated and embedded in a socio-political context of power relations in society. Dijk further differentiates between the *micro* and *macro* levels of social order and considers that discourse, language use, and verbal interaction belong to the micro level of the social order, whereas, power, dominance, inequality between different groups belong to the macro level of social order. The aim of CDA is to bridge the gaps between the micro and macro levels of the social order, and draw conclusions which aim to end social injustice and inequality caused by the power relations in society.

The passages used for analysis and interpretation, are selected as a result of omissions/exclusions from the totality of the text because the analysis and interpretation is based on the issues of adult fixations on children's multiaccidental meanings. Each passage is analyzed according to Dijk's socio-cognitive analytical framework. In *micro analysis*, the lexical style, and the local/surface meanings embedded in the vocabulary will be analyzed. In *macro analysis*, the global/ideological meaning of the passages, along with the implications that underlie the local meaning of discourse, will be analyzed. The analysis is correlated with different theoretical perspectives on the said topic. The theories applied to the analysis are mentioned in parenthesis along with the analysis.

Adult Fixation and Child's Border Crossing

The term *border crossing*, as applied in this study, is inspired by Bakhtin's theory of meaning as an outcome of dialogic social and mental interaction, as explained in Bakhtin's different essays in *The Bakhtin Reader* (1994). Meanings, assigned to language, enable mutual understanding on part of the addresser and the addressee. Meaning occurs instantaneously only when two different terminals are hooked together, constructed by crossing the borders of individual consciousnesses and entering into the domain of other's consciousness. So, meaning originates where the two consciousnesses of the addresser and the addressee blend. The society imposes influencing factors on the individual, conscious or unconscious, and these become a part of his/her personality and mental makeup and therefore, get blended into his/her understanding of the world at large. This mixture of thoughts and motives is the innovative understanding that depicts *meaning* on common grounds as unique to the setting in which the interaction takes place. This blending and mixing of unique consciousnesses leads to the idea of *multiplicity* of meaning that encompasses any given linguistic item. It means that there is possibility of drawing out different meanings from a single word depending on how it is used. It is thus an aspect of meaning that escapes individual control.

In different parts of the book, the author narrates events that refer to adult border fixations for children, and children's rebellion or challenge against those borders. While narrating from his childhood experience, the protagonist tells about his desire to explore the adult ways of life by observing and sharing talk with his father, whom he calls "Baba".

(1) Sometimes I asked Baba if I could sit with them, but Baba would stand in the door way. "Go on, now," he'd say. "This is grown-ups' time. Why don't you go read one of those books of yours?" he'd close the door, leave me to wonder why it was always grown-ups' time with him. I'd sit by the door, knees drawn to my chest. Sometimes I sat there for an hour, sometimes two, listening to their laughter, their chatter. (p. 4)

The lexical style of the author features simple and easy vocabulary, however the words selected to express the local meanings are highly symbolic. The word "**door**" is highly significant in this regard. A 'door' is generally a threshold which lies between places, and it refers to something 'inside' or 'outside', similarly, it refers to 'openness' or 'closeness'.

When the author states that “Baba would stand in the door way”, it refers to how adults stand between children’s cognitive thresholds. Again, in the third line the author states, “he’d close the door”; at the local level of discourse, the clause refers to the act of adult closure practiced on children. Adults not only stand in the child’s way but they also close their pathways when children try to cross the borders constructed by them. In the fourth line again, the author states, “I’d sit by the door”, and it explains child’s curiosity and desire to cross adult’s fixed/closed thresholds. The second important vocabulary selection with respect to the lexical meaning is the phrase, “**grown-up’s time.**” The phrase refers to the adult border fixation for children, how adults define their boundaries and do not allow the children to cross those. The words “leave me to wonder” reflect the plight of the children who try to make sense of adult’s acts and meanings. Children are confused when adults do not explain the logics for their actions and thereby impose them on children. In the last line, the words “their **laughter**” and “**chatter**” explain adult indifference towards children and their understanding of adult practices. Adults do not bother as to what will the children feel of such neglecting acts as to indulge in the “grown-up’s time” and closing the doors upon them, without any genuine reason given to them.

At the macro level of discourse, the passage implies how adults enact physical and cognitive borders for children and how children struggle against these borders. The sentence “Baba would stand in the door way” implies that adults stand at the child’s cognitive thresholds. Instead of opening up the cognitive channels for children, adults close the doors of creative/critical thinking for them. Rather than facilitating meanings children associate with life and the world to be constructed by dialogic interaction with the adult meanings as Bakhtin claims in his theory of dialogism, the meaning making process is stopped. When children try to cross these borders, adults not only discourage them but also restrict them within the borders that leave no room for the child’s cognitive development. The statement, “he’d close the door”, implies at the macro level, what Kincheloe terms as the “discursive closure”, that closes and clamps all possibility for an alternative perspective and/or perception, which results from adult imperialistic practices with respect to children. One of the worst effects caused by such adult discursive practices is the mental and psychological confusion, which children face when they fail to understand why they cannot cross certain boundaries and consequently fail to understand the rightful purpose in life as adults do not perform their function as guides and teachers. The sentence, “leave me to wonder” implies that adults leave children confused as they fail to justify their actions for children. Nonetheless, no matter how strong adult fixations may be, children always try to get free of these limitations, and want to learn about the adult actions as practiced by the adults.

(2) That Hassan will grow up illiterate like Ali and most Hazaras had been decided that the minute he had been born, perhaps even the minute he had been conceived in Sanaubar’s unwelcoming womb—after all, what use did a servant have for written word? But despite his illiteracy, or may be because of it, Hassan was drawn to the mystery of words, seduced by a secret world forbidden to him. (p. 24)

The words “will grow up illiterate” suggest at the local level of discourse meaning, firstly, the social pre-decision with which adults fix children’s social roles and positions, secondly, the words reflect the adult/social closure practiced on children by the society. To keep a child “illiterate” without his/her will and to decide for them that s/he will remain so is a kind of cognitive closure which adults bring upon children only to maintain the authority of certain power classes in society. The use of the words “decided the minute he had been born” suggests that the society pre-decides for the child what social role/position s/he will acquire in the social order as early as the child’s conception, “even the minute he had been conceived”. With the conception and then birth of a child in a specific social class/group, the child not only gets linked with tags and labels like a “Hazara” or a “servant”, but also gets fixed cognitively as to his/her defined rights in the society. Such social pre-decisions lie at the heart of adult border fixations imposed on children. Nonetheless, children never stop trying to cross these borders, instead they always aim at the opposite, that is, children cross these adult borders; “Hassan was drawn to the mystery of words, seduced by a secret world forbidden to him.” The line is highly significant with respect to the local meaning. Adult world, hidden from the child, creates a sense of curiosity in him/her to know/understand and fit into the adult world. Although it is forbidden to children to cross certain lines which divide the adult and the child’s world, children always aim at crossing those adult borders and entering/exploring the forbidden spaces.

At the macro level of discourse, the passage implies how individuals are interpellated as subjects in society and assigned certain fixed roles and positions in society. The social tags such as “Hazara” or the “servant” class, interpellate children into subjects whose social placement in society is predestined by the cultural norms (Althusser, 2001).

When children encounter such cultural norms and values, they internalize them and hence fail to perceive of themselves as anyone other than what the socio-cultural ideologies interpellate them into. The passage implies how children, even before their birth, are “expected” to be someone who fit into the pattern of already prevailing norms of the culture. Through this process of interpellation certain characteristics of the personality get associated with the subjects, as in this case, “illiteracy” with “Hazaras”. Such ideological associations are by no means logical, instead, as Foucault (1982) claims, are only constructed to maintain the power flux in society, which assures the domination/suppression of certain groups of people by others.

The second important ideological meaning that the passage implies at the global level of discourse meaning is the function/role of “culture” in the power exercise of one group over the other. Allan (1998) argues that culture functions as an ideology that is based upon a type of false consciousness and works to oppress a group of people. Such persistent oppression is an act of persecution that inhibits natural growth and disallows enrichment, which is, intellectual, physical, social, etc. Moss (2008) equates culture as one’s experience of life and asserts that “a child’s ‘culture’ is their daily experience of life, not some fixed and static set of beliefs and practices owned by other people in their community.” When children are assigned such socio-cultural identities as a “Hazara”, they are personally and cognitively fixed into a self concept which is by no means natural, instead only a socio-cultural construct that limits their physical/cognitive freedom to become who they want to as adults.

Children, unlike adults, react to such oppressing socio-cultural constructs because they are naturally prone to exploration and border crossing; they go beyond adult ideological meanings and draw out their own logics to be free both physically and cognitively. The sentence, “seduced by a secret world forbidden to him” strengthens that logic and representation of children as border crossers.

Adult Fixation and Child’s Multiaccentual Meaning Making

Accentuality is the idea proposed by Volosinov, in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929), to explain the originality of meaning. ‘Accent’ is what makes a ‘word’ unique, giving the user its ownership by impregnating it with his/her intentions. A word is said to be accentuated when a user gives it a specific tone that intends to convey the contextual meaning of the word, the meaning which the user wants to convey to the receiver. In other words, giving our ‘voice’, our own intentions to a word is what accentuates it as ours, conveying the meaning that we intend for the receiver to understand. Moreover, while characterizing ‘accent’, Volosinov considers that all words are fully ideologically packed, since all language carries historical trends of use and is developed in order to motivate and sustain some ideological basis in society. “Any human utterance is an ideological construct in the small.” (Volosinov, 1987, as cited in Lock and Strong, p. 100). The meanings assigned to words or the concepts embedded in them are provided by a social understanding and acceptance of the socio-cultural context in which they evolve. An utterance thus, becomes a contest where different meanings clash with each other and challenge the authority of each meaning as right against wrong. An accent is therefore, a challenge not only to prevalent meaning in an utterance but also to the ideology on which it is based. Since ideology is a fixation of ideas and norms, it restricts the multiplicity of meaning in language. It is against this restriction on plurality that Volosinov brings the idea of multiaccentuality, and sees ‘dialogue’ as a means to escape ideological fixation. Multiaccentuality then, is an open acceptance of multiple accents in society; it is the freedom of ‘voice’, it is the liberty one can enjoy to *mean* whatever one intends to mean. It is in this sense that Kincheloe (1997, p. 62) elaborates upon the term multiaccentuality and its role in accentuating meaning making:

All language is multiaccentual, meaning that it can be both spoken and heard, written and read in ways that reflect different meanings and different relationships to social groups and power formations. When language is used in an imperializing manner, meaning as a form of social regulation, this multiaccentual is repressed.....such a linguistic act is an example of what is labeled discursive closure, a language game that represses alternate ways of seeing, as it establishes a textual orthodoxy. In this context discursive practices define what is normal and deviant, what is a proper way of representing reality and what is not.

Adult language use is polished by the norms and set customs of society and culture but children do not follow the political/pragmatic rationale, they have reasons of their own to draw the meanings they like/understand from adult discourse. Adult understanding is marked by borders of culture and society of which the child’s mind is absolutely free. Children therefore, do not understand language in a political context the way adults do.

The child's way of understanding lies across these barriers posed to adult discourse, where s/he formulates his/her own meanings. Adult discourse thus, is essentially monoaccental and tends to restrict and limit child's innovative capacity to understand things and life concepts the way they want to.

(3)Of course, marrying a poet was one thing, but fathering a son who preferred burying his face in poetry books to hunting... well, that wasn't how Baba had envisioned it, I suppose. Real men didn't read poetry—and God forbid they should ever write it! Real men—real boys—played soccer just as Baba had when he was young. Now, that was something to be passionate about. (p. 17)

The lexical choice in the first line, "fathering a son" brings to surface the father-son relationship and makes it look like an artificial process which is sustained with great effort, instead of a natural, effortless relationship. In the second line, the author brings "poetry" and "hunting" into a direct comparison and, at the local level of meaning, highlights the effects of cultural/traditional beliefs and norms on children. While poetry is a creative experience for children, including both boys and girls, but in Pashtun culture it is not something to be very proud of. Instead hunting is a virtuous activity which is associated with courage and manliness. In the third line, the author uses the word "envisioned" which focuses on how adults visualize their children to follow in their footsteps and share their likes and dislikes instead of their own. The ironic use of the words, "Real men" stresses on how gender is perceived in different cultures and how different cultural activities are limited to the genders; "Real men didn't read poetry.... Real men, real boys played soccer just as Baba." The words soccer and poetry again reflect adult fixations imposed on children. This cynical lexical choice builds up the local meaning reflecting how adults view children and their choices in life as a reflection of themselves and their lives. In other words, adults impose their own choices, likes, dislikes and decisions on children and thus affect their identity and worldview.

At the global level of meaning, the passage implies the fact that socio-cultural ideologies shape up adult understanding, since all *meaning* is contextual and a result of the dialogic process between the subject and his/her socio-cultural context (Bakhtin, 1981). This adult understanding is imposed on children as if it is the ultimate/fixed *sense* in everything they come across. One of the important categories of cultural context, through which many *meanings* related to the subjects are derived, is 'gender'. Laclau & Mouffe (2002) observe that gender plays a vital role in deciding the different subject positions/roles in society. Men are generally associated with 'strength' and 'bravery' while women with 'fragility' and 'frailty'. Because of this *chain of equivalence*, men are encouraged, in different cultures, to participate in activities such as "hunting" and sports like "soccer", while girls may be esteemed to have known "poetry". Nonetheless, such behavioral patterns, that are considered as 'normal' for children of each gender, are mere socio-cultural constructs that aim to fix the social positions/roles of the genders. Such adult fixations repress the child's independent thinking and bring upon it a finality which does not encourage multiaccentuality to flourish. The child's thinking is therefore, devoid of the context in which his/her voice is heard and responded.

Barker & Galasinski (2001) argue that the figure of the father is most important in developing the son's concept of masculinity and in understanding the roles men are attributed in society. When children find the parent's concepts conflicting with their own understanding, they get confused and their voice gets repressed because of adult authority. Therefore, adults with their ideological understanding affect children's meaning making process, since children fail to blend in their meanings with the adult's to get a holistic concept of their placement in society.

The author narrates an important event from his childhood experiences, when his father takes him along to watch the Afghan national sport of Buzkushi. The understanding of this sport and its association with the sense of entertainment is totally different for the adult and the child. The author states:

(4)I watched with horror as one of the chapandaz fell off his saddle and was trampled under a score of hooves...I began to cry. I cried all the way back to home. I remember how Baba's hands clenched around the steering wheel. Clenched and unclenched. Mostly, I will never forget Baba's valiant efforts to conceal the disgusted look on his face as he drove in silence. (p. 18)

The passage refers to the Afghan national sport, *Buzkashi*, in which horsemen propel a headless goat carcass towards a goal. The expert Buzkashi player is known as "chapandaz". The author narrates an event of Buzkashi from his childhood experiences and brings out a picture of the sport from the perspective of children. The lexical choice in the very first line brings out the child's psychological/mental reaction to violence.

Words like “horror” and “trampled” suggest that the sport had a horrifying effect on the child. Adult cultural meanings associated with events such as Buzkashi might not be logically meaningful for children as they are for adults.

The statement “I began to cry”, refers to child’s physical reaction to violence. To the adults, the sport may be a show of courage and strength but for a child it may be a violent show of cruelty, since children are always very fond of and very sympathetic towards animals, watching a headless goat being pushed and pulled among horsemen may not be a very entertaining sight for a child. So the natural reaction of children towards violence is ‘crying’. At the local level of discourse meaning, the last three lines focus on the adult’s reaction to the child’s non acceptance of adult meanings. The words “clenched” and “unclenched” refer to the adult’s psychological state of aggression, anxiety and confusion. The last line, however, is highly significant with reference to the local meaning, “I will never forget Baba’s valiant efforts to conceal the disgusted look on his face as he drove in silence.” The line focuses on how adults psychologically impose their actions and their beliefs on children; many borders are enacted silently by adults through gestures expressing disapproval of the child’s behavior and understanding of adult meanings. These gestures serve as psychological borders which adults enact between themselves and the children. Adults, however, fail to perceive the child as an independent individual who may or may not think according to the adult’s understanding and socio-cultural beliefs.

At the macro level of discourse, the passage highlights ‘cultural meanings’ associated with different situations and events and their impact on children. Barker & Galasinski (2001) state that “culture is a zone of contestation in which competing meanings and descriptions of the world have fought for pragmatic claim to truth within patterns of power”. Most importantly, the understanding of cultural norms and values are a matter of competition when it comes to the child’s understanding of them. As for instance, the national Afghan sport, ‘Buzkashi’ might be a source of national and cultural pride for the men of the nation but, unlike adults, children might not be able to logically associate the sport with national pride or valor. On the contrary, children might react to the violence portrayed in the game and feel fearful of the outcomes. The adult’s cultural meaning, thus, comes into a direct conflict with the child’s understanding and no holistic truth claim might be possible in the case. The result of this imperialistic practice of imposing cultural meanings on children might bring upon them a psychological closure, which may leave them perplexed with respect to their cultural traditions. These dialogic childhood experiences between self and others discursively position the child in a fixed cultural tradition/situation, which is considered as the ultimate truth claim. Children are therefore, subjected to adult socio-cultural/ ideological fixations whether these are acceptable for them or not. The result of these fixating practices is psychological closure/perplexity for the child which represses his/her multiaccultural voice as against adult monoacculturality (Volosinov, 1929).

Children aren’t coloring books. You don’t get to fill them with your favorite colors(p. 19)

The line is highly significant with reference to both the local and the global meanings of discourse. The line highlights the fact that adults think of children as “**coloring books**” and try to fill them with their “**favorite colors**”. Adults try to fix different socio-cultural meanings for children based on their experiences in society. What fixed meanings are transferred to adults in the form of socio-cultural traditions/beliefs, are perceived as the final truth by them, and this unquestionable truth claim is forwarded on their children. Adults, thus, expect children to follow the fixations adjusted by the grand socio-cultural code and do not allow them to cross any of such adult borders.

At the macro level of discourse, the lines imply a reaction to adult fixations for children. The author advocates the ideological positioning of the child in the socio-cultural scenario and upholds the importance of child’s voice in society, which could be multiaccultural if allowed to grow and nourish in a free, liberal society. Adults view children as reflections of their own selves and try to mould their thoughts/beliefs accordingly. The child’s *voice* and his/her multiaccultural understanding of self and the world are repressed by the adult discursive practices when adults force them to follow their own set of beliefs/tradition. This discursivity limits the child’s thinking process and deprives him/her of originality of meaning in life, and also reflects upon their future course in life.

Religion and Child Understanding

Religion is an important category of cultural context and in almost all cultures is practiced with great reverence. While religious beliefs help people to live a healthy peaceful life, they may be a source of mental confusion for many.

Children are taught about religion in a way which does not encourage critical thinking, instead they are bombarded with ideological concepts they may not understand fully. In this way, religious teachings might interfere with the child's day to day experiences and affect his/her understanding of self and others.

The text highlights these issues, for instance, in the last part of the novel, when Sohrab blinds Asif (the Taliban leader) with his slingshot to win his freedom and end the fight between Amir and Asif, he feels guilty of hurting him. Knowing that he was not a good man and he had sinned in life yet the child's sense of right and wrong justified his act as something not approved by religion.

(5) "Will God...." He began, and choked a little. "Will God put me in hell for what I did to that man?".....
"Father used to say it's wrong to hurt even bad people. Because they don't know any better" (p. 277)

The lexical style of the author features vocabulary that highlights the religious confusion of children. The placement of words, "**God**" and "**hell**" refer, at the local level of meaning, to the induced religious fear of hell and punishment in children by the adults. More than the joys of a peaceful faith practice; children fear the practice of sin and hell in religion because this is what adults emphasize upon, in order to control their actions. The lexical choice in the sentence, "it's **wrong** to **hurt** even **bad** people" focuses on the child's sense of right and wrong as opposed to the adult's. The understanding of children is free of socio-political/cultural markers which define and restrict adult meanings. If the child is taught that it is sinful to hurt other people, s/he may not understand that hurting a bad man for doing something wrong is acceptable in religion. Children are thus, naïve in their understanding of issues like religion.

The micro analysis implies how religion is used to induce fear in children. In order to control children's actions as per adults' desires, children are often told that if they do wrong they will be sent to hell and will burn in hellfire forever. The result of such ideological preaching is the development of children's evaluation of their actions in the light of religious beliefs and the gravity they feel for it.

(6) When I was in fifth grade, we had a mullah who taught us about Islam...he told us one day that Islam considered drinking a terrible sin; those who drank would answer for their sin on the day of qiyamat. In those days drinking was fairly common in Kabul.....

We were upstairs in Baba's study, when I told him what Mullah Fatiullah Khan had taught us in class. Baba was pouring himself a whiskey from the bar he had built in the corner of the room.....

"I see you've confused what you're learning in school with actual education"

"But if what he said is true then does it make you a sinner, Baba?" (p. 14)

The lexical choice of the author highlights the conflict between adult religious ideologies and religious practices. This conflict is raised when "**drinking**" is compared to a "**terrible sin**" according to religious ideology but at the same time is said to be "**fairly common**" in Kabul. So, when children are preached about religion in way that adult practices nullify or oppose them, children get confused; they fail to understand whether it is the religious ideology which they are supposed to follow or the actions of the adults. The placement of these opposites also presents the double standards of adult socio-cultural meanings which they impose on children as such. The words, "**pouring**", "**whiskey**", "**bar**" all reflect drinking to be a fairly common adult social practice. The words "**learning in school**" and "**actual education**" raise adult confusion about the child's education. The confusion between the two notions raises the question as to what is actual education for children. Is it the theoretical teaching of ideology, or the actions/practices of the adults that the children are supposed to follow? Since adults fail to comply their actions with different ideologies, they also fail to be effective role models for children and the inconsistency of their actions confuses children with respect to the socio-cultural standards of right and wrong.

At the macro level of discourse, the passage implies how adult cultural meanings affect child's meaning making process. As Foucault (1982) argues that ideologies such as religion are cultural constructs to control subjects and confine them in a certain fixed position in the social order. These cultural constructs are transferred to children from adults according to their socio-cultural context. It is the state and the society that develop religions on the basis of cultural orientations. So, religion is also contextual and is constructed by man on the basis of socio-cultural and political ideologies. The religion that a child is taught also comes from nowhere else but his/ her culture. Adults may understand the conflicts that arise between different ideologies such as religion and culture. For instance, the religious teaching of drinking as a sin might come in direct clash with the actual cultural practice of drinking.

The adults may understand this double standard in cultural meanings but children fail to understand such conflicts. For children, if something is said to be a sin, it should not be practiced but when they view the opposing adult practices to religion, they not only get confused but fearful also since sin is strongly associated with hell. As a result of such ideological conflicts, children get confused with respect to what is right and what is wrong since adults preach to them one thing and practice another. These contradictions have adverse effects on their growth and development of identity and personality and breed lack of tolerance and patience which are the hallmarks of religious practices.

In Conclusion

The selection of passages from *The Kite Runner* aims at some of the problems faced by children in an adult war-torn world. The child's identity, worldview and understanding of adult practices including religion, are all affected by the socio-cultural and political context in which they are placed. The racial/ religious prejudices that divide adults are thrust upon children and they are victimized on its basis without any reason. Similarly, adult discursivity and placement of various cognitive borders hinder the child's capacity to think logically, and as a result the child gets stuck in a perplexed state of mind with respect to what is right and what is wrong. Times in Kabul reveal children's muted state of being, and the mutation that is caused to their growth and development as effect of war. Their escape from such circumstances can provide no relief and if it does, it is likely to be soured by past experiences and then, their permanent entrenchment in prison houses of past events is sure.

References

- Allan, K. (1998). *The Meaning of Culture: Moving the Postmodern Critique Forward*. Praeger.
- Barker, C.&Galasinski, D. (2001). *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis*. SAGE Publications.
- Bertens, H. (2001). *Literary Theory; The Basics*. Routledge.
- Burke, P.& Stets, J. (2009). *Identity Theory*. Oxford University Press.
- Khaled, H. (2003). *The Kite Runner*. Bloomsbury.
- Kincheloe, J. (1997). Fiction Formulas: Critical Constructivism and the Representation of Reality. In Representation and the Text: Reframing the Narrative Voice. Tierney, W&Lincoln, Y (Eds).SUNY Press.
- Lock, A.& Strong, T. (2010). *Social Constructionism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Morris, P. (ed). (1994). *the Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Volosinov*. London: Arnold.
- Van Dijk, T.A. (1993). *Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis*. *Discourse & Society*,4 (2).
- _____(1993). *Analyzing Racism through Discourse Analysis*. In J.H. Stanfield and R.M Dennis. (eds.), *Race and Ethnicity in Research Methods*, 92-134. London: Sage.
- Volosinov, V.(1973). *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Seminar/ Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in Society: Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press.