

Vol. 15, No. 5
pp. 313-333
November &
December
2024

The Concept of Cultural Multilingualism Based on Kazuo Ishiguro's "Never Let Me Go"

Behzad Pourgharib^{1*}  & Fateme Sarabandi Kemak² 

Abstract

Multilingualism and its tangled relationship with culture have been the center of debate for many years. It still sparkles various conceptual arguments and day by day, more academic research is circulating on this subject. The concept of multilingualism and the arguments around this discourse roots in the language itself. To fully grasp the notion of cultural multilingualism, first, we need to perceive how and where language and culture are interlinked. The study of culture has the originality of studying history itself. The first studies on both language and culture date back to the earliest time human attempted to analyze and perceive history. The globalization of multilingualism has led scientists and experts to analyze multilingualism through a cultural lens. It's only in a few decades that perceiving and understanding multilingualism through cultural perspectives has opened the eyes of experts to new horizons. Concerning this fact, this study has evaluated *Never Let Me Go*, a 2005 Nobel-winning novel by the Japanese-British novelist and screenwriter, Kazuo Ishiguro according to cultural multilingual values. Additionally, this study questions the concept of cultural multilingualism, together with its significance in shaping one's identity and self as the main key in Ishiguro's novel. Proven by the given facts, the current study illustrates how cultural multilingualism forms the author's writing style and mindset as a multilingual individual.

Keywords: cultural multilingualism, Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*

¹ Corresponding Author, Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism, University of Mazandaran, Babolsar, Iran; Email: b.pourgharib@umz.ac.ir, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6162-7312>

² M.A. in English Language and Literature, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Golestan University, Gorgan, Iran; Email: settask0707@gmail.com, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4985-5248>

1. Introduction

Cultural multilingual studies have examined the interwoven relationship between culture and language for many decades. There have been numerous groundwork studies that have tested the mutual relationship between culture and language through different perspectives. This study aims to take a closer look at the concept of cultural multilingualism in literature, by exploring one of the contemporary Japanese-British novelists' life, Kazuo Ishiguro and his Nobel-winner novel, *Never Let Me Go* (2005). The concept of cultural multilingualism and its effects on literature has sparked various arguments on this matter. Many ideologists and researchers have analyzed the deeply-rooted relationship between culture and language. The effects of multilingualism on shaping an authors' literary works have attracted remarkable interest up to the present time. Interestingly, according to Noam Chomsky (2000), the study of language and its constructions has increased widely. New theories, in Chomsky's idea, have been made about the construction of language as a systematic organ of human life, while traditional ideas have been reconstructed, reshaped, and totally revived.

Both culture and language are treated as systematic, community-accepted, and intricately interwoven conceptions. Both have specific characteristics that link them together. Language, which is basically known as a communication tool, acts as a system that helps a community to maintain its 'whole identity' or 'being', as Aronin (2012) states in her study. On the other hand, we have multilingualism that absorbs not only one community's identity and communicational tools but also combines this systematic structure with two or more other systematic structures. Besides, there appears the idea of culture as a behavioral, thought-processed, and belief-centered system (Pai, 2005).

Cultural multilingualism combines these two concepts to make a whole, independent ideology. In this concept, culture and multilingualism act like a warp and woof in a work of art that constructs the base of that work of art. This study applies this concept to the work and life of Kazuo Ishiguro, the prominent Nobel-prize winner, who shook the world in awe with his 2005 novel *Never Let Me Go*. The story was directed five years later by Mark Romanek, making 9.90 million USD at the Box office.

Born in Japan, Nagasaki in 1954, Kazuo Ishiguro was raised in Japan. He left his motherland at the age of five for good. He officially became a British citizen

in 1982. Soon enough Ishiguro established an eminent name around Great Britain as a celebrated literary figure. His debut novel was *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) which was awarded the Royal Society of Literature Winifred Holtby Prize. Ishiguro then made an outstanding comeback by publishing his most admired novel, *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986) which pictures Japan in forties. He published various other works before delving into the clone-centered world of *Never Let Me Go* (2005). A well-known example would be *The Remains of the Day* (1989) which was screened in 1993 by James Ivory together with notable actors like Anthony Hopkins, Emma Thompson, and Hugh Grant. *The Remains of the Day* (1989) is believed to be a perfectly structured, well-written novel that won The Man Booker Prize.

Never Let Me Go (2005) is a science-fiction dystopian novel that focuses on the lives of human clones narrated by Kathy H., the protagonist. The story is set in Hailsham, the school in which human clones are raised, educated and matured up to the time they're finally ready to donate their body organs (Griffin, 2009). In a study focused on Ishiguro's style, Eniko Jakus (2010) points out the lack of resolution in Ishiguro's novels. She marks the fact that the burial of an unresolved past not only lingers in *Never Let Me Go* (2005) but could have also been traced in his other novels. These unresolved memories usually end in a melancholic resignation.

But the question is how a multilingual child who faces a whole new culture and language at such a young age will be able to produce highly admired literary works. How can we address the questions of identity found in *Never Let Me Go* (2005) to the author's life as a multilingual child? How cultural multilingualism could be observed in Ishiguro's characters, storyline selections, and writing style? Is there any particular link between a multilingual writer's acquisition of culture and language and the literary works they produce at older ages? Can someone connect the children raised in Hailsham to the author's life?

This study's focal point will be centered on these calculated questions to better understand the influences of cultural multilingualism in shaping a writer's mind and literary conceptions.

2. The Relationship between Language and Culture

Language is understood to be a medium of human communication, which can be an expression of culture, too. Together with culture, language represents a vital instrument, which shapes the identity of particular community members (Pai, 2005). As Michael Clyne (2011) expresses, language is believed to be an instrument of action that acts as a means to cognitive and conceptual development. Before this definition, the totality of culture as a thought and belief system was already mentioned. Among these elements, language acts as a medium to deliver beliefs and traditions. The culture was previously specified to a certain community, and so was language in some ways. As Clyne describes, culture defines language and language illustrates culture. Both culture and language bring forth a sense of solidarity to one's community. Hence, they both apply peculiar characteristics to a certain group of people. These shared characteristics stand certain communities out among others.

To add to the points already mentioned, Sharifian (2015) also explores the various aspects in which language and culture are connected. He traces back the earliest sparkles in the field of language and culture connectivity to the 18th century. He exceptionally mentions Wilhelm Von Humboldt (1767-1835), Franz Boas (1858-1942), Edward Sapir (1884-1939), and Benjamin Whorf (1897-1941) as the prominent figures that highlighted the interwoven relationship between culture, language, and thoughts. Both language and culture have been viewed differently through the course of history. For instance, some schools considered language a mere medium of communication, while others described it as a cognitive, structured faculty of the mind. Each approach and each school has brought contrasting ideologies into the concept of language. The process of culture as a research case has been likewise. Different schools have evaluated culture dissimilarly and from different angles. Some viewed culture as a symbolic system, while others regarded it as a cognitive construction.

Although every school might have different assumptions considering the definition of language and culture, almost all of them agree on the matter of interwoven connection between these two. Many theorists and ideologists declare the fact that language and culture are almost inseparable. Sharifian reveals that if it would be possible to separate language and culture, the afterward implications will prevent us from doing so. On the other hand, David Elmes (2013) claims the

complexity of defining the relationship between language and culture is rooted in the difficulty of understanding people's cognition while communicating. Elmes burrows Wardhaugh's ideas in his *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (2002) to explain the dissimilarity of notions in defining language and culture. Referring to Wardhaugh's opinion, language consists of rules and principles of saying and doing things by using words and sentences, rather than sticking to the knowledge of specific sounds, words, and sentences. Although Wardhaugh does not include culture in this definition, Elmes reasons, that he believes that the speeches are inevitably connected to the environment they are performed in. Elmes employs Thanasouls's *The Importance of Teaching Culture in the Foreign Language Classroom* (2001) to indicate the fact that language does not exist apart from culture. Both guide us toward a sense of 'social reality' cited by Sapir which includes a socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that configures the texture of people's lives. Both culture and language have the capabilities one needs to know or believe in order to operate in an acceptable manner to the members of that society. This time Elmes uses Malinowski's ideas to show that one faces three basic sets of requirements once affronted to society: 1. the individual needs, 2. the instrumental requirements of society, 3. the centralizing symbolic needs of the individual and the society.

While taking Malinowski's viewpoints into consideration, one must not forget that Malinowski believed culture to be bound to expectations and benevolence. In other words, because of the fact that one's individual roles and consequent needs are also a part of the culture, they should be kept in balance. Therefore, to act in accord with the culture one must examine the power of words and actions while reacting to the members of one particular culture. To put it in another way, a key point to cultural presence is to express thoughts in a way that is accepted, believed, and understood by the members of society. That's why it's not possible to examine one (whether language or culture) without considering the other. Although it's hard to prove that linguistic structures determine the speakers' worldview, Elmes declares that it plays an important role in shaping the person's adaptation of a worldview. Elmes also sheds light upon the reflection of speakers' cultures in their languages or their choice of words. That's because of the fact that every culture values certain things or does things in a particular way. This notion suggests another aspect of the relationship between language and culture. Elmes points to the reason that people in every culture use language in a manner that

elucidates their unique, unlike culture.

He then utilizes German and Hungarian to show the readers another aspect of fundamental relationships between different cultures. By using German and Hungarian as an example, he intends to indicate the fact that although languages might be totally different between the two cultures, there might be some shared similarities between the two languages with different structures. Elmes also adds the Whorfian hypothesis to join another aspect of the culture-language relationship. A new hemisphere called linguistic determination.

Linguistic determination results in the idea that explains how differences in languages can lead to dissimilarities in cultures. Elmes defines that our actions are extremely influenced by the linguistic habits of society. He includes Japanese society and its numerous ways of politeness as an example that reflects the cultural habits. While one culture (as Indians do) might consider 'father's brother' to be also a symbol of "father", one other might not do so. Hence, two people from different cultures might use the word 'father' but aim for un-like people or dissimilar purposes. These factors lead us toward the interconnectedness of language and culture, yet it's a kind of diversity when compared with other languages or cultures.

All in all, Elmes finishes his expressions by indicating how our interpretations are classified based on our linguistic or cultural beliefs. Thus, language learners should not only focus on learning linguistic forms and communicational rules; but they also need to acquire the culture of the target language. Culture (if educated or considered in the teaching curriculum) should not be viewed as something less important than other language skills (listening, writing, speaking, reading, etc.). Quoting one of Kramch's ideas, Elmes expresses that culture is always present in the background of language learning, challenging the learners' potential to make sense of the world around them. Accordingly, foreign people need to touch, see, and smell the target language's society or culture in order to fit.

The aim of this study is to merge different disciplines into one unified conviction, and show how the interwoven relationship between language and culture can lead to a discrete conceptualization called 'cultural multilingualism'. Besides, this study will evaluate multilingual children's abilities to produce works of literature in a language totally different than their mother tongues. To fully support this ideology, the present study utilizes Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me*

Go (2005), an English-written Nobel-winning novel, by an originally Japanese writer, to see how cultural multilingualism and interwoven language-culture relationship could lead to represent a world wholly dissimilar to the one the children are grown up in.

3. Cultural Multilingualism Genesis and Structure

We are living in a multicultural world, says Irina-Ana Drobot (2021). One can find various cultures in the same country due to the multilingual atmosphere ruling the current world. This multilingual state is the result of the massive globalization of cultures and languages. Aside from the communicational devices and platforms, the developing status of life has resulted in various traveling opportunities. Today's art and culture can be promoted and spread much easier than in previous centuries. The language learning platforms have provided several chances for foreign language learners to master the target languages' cultures alongside developing an understanding of target communication devices, grammar, and methods.

In addition, Drobot explains the matter of globalization of language and culture in a vast domain. She claims that having proper information about different cultures can lead to a better understanding of the language itself, be it a short-term or a long-term period of acquiring a different language. She believes that language cannot depart from culture because it's an almost inseparable part of it. One does not exist without the other. Both language and culture are the body of a socially inherited accumulation consisting of various beliefs and practices. Furthermore, language is a key to the cultural past of every society. Cultures shape the use of languages and languages develop, pass through, and establish cultures. Language is also known to be a vital key to learning, understanding, and connecting to a target culture. Not forgetting the fact that language reflects the culture and the mindset of a certain society. In this matter, one can rely on the chiefly-polite structures of Eastern Asian languages, like Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. The use of honorifics in Korean could be an evident example of this matter, which shows off the culture of addressing different social statuses with different vocable structures.

In this regard, Irina-Ana Drobot delineates the structure of language as a key to determining how the members of the target society think, what could their

worldview be, and what is their mindset.

As an example, we can refer back to the usage of honorifics in the Korean language or the polite manner of addressing people in Japanese. The usage of honorifics in Korean shows how people of that target culture value respecting various social statuses. In doing so, they use unlike **높임말** (pronounced: Nopimmal – Meaning: honorifics) to show respect toward a certain person. Using honorifics is not only addressed toward a certain social status, but it's also a way to indicate the level of intimacy, the age or gender of the person addressed, and the situational aspects of the sentence made. It's also quite common for the speakers to lower their own statuses as a sign of respect and humbleness (Ahn et al. 2010). This proves Drobot's claim of language being a key point indicating the target society's culture. Although she insists on the fact that language cannot determine the worldview of the target society entirely, it's extremely influential in activating the speaker's adoption of worldview.

Drobot agrees that cultures are dynamic. They change with respect to society's needs, traditions, and values. Regarding the fact that language is a part of a culture, the use of language can vary according to the changes that occur in culture. Along with the given facts, Pishghadam et al. (2020) also signify the importance of linguistic expressions in shaping and illuminating a culture's behavioral patterns and belief systems. In consequence, the linguistic structures hired by the members of a culture have a remarkable influence on the way the members of a society express their values and selves.

Taking this into account, he and his team also cast light upon the fact that how the analysis of languages can lead researchers toward a better understanding of cultures (Pishghadam et al., 2021).

This is where cultural multilingualism comes in the way. Considering the matter of language as a part of the culture, cultural multilingualism concentrates on the cultural aspects of multilingualism. While referring to multilingualism, one cannot ignore the importance of multiculturalism. Cutler views multiculturalism as a behaving and thinking system. He defines multilingualism as a learning and communicational style. So Drobot utilizes this viewpoint to address multilingualism not only in a communicational way but also as an influential factor in the mindset and values of a certain group of people. This study seeks this explanation to show how cultural multilingualism is set on the method by which

multilingual people acquire, understand, and adopt various cultures. This study seeks shreds of evidence with which the awareness of dissimilar cultures can enhance a multilingual person not only to adapt to the differences of languages and cultures but also to portray them in a literary work.

Cultural multilingualism projects the cultural values and attitudes of multilingualism. As Irina-Ana Drobot explains, facing a new structure of language or learning a foreign language can lead to a better understanding of the target language's culture. She indicates that multilingual people can connect better with the differentiation of cultures. Multilingual children can adapt to the unlike values and mindsets of a different culture in a better and faster way.

Hoffman et al. (2004) present multilingualism to be more than a study of linguistic practices or anthropological linguistic contexts. They examine multilingualism in the cultural context. They institute the language to be more than just a set of lexical or grammar rules. In their idea, language functions as a negotiation for one's identity, especially when faced with a new cultural environment. The new culture shapes the understanding of one's identity, depending on how frequently the person uses the languages or shifts between them. Based on their objective, multilingual individuals who possess more than one language develop a new sense of multilingual competence, which leads to a different state of mind when compared to monolinguals. In some ways, one can conclude that multilingual competence can connect to a different sphere of knowledge and mindset.

So one cannot limit multilingualism or acquiring more than one or two languages to learning two or more sets of grammatical or vocabulary rules. Multilingualism consists of a systematic conception that consists of many layers, and cultural multilingualism is one of them. As Huffman et al. mention in their study, "Multilinguality exists and can be studied in its cultural context(s)" (Hoffman et al. 2004, p. 26)

Although there have been many more ground studies considering multilingualism, in the case of cultural multilingualism there are still many requirements to be examined. Cultural multilingualism does not exist on its own and it's the individual and society that shape its being. In spite of the fact that multilingualism is believed to be 'the process of acquiring several non-native languages and the final result of this process' as introduced by Cenoz and

Genesee, it's thought to be more than only a linguistic structure. The cultural dimension of second or third language acquisition cannot be underestimated. Cultural multilingualism could be pronounced as a vital answer to the cultural schema of multilingualism that tests the effects of cultural environment on foreign language learners. In this case, we can refer to Kazuo Ishiguro's life as a foreign English learner, facing a new culture and environment in his fifth year of existence. In the next parts of this study, we will focus on the influences of cultural multilingualism in forming the individual's identity.

As Huffman et al. reveals in their paper, as more languages are added to the acquired languages, the more complex the system could get. As monolingualism turns to bilingualism, and bilingualism turns to multilingualism, the phenomenon quantitatively gets bigger and the complexity increases. As each language is added to the previous one, the individual needs to work on more requirements in order to connect to society both communicatively and culturally. So studying cultural multilingualism and its effects on an individual's mindset, identity, and personhood, can lead to a better understanding of what the individual is going through. Understanding the individual's dilemmas can lead to better teaching and learning experiences, especially in today's multicultural and multilingual world. Cultural multilingualism can be a lantern shedding light on the way unknown experiences when faced with new cultures while learning various languages.

All in all, multilingualism represents and meditates the crucial elements of identity and selfhood. So if we want to get closer to the influences of cultural multilingualism in shaping foreign language learners' literary skills, we also need to get closer to the question of identity and selfhood raised by multilingual studies. The question is mainly asked in Ishiguro's Nobel-winning novel, *Never Let Me Go* (2005).

4. Cultural Multilingualism and the Question of Identity

It has been decades since the focus of many linguistic experts has shifted to multilingualism. The cultural aspects of multilingualism have always been taken into consideration. Although there have been numerous efforts to inspect the cultural characteristics of multilingualism, there need to be more ground inquiries on the matter of cultural multilingualism. John Edwards (2009) notes that the importance of studying the linguistic aspects of identity dates back to the early

1980s. Besides, identity has always been a buzzword in cultural studies. In many of them, identity has been announced as a subjective sense of self in any individual.

Edwards brings multiple definitions of identity into account. Quoting from Wetherell, Edwards claims that certain routines that are shaped over time by repetition can also indicate one individual's notion of identity. Reasoning that these repetitions, processes, and modal practices have the potentiality of constructing a person's exclusive or 'personal style'. He also maintains the fact that while considering identity, one cannot ignore the truth that identity involves many potential sub-divisions. He even insists on the reason that some of these sub-divisions have greater importance over others.

As mentioned before, Edwards believes that one of the things that have great influences on an individual's mindset of identity is the linguistic patterns of society. Language and culture both affect the way individuals form their identities. The particular traits that shape one's identity are significantly influenced by language and culture. He adds that only when individuals hang on to existing traits and attributes, that they feel a sense of comfort, belonging, and familiarity in it. A feeling called the sense of home by a contemporary multilingual writer, Natasha Lvovich (1997). The sense of familiarity, comfort, and home are the leading themes used in many of Ishiguro's novels. The search for a real home to settle down could be found in almost all of Ishiguro's novels. As in *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro somehow reflects the sense of experiencing your childhood in a certain culture, but then facing a totally new culture for the rest of your life within the paragraph below:

"There have been times over the years when I've tried to leave Hailsham behind... when I've told myself I shouldn't look back so much. But then there came a point when I just stopped resisting." (Ishiguro 2005, p. 11)

In most of his novels, the sense of a long-lost home and a search for a true home can be captured in Ishiguro's style of writing. As for *Never Let Me Go*, one could clearly observe that Kathy H. has already adapted to the new culture, away from Hailsham. However, she still finds herself calling Hailsham her true home – as for Ishiguro, it could be Japan -.

"DRIVING AROUND THE COUNTRY NOW, I still see things that will remind me of Hailsham. I might pass the corner of a misty field, or see part of a

large house in the distance ...and I'll think: Maybe that's it! I've found it! This is Hailsham!" (Ishiguro 2005, p. 11)

In this respect, J.M. Dewaele's (2009) notions should be taken into consideration. He somehow justifies Ishiguro's style in reminiscing about Japan through his British book by stating the fact that a person who has been raised by parents from a different culture, or originates his/her childhood in another culture but continues living in a new one, builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not maintaining the complete ownership to any of them. So cultural multilingualism leads the multilingual child to acquire multiple cultures, as well as adopt various cultures.

Edwards claims that we tend to hang on to these traits until we face some circumstances that suggest that alterations need to be formed in these traits and attributes (Edwards declares that some people even feel rejected while trying to adapt to new traits, considering cultural multilingualism, we can address culture shock as an example).

Edwards believes that the essence of identity is the notion of similarities. He introduces identity as a signification of 'sameness' in one's personality. He includes the dictionary meaning of identity, modeling identity for something that separates one's personhood from someone else. He sheds light on the connectedness of unbroken traits presented within a person's life. Although there are distinctive features both in individual identity and group or social identity, culture and language are believed to have great influences in shaping one's perception of identity. Personal identity is the statement of someone's individual traits, manners, and tendencies. These characteristics primarily emphasize the uniqueness of one individual from the other. Although the identity is bound to form similar characteristics between individual's sense of personhood. Supporting this fact, Edwards brings forth the connectedness between individual and social identity.

On the other hand, Edwards states language and identity as "ultimately inseparable" factors. He calls language to be the central attribute of human life. Hence, whenever identity is taken into account, it is hardly ever possible not to include language as well. Consequently, it's almost impossible to separate language from culture. So in *any* study of identity, one should involve the effects of language and culture in the bargain. Language, as expressed by Edwards, is the

link between an individual and others. Also, the particular usage of words, accents, notes, gender, and age have important effects on showing off one's identity and personhood.

Michele Koven (2007) defines that multilingualism has a vital effect on the way multilingual people feel about themselves, leading us toward the psychological effects of multilingualism in developing one's comprehension of personhood. Multilingual individuals are most likely more confronted with the question of identity than monolingual people who proceed with their lives depending on only one language to communicate. Koven illustrates that learning a new language can lead to forming a 'new person'. In conclusion, she analyzes multilingual participants through a case study. In this course, she questions whether multilingual individuals feel like different people when they are communicating in various languages. Around 65% of her samples agreed that they indeed feel like a different person while communicating in a different language. Koven assumes that each language changes the way multilingual participants behave. Considering their level of fluency, and the time they are faced with different cultures, a split identity is shaped within the multilinguals.

Additionally, in another ground study, Benjamin Bailey (2008) raises the fact that different languages boost the way multilinguals express themselves. In his judgment, multilingual have expanded potentiality in using different sets of linguistic forms while positioning their notion of self and identity. Not forgetting the fact that coming across multiple languages means the person is more open toward new cultures and can adjust to cultural matters more easily. As an example, Bailey brings forth the female Dominican American youths who distinctly express their social identity in relation to their multilingual self. Bailey infers that individuals use language to resist and reproduce existing meanings and structures, connecting their identity to the construction of society, but in their own way. Hence, cultural multilingualism is potent in developing various identities in multilingual individuals. Although living as a multilingual means individuals need to adapt to various cultural, communicational, grammatical, and lexical aspects, the multilingual somehow proceed with their own picked identity, shaped by themselves.

However, studying cultural multilingualism and the effects of culture in the lives of multilingual has proved that once –as Lvovich (1997) portrays in her autobiographical storybook, *The Multilingual Self*- the multilingual find their

voice (or metaphorically settle down with one language), one of the languages will successfully rule over the others. In spite of the fact that multilinguals learn different languages for countless motives, it's almost visible that one language would be utilized more than the others.

In the case of Kazuo Ishiguro, he utilizes English over Japanese to express his thoughts. But taking the main concepts of the book into account - the search for a true home, identity, rejection of society, and not being considered a member of society - it appears that Ishiguro has preferred his second language over the first one to reflect his thoughts. At the same time, he uses his second language to demonstrate Japan-related conceptions (Mason, 1989). So one can conclude that although Ishiguro is a British writer, he's still culturally related to Japan.

Today's developing, vastly communication-centered world has established a belief that 'one language is not enough'; hence there are always pragmatic reasons with which individuals are convinced and sometimes 'forced' to learn multiple languages (De Bot, 2019). So one language would be chosen over the others for daily purposes (depending mostly on geographical settlement). In this sense, Lvovich (1997) believes that she finds her true identity and closeness in English. Despite her fluency in her mother tongue -Russian- she has chosen to write her book in English mostly because it gives her a sense of belonging, familiarity, security, and an end to immigration. She believes that most individuals remain in a quest for identity, struggling for a sense of belonging until they reach a place they wished for. She introduces English as only one of her voices. As the product of growth and living in a new cultural environment and language, she chooses English over French and Russian to produce her literary works.

As a result, the question of identity is always raised while talking about cultural multilingualism. Identity has never been separated -and can never be separable- from language and culture. Cultural multilingualism holds the quest for identity resulting from simultaneous shifting between various cultures and languages. Consequently, there happens to be a mixture of identities when individuals try to communicate through multiple languages. As an example, we can refer to Kazuo Ishiguro's English books which poured Japanese culture into English written words. The next part of this study marvels at the ways cultural multilingualism is shown in Ishiguro's prominent novel, *Never Let Me Go* (2005). Also, this paper will try to trace features resulting from cultural multilingualism in Ishiguro's dystopian novel.

5. Traces of Cultural Multilingualism in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

Kazuo Ishiguro's dystopian novel is set in a boarding school in the late twentieth-century of England. Although Ishiguro has written several Japanese-based novels such as *An artist of the Floating World* (1986) or *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), he has mostly focused on British society than a Japanese one. In spite of having great honor and regard for Japanese culture, movies, and literature, Ishiguro announces himself as a British novelist. In this novel, Ishiguro pictures a society that raises human clones for the purpose of donating their organs when they grow up. This small society of human clones is kept and raised in the said boarding school, with a separate culture and society from normal citizens of Britain. They are strictly cared for their health, avoid doing certain things of their free will (such as smoking cigarettes), are educated, and are raised to be organ donors in the future. They start their organ donation by being 'carers' as the first step. Meaning they need to take care of the clones that have already started the procedure of donating their organs for several years (Eatough, 2011).

The portrayal of British society in Ishiguro's novel is quite unlike other dystopian novels. In *Never Let Me Go*, British society mainly resembles today's Britain. The only change applied is the living human-clone community living mostly in their boarding schools or dedicated hospitals. The story is narrated in first-person point of view, set largely in 'Hailsham', the boarding school. This school is magnificently different from other clone centers. This school is known for its particular method of educating its clones and mastering them in several types of arts. The story is told by Kathy H., a clone girl who is now thirty-one years old and has worked as a carer for around twelve years. She reminisces about years back when she was studying in Hailsham together with two other of her best friends, Tommy and Ruth. Many believe that by creating *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro has followed the path of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* as an inspiration. However, unlike Huxley, no signs of federal foundations or genetic laboratories are seen in *Never Let Me Go* (Nickels, 2017). But the main question raised by this study is "How can one consider *Never Let Me Go* as a result of cultural multilingualism?"

In his research, Nik Waight (2013) points at a key point about Ishiguro's writing style, especially in *Never Let Me Go*: "Although none of the novels is autobiographical, elements of the author's life are similar to the challenges his

characters face in terms of their outsider status.” (Waight 2013, p. 5) As mentioned earlier, Ishiguro was born and raised in Japan until he reached his fifth year of existence. He resists calling himself a Japanese writer, and he was appointed as a British writer only when he published his first novel back in 1982. He was actually announced as a young British writer without even being a British citizen. Hence, it was quite hard to consider him neither as a British nor a Japanese writer. The same problem happens to almost every bilingual and multilingual child. The similarity of Ishiguro’s life can be traced to Hailsham’s children. Although they were a part of British society, they were never considered to be one. Although they are born and raised in a particularly different culture (Hailsham), they have to adapt themselves to the new culture of British society by the time they are fully graduated from school. Similarly, Ishiguro who was born and raised in Japanese society was transferred to another culture with another language. Many multilingual individuals feel like an outsiders in the target culture, immersed in new values and cultural traditions, totally different from the ones they were once born into.

One of the key factors raised by Waight is that Ishiguro represents English culture as an outsider. Cultural multilingualism leads multilingual individuals to act like outsiders in the target community.

“...by the time a moment like that comes along, there’s a part of you that’s been waiting. Maybe from as early as when you’re five or six, there’s been a whisper going at the back of your head, saying: “One day, maybe not so long from now, you’ll get to know how it feels.” So you’re waiting, even if you don’t quite know it, waiting for the moment when you realize that you really are different to them.” (Ishiguro, 2005, 45)

The search for identity is the mainstream of both Ishiguro’s life and his notable work, *Never Let Me Go*. Cultural multilingualism leads multilingual children to always reminisce about the memory of the past. Childhood memories play an important role in multilingual children’s lives. Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go* could be announced as a strong picturesque of childhood memories and dwellings in the past. Ishiguro deals with the same theme in most of his novels, empowering the ideology of pouring his real-life challenges into his writing style. Children grow up in a society they will never be considered normal citizens. The

experience of a multilingual child living in another culture (other than their ethnic origin) would be the same. Cultural multilingualism sometimes confuses others to identify them due to their particular ethnical background.

On the other hand, there is another element of cultural multilingualism traced in *Never Let Me Go*. Ishiguro utilizes a certain 'Gallery' in which students of Hailsham show their artworks. Although in the earlier parts of the story, almost none of the readers could guess what the hidden notion of holding such an event is, gradually as the children are grown up, they question their previous guardians about the truth beneath holding such a routine event. The truth is somehow shocking for both the readers and the main characters. It follows as Waight explains:

"...the clones never fully comprehend the atrocities of their existence in the way that we do, largely due to the fact that they have repressed reality for most of their lives." (Waight, 2013, p. 10)

Ishiguro reveals a hidden message by pointing out his own struggles living as an ethnical Japanese multilingual child in British society. As mentioned earlier, Ishiguro was officially announced as a British young writer after publishing his first novel. Up to that time, although Ishiguro was indeed a part of British society, he was never fully announced as one.

This fact mirrors the relationship between the success of Ishiguro's first novel and his final acceptance as a British writer. In the ending chapters of the book, the two main characters – Kathy and Tommy – face the biggest truth in their lives. "We took away your art because we thought it would reveal your souls. Or to put it more finely, we did it to prove you had souls at all. 'There, look!' we could say. 'Look at this art! How dare you claim these children are anything less than fully human?'" (Ishiguro 2005, pp. 289-290) The Gallery was a way for the students to prove that they are worthy enough to be recognized as a normal part of human society. The fact that a piece of art – Ishiguro's novel – was the only way for him to be considered a British citizen – or prove his social-cultural presence - reflects the biggest irony of Ishiguro's life and his novel, *Never Let Me Go*.

The artwork (both in *Never Let Me Go* and Ishiguro's life) could be considered a way of regarding an individual as a normal citizen of society – a human.

Correspondingly, one can consider *Never Let Me Go*, a dystopian novel by British-Japanese writer Kazuo Ishiguro, influenced by the factors and elements of cultural multilingualism.

6. Conclusion

The analysis of multilingualism has taken over linguistic and socio-cultural studies for the past few decades. Although there have been numerous ground studies on the matter of multilingualism, there needs to be more made on the matter of cultural multilingualism. This study first presented the interwoven, interlinked relationship between language and culture. As mentioned above, almost none of them can be considered without the other involved. Language is a representation of culture and culture consists of language. The globalization of language and culture in today's world has turned most monolingual countries into multilingual ones. Due to this reason, we cannot consider language without culture being presented, one can indicate that we are living in a multilingual-multicultural world in which cultures and languages are strongly shared, taught, and learned.

This study focused on the quest for identity raised by cultural multilingualism. As a result, the study proved that most multilingual individuals evolve a new identity for themselves whenever they talk, communicate, and act based on another language. Cultural and multilingual aspects both have vital importance in shaping a person's identity and comprehension of selfhood. Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* was utilized in this paper to develop a better understanding of the effects of cultural multilingualism on the literature of multilingual children. As stated in the previous parts of the paper, this novel portrays Ishiguro's dilemmas and challenges as a multilingual child in a new culture and society. It's like Ishiguro has immersed his childhood experiences into the characters presented in *Never Let Me Go*. Ishiguro indirectly pictures the struggles of multilingual children who try to prove themselves as worthy, normal citizens of society. Even though he tries to illustrate a fantastical, dystopian British society, his criticism is alive and obviously felt within his writing style and work. So this paper proved that cultural multilingualism can have great influences on a multilingual writer's mindset, chosen themes, and writing method.

References

- Ahn, J. M., Lee, H. A., & Han, H. Y. (2010). *Korean grammar in use: Beginning to early intermediate*. Darakwon.
- Aronin, L. (2012). Material culture of multilingualism and affectivity. *Oranim Academic College of Education*, 2(2), 188–189. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2012.2.2.3>.
- Bailey, B. (2007). Multilingual forms of talk and identity work. In P. Auer & L. Wei (Eds.), *Handbook of multilingualism and multilingual communication*, (pp. 341–370). Mouton de Gruyter.
- Clyne, M. (2011). Multilingualism, multiculturalism and integration. In M. Clyne & J. Dupp (Eds.), *Multiculturalism and integration: A harmonious relationship* (pp.53–72), ANU Press.
- Dewaele, J. M., & Van Oudenhoven, P. (2009). The effect of multilingualism/multiculturalism on personality: No gain without pain for third culture Kids. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 6(4), 443–457. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790710903039906>.
- Drobot, I.A. (2021). Multilingualism and awareness of cultural differences in communication. In X. Jiang (Ed.), *Multilingualism - Interdisciplinary Topics* (pp. 1–2), Shanghai International Studies University.
- Chomsky, N., (2000), *New horizons in the study of language and mind*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511811937>
- De Bot, K. (2019), Defining and assessing multilingualism. In J. W. Schwieter & M. Paradis (Eds.), *The handbook of the neuroscience of multilingualism* (pp. 3–5). Wiley Blackwell.
- Eatough, M. (2011). The time that remains: Organ donation, temporal Duration, and bildung in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. *The Johns Hopkins University Press*, 29(1), 132–136. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lm.2011.0312>
- Edwards, J. (2009). *Language and identity: An introduction (Key Topics in Sociolinguistics)*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511809842>.
- Elmes, D. (2013). The relationship between language and culture. *National*

Institute of Fitness and Sports in Kanoya: International Exchange and Language Education Center, 46(11), 1–17.

Hoffman, S., & Ytsma, J. (Eds.) (2004). *Trilingualism in family, school and community*. British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data, Multilingual Matters Press. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853596940>

Griffin, G. (2009). Science and the cultural imaginary: The case of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. *Journal of Textual Practice*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 23(4), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502360903000570>

Ishiguro, K. (2005). *Never Let Me Go*. Faber and Faber.

Jakus, E. (2010). *Modern utopia and dystopia in the novel Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro*. GRIN Verlag.

Koven, M. (2007). *Selves in two languages*. John Benjamins Publishing Company: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Lvovich, N. (1997). *The multilingual self: An inquiry into language learning*. Routledge Publication. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203062982>

Mason, G. (1989). An interview with Kazuo Ishiguro. *University of Wisconsin Press*, 30(3), 334–8. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1208408>

Nickels, M. (2017). *Society's influences on Kathy H.'s identity formation in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go*. University of Koblenz-Landau.

Pai, P. (2005). Multilingualism, multiculturalism and education: Case study of Mumbai city. In J. Cohen, K.T. McAlister, K. Rolstad & J. MacSwan (Eds.), *Isb4: Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism* (pp. 1794–6). Cascadilla Press.

Pishghadam, R., & Derakhshan, A. (2020). Culturing analysis of devaluation in the Iranian culture. *Language Related Research*, 12(5), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.5247/LRR.12.5.1>.

Pishghadam, R., Ebrahimi, S., Naji Meidani, E., & Derakhshan A. (2021). An introduction to culturing analysis in light of variational pragmatics: A step toward euculturing. *Research in Applied Linguistics*, 11(2), 15–16. <https://doi.org/10.22055/rals.2020.15945>

Sharifian, F. (2015). *The routledge handbook of language and culture*.

Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.29302/jolie.2019.12.1.12>

Waight, N. (2013). *Memory, ethics and the unreliable narrator in An Artist of the Floating World, The Remains of the Day and Never Let Me Go* [Unpublished M.A. Thesis]. The Open University.

About the Authors

Behzad Pourgharib is an Assistant Professor in English Language and Literature at the University of Mazandaran in Iran, has published numerous articles in both national and international journals. He has also actively presented papers at various conferences. His research interests are broad, focusing on contemporary American and African literature, migration and diaspora, and gender and postcolonial studies.

Fateme Sarabandi Kemak is a Masters graduate from the Golestan University of Gorgan, Iran. She's majored in English Literature and currently teaches English to kids and teenagers in Tehran, Iran. She's also a writing enthusiast and enjoys spending time delving into books of various subjects and genres.