A Fusion of Horizons:
Students' Encounters with *Will and Wave*

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In a case study, I applied philosophical hermeneutic principles in an advanced level EFL writing class in Taiwan. A "fusion of horizons" occurs at the junction of two intertwined interpretations: one from our socio-historical tradition and the other from our experience of novel phenomena. I explored students' hermeneutic horizons in relation to Nietzsche's text *Will and Wave.* Data collection was through classroom observations, informant interviews, and an analysis of three students' interpretive essays. The results indicated that students experienced particular difficulties comprehending metaphors and the author's purpose. Comprehension was a painstaking effort for most students because of their perceived ambiguity of Nietzsche's message. Nevertheless, the text evoked personal stories and new perspectives for some students

Key words: textual interpretation; hermeneutics; metaphor; foreign language reading; foreign language writing; socio-historical understanding

Introduction

As an English teacher in an East Asian context, in my case in Taiwan, I initiated this study to explore if hermeneutic theory could be instigated in a practical manner in a graduate-level EFL (English as a foreign language) advanced writing class. Hermeneutics is the *art* of textual interpretation. According to Reyna (2002), since the 1960s, hermeneutics has been crucial in cultural anthropology and extremely important in "literary criticism, the arts, . . . certain areas of philosophy, the social sciences, and history" (p. 7). Gadamer (1977) tells us that the principles of hermeneutics emerge from the questioning techniques of dialogues, as those in the Socratic dialogues written by Plato. Such questioning strategies can be applied to achieve textual comprehension through readers' imaginary dialogues with written texts. This

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kind of dialogue occurs just as a conversation between two strangers might develop. The dialogue takes on the characteristics of questions and answers, always occurs prior to interpretation, and brings about understanding of an event (Gadamer 1960, 1994, p.465). A hermeneutical conversation commences when the interpreter sincerely opens up " to the text by listening to it and allowing it to assert its viewpoint" (Linge 1977, p. xx). As Palmer (1969) puts it, "Hermeneutics is the art of hearing" (p. 86).

Although Widdowson (1978) proposes that *interpretation* is the bases of the communicative process, its importance has not been extensively emphasized in EFL or SLA (second language acquisition) research. Yet its prominence in language learning and in literacy has been increasingly recognized *theoretically* with a realization that students must come to terms with cultural differences when reading and writing about texts from other languages (Kern & Schultz, 2005). Theoreticians of Critical Language Awareness such as Mandes (2000) have drawn from the hermeneutics of Gadamer and Ricouer in theorizing that the encounter of, "Subject matter and language provide the basis of critical

language awareness" (p.152.) Proponents of genre-based pedagogies also have envisioned writing as dialogic as it draws from a plurality of voices from other texts (Hyland, 2003).

Qualitative studies related to hermeneutical, textual, or dialogic interpretation have been conducted in language learning. For example, Yorke (1986) conducted a study in regard to the use of interpretive tasks to teach short stories; other such studies have been conducted in second language listening (Murphy, 1989); language learning through journal writing (Baily, 1990; Myers, 2001); program planning or educational prioritizing (Kramsch, 1993); rhetorical approaches to interpretation (Kramsch, 1997); teaching text and context in a multimedia Quechua language program (Kramsch & Anderson, 1999); fathoming of Anglo-Saxon and Chinese mythological literature through multi-modal texts (Myers, 2004); understanding of cultural and situational contexts in writing and textual interpretation (Kachru, 1999); and developing learner autonomy among Norwegian 14-year olds through a dialogic reading approach (Fenner, 2001).

Kostelnikova (2001), in a study of Slovakian high school students' interactions with poetry, describes how her students grew more aware of metaphor usage and cultural stereotypes through activities designed on the basis of interpretive theory such as reader response and hermeneutic questioning of the text. Lillis (2003) describes the results of a dialogic approach in her university ESL composition classes as one which compelled her student-writers to wish to bring a hybridity of texts into their writing and "make meaning through logic and emotion, argument and poetry, impersonal and personal constructions of text." (p. 105).

An Exploration into Using *Will and Wave* in an Advanced Thesis Writing Class

In a graduate level writing class, I assigned what Kaufmann (1974) calls "a prose-poem" (p. 248), an excerpt from Nietzsche's (1882, 1974) *The Gay Science*, entitled *Will and Wave*. Some EFL/ESL writing teachers will likely grumble in reaction to this choice and contend that graduate students have certain prescribed skills they must develop, such as how to develop a sound argumentative style. Others might argue that certain philosophical concepts from the German language are untranslatable into English and socio-historically embedded concepts as the German view of *will* are unfathomable, not only to EFL graduate students but to most of us in the twenty-first century who don't have a

background in the German philosophical tradition. They might also argue that a whole body of classical works translated from other languages should be omitted from the literary canon in teaching EFL because of our lack of *schema* of the socio-historical conditions of Greece in the pre-Christian era. Thus, for them, much of Western literature translated into English from *The Odyssey* to *A Thousand and One Nights* cannot be studied in English because they were originally written in another language. We can respond to these arguments to the effect that some of the spirit and language of these works may be lost in time and translatability, but that they are still relevant to our students' needs if they are to have a deep conceptual understanding of the cultural history that is embedded in the English language which has developed out of diverse languages, from Germanic origins to heavy borrowings from Latin, Greek, and Norman French over the course of time. Moreover, much great Western literature in English and other Western languages over the past two thousand-five-hundred years have grown out of such obscure roots as Latin and Greek myths which are much more distant to us in time than nineteenth century German philosophy. In fact, the very roots of many words in the English language are intermingled with mythical thought, as can be see in such terms as *chaos, narcissism, psychology, oedipal complex,* and *erotic*. In studying literary genres such as fables and myth there is, according to Gadamer, (1960, 1994) an "open indeterminancy" (p. 498). Myth can constantly invent new forms within itself and a constantly shifting horizon, as in the many versions of the Faust legend from Marlowe to Valery. Such novel forms even translate into modern cinematic attempts. As Thoreau (1906, 1960) puts it, " Decayed literature makes the richest of all soils" (p. 85). Although one may argue that extensive reading of a wide range of texts is irrelevant to the needs of graduate students in a foreign language who should focus only on language pedagogy issues, extensive reading *is* a major way to understand the target language and becomes even more compelling for graduate students, such as mine, who often come from a variety of majors such as accounting, commerce, and tourism and have weak backgrounds in reading and writing in English.

Kern and Schultz' (2005) argue that few qualitative hermeneutic studies in SLA regarding textual interpretation have been conducted and suggest that the way to understand students' "textual interactions" (p. 388) will likely come through ethnographic studies, interviews, or think-aloud protocols. I commenced this investigation, bearing in mind their call for a qualitative research approach, on the

assumption that culture and language are inextricably linked. Advanced students of foreign languages in an EFL context must not only master a language but also attain competence in the socio-historical current of heterogeneous ideas and viewpoints embedded in both current and classical literary texts. They have to reconcile life experiences derived from their own culture and language with that of the socio-historical perspective emerging from the target language. Additional support for this view comes from cognitive linguistics (Johnson, 1990; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999; Langacker, 2002; Talmy, 2000; Ungerer & Schmid, 1996) which provides meticulous qualitative evidence concerning the manner in which language is based in experience and embodiment, causing humans to represent the world in very specific ways. Moreover, studies from neuroscience (Damasio, 1994; LeDoux , 1998; Lieberman, 2000) have shown that *experience* reforms synapses and creates new connections in the brain. Hence, students should be able to expand their reading and writing interpretive abilities in *concrete* ways through reconciling their past reading experiences with new ones.

A Task-Based Procedure Toward a Fusion of Horizons

A hermeneutic horizon involves both a reader's reflective and creative engagement with a text. For this study, I adapted Gadamer's (1960, 1994) sense of a horizon as a place where an individual encounters a particular kind of text that is rich in its possibility of multiple interpretations. There are similar perspectives from various writers. Walt Whitman (1890, 1990) in his poetry seeks to bring readers " into the atmosphere of the theme or thought " where they can pursue their "own flight" (p. 434). Ricouer (1984) observes that it is the reader who fills in the "holes, lacunae," and "zones of indetermination," (p.77) in a work. For example, Joyce's *Ulysses*, challenges readers to create their own plot. Ricouer (1984, p.79) sees a fusion of horizons that intersect through the world of the reader and the world of a text. These perspectives share the idea that the reading process involves acts of the imagination by the reader. For horizons to fuse, the multiple meanings that rise up from reading a text must merge at some point in readers' minds. This fusion involves a creative process of questioning the text, exploring the underlying meaning, and going beyond it. A fusion of horizons leads to new self-realizations in relation to the world of the text and one's previous experiences and opens up the possibility of writing and expanding on ideas or information in novel ways. This could be an important step in developing scholarly explorations and writing.

In an attempt to develop hermeneutic strategies in my thesis writing class, I designed a task-based activity sheet developed out of the concept of horizon. The questions on this sheet emerged through an analysis of the hermeneutic principles underlying the constitution of a creative and interpretive reader as delineated in Gadamer (1960, 1994), Gadamer (1977), Palmer (1969), and Ricouer (1984). I wanted to test the principles and see if they could enhance reading comprehension and writing. I then asked students to try to apply the question prompts to Nietzsche's text by writing an essay that would emerge from the questions. I chose Nietzsche's text combined with a footnoted commentary by the translator Kaufmann because these passages seemed rich in allusions to socio-historically embedded schema of which EFL students and even native speaking students should be aware. Most of the questions on this worksheet (except for those especially directed toward *Will and Wave)* could also be applied or adopted to a variety of text genres by instructors in reading, literature, or academic writing classes.

Gadamer (1960, 1994) views an individual's horizons as containing presuppositions as to the understanding of events or texts. Hence, in the activity sheet, the first question was: *1) The Title: Look at the title of the text before you read it. Note down what your initial expectations are about what you will read.*

Meaning is context-dependent according to one's field of view, and understanding occurs through absorbing a strange horizon into one's own. Such an experience can create discomfort because the vista of a person's expectations may suffer a reversal. As Kafka says (as cited in Josipovici, 1997), " the only books worth reading . . . are those which come from way beyond our horizon" (p. 171). Kafka thinks that for a book to be worthwhile it should collide with our carefully constructed worlds so that we are forced to face our repressed thoughts. According to Palmer (1969) bridging this tension " between the horizon of the text and that of the interpreter is the task of interpretation" (p. 237). The new horizon for the reader will be what Gadamer calls (1960, 1994) " the appropriation of a literary tradition" (p. 390) which provides one with an experience that is superior to the joys of travel and even other intellectual pursuits. Gadamer also asserts that our horizons of interpretation are linguistically driven because language and understanding are inextricably linked (Linge 1977, p. xxviii). Thus, readers'

horizons are strongly influenced by the characteristics of their native language (or languages, if they are bilingual). From these considerations, I derived the second question on the activity sheet: *2) Presuppositions and Prior Experiences: Before you read, consider and note any possible biases, prejudices, or obstacles you might have that will deter you from understanding the text. What experience do you bring with you in understanding texts in Western poetry and Western scholarly writing?*

The third question on the activity sheet reflects the dialogic nature of textual understanding as delineated in the introduction of this paper: *3) A Textual Conversation: As you begin reading the content, approach it as if you are engaged in a conversation with the text itself and you are initially listening to it. What does it tell you? What do you later tell it? What questions do you have for the text? Can you and the text reach a mutual understanding? Do you find anything that is ambiguous? What is it? Do you find that the piece has a definite meaning? What is it? Does it have multiple meanings? What are they?*

As this was a thesis writing class, the fourth question was directed toward probing the text for its thesis or theses and challenging the reader to go beyond the assertion in the text by engaging in creative academic writing: *4) The Thesis: A thesis involves an assertion about a topic. What is asserted here? Does the piece have a thesis? What is it? Is it directly or indirectly stated? What question or questions did the writer of this work have prior to writing that he answered in his work? Could you develop this thesis further? How?* Question five which is more specific to a particular text will be delineated in a following section. The sixth question enabled students to explore independently the socio-historical context: *6) Background Perspective: How do you think the text came to be written? What was the context or situation in which the text developed? Do you have any idea about the history behind the "ideas" presented in the work? What can you explain or find out about them?* The seventh and ninth questions were expansions on the first two questions as students had to attempt to overcome obstacles and tension that the text presented them to form new horizons for themselves: *7) Strange Perspectives/Pragmatic purposes: Is there anything in this piece that seems strange or makes you feel uncomfortable? What do you find peculiar? Is there anyway that you can overcome this discomfort or strangeness? How did you do this? After overcoming any obstacles, what would you do with this text? Is there any way it could be useful to you?* The final question probed for new perspectives: 9) *New Horizons: Has reading this piece*

affected you or changed you in any way? Are any new elements added to your perspective on the world? Do you think you've exhausted all the meanings of the text? These questions can be applied to any text, whether literary or academic. The other questions on the worksheet were more specific to the text. Questions specific to a text that involve engaging students hermeneutically can be developed by an instructor on a case by case basis. For example, for the following text, I asked: *8) Becoming the Sea: If you were the sea or the waves, how would you respond to the writer or the text?*

The Text: Will and Wave

The text students read and interpreted was Section 310 of *The Gay Science* written by Nietzsche (1882, 1974). Also included were explanatory footnotes by the editor and translator Walter Kaufmann. The passage is as follows:

> *Will and Wave.* – How greedily this wave approaches, as if it were after something!
>
> How it crawls with terrifying haste into the inmost nooks of this labyrinthine cliff!
>
> It seems that it is trying to anticipate someone; it seems that something of value, high value, must be hidden there.—And now it comes back, a little more slowly but still quite white with excitement; is it disappointed? Has it found what it looked for?
>
> Does it pretend to be disappointed?—But already another wave is approaching, still more greedily and savagely than the first, and its soul, too, seems to be full of secrets and the lust to dig up treasures. Thus live waves—thus live we who will—more I shall not say.
>
> So? You mistrust me? You are angry with me, you beautiful monsters? Are you afraid that I might give away your whole secret? Well, be angry with me, arch your dangerous green bodies as high as you can, raise a wall between me and the sun— as high as you can, raise a wall between me and the sun—as you are doing now! Truly, even now nothing remains of the world but green twilight and green lightning. Carry on as you like, roaring with overweening pleasure and malice—or dive again, pouring your emeralds down into the deepest depths, and throw your infinite white mane of foam and spray over them: Everything suits me, for everything suits you so well, and I am so well-disposed toward you for everything: how could I think of betraying you? For—mark my word!—I know you and your secret, I know your kind! You and I—are we not

of one kind?—You and I—do we not have *one secret*? (p. 247- 248)

Kaufmann's Footnotes

Kaufmann (1974) tells us that some critics might object to Nietzsche's mention of vitality since Nietzsche "was sick and in pain" and "half-blind" (p. 248). He suffered from migraine headaches and other ailments. Yet he did not heed his doctor's advice to give up reading and writing. For Nietzsche, writing and the creative urge was life itself. Kaufmann observes that Nietzsche's view of life may at first seem devoid of meaning and purpose and lead to "nausea or despair," but from a "Dionysian perspective" his view "can be experienced as liberating and delightful" (p. 248). Thus, in the hermeneutic exercise, the fifth question asked: *5) Kaufmann's remarks: How do Kaufmann's remarks about Will and Wave influence your understanding of this work?*

The Framework for The Inquiry

The Setting

This study took place in a graduate level thesis writing class over the period of October 2004 to January 2005 in an MA English program at a university in Taiwan. The class had 12 members. I have changed their names to protect their anonymity. The students were all pursing a degree with the professional goal of becoming English teachers in Taiwan.

The Research Questions and Approach

The research approach involved observation over six hours of class time in which I collected data through direct observation, listening, an interview of three students about their classroom small-group discussions in regard to the text, and an analysis of three student's final semester essays. I chose three different strategies in an attempt to triangulate and increase the reliability and validity of a qualitative approach. I asked them to read the text *Will and Wave* and write an essay that emerged from following the work-sheet guidelines. I hoped to learn what benefits or problems might occur in attempting to apply hermeneutic principles in advanced EFL reading and writing and what kinds of expectations and pre-assumptions my students had when reading and writing in English. What were the historical and personal situations of my students as reflected in their

interactions with the passage? As Kent (1993, p. 75) notes, we can broaden our frame of reference in writing research to include storytelling from differing perspectives. This led me to ask, what stories emerged from student's hermeneutic reflections? What changes in perspective in regard to writing, reading, or learning motivation could the dialogic aspects of the questions and the classroom interactions concerning the text bring?

Teaching procedure

I began the teaching procedure during the third class meeting of the semester. Initially, I gave students the passage and explained items one through nine of the worksheet. I asked the students to read the prompts and the text and ask me questions for clarifications. We spent three class periods on this, and then I assigned them an essay to write from the prompts, to be completed in two weeks. After two weeks, they spent an additional three periods of fifty minutes discussing their essays. I arranged students in three groups with four students in each group and asked them to discuss the meaning of the text and their various interpretations. Students thereafter had to re-write their first drafts according to their discussions. I gave them three weeks to do this. On their second drafts I provided feedback on their content, organization, and word usage and asked them to re-write and re-fine their drafts for a third time. If I felt that a student had inadequately answered the prompts as some students did not respond to all of them, I elaborated on how they might respond by re-phrasing the questions in my feedback.

Observations

I used ethnographic techniques to collect observation and interview data. According to Pelto and Pelto (1987): 1) researchers are participant-observers; 2) they should be aware of their own pre-suppositions as much as possible before, during research, and while synthesizing and interpreting research data; 3) they collect data through directly observing human behavior, listening to what people say, and examining human products; 4) they take notes just after the events have occurred and are still fresh in memory; 5) they look for patterns in the data from the notes to explain the behavior they have seen and may ascertain certain principles of behavior from their observations. Hence, I recorded my observations in field notes immediately after the events and sometimes as the class occurred, especially as I observed students in in-group discussions.

In the first encounter with the text, students asked for clarification in regard to a variety of issues after they had read it silently. For example, two students asked for an explanation in regard to the different concepts of a text that *talks* as opposed to the writer of the text. I told them both perspectives were important and to first consider the point-of-view of the text and then consider the writer of the text's perspective. One student asked for the meaning of *mane* as it referred to "white mane of foam." I explained that a " white mane" was a metaphor for a "wave," which could be compared to the white mane of a stallion. Another student wanted to know about Dionysian rites. I said that Dionysius was the Greek god of wine and orgiastic ceremonies and intoxication were associated with him.

In the second meeting after two weeks has passed, as students worked in their groups I observed and sometimes intervened when a student asked for clarification. For instance, one student asked, "What is the meaning of *will* in the sentence '*Thus live waves—thus live we who will—more I shall not say.*"

I explained, " the meaning of will can have different nuances; for example, "will" can mean an intention or it can signify a future action. "

None of the students understood what was meant by the reoccurrence of the same event as mentioned by Kaufmann so I explained that Nietzsche thought, in contrast to Buddhist thought on re-incarnation, that we re-live the same life over and ever again. One female student, Chui Ping, said with a pout, " that would be very boring. "

I replied, " If it is the case that we re-live our life over and over then we should live it to the fullest and such an idea motivates us to live it to the maximum since it is the only life we will ever have. "

Another student, Bo Hung, then discussed the Buddhist idea of cause and effect as embodied in Karma and we clarified the differences between Nietzsche's idea of re-birth and the Buddhist one. After an initial discussion, students read each others' papers and discussed them. The class discussions added depth to the students' understanding of the passage. However, interactions in each group varied, ranging from animated among several members in Group B to dynamic befuddlement in the other groups.

Interviews

To further clarify what had occurred in the group discussions, at the end of the class, I asked three members, one from each group, to remain behind and interviewed them

about their group discussions. At the beginning of the class I had randomly asked one member of each group to be an informant and to pay attention to the interactions in his or her group. The first student, a male, from Group A, Bo Hung, said, " The main obstacles we had in understanding the text were in understanding the symbols and metaphors. "

"Can you give me an example? " I asked.

He said, "Gilda, could not understand what "the beautiful monster" in the text meant. " He then told me that they finally decided that the overall textual significance dealt with the meaning of life and the reoccurrence of the same event. Bo Hung went on to say, "Chinese poetry is richer than Western poetry. "

"How so?" I asked.

"In a single Chinese character there is greater space for imagination, " he replied. He then said, "This reading is not complex, but only understanding the metaphors makes it difficult for us. "

I then interviewed a female, Yung Ping from Group B. Like Gilda, she didn't understand what was meant by the "beautiful monster." She said that Chui Ping and a male, Pui Chung, from her group, saw the meaning of the piece from different perspectives. Pui Chung asserted the "secret" the wave and Nietzsche shared in the last line was that the wave and Nietzsche were one and the same. Pui Chung saw the sea as a source of inspiration, and the roughness of the sea represented the uncertainties of our desires. On the other hand, Chiu Ping saw the sea as an obstacle to Nietzsche's search for knowledge. The sun represented knowledge, and it was blocked by a green wall: the sea did not allow all the sun to shine in and so Nietzsche had to gather the truth in pieces. Yung Ping, my informant, felt that unrequited love was behind the writing and that Nietzsche was alienated from an overly-conservative society and lonely with physical problems.

Group C's representative said, "Our background knowledge is too weak to understand the passage, and the essay we wrote is poor. " He said that one student interpreted the text as a love letter to an ex-girlfriend; another student thought she understood it better after she had considered Kaufmann's remarks.

The students in my class lacked a strong background in Western literature and the history of ideas. This was because many of them came from other majors as undergraduates such as accounting or communications and may not have been exposed to the necessary background material to read the text. Those who had weaker backgrounds in English were upgrading their skills by taking undergraduate literature and

cultural based classes at the same time as they were attending graduate classes.

In regard to similarities and differences between the three groups according to these interviews, it was discernable that members in both groups B and C thought that unrequited love and loneliness had motivated Nietzsche to write the text. Moreover, individual members in groups A and B were puzzled about the meaning of the metaphor "beautiful monster". In group B, the metaphorical meaning of the sea was interpreted differently by two members and resulted in a heated discussion; whereas, in group A, the metaphors mainly were obstacles to understanding. In groups A and C, the members finally decided that the meaning of the text lay in the idea of the sea as symbolizing the eternal reoccurrence of the same life. Unlike group B's members who had more individualized feelings about the text, these members had relied on Kaufmann's explanatory footnotes to understand the passage.

Additional Factors

Besides the research data above, I also informally gathered information from an outside informant who was friends with one of the members of the class. I had known this informant for some time as the informant had previously been my student. I learned that some students (not all) were not happy with the mandatory process method of revision of papers and with other materials in the class. Apparently they would have preferred materials that focused solely on TEFL pedagogy, and they failed to see the usefulness of revising everything they had written.

The Significance of the Observations and Interviews

From the data that emerged from these classroom observations and interviews it appears that students in the three groups had multiple interpretations and personal feelings in regard to the significance of the text. In some cases, after discussion, they were able to come to an agreement, in other ones they remained in disagreement. Most students had difficulties understanding the metaphors and symbols, but at least two students made a detailed effort to interpret their meanings.

Two pedagogical issues relevant to EFL instructors emerged from students' encounters with the text, the teacher's feedback, and their group discussions. First, since the use of metaphors seemed to create barriers in textual understanding, it appears that instructors in reading and

writing courses should try to find the time to explicitly teach about the metaphorical bases of language. To develop pedagogies in this regard instructors should consider applying theory and research emerging from cognitive linguistics (Johnson, 1990; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999; Langacker, 2002). For example, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) think, "all language is ultimately rooted in metaphorical (or analogical) modes of perception and thought, " (p. 2) and they provide scores of historical examples of the metaphorical development of scientific concepts and hundreds of examples of metaphorical phrases in daily use. Additionally, instructors could refer to Holme (2004) who has written explicitly about the applications of conceptual metaphors in foreign language teaching. From the group discussions, I also noted individual variation and disagreements as to the true significance of the text. As Gardner has observed (1993) individuals bring diverse intelligences into a learning situation and this is as true in Taiwan or in East Asian contexts as in America.

A Textual Analysis and Discussion of Three Student Papers

Of the twelve graduate students, three chose to further develop the paper beyond an initial three drafts and handed it in as their final term paper. Thus, I chose these three to analyze because they had been the most stimulated to continue to develop their horizons in regard to the text *Wave and Will.* These students were not the same students who I had interviewed. Two of them were Taiwanese females: Mi Tag and Chang Cho, and the other participant was a Taiwanese male: At Sai.

In analyzing their essays I combined strategies from deconstructionism (Feldman, 1995; Schrift, 1990); philosophy (Kahn, 1979; Whitehead 1938, 1968;), hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1977; Palmer, 1969;; Ricouer, 1984), media semiotics (Danesi, 2002), and narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993). I chose these broad frameworks because through the varied lenses they provided I was able to analyze in stages each student's hermeneutic strategies from their initial encounters with the text and their obstacles to understanding, until the point where new horizons of interpretation emerged. From these interdisciplinary perspectives, I developed four categories of analysis of their texts: 1) subtexts; 2) inconsistencies, ambiguities, disconnected thoughts, dichotomies, what was left unsaid, strangeness, and, uncertainty; 3) reoccurring images, and 4) emerging and novel patterns of thought. In the above framework, subtext refers to the previous experience

that the reader brings to his or her encounter with the text. Such experiences could deal with life experiences or inter-textual allusions. Inter-texts are other narrative texts to which the text alludes to "by citation or implication" (Danesi, 2002, p. 63). The second category of the analysis above, incorporates deconstructive techniques. According to Feldman, (1995) a deconstructionist looks for the varied significances underlying a text, dialogue, or occurrence. A deconstruction seeks the most prominent "ideology in the text" (p 5), dialogue, or occurrence and other possible categories that could be used to interpret them. "Taken-for-granted categories (often in the form of dichotomies) and silences or gaps are elements that support the dominant ideology. Disruptions (sometimes in the form of a slip of the tongue or a joke) are elements that reveal the possibility of other meanings and the instability of the dominant ideology" (p. 5). In regard to categories 3) and 4), as Whitehead notes (1938, 1968), "understanding has two modes of advance, the gathering of detail within assigned pattern, and the discovery of novel pattern with its emphasis on novel detail." (p. 57-58). As I read through their essays, I numbered and color-coded them according to the four categories to try to locate each student's main preoccupations in responding hermeneutically to the text. Thus, I focused on the re-occurrences of patterns and images in their thoughts about the text, on their previous experiences with texts, on any uneasiness or tensions they felt which might have led to their deconstructing of the text, and on emerging images that reflected their new horizons of interpretation and a reconciliation of the tensions.

At Sai initially thought that the title *Will and Wave* reminded him of Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. He then wrote about a personal event evoked by the text: In my childhood I enjoyed playing on the beach and chasing the waves. Once there was a typhoon about to leave, I went to see the huge waves caused by the typhoon with others . . . .With the wind simmered a bit, a few people started to risk and get closer to the waves. I was . . . . carried away by the wave . . .I lost conscious . . .I was brought back to the beach . . .I thought the wave played a big joke on me, but luckily it was a kind one.

At Sai twice admitted in his essay to being baffled with what Nietzsche meant when he wrote, *Everything suits me, for everything suits you so well, and I am so well-disposed toward you for everything: how could I think of betraying you?* He added that the thesis could be, "Abandon unnecessary will and learn from the waves." For him, will is something that is imposed on one by society and its importance is overemphasized by society. Yet later he stated

that it was necessary to develop a strong will to overcome society's ills. At Sai equated the waves with life, questions about the meaning of life, and a criticism of what he saw as current social ills in people's superficial values such as worship of fame, materialism, and the rampant commercialism of the internet and television. He decided that a new horizon that emerged from his interaction with the text was that he began to question his life mission. This questioning began with seeing how Nietzsche was able to produce great works and stay focused in face of illnesses such as half-blindness and migraine headaches. He felt that he had to learn to stick to something, and that up to this point in his life he still had not found a definite goal.

Mi Tag stated that she was prejudiced before she began to read because her previous experience and exposure to Nietzsche had been a negative one in an undergraduate class. She professed to a dislike of philosophy and thought that the course should only focus on academic writing related to TEFL. As she tried to read *Wave and Will* she felt that she was trying to penetrate a fog and wondered who "you" was in the text, and "who was the monster?" She also didn't understand Kaufmann's remarks because she had no idea about the philosophical concepts that he discussed. She found that many of the words made her uncomfortable and were strange, for example, "greed," "lust," "mistrust," "monster," "the deepest depths," and "Dionysius" (as mentioned by Kaufmann). The words were odd and discomforting, because, "He didn't tell the readers what happened to these words and him.' She had to read blindly through the text. In her essay, she referred repeatedly to blindness, fog, and to Nietzsche's sickness, misery, and loveless existence as having some significance behind the text. She concluded that in fact there was no meaning to what she was reading, and Nietzsche had purposely " left a lot of space for imagination for the reader." Finally, however, she decided that this vagueness or ambiguity actually made the text more interesting. After initial feelings of negativity and receiving feedback on two negative drafts in regard to the text, she began to reappraise her vistas. For example, as part of the assignment she was asked to become the sea and respond to the text. She wrote that if she were the sea, " I would be a wonderful listener and accept all the merits and shortcomings from Nietzsche. I would have the power of containing the myriad things in the world."

The third student, Chang Cho, stated that she was usually mystified by philosophy and so when she first encountered any philosophical work she had no idea what to expect. She conjectured from the title that it was metaphorical

with *will* being something abstract, and *wave* something concrete. She had previously relied on teachers' explanations in order to understand poetic or philosophical works. She initially felt that she had to read it slowly and carefully and analyze each word in the text. As she read she found it was hard to understand the strange symbols. She queried, 'Who is you?' in the statement "You mistrust me." She wondered, "Why should "*you*" mistrust me?' She also asked, "What did *beautiful monsters* infer? What is *the secret* and why must it be shared by *us*?'' She noted the reoccurrence of the word *green* in the text. In her group discussion one participant interpreted "green" as symbolic of sickness and she thought this was a plausible explanation for its usage. A reoccurring thesis was that *wave* symbolized the will for life. Some emerging images or new horizons, came when she envisioned that she was a wave (not the sea). She said that as a wave she would be the confidant of the poet and would only be a tiny wave, not the whole sea, but the poet would recognize her running back and forth. The poet would give meaning to her life. For her, the poem indicated "a way of living a regular and hopeful life." Chang Cho concluded that human life is like the sea in that it goes in cycles, sometimes it is calm, other times turbulent, and life moves like waves grasping for hope "up and down, back and forth—from dawn to twilight."

Conclusion

In language teacher-training at the EFL graduate level, students often lack background knowledge about the history and culture embedded in the target language. They also may lack awareness of the nuances of metaphorical usage. They should be exposed to a wide range of target language texts and not simply to those that have an academic focus.

Not every text has a definite or easily agreed upon meaning. Some texts may be intentionally ambiguous. A work of literary art usually opens itself up to multiple interpretations. However, this same phenomena occurs in academic research where students will confront ambiguities and conflicts in interpretations from study to study. The nature of scholarly writing too is dialogic and even data analysis is open to multiple and novel interpretations. If we approach texts as conducive of such multiple interpretations, we as teachers can communicatively enrich our classes by having students share their different interpretations with each other.

In this case, through a hermeneutic reading and writing approach that incorporated an art of questioning and dialogue,

students confronted an alien text that initially mystified most of them. They had to cognitively stretch themselves in trying to understand discourse that was laden with metaphors and usages that were at first strange. It was difficult for them to come to an agreement as to the meaning of the text although in some of the groups, students were able to arrive at some partial agreement as to the significance of some phrases and general agreement as to the overall thesis. The fact that they did not find complete closure as to the meaning is not surprising from a hermeneutic standpoint. Gadamer (1977) asserts that a dialogue can be carried on forever. One may break it off, "but every such break has an intrinsic relation to the resumption of the dialogue" (p. 67).

As reflected in an analysis of three essays, each student brought their own unique backgrounds toward understanding this particular literary text, and they had different stories to tell about themselves in relation to the text. By explicitly and implicitly urging students to arrive at new horizons through a hermeneutic worksheet, each student apparently found something personally important that emerged out of his or her engagement with the passage. For example, for At Sai, from the readings came a recognition of the importance of having a goal. For Mi Tag, it was the realization that she had to open up her listening skills and become a listener as she read through a text. For Chang Cho, the prose-poem indicated that one could discover meaning in the small things of daily life, such as in the constant movement of waves that were always changing and in which new phenomena can always be observed if one pays attention. She also took on the characteristics of a good philologist in the way she thought she should approach the reading of a philosophical work. She considered that it should be done slowly and carefully and each word should be understood. In this activity all the students *had the opportunity* to dynamically enhance their reading, creative writing, speaking, visualization, and listening skills. However, not every student was happy with this assignment and many of them were more interested in writing on academic subjects that prepared them to write their Master's thesis. For this reason, I do not think I will use *Will and Wave* as a text in a thesis-writing course again. Instead, this text might be suitable in a literature or writing course for undergraduates. As for the activity sheet itself, most of the items on it not specifically addressing *Will and Wave* could be generally applied to a variety of texts and especially to genres of a rhetorical nature as well as poetry.

The choice of *Will and Wave* as the means of increasing reading comprehension skills in this study, demonstrated that an inability to grasp the sense of metaphorical usage caused

initial discomfort and befuddlement in the reading process. The importance of the understanding of metaphorical usage for EFL students engaged in academic writing can be summed up by Lakoff and Johnson who assert (1999), "metaphor can hardly be distinguished from trope (figure of speech) in general . . . . such things as fables, parables, allegories, myths, and models, including scientific models, can be seen, by implication, as "extended and sustained metaphors" (pg. 5). In further research, by applying hermeneutic principles to textual understanding, as envisioned here, with other genres, (for example, academic articles, ESP texts, or persuasive essays) different results may emerge that may involve student's self-perceptions and creative research skills as they become readers who engage dialogically with what they read. There is evidence (Holyoak & Tagard, 1985; Tang, 1997) that traditionally in Chinese writing, stemming from Confucius, Mencius and Kao Tzu, analogies and extended metaphors have been common. More comparative studies focusing on metaphorical thinking amongst Chinese students in *interpreting* Western texts could reveal problems students from Confucian traditions have and possible pedagogical solutions to those problems. Additionally, more research could be directed toward how reading texts in a foreign language change student's beliefs. As Nietzsche asserted (Nehamas, 1985) our text is being created as we read it. Interpretation is introduction of new meaning to old ones.

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