

# ความพึงพอใจของนิสิตที่มีต่อการบูรณาการ นวนิยาย Chick Lit เข้ากับการเรียนการสอนในชั้นเรียน

## Students' Satisfaction on the Integration of Chick Lit Novels into Classroom Instruction

กฤติยา สิทธิเชนทร์ (Krittiya Sittichane)<sup>1</sup>

### บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้เป็นงานวิจัยเชิงปฏิบัติการที่มีวัตถุประสงค์คือเพื่อนำเสนอการการศึกษาอัตลักษณ์และคุณค่าของผู้หญิงที่ประกอบสร้างในสังคมสมัยใหม่ มาใช้ในการวิเคราะห์วรรณกรรมกับการเรียนการสอนในชั้นเรียน โดยเน้นการใช้ทฤษฎีทางวรรณกรรมและการศึกษาเพื่อพัฒนาทักษะการคิดวิเคราะห์ของผู้เรียน นวนิยาย Chick Lit ถูกเลือกสรรและวิเคราะห์ตัวละครหญิงโดยใช้ทฤษฎีสตรีนิยมเป็นกรอบการศึกษาและวิเคราะห์ กลุ่มตัวอย่างได้แก่นิสิตชั้นปีสามวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ มหาวิทยาลัยทักษิณ ข้อมูลที่ใช้ในการศึกษามาจากผลสำรวจความพึงพอใจของนิสิต แบบสำรวจความพึงพอใจ แบ่งออกเป็นสามด้าน ได้แก่ ความรู้และทฤษฎีเพื่อการคิดวิเคราะห์ และการตระหนักรู้ถึงอัตลักษณ์และคุณค่าของผู้หญิง ข้อมูลถูกวิเคราะห์โดยใช้ ค่าร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ย และค่าเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน จากผลการศึกษาวิจัยความพึงพอใจรวมของนิสิตที่มีต่อการบูรณาการการวิเคราะห์วรรณกรรมกับการเรียนการสอนในชั้นเรียนอยู่ในระดับที่สูง (ค่าเฉลี่ย = 4.19) โดยที่ความพึงพอใจในและทฤษฎีเพื่อการคิดวิเคราะห์ และการตระหนักรู้ถึงอัตลักษณ์และคุณค่าของผู้หญิงอยู่ในระดับที่สูง ทั้งสามด้าน (ค่าเฉลี่ย = 4.29, 4.24 และ 4.04 ตามลำดับ)

**คำสำคัญ** : นวนิยาย Chick Lit, คุณค่าของผู้หญิง, ภาษาคติความงาม, การบูรณาการ

<sup>1</sup> อาจารย์, สาขาวิชาภาษาตัวอันตก คณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยทักษิณ สงขลา 9000.  
e-mail : krittiya.sit@gmail.com

## Abstract

The research was an action research with a purpose to integrate literary analysis of women's identities and values constructed in modern society in Chick Lit novels to classroom instruction. Literary theories and gender studies were highlighted and students' analytical skills were enhanced. Chick Lit novels were selected to conduct a textual analysis of the female characters, and feminist approach was utilized as a primary conceptual framework. The participants were 70 third-year English major students of Thaksin University. The research data was collected by students' satisfaction survey divided into three major satisfaction areas related with literary theory and gender knowledge; analytical skills; and realizing women's true identities and values. The data were analyzed using percentage, mean and standard deviation.

The research finding indicated overview of students' satisfaction to the integration of literary analysis with classroom instruction had high level (mean = 4.19). Students' satisfaction gave high levels those entire three major satisfaction areas (means= 4.29, 4.24 and 4.04, respectively).

**Keywords** : Chick Lit novel, Woman's value, Beauty Myth, Integration

## Introduction

Chick Lit has been widely discussed among scholars whether it provided benefit to the reader. Despite bad reputation of being superficial and trashy, Chick Lit allows readers to explore the ideas of how women are victimized by the patriarchal capitalist society. It reflects the ideas of women's images, identities, and values and shares a similar context of beauty myth and consumerism circulated in the society. As for teaching and learning literature, Chick Lit has also been questioned if it is appropriate as a medium used for instruction. In fact, teaching Chick Lit in literary classroom is considered appropriate since

the contexts of the novel itself are similar to the context of the reader. Teachers are recommended to allow students to relate what they read in literary texts to what they have experienced during their lives ( Floris, 2004, cited in Khatib, 2011). Streffensen argued that teachers should provide scaffolded assistance with literary texts. Moreover, teaching literature in class should be done through the whole process, with the students' assessment. Still, the majority of research has focused on how much a student's skills improved... but has largely ignored a perspective on student's perception of classroom activities. Not many research studies explored how students react to classroom literature teaching practices. (Green, 1993; Fogal, 2011). It is essential to obtain students' feedback since teachers need it for improving their teaching methodology and managing classroom instruction. Hence, the study was drawn with the aims to integrate Chick Lit analysis focusing on the issues of women's identities and values, Beauty myth and consumerism in classroom, and also obtain their satisfactory feedback of learning outcome.

## **Purpose of the study**

To integrate the study and analysis of women's identities and values constructed in modern society portrayed in Chick Lit novels to classroom instruction

## **Literature Review**

### **Chick lit**

The term Chick Lit was coined by a novelist Chris Mazza when co-editing Chick Lit: Postfeminist Fiction (1996) as " a genre with a form of contemporary popular fiction written by women, about women, (largely) for women depicting the lives, loves, work and relationships of young, single, urban, female protagonists". Joanne Knowles (2004, cited in Sarah Gormley, 2009) additionally detailed Chick Lit as whilst plotlines are variable, chick lit can be internally defined

by the structure of a female central character “seeking personal fulfillment in a romance-consumer-comedic vein”. Natalie Rende (2008, cited in Esther Voon Suk Hsein, 2009) significantly described the criterion characteristics that Chick Lit needs to have as

A ‘young’ female protagonist (typically post-graduate, mid-20s through early 30s) [...] a posh urban setting, most frequently Manhattan, New York City or London – a Los Angeles or Philadelphia thrown in here and there [...] an occupation based primarily in the communications industry i.e. publishing, advertising, public relations, journalism, fashion ... problems in the workplace, which typically occupy a significant portion of the text, ranging from insufferable coworkers (usually other women), and infatuation with either the boss or a male coworker, or being stuck in a ‘dead end’ job [...] frequent romantic entanglements, but remains single throughout much of the text (and woefully laments such a status) until the ending [...] excessive compulsive behaviors i.e. obsessively spending money, strict dieting [...] eccentric mothers who represent foils to their ‘independent’ daughters. (16)

Chick Lit is distinct from romantic novels written by female authors. While female authors’ novels focus on romantic relationship between male and female, Chick Lit, instead, pay attention to female protagonists’ relationship with various circumstances. Srijani Ghosh ( 2013) stated that Chick lit targets a very different demographic of urban, working, upwardly mobile, middle class women in their 20s and 30s try to balance everything in their lives i.e. career, friends, family and lovers, and that struggle leads to the conflict in the stories. Thus, it can be said that Chick Lit subtly portrays more complex layers of characters’ relationship. Despite the reputation of being shallow and unoriginal, Chick Lit allows readers to explore the insights of how women are oppressed and victimized by the patriarchal system and society. Moreover, Ferris and Young (2006) proposed in Chick Lit: The New Woman’s Fiction that Chick Lit reflects the lives of everyday working young women and men and appeals to the readers who want to see

their own lives in all the messy details reflected in fiction today. The typical Chick Lit protagonist is not perfect but flawed, eliciting readers' compassion and identification". With the perfect imperfection depicted in female protagonists, Chick Lit seems realistic to the readers that they share some similar characteristics with the protagonists so they readers can easily identify themselves with the characters.

### **Concepts of Value**

Value mentioned in Women's Value is not regarded to the qualitative sense of value relating to subject of exchange even though question of value poses itself as things produced by human labor. Deo Villaflor (2014) defined value as "fundamental and important to an individual's existence for, in effect, they define what is desirable and meaningful to him as social being...guide man's behavior and action as he relates himself in most situation in life." Kluckhorn (1951, cited in Oranit Rungchaimongkol, 2006) proposed that " a value is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available means and ends of action...including moral judgment, justifications of oneself and others, comparisons of oneself with others". Value can disclose the cultural norms of a society, specify the ways in which a person should behave, and permit a person to make decisions about relationships by specifying what is good or bad, right or wrong, and appropriate or inappropriate ( Samovar and Porter,1995, cited in Oranit Rungchaimongkol, 2006).

Considered through Feminist framework, women's value have been defined by patriarchal system using criteria constructed by men. To men and society, women's value is labeled as beauty and sexual attractiveness. However, there has been an attempt for feminism to refuse to conform men's constructed value but to define women's value on their own as to be personally strong, not for dominating others, but to impart their love, truth and faith •in themselves and

other women. . This- personal power enables a woman to be active, assertive and skillful, and not allow oneself to be a passive victim (Singh, 2003). Hence, women's value should be focused to individuality and diversity which encouraging women to enhance their self-esteem, self-respect including self-awareness of their contributions to others.

### **Beauty Myth**

Beauty Myth was proposed by Naomi Wolf in her work entitled "The Beauty Myth : How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women" (1991). The Beauty myth is a tool of patriarchal system to control women's increasing status in politics and economics Beauty myth confines women in the false ideology of "standard and Ideal beauty" (slim shape, light skin, oval face, long legs etc.) as "the beauty myth is not about women at all. It is about men's institutions and institutional power ....Though there has, of course, been a beauty myth in some form for as long as there has been patriarchy, the beauty myth in its modern form is a fairly recent invention. (p.13-16)

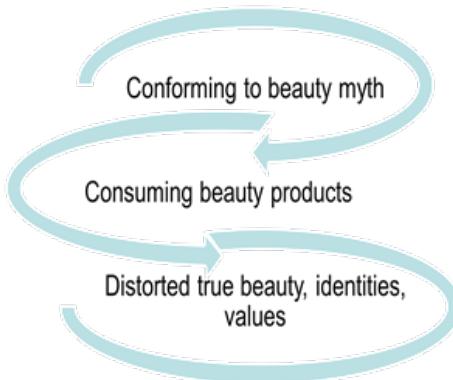
Women must want to those posses standardized beauty and men must want to possess women who embody it. In addition, women's success and social status are indicated by their beauty and appearance. Beauty functions in sexual selection, fertility and reproduction, showing the women are regarded by the patriarchal society as successful women. Ghosh (2013) stated that the it is the possession of a perfect body that appears to be considered the source of a woman's self-confidence and identity. Hence, Beauty myth victimized women, causing women's obsession in physical appearance that self-hatred, low self-esteem, and feeling of insecurity in their status.

### **Collaboration of beauty myth, media and consumerism**

Looking through feminist lens at the patriarchal system to control women, it is revealing that Beauty myth, media and consumerism have effectively collaborated to victimize women. That is, women are convinced to conform the ideal beauty advertised in media. Distinct appearance leads to feeling of

insecurity that they are flawed and unaccepted. The insecurity makes women consume beauty products, clothes, and accessories advertised.

**Figure 1** The process of women's victimization under the collaboration of beauty myth, media and consumerism



#### **Aims of integrating Chick Lit into classroom instruction**

1. To prevent students from being victimized by the beauty myth and consumerism
2. To make students aware of their gender's identities and values, leading to awareness of their positions in the society
3. To enhance students' understanding of literary theory and their analytical skills

#### **Demographic Information**

The respondents of the study comprised 70 third-year -English major students at Thaksin University who enrolled in Contemporary Literature course. All of the respondents had passed two literary courses: Introduction to Prose and Poetry and Introduction to Literature. There were 16 males and 54 females with ages range from 19 to 21 More than half of the respondents obtained good

grades in both courses; 32.86 per cent of the students obtained B+ and 25.71 percent obtained B in Introduction to Prose and Poetry course, and, similarly, 21.43 of the students obtained B+ and 31.43 percent obtained B in Introduction to Literature course. Hence, the majority of respondents had good background knowledge and basic analytical skills to confidentially investigate and discuss women's identities and values through Chick Lit novels analysis. In addition, most of them had experienced reading or watching Chick Lit (64.29 %) but had never been aware of gender issues portrayed in the works

**Table 1** Respondents' sexuality in percentage

Sex	Number	Percentage
Male	16	22.86
Female	54	77.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table 2** Respondents' experience in Chick Lit

Sex	Number	Percentage
Yes	45	64.29
No	25	33.71

**Table 3** Respondents' grades in the courses Introduction to Prose and Poetry and Introduction to Literature

Grades	Introduction to Prose and Poetry	Percentage	Introduction to Literature	Percentage
A	8	11.43	4	5.71
B <sup>+</sup>	23	32.86	15	21.43
B	18	25.71	22	31.43
C <sup>+</sup>	10	14.29	11	15.72
C	9	12.86	13	18.57
D <sup>+</sup>	2	2.85	5	7.14
D	0	0.00	0	0.00
E	0	0.00	0	0.00

## Methodology

This study was conducted in a mixed method research methodology. The first phrase was focused on literary analysis of women's identities and values. In this phrase, three Chick Lit novels were selected for the study i.e. Bridget Jones' Diary, Confessions of a Shopaholic, and Devil Wears Prada. Feminist framework of Naomi Wolf's Beauty Myth and consumerism were employed in the study to analyze the issues of women's identities and values in the modern society which appeared in the selected novels. The second phrase was the integration of the finding from Chick Lits novel analysis in the first phrase with the classroom instruction of Contemporary Literature. 70 third-year-English major students enrolled in this course. At the end of the course, respondents were assigned to have group work presentation in a seminar titled "Looking at Myth and Women in Modern Society" which was also attended by academic staffs and outside people with interest in women's issue. Data was collected by observing respondents' presentation performance in the seminar and a satisfactory survey of their learning outcomes from the classroom instruction. The survey was

divided into three major satisfactory areas: gender and literary theory knowledge; integration and reflection skills; and ability to realize their gender identity and value.

### **Integration of Chick Lit novels**

Step 1 : Students were allowed to expose Chick Lit. Also, Student were assigned to read Chick Lit novels to experience the main themes and contexts of the texts

Step 2 : Students were assigned to focus on some specific content of the novels in order to find the messages conveyed. After that, teacher introduced gender issues conveyed in the specific content of each novel.

Step 3: Teacher asked students to relate gender issues presented in Chick Lit novels to their own contexts.

Step 4: Teacher introduced the more complex concepts of women's identities and images, beauty myth and consumerism in modern society. In addition, teacher assisted students in scaffolding the knowledge of those concepts by allowing students to do textual analysis in Chick Lit novels.

Step 5: Students were assigned to make the analysis of the novels, focusing to the idea that women's true beauty, identities and values were distorted by beauty myth and consumerism. Teacher, additionally, assisted students in integrating knowledge of gender's identities and value, beauty myth and consumerism into their own context.

Step 6 : In the last step, students were assigned to reflect their knowledge and analytical skills gained from classroom. Students then were assigned to do group presentation and discussion in the seminar. Finally, students were asked to assess their satisfaction of learning outcome from the classroom.

### **Measurement & Data analysis**

In this study, questionnaire was adapted from Donald Kirkpatrick's Evaluation in Instructional Design( 2006) and Learning Outcome Assessment Matrix provided by The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).The questionnaire was

designed using a five-point Likert scale to find out the level of the students' satisfaction of learning outcome from integrated instruction. Learning outcome was divided into 3 aspects: knowledge; knowledge integration and reflection; and realization. The quantitative results of the satisfaction survey was analysed using SPSS that Arithmetic Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) & Standard Deviation (S.D.) were employed to calculate the level of satisfaction based on the following criteria:

**Table 4** Data analysis of respondents' satisfaction of learning outcome

Scale	Mean range	Satisfactory level	Score range
1	Extremely satisfied	Very high	4.50-5.00
2	Very satisfied	High	3.50-4.49
3	Moderately satisfied	Average	2.50-3.19
4	Slightly satisfied	Low	1.50-2.49
5	Not at all satisfied	Very low	1.00-1.49

## Findings of the study

According to the table 6, the mean scores of the respondents' satisfaction with the gender and literary theory knowledge range from 4.04 to 4.44 with an average mean score of 4.29, falling into the level of very satisfied. This finding can be interpreted that the students had positive responses to what they had learned in the class. The highest mean score is obtained from item 3 "I receive knowledge of the image of women in modern society." ( $\bar{x} = 4.44$ ,  $S.D. = 0.59$ ) at

the very satisfied level, while the lowest mean score is obtained from the item 6 “I receive knowledge of literary theory” ( $x=4.04$ ,  $S.D.=0.81$ ) at the very satisfied level as well.

Concerning the respondents' attitudes toward their knowledge integration and reflection ability, the respondents were very satisfied with the statements that they were able to integrate the knowledge of beauty mythical concept, and consumerism in modern society to the study and analysis of Chick Lit novels ( $x= 4.04$ ,  $S.D. = 0.63$ ). Likewise, respondents were very satisfied that they were able to reflect the knowledge gained from classroom in the seminar presentation entitled “Women and Identities in Modern Society” ( $x =4.04$ ,  $S.D. =0.64$ ). Subsequently, the average mean scores fall into the same point at 4.04, falling into level of very satisfied, indicating the positive attitudes toward their ability of knowledge integration and reflection.

As for the attitudes toward the realization of their gender identity and value as well as beauty myth and consumerism in modern society, the mean scores range from 4.19 to 4.35 with an average mean score of 4.27, falling into the very satisfied level. This indicates that the respondents have positive attitudes toward their ability to realize their own gender identity and value in society including their awareness of beauty myth and consumerism. The highest mean score is obtained from item 3 “I am aware of beauty myth and consumerism in modern society, and will not be victimized by them” ( $x= 4.35$  ,  $S.D. = 0.65$ ) at the very satisfied level, while the lowest mean score is obtained from the item 1 “I realize my gender identity in society” ( $x=4.19$ ,  $S.D.=0.75$ ) at the same level.

In sum, according to all questions of three main aspects including knowledge, knowledge integration and reflection, and realization, the findings revealed that the respondents were very satisfied with the study of women's identities and values through Chick Lit novels ( $x = 4.27$ ,  $S.D =0.49$ ).

**Table 5** Respondents' satisfaction of Learning Outcome from integrating Chick Lit into classroom instruction

Item	Learning Outcome	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	level
Respondents' satisfaction of Knowledge				
1	I have received knowledge of beauty mythical concept.	4.39	0.58	High
2	I have received knowledge of a capitalist and consumerist society.	4.38	0.64	High
3	I have received knowledge of an image of women in a modern society.	4.44	0.59	High
4	I receive knowledge of the roles and values of women in a modern society.	4.40	0.62	
5	I have received knowledge of the identities of women in a modern society.	4.35	0.65	High
6	I have received knowledge of literary theory.	4.04	0.81	High
7	I have received knowledge of Chick Lit novels definition, elements and characteristics.	4.19	0.70	High
8	I have received knowledge of literary analysis.	4.16	0.74	High
	Total	4.29	0.51	High

Item	Learning Outcome	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	level
Respondents' satisfaction of knowledge integration and reflection				
9	I am able to integrate the knowledge of beauty mythical concept and consumerism in modern society to the study through analysis of Chick Lit novels	4.04	0.63	High
10	I am able to reflect the knowledge gained from classroom in the seminar presentation entitled "Women and Identities in Modern Society".	4.04	0.64	High
	Total	4.04	0.60	High
Respondents' satisfaction of realization				
11	I have realized my gender identity in society.	4.19	0.75	High
12	I have realized my gender value in society and myself.	4.28	0.68	High
13	I have learned to be aware of beauty myth and consumerism in modern society, and will not be victimized by them	4.35	0.65	High
	Total	4.27	0.69	High
	Overall	4.24	0.49	High

## Discussions and Conclusions

The highlights that need to be discussed are the items with the highest and the lowest mean scores. It is interesting that the respondents' satisfaction toward the literary theory knowledge is the lowest among all knowledge received from the classroom instruction. This is opposite to the fact that those respondents have passed two literary courses and had some skills of literary analysis; therefore they should have more easily understood the theory of literature. This is because

the students' exposure to literary theory is limited in an academic context of classroom which relies on teachers' instruction. In contrast, despite the same level of very satisfied, respondents agreed that they could access to the concept of women's image than others concepts of women's identities and roles; beauty myth; and consumerism. This is because the image of women in modern society is often reproduced and presented through various types of media such as internet, advertisements, movies, magazines. Respondents have more exposure opportunity because the learning women's image is not restricted in classroom instruction only. It is widely and generally presented in the society. However, the concept of the image of women in modern society was distorted and the respondents needed to change the perception and attitudes toward this concept.

As for the knowledge integration and reflection satisfaction, the mean score is the lowest when comparing to the other aspects. The reason is that studying Chick Lit is new for the respondents. Although some of them have experienced watching or reading Chick Lit, studying the issues of women's identities and value distorted by Beauty myth and consumerism in modern society is academic context which is distinct from reading for pleasure. In addition, the respondents' integrations of their knowledge with the analysis of Chick Lit novel including reflect their understandings are complicated. The teacher had to deliberately make respondents relate the feminist theory to the analysis of Chic Lit novels and develop to the new understanding of how women's identities and values are distorted by the beauty myth and consumerism. It is suggestive that respondents need to develop the knowledge both inside and outside the classroom.

The learning outcome satisfaction of knowledge and ability in integration d reflection is related to realization, as the ultimate goal of the study. Students' awareness of their gender identity and value and realization that they will not be victimized by the beauty myth and consumerism indicated that the purposes of

the study were finally achieved. The study was mainly done in order to prevent the students from the victimization that beauty myth and consumerism could cause them to the loss of self-esteem, and to the overconsumption of products which can lead to the commodity worship in the future.

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