



writing portfolio

for colour and one
white," said Lau.
Whether in color
au's photographs a
ment of life in
m of the m
er such
ople

table of contents

artist statement	3
evergreen	6
cleaning robot	16
IB English Extended Essay: Indifference in literature	17
acid rain	31
Research Paper: Chinese Language Skills & Typing Proficiency	32
Research Paper: Moving Beyond the “Proper” Language: A Case Study of Tibet	50
world’s last diary entry	63
IB English HL Essay: Eloquence in Shakespeare	64
don’t worry about us	70



artist statement

I grew up like a STEM boy. Whereas some writers start young, crafting narratives and building characters from their earliest memories, I found my childhood adorned with fractions and equations and out-of-school classes, farthest from a writer one could have been. It was a time when my mom, my teachers, and even I, thought I was dedicated to going down the path of a mathematician, chemist, or engineer: with a bowl cut and thick glasses that seemed almost too fitting, I calculated with no worry of writing, no idea of stories, no interest in words.

It was during middle school when the shift began. Listening to the teacher from my out-of-school classes talk about sines and cosines, my mind drifted beyond the graphs on the whiteboard, to the swaying willows outside the window, back to the phone in my pocket. I knew better than to use it during classes, but my favorite content creator at the time had just released a podcast – about “Dungeons and Dragons”. I had no idea what it meant, but I knew it would at least be easier to listen to than trigonometry, so I saw no better time to drop in and have a listen.

Slowly, a two-hour episode turned into four episodes, then twenty. The time I didn’t spend hastily scribbling down answers to questions was spent intently listening to the story playing in my head, hungrily hanging on to every word:

“...Br’aad, you watch as the wind ruffled the grass in front of your brother’s grave, the flowers you placed down glistening under the sun.

‘Sylvan... I’ve missed you.’”

I sensed the teacher come around to my table. Instinctively, I prowled over the math question on my desk, pretending to solve it, fumbling to stuff my phone back in my pocket. A hand slowly landed on my shoulder. I winced, preparing to be scolded for not paying attention...

“Hey, is everything alright?”

“Huh?” I looked up. My vision was blurry.

“You know, you can talk to me...”

I looked back down at my workbook, thinking it was my answer that prompted the response. As I scavenged through my work, I saw spots of grey line the paper, smearing my handwriting into clouded puddles; I reached toward my face. I was crying.

Before I even realized, I was completely ensnared in the story of characters, a trap I would only escape from when I entered high school, when I had finished all one hundred and more episodes. I was moved by not only the plot but how characters grew; how cities fell, and new ones took their place; how words – and only words – could be so poignant. These characters spun beauty out of destruction and dilapidation, creating stories out of a world that disallowed them the comfort of living. I wondered: could I create, just like they had done?

I had found my way into the world of writing. Looking into genres of apocalypse and post-apocalypse. I found what I loved was not the crumble of civilization, but rather what stemmed from it: where we finally give up conflict and struggle to peacefully face our end, where new stems and flowers grow in place of human activity, where waves wash over old trees and buildings so our world can start anew. Thus, I picked up a pen, and began to write – uncertain yet passionate, I created temporary yet heartwarming love in *Evergreen*, and painful yet loving relationships in *don't worry about us*, depicting stories of fresh ends, uncertain presents, and new beginnings.



The more I wrote, the more I fell in love with creating, and the more I was fascinated by language itself. Writing lines of dialogue, I felt so many ideas hinged on the breath of words and the construct of sentences. When we explain, express, or exclaim, what is it that carries meaning? When we converse, complain, or chitchat, how is it that we do so? It's difficult not to be intrigued by something so delicate yet so robust as language, so I began to dive into the realm of Linguistics, the study of language. I started the independent research paper *Chinese Language Skills & Typing Proficiency* to explore language in the environment where I grew up, and published *Moving Beyond the Proper Language: A Case Study of Tibet* to investigate the effect of linguistic marginalization on minorities. Even in my school assignments I chose to look into the language of writers: how Shakespeare's depiction of Richard II's eloquence questions his kingship, how Camus' characterization of Meursault makes him "passionate" rather than "indifferent".



In a medium I once believed was reserved for paperwork and mundane assignments, I found a place to express and explore what I love. Once destined to be a STEM major, I found my voice and passion in writing: I write from the world around me, taking inspiration from the things I love doing, breathing life into the mundanity of everyday. Even though responsibilities and tasks can sometimes be overwhelming, I still write: to use language to its fullest extent, to express the potential hidden within words, and to imagine a world nonexistent yet beautiful.

Jay



evergreen

Projections of constellations pulsed across the ceiling, their blue light shadowing the laboratory. Beads of sweat gathered on the forehead of one scientist, slithering down his cheek, staining his lab coat, disappearing. The screech of a chair sliding, the rhythmic pitter-patter of anxious footsteps running across the room, and, two minutes later, the shuffle of that same pair of footsteps, slower, dragging across the pristine marble floors, tracing a path back.

*

The day before.

The sum of fifty instruments practicing separate parts drowned the concert hall with sound. Notes bounced off each other, into walls, and eventually back into their owners' ears, settling. The lights were a little too dim, the notes on the sheet music sometimes blurring into a puddle of grey, and sometimes the notes did not look like notes at all and fluttered off the page and crashed into the music. A flutist in the second row tried to rub the strain out of his eyes.


A man in a black suit walked up to the conductors' stand, holding a wooden baton that glowed a subtle yellow in the lights of the hall. The sound from the instruments slowly died down; a sustained note from the third violin resulted in a few warning glares from around her. The man cleared his throat.

“As you may know, our concert is ever nearing. Let’s do our best today, as well.”

Saying the same lines as always, almost like something out of a play.

“Starting from A.”

The piece started with a soft introduction from the violins, a budding seed, for the woodwinds to nurture. The thunderstorm of a quivering vibrato, the gust of wind from the



clarinet solo softened by a beam of sunlight from a nearby trumpet, a splash of water, a soft encouragement, the sudden acceleration to a bright climax, ending in a blossoming flower ... The flower they saw again, and again, and twice more today, leaving behind the smell of sweat and dry air. Reaching section D, it seemed less of a flower but more in the shape of a dried leaf.

A sharp clash of notes in the woodwinds. The conductor's baton came to a grinding halt. "What was that?" His voice was sharp, slicing cleanly through the air. "Two before E!"

The first flute flashed an apologetic smile: Finn Evergreen, a young man who held the melody. He glanced up, down, adjusted the head joint of his flute (although he was not out of tune), and stared back at the sheet music in front of him, whose notes blew into the air and left behind an empty staff.

A few hours of practice passed. Sounds hushed into an echo: the silent shuffle of rags cleaning out saxophones, the soft disassembly of wooden clarinet parts, and the lonely crinkle of sheet music hastily stuffed back into folders, all enveloping Finn like a bubble that slipped past his consciousness and floated wonderfully in a dreaming daze.

"Earth to Finn?"

He felt a slight breeze.

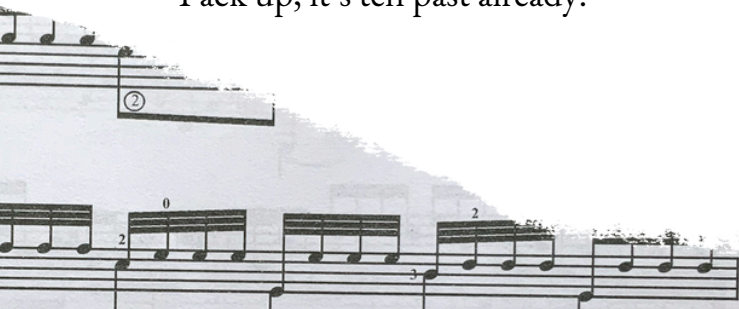
"Are you there?"



The bubble burst with a light scent of lilac. He looked up to see the chair of the second violins holding her case, standing in front of him, and realized now that the lights around him were significantly dimmer.

"Sorry?" He replied, not really knowing if the question needed an answer.

"Pack up, it's ten past already."



*

“Recent news suggests people stay inside...”

A static buzz broke into the TV’s signal, cutting the voice off.

“...That’s all for today. Keep yourself safe.”

The TV was shut off, leaving the lab illuminated only by various study lamps and the bluish greyish hue of many ceiling constellations. The room was quiet again.

*

They strolled past spinning fronds of ginkgo, streetlights that cast a fuzzy shadow around their bodies, and the moon that pressed shades of yellow and orange onto their skin. It had become a habit, walking home together after practice. They’d had performances throughout the year, while the trees lining the road would wither and shrivel, then fluff with emerald colors, then turn shades of sunshine, eventually settling into an autumnal red, like how day turns to night and how waves rise and fall.

“It’s a full moon tonight.” Claire pointed a finger towards the sky, circling it in the air gently.

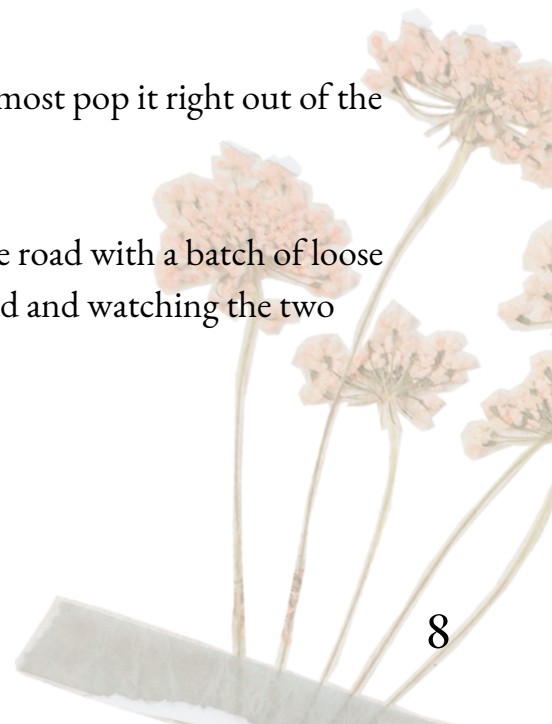
Finn looked up. He stared at the little orb in the sky, and it shone with a knowing shimmer. It pulled the darkness inwards, handed its glow outwards, and wrapped the city in a curious golden sheet - the same moon that had hung in the sky for countless years, being able to reach back in time as easily as taking a cookie from a glass jar.

“It’s pretty,” Finn remarked, “Look at how round it is. I could almost pop it right out of the sky.”

A faint breeze brushed against his words, carrying them down the road with a batch of loose leaves. An owl hooted somewhere in the distance, cocking its head and watching the two people carefully as if they were a peculiar bug.

Claire mused. “It’s a bit far for that.”

“How do you know?”



“I’ve tried,” She said, smiling. “It doesn’t work.”

The two stopped under an old ginkgo tree, standing under branches that wound left and right and split in half. Finn leaned onto the trunk, spreading his arms outwards to feel the breeze. The same breeze that rippled the water in a small pond behind the tree, sending rings over its glassy surface that jiggled the reflection of the moon and scattered its yellow fragments into a million different sparks of light.

“This world is getting way too small for us to live in,” Finn started. “We need the stars. You think we’ll be able to live up there some day?”

Claire nodded, her brown eyes half deep in thought, half looking down at the grass that rippled with the wind too.

“I think we will.”

“That’d be nice, right?” Finn grinned.

*



Rows of numbers. They stumbled and crashed onto computer screens, onto whiteboards, onto notebooks, spilling over frayed leather edges and dripping onto the floor. The air felt damp; lifting a leg felt as if wading through slime, the occasional bramble or vine hooking into flesh and ripping through skin, curling around necks, wrapping, constricting, suffocating - with each new equation and with each scientist that went home.

*

“I’ll be going this way now,” Claire said, at an intersection.

A familiar stop sign shone scarlet under a streetlight.

“Okay,” Finn responded. “Have a good night.”

“You too.” Her smile seemed to float in the dim evening air even after she turned and

walked the other way, drifting up and into the trees from where the ginkgo fronds fell.

*

1:30 A.M.

A flickering lamp cast a dim shadow behind the laboratory tables, while trembling fingers slowly dialed the numbers that would call home.

“Finn? Listen. It’s Matt.” His voice sounded low and weak to his little brother. “Are you there?”

“What?” The voice on the other end was drowsy, clearly irritated.

“Something’s gone wrong. I... I don’t think we even have ten hours.”

“At this hour, really?” Finn’s voice was half confused, half exasperated, fully tired. “Don’t joke. I’m hanging up.”

Matt’s eyes widened. He held onto the phone with his other hand, as if trying to drag Finn back through the numbers on the screen.

“Listen,” He enunciated, “I don’t usually call. Just trust me when I say it’s bad. Tsunamis at best, and the end of the world as we know it at worst. We don’t even know what’s going on, entirely, but all we know is that our chances are slim. It’s 1:30. I’m not lying. Please.”

A shuffling of blankets on the other side. “You’re really not lying?”

“Yes,” Matt pled, “But see, listen, right? Using a helicopter, in theory, we stay in flight until the water washes over, because a regular performance helicopter can hover around three kilometers, enough leeway for even a mega-tsunami, because I estimate it will last no more than an hour, and a fully fueled helicopter can hover for at least two hours, and assuming our numbers aren’t horribly wrong, in eight to ten hours until the wave hits, this gives me time to go home, and you can start packing essential supplies, then we take flight when the



earthquake hits beforehand, and land... on the water, after the blunt of the impact has passed, and that's how we can survive, and that's what we have to do..."

His words trailed off, and a growing silence stretched between the two.

"...Helicopter," Finn whispered.

Matt looked left at the whiteboard next to his computer, looked down at the overflowing trash can beneath his desk, and looked up at Ursa Major, whose seven stars slowly moved across the ceiling and glowed a dim blue. Did it always move this fast?

"Hello? Matt?"

"Yes."

"I never knew you had a helicopter?"

"That's the only problem." Matt exhaled bitterly. "I don't have one. I don't know anyone who can get one. Everyone's leaving. Now what? Now what do I do? I can't just sit and wait to die. It's not like I'm onto anything either, but I can't just -"

"Wait..." His little brother's voice cut him off. It was trembling, with a soft vibrato, like the first time he hurt himself on the mulch of the playground. Like the first time he was scolded by Mom. That time when he still couldn't believe there were things more important than his next middle school band performance. Times when they lived together and saw each other more than once half a year. A faint memory rang in Matt's ears, which drifted into the air, dissolved into the constellations on the ceiling, and left behind an excruciating tang.

"That means..."

Matt bit his lip. "I-I'll stay in the lab. Maybe there's some hope. I'll try. I love you."

"That means..."

*

Finn put down his phone. His mind wandered to his brother in the lab, and his friend in the symphony. He closed his eyes and waited to wake up. Instead, he fell asleep.

*

“We have to tell everyone.” Matt’s determined voice boomed through the room, palm hitting the table with every other word. “The people deserve to know!”

The room fell silent again. A chair creaked as another scientist stood up slowly, swaying a little. Eyes turned towards him.

“Who? And what do they plan to do? Give everyone a helicopter? Do you want the world to be in utter chaos in its last few moments?”

*

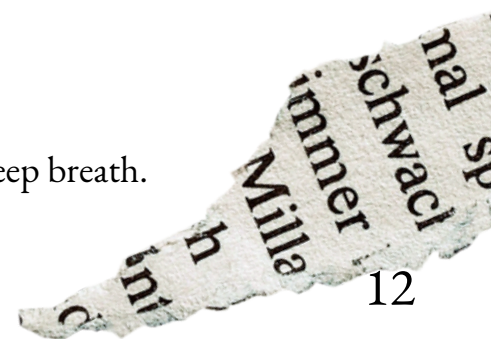
Finn’s eyes creaked open at the persistent clang of his alarm. His head throbbed, the room spun, and sweat clung to his shirt, gluing his shirt to his back and his back to his bedsheets. He turned his head slowly towards his alarm, which displayed a proud, flashing 8:00 A.M; he shook his head, hoisted himself up, grabbed his phone, flicked to the call log, and the call – that dreaded call - stared right back at him: 1:31 A.M, from Matt, his brother. Finn rubbed his eyes and stared at the call, trying to will it out of existence. But it stayed, stubbornly, burned into his phone and his retina and leaving a dark afterimage when he stared at the walls. His stomach churned, his vision swam, but, blinking, he determinedly punched in another phone call, to someone he hoped would be more reliable than him.

“I wasn’t going to pick up at first, but I saw it was you.” Claire’s groggy voice calmed Finn a little. At least something was still the same.

“Do you have a helicopter?”

“Dude. It’s 8 in the morning.”

Finn paused and thought about how to phrase his news. He took a deep breath.



“Claire, remember how my brother works in a lab? He said, no, warned me that a giant tsunami is going to wipe everything out - I don't have the equipment to avoid it, and I would assume you don't have a helicopter secretly lying around.” Finn closed his eyes, silently hoping that in some unforeseen turn of fate Claire would own a helicopter. “...Do you?”

“Yeah, no, I don't.”

“I figured.” Finn sighed. “Wait, how are you taking this so lightly?”

“Do you think we're gonna die?” Claire's voice seemed oddly calm.

Finn thought for a moment. “Yeah, I think so.”

“Okay. Give me some time.” The call dissolved into Finn's home screen.

A text appeared five minutes later. It read, simply, “The park. Bring your flute.”

*

“Dr. Boris, are you giving up?” Matt's accusatory tone shot through the lab. “You should know better than anyone that there's a non-zero chance of-”

“Have you not read the data?” The scientist's shout cracked as he cut Matt off mid-sentence. His eyes gleamed, bloodshot, the veins on his forehead bulging with desperation.

“Dr. Evergreen, do you seriously think there is a chance in hell that we'll survive?”

“I'll find a way, with or without you.” Matt's eyes burned with a resolute flame. “I plan to save the world, and you can plan to be grateful.”

“Matthew Evergreen,” The tired scientist dropped his binder, sighing. “Damned idiot.”

Matt sat down in his chair and began typing again. The lab resumed its silence after its door slammed shut, a silence that was mixed with distress, fear, and just a little hope.





*

The park was flush with reds, yellows, and browns. Leaves littered the ground, crackling softly with every other step Finn took. Small streams of sunlight trickled through the leaves, floated onto the grass, and brushed a glimmering golden gauze over patches of emerald. Finn held his case close to his body as he made his way across the cobblestone paths.

“What took you so long?”

He saw Claire sitting on a wooden bench under a large yellow ginkgo. Her stern face burst into a smile at Finn’s confused expression. “Just kidding. I know it’s only been ten minutes. Seems like an eternity, though, when you’re waiting for the world to end.”

Her brown hair shone golden under a patch of sunlight.

“Why didn’t you question...” Finn began, then hesitated.

“It really doesn’t matter if it’s real. It’s nice as is.” Claire cocked her head, closing her eyes.

“Did you bring your flute?”

“Course.” Finn held up his case, nodding, deciding not to push it further.

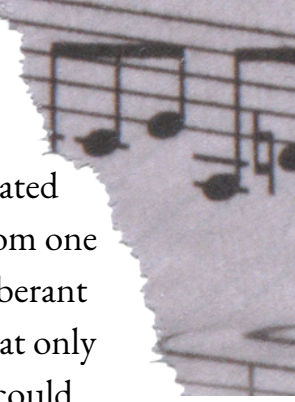
Claire reached behind the bench, bringing out her violin case and revealing the familiar instrument. Its brown wood was still delicate after years of handling, white strings glistening in the sunlight. She strummed them mindlessly, reaching for the bow with her other hand, her scent of lilac intertwining with the autumn air and the sound of leaves rustling.

Finn sat down next to her and opened his own case. A beam of sunlight danced over his flute. He gently put it to his lips, twisting to adjust his embouchure. He moved his fingers over the metal keys and played a simple B flat scale. “I’m guessing you wanted to do our duet.”

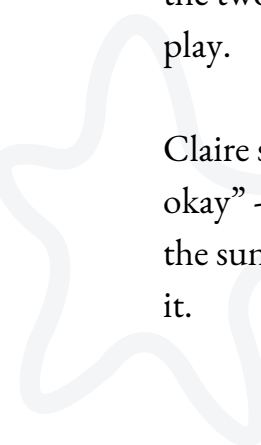
Claire nodded, bowing a quick scale in return. “Two, three, four...”

They played. Music swirled through the autumn foliage, reached for the clouds, fell with





the ginkgo, and lay lazily in patches of grass. Music swam through the air and resonated with the ground, spiraling between the two instruments and effortlessly flowing from one to the next as if they had the same soul. They filled the empty park with music, exuberant one moment, then heartbroken the next, then serene, then bitter, then emotions that only the two friends knew and only the two duettists felt and only the two instruments could play.



Claire smiled a smile that reminded Finn of the seasons, a smile that said “everything will be okay” - Finn, lips to his flute, smiled through his eyes. They played until the melody reached the sun rising above their heads, played until the ground shook and the notes trembled with it.

*

“Ol’ Boris always had a knack for being right, huh.”

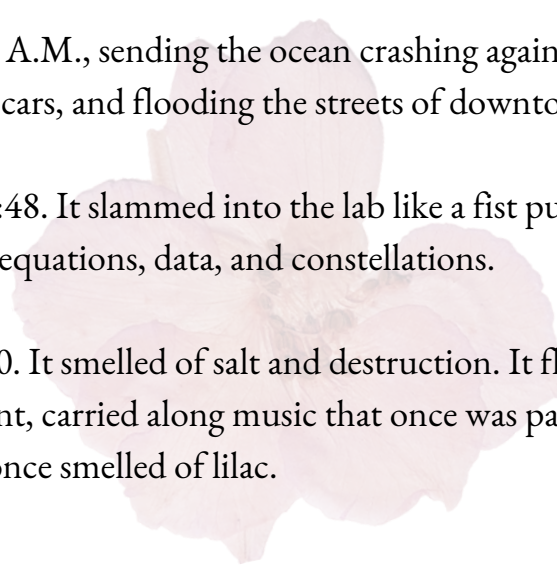
Matt closed his computer and laughed bitterly. He stood up and stretched, looking at the sun that had risen hours ago.

*

Blue flames rose from the sea and licked at the sky, casting a grave shadow towards the shore. They burned with a furious intensity, staring down at the people, charring the sky an ashen black.

The first wave hit at 10:45 A.M., sending the ocean crashing against the shore, knocking down trees, washing away cars, and flooding the streets of downtown Los Angeles.

The second wave hit at 10:48. It slammed into the lab like a fist punching through paper-mâché, sweeping through equations, data, and constellations.



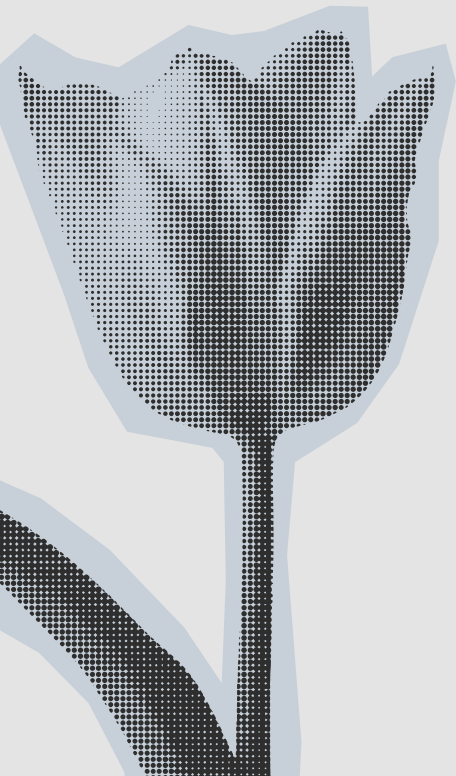
The third wave hit at 10:50. It smelled of salt and destruction. It flew through leaves that once were green and vibrant, carried along music that once was passionate and heartfelt, and washed away regrets that once smelled of lilac.

cleaning robot

rusted streets, dusted heaps of wood and steel
flickering and, fluttering neon lights
weathered rock, severed locks of hair reveal
sickening and, clattering city heights.
though they barely stand or glow or work now
though they've barely landed blows that hurt now
it's hard to see the world they've loved be so
dilapidated, contaminated
i wonder if they'll sit and wait to go?
it's that i've hated (go back and save it)

[detected motion twenty meters south]
...Database says this place was abandoned.

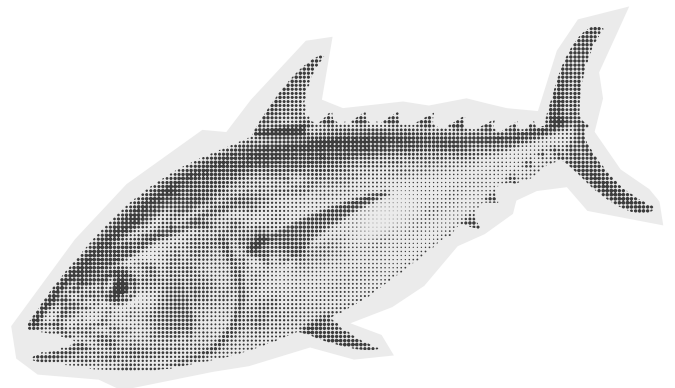
He left a rose stem; one he grew himself
on a grave its petals would have landed.



IB ENGLISH EXTENDED ESSAY

indifference in literature

*How do Albert Camus's **The Stranger** and Samuel Beckett's **Krapp's Last Tape** contribute to the portrayal of indifference in the human condition?*



Indifference in literature:

*How do Albert Camus's **The Stranger** and Samuel Beckett's **Krapp's Last Tape** contribute to the portrayal of indifference in the human condition?*

**An Extended Essay in
English A, Category III**

18 September 2024

Word Count: 3969 words

Citation Style: MLA 9th Ed.

Introduction

“Man is the only creature who refuses to be what he is.”

Albert Camus

Albert Camus’s *“The Stranger”* is both a novel of the absurd and an exploration of the human condition through an indifferent society: the protagonist, Meursault, eats, smokes, witnesses death, and kills, seemingly without emotional conflict or upheaval. Samuel Beckett’s *“Krapp’s Last Tape”*, similarly, has a removed protagonist. However, Krapp, an aging man who spends his days listening to old tape recordings of himself, is removed almost of his own accord: it is driven by introspection and regret, scrutiny and nostalgia.

Both Meursault and Krapp are victims. Meursault is a victim to society: as a “stranger”, he is thrust into a world that demands conformity to social norms he cannot embrace, faces repercussions of actions he does not see are wrong, and dies a death passive and withdrawn. In “Krapp’s Last Tape”, Krapp is victim to his dilapidating mind: tapes of his younger days plague his thoughts just as much as they provide solace, as he is caught between the nostalgia of the past and the grim reality of the present.

Significance

Beckett’s works began to be associated with absurd writers, like Camus, relatively early in his career. (Robinson, 1997) However, even though much comparison and analysis have been made with Camus and Beckett’s more famous works, *Waiting for Godot* (Bennett, 2012; Baziz, 2013; Ullah, 2016, etc.) and *Endgame*, (Brzeska & Wadowska, 2015; Özden, 2016, etc.), *Krapp’s Last Tape* does not have the same amount of recognition.

Krapp’s Last Tape, a one-man play, presents a more intimate and personal view of the indifference of life, different from the well-analyzed existential questioning of *Waiting for Godot* or the cyclical despair of *Endgame*. In a way, *Krapp’s Last Tape* is also similar to Camus’s *The Stranger*, where Meursault is essentially in his own one-man play, as solitude and removal from his surroundings

both isolate and define him. This allows for a more detailed analysis as both protagonists are in similar circumstances but have different backgrounds.

While absurdism, in terms of genre, is the idea that human life exists in a universe indifferent to human concerns and actions, indifference can almost be seen as a byproduct of this relationship. Characters of absurdist works are often indifferent towards events as they realize the futility of finding inherent purpose. However, Krapp and Meursault are not only living in a universe indifferent to them, but they themselves are also indifferent to the universe: by analyzing the two texts through the common idea of “indifference” and not “absurdity”, this essay tries to examine the ways in which the characters *respond* to the indifference of the universe. Do they embrace the absurdity of existence, or is it a defense against the futility of understanding? Can indifference help the characters deal with the apathy of the universe, or is it a fragile mask that is bound to collapse? These questions allow me to explore deeper into the intentions of the characters themselves and the complexity of the human condition, investigating how indifference can both stem from and interact with the idea of absurdism.

Methodology

This essay will employ a comparative literary analysis approach to explore three main themes prevalent in both *Krapp's Last Tape* and *The Stranger*, namely, the **attachment** of characters to their past and the people they are with, the **hatred** towards injustices and their surroundings, and their **memories** that come to haunt them. Using these main themes, this essay aims to reveal indifference as a layered emotional state brought on by interactions with the world and other characters, rather than simple withdrawal or mere apathy. This essay will both refer to secondary critics that comment on how these themes are displayed and utilized, and include the author's own analysis, evaluating the similarities and differences between the two texts.

This essay will also consider past research on the comparison between the works of Beckett and Camus. Historical context and primary sources, such as Camus's journals, while interesting, will not be examined in this essay. This is due to the deviation from the topic of “indifference in the human condition” towards a commentary on authorial intent and psychoanalysis.

I. Attachment

In *The Stranger*, Camus sets up Meursault as indifferent in arguably one of the most famous opening lines to a novel: “Maman died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don’t know”. His cold, dismissive reaction to the death of his mother first establishes his emotional disengagement with the present (“today”). His exasperated expressions “I don’t know... That doesn’t mean anything” not only display his lack of understanding but also his lack of desire to understand, relying on “maybe”, guesswork. During his mother’s funeral, he does not show respect nor pay attention to the procedure. He “smokes”, and “dozed off for a little while”, even referring to his own mother as a “dead woman”, the distanced subject “woman” displaying his utter removal from the funeral. His indifference here manifests in his almost stubborn dedication to his own actions, seeing his mother’s death as a distraction. Meursault comments inconsiderately on his mother’s friends, noticing their “bulging stomachs”, “wrinkles”, and “cries” that he gratefully refers to as having “finally...shut up”. He narrates with short, straightforward sentences when meeting the director of the funeral, saying “I went to his office. He had me sign a number of documents”, noticing irrelevant details like the director’s “pin-striped trousers”. Camus resolves the first chapter with Meursault’s uneventful conclusion, writing “After that, everything seemed to happen so fast, so deliberately, so naturally that I don't remember any of it anymore.” His attachment with his mother is absent from his descriptions so much so that he “d[oesn’t] remember” her funeral proceedings except for a few irrelevant moments. Here, Camus initially sets up Meursault’s indifference towards his close surroundings and personal relationships through his cold reaction to his mother’s funeral.

This seeming lack of attachment is apparent in *Krapp’s Last Tape* as well. However, unlike Meursault, whose lack of attachment is to his mother, Krapp’s lack of attachment is towards a past version of himself. After Krapp listens to his voice tapes of the past, he decides to start a new “virgin reel”, grumbling, “Just been listening to that stupid bastard...Thank God that’s all done with anyway.” By recording a new reel, he actively cuts off the past by literally starting anew, a stage image clear to the audience when he “takes [the] reel off [the] machine” and “loads [the] virgin reel”. He tries to maintain a certain indifference towards past events, referring to them as “all done with”, depicting a finale of the past and insinuating a new beginning. Though, as thoughts from the past flood back, he resorts to actively telling himself to stop thinking about the past, shouting “Yes! ... Let that go! Jesus!” The desperate and urgent exclamations characterize a persistent and almost

maddening plaguing of his past memories, so much so that self-deprecatative language such as “stupid bastard”, “old buckball” is consistently used to try and separate his thoughts from himself. Different from Meursault, whose lack of attachment stems from indifference and a lack of care, Krapp shows an alternative perspective where he hopes for less attachment, stemming from too much care. Indifference, here, is likely a positive process: being able to forget and live with “light and dark and famine” instead of constant recall can be relieving, resolving inner conflicts and improving the negative aspects of the human condition. Where Meursault is unhappy in his indifference, Krapp would be relieved.

On the other hand, we cannot say that Meursault is completely unattached or indifferent. When Meursault listens to Salamano, one of his neighbors who has mistreated his dog by swearing at and beating it for eight years, crying after losing his dog, Camus describes Meursault as “for some reason... th[inking] of Maman”. This mirroring of loss can be a clue to Meursault’s concealed emotional attachment towards his mother. Even though Salamano seems to be indifferent, even violent towards his pet, he loses control of himself when he loses his only companion in life. Desperately, he questions, “They're not going to take him away from me, are they, Monsieur Meursault?... Otherwise, what's going to happen to me?”. Salamano’s cries reminding Meursault of his mother can insinuate Meursault’s buried emotional attachment towards her, only uncovered through parallels with another indifferent character. This parallel is further enhanced when we consider the fact that, both at his mother’s funeral procedure and when listening to Salamano’s cries, he “wasn’t hungry”. (Wagner, 1970) This lack of appetite, a common syndrome when facing grief and mirrored by Salamano’s painful loss, may stem from his attachment towards his mother.

Meursault’s attachment to his mother is also revealed through observations that deviate from his self-contained point of view. When returning from the funeral, he remarks “it was just the right size when Maman was here. Now it's too big for me...” The comparative “too big” in depicting an apartment here stems from the fact that “Maman”, who used to fill the space, is no longer with him: only his memories of when the space was “too big” remain, and this attachment plagues him so much so that he retreats to “just one room now”. (Makari, 1988) This is insinuated by his somber, defeated tone when describing his surrounding furniture, saying he lives in “just one room now, with some saggy straw chairs, a ward robe whose mirror has gone yellow”. Adjectives accentuating the dilapidation of the room, “saggy” and “yellow”, convey a sense of decay and neglect, while the

limiting “just” further reinforces the idea that, without his mother, the space feels lifeless, reduced to the “one room” he resides in. This seemingly defeated and inwards act of living in his own room betrays his indifference to the death of his mother, as he actively fills the void of his loss by physically restraining the space he lives in. Here, Camus subtly hints at an indifference that stems not from apathy, but a hidden emotional attachment: much like Krapp’s obsession with his tapes.

Krapp, on the other hand, is trapped in a cycle of desiring affection, not receiving it, and wanting to be indifferent towards his own desires. When young Krapp professes on the tape that he thought the relationship was “hopeless” and “no good going on”, he bends over the woman, and she “let [him] in”. Only when Krapp tells the woman he wants to separate from her is when he indulges in her affection, first showing his contradictory yearning for attachment. This clash is furthered when he switches off the tape for a long, rambling monologue: towards the end, he says, “Be again, be again. [Pause.] All that old misery. [Pause.] Once wasn’t enough for you. [Pause.] Lie down across her.” Here, Beckett’s repetition of “again” and “all” show Krapp’s clear memory, which is in direct contrast with his desire to separate from the past, shown in the deprecative “old misery” and the second-person pronoun “you” in reference to himself. Krapp concludes the monologue with “lie down across her”, accompanied by a stark stage image of “bend[ing] over the tape machine”. Here, this action mirrors his past desire of wanting to bend over the woman to look over her eyes, showing his inability to detach from past events, unconsciously replicating the same action that he so desires. (Wulf, 1993) He tells himself to separate from the past both intentionally through imperatives and unintentionally through vulgar self-deprecation, but eventually dwells on attachments that plague his memory and disallow him to be indifferent. Here, Krapp would much rather like to be Meursault, unmoved by trauma and unworried by love.

In *The Stranger* and *Krapp’s Last Tape*, both Meursault’s muted reflections on his mother’s absence and Krapp’s inner conflict with his own memories show a common desire to escape. Even though a surface-level mask of indifference makes them seem unbothered, their emotional attachment towards either their family and identity suggest indifference as a defense mechanism rather than actual emotional disengagement.

II. Hatred

Hatred is an emotion born out of passion. If one is indifferent, they do not hate, as they have neither the desire to nor the subject of hate. In *The Stranger*, what causes Meursault to kill the Arab is depicted as “sunlight”: it was the “scorching blade” of the sun that caused him to “tense[]” and “squeeze[] ... the revolver”. Camus depicts his action using passive verbs like “tensed” and “The trigger gave”, directing the intention behind the shot off of Meursault and onto factors out of his control. This is added to by Meursault’s usual straightforward, self-centered description of an unrelated observation, the gun’s “smooth underside”, displaying his underlying disinterest with the result of the gunshot. Meursault’s previous realization of two opposing choices, that one could “either shoot or not shoot”, is obvious to the reader: however, it is the fact that he is preoccupied with the choice itself, and not the result of the choice, that signifies an indifferent attitude to his actions. He is merely someone who oversees choices being taken, and the affected subject of the choice does not concern him as much as the present. His shot is not made out of hatred or vengeance, as he does not seem to intend the shots.

Krapp, unlike Meursault, seems to clearly hate. The conflict that tortures Krapp is precisely his fixation on past unfulfilled relationships, an inability to be indifferent turned a jealousy towards the past. His hatred towards past missed opportunities is shown in “Could have been happy with her, up there on the Baltic, and the pines, and the dunes. [Pause.] Could I? [Pause.] And she? [Pause.] Pah! [Pause.]”. Krapp, fixated on conditional possibilities, focuses on the “could have” and engulfs himself in pictures of a nonexistent future, “Baltic... pines... dunes”. This slowly dissolves into skepticism, then self-doubt, finally causing him to explode in anger with the plosive “Pah!” at the end. There is a direct conflict between his hatred and his indifference, where the pain his fixation causes him devolves into hatred, which feeds into his passion for remembrance. After he shouts “Pah!”, he continues to angrily mutter profanity, saying “Bony old ghost of a whore.” He then returns to a seeming acceptance, realizing that he “couldn’t do much”. Bouncing between nostalgia, aggression, and faux indifference, Krapp’s hatred toward both the events of his past and his inability to change them is a stark contrast to Meursault’s apathetic outlook.

However, if we take another look at *The Stranger*, there may be hints of emotional involvement in what causes Meursault to finally fire the bullet at the Arab. During the scene, what is

surprising is that the usually un-descriptive Meursault suddenly erupts in poetic metaphor when describing the overhead sun and the sweat on his face: “The light shot off the steel and it was like a long flashing blade cutting at my forehead... curtain of tears and salt... cymbals of sunlight”, observations in a narrative voice that is highly uncharacteristic of an indifferent, unemotional “stranger”. Violent images such as the “blade” and the “crashing...cymbal” insinuate a visceral, almost primal response in response to the sunlight, a break from his usual indifference. This insinuates an emotive, aggressive undertone that is only brought out through the medium of “sunlight”. As Meursault returns to the beach after Raymond had left, he depicts the weather begrudgingly, saying “The sun was starting to burn... I felt drops of sweat gathering in my eyebrows ... The sun was the same as it had been the day I'd buried Maman.”. Here, drawing on the image of his mother’s funeral, the “sweat gathering in [his] eyebrows” is almost a reenactment of the “cries” and “tears” shed by his mother’s friends. It was also the sun during his mother’s funeral that Meursault remarked “it “inhuman and oppressive”, blaming his “oppressed” state of mind on the sunlight. Considering the previous analysis of Meursault’s possible underlying emotion towards his mother’s death, it seems as if he hides his true emotions behind a veil of indifference: if he seems indifferent, he is “guilt-free” (Makari, 1988), and thus he pretends to hate indifferently, to hate because of the “sun”.

In a way, Krapp also tries to hate indifferently. His hate of the past self is expressed by communicating through a tape recorder, a futile, repetitive action that only emphasizes his past mistakes further by focusing on them. He “consults his dictionary and ledgers... rearranges his collection of tapes... [and] has difficulty concentrating on his tasks”, and when he is unable to precisely locate a spot on the tape recorder, he fumbles anxiously, continuously “switch[ing it] off, wind[ing it] forward”, cursing at the object. Catanzaro (1999) states that Krapp, frustrated with his “impotence on the sexual [level]”, detaches himself from the past, feigning indifference. He wanders around his room indifferently, even going to grab a bottle of wine, but seemingly cannot stop himself from playing the tape, showing his fragility in being unable to face his mistakes. After monologuing about his past lover, he bursts into song, the stage direction “[Pause. Sings.]” so abrupt we question if he sings out of his own volition, or to make his previous comments seem spontaneous as well (instead of thoughts that plague his mind). He does not sing for long, as after four short lines he returns to cursing at his old lover, calling her a “bitch”, and exasperatedly comments on his own state of mind, “Ah finish your booze now”. Listening to his old tapes, Krapp

hates with a passion that is shabbily covered with alcohol, song, and mindless distraction. His lack of indifference towards the past eventually becomes a liability, a wound he is both unable and unwilling to close.

For both characters, it seems as if when the “defensive mechanism” of indifference is broken, it often gives way to a more intense and passionate reaction contained within. When confronted with fizzling regrets and unresolved hate bottled with the cork of indifference, both characters erupt into impulse and hatred - in Krapp’s case, he curses and drinks, and in Meursault’s case, he kills the Arab.

III. Memory

In *The Stranger*, Meursault’s memories are, for the most part, faint. He is portrayed mostly as indifferently forgetful, or self-centered to the point of inadvertent neglect. As detailed in part I, his memories of his mother’s funeral, “...I don't remember any of it anymore”, first depict his utter apathy towards happenings around him. Motifs of forgetfulness are returned to before Meursault’s trial proceedings, where he almost “sh[ook the] hand” of the “examining magistrate”, but “remembered ... just in time” that he had “killed a man”. His nonchalant attitude and almost casual remembrance of his murder of the Arab are characteristic of his indifference: Meursault places no extra importance on the murder, seeing it as a common memory that he only “remember[s]” in time for the court procedure. Even when he remembers Marie before his execution, he professes that “remembering Marie meant nothing to [him]”, as he would not be “interested in her dead”. His quick acceptance of his fate, being “dead”, portrays his detachment towards the execution.

However, Meursault’s indifference towards the trial is questioned when he sometimes remembers his past. Locked in his prison cell, he repeatedly walks around the cell, obsessively memorizing each detail and eventually “enumerating” the items that occupied his old room. This activity seems pointless, much like Krapp’s repetitive listening, but when we consider the only other activity he does in his prison cell, reading a “Czechoslovakia[n] ... crime story” for a “thousand times”, an interesting parallel can be drawn. The story recalls an unknowing mother who mistakenly beat her own son to death to rob his money, and hangs herself when she realizes the truth. According to Leverage, 2005, this story mirrors Meursault’s circumstance: while the mother in the story is inadvertently killed by her son’s lack of clarification, Meursault is at times on trial for a lack

of grief during his mother's death, his mother inadvertently sentencing his death. Considering the story about the mother and the room that reminds Meursault of his mother's absence, it can be insinuated that the result of these repeated actions is to "recall ... his deceased mother ... her whom he has been unable to mourn or remember since her death" (Leverage, 2005). Meursault's memories slowly flood through his indifferent exterior, leading to actions that betray his persona as a "stranger".

For Krapp, memories serve as records of the past. According to Uchman, 2016, Krapp's memories in *Krapp's Last Tape* can be divided into two types: his voluntary memories and involuntary memories. In the last few lines of the play, Krapp's tape repeats "I wouldn't want them back" twice in relation to his "best years", while Krapp "motionless[ly] stare[s] before him". Here, we see a stark contrast: Krapp, thirty-nine years old, voluntarily gives up the memory of past love in exchange for "intellectual fulfillment" (Uchman, 2016), indifferent to the loss of his "best years" due to the "fire in [him] now". In "perhaps my best years are gone", the use of the word "perhaps" to refer to this loss is casual, implying young Krapp's determination towards the now and almost confident indifference towards the past. Older Krapp, facing the results of this indifference, is only left with his involuntary memories. Motionlessly listening to the tape recorder, he is tortured by memories of his past love, repeatedly replaying the description of his experiences with his girlfriend: it is due to the importance that he places on these memories that leads to his pained inability to forget.

Krapp, like Meursault, engages in repetitive action. However, whereas Meursault finds fulfillment in remembrance, Krapp only spirals downward into the past, unable to find reassurance. According to Lombardo et al., 2017, as Krapp cannot "access...the past", he cannot "compensate for ... loss through remembrance." Thus, he is reduced to "crap". Unlike Meursault, whose tendency for indifference is broken down through memory, Krapp's wishes for indifference manifest in his repetitive recall of the past: as he is unable to return, he can only "repeat[] what he has always done". He is unable to care, nor conjure the past in front of him, so he is forced to be indifferent. His internal turmoil over this lack of choice is precisely what torments the old man in the play.

Here, indifference is less a protective shield, and more an emotional barrier. Even though Krapp and Meursault can choose to avoid confronting the past, this indifference traps them in

cycles of detachment and unresolved memories, the indifference that once protected them from the world's apathy now entrapping them in their own emotional isolation. Both characters fixate on past relationships they are unable to return to: they focus on memory, as memory is the only trace left by the past; they feign indifference, as indifference is the only emotion protecting them from the past.

Conclusion

Indifference is not a passive emotional state. For both characters, it can serve as a protective shield, a defense mechanism that protects them from the cruelty of the world, its expectations, and the past. However, this defense is not indestructible: when it breaks, it gives way to sudden floods of emotion, when the hatred and regret it once contained erupt toward the surface; it then coagulates into an emotional barrier, trapping the characters in cycles of remembrance and detachment, suffocating and isolating them.

Both *The Stranger* and *Krapp's Last Tape* portray tragic characters – whether faced with an unchanging past, immovable future, or the ambivalent present, both Meursault and Krapp struggle against a world that seems to resist them the comfort of care. Thus, they are indifferent, as it helps them deal with the world - at times hiding behind it, at times breaking through it, but always suffering through it.

Works Cited

- Baziz, Tarek. *Analysis of the Two Existentialist Works: Beckett's Waiting for Godot and Camus's The Stranger in Terms of Philosophical Imp.* 2013,
https://scholar.googleusercontent.com/scholar?q=cache:iKCLg42y2F8J:scholar.google.com/+Baziz,+2013+waiting+for+godot&hl=en&as_sdt=0,5&as_vis=1.
- Beckett, Samuel. *Krapp's Last Tape*. Bloomsbury, 2016.
- Bennett, Michael Y. "“The Essential Doesn't Change”: Essence Precedes Experience and Cartesian Rationalism in Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot.” *Notes on Contemporary Literature*, vol. 42, no. 1, Jan. 2012. *go.gale.com*,
<https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&sw=w&issn=00294047&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA296836104&sid=googleScholar&linkaccess=abs>.
- Brzeska, Ewa, and Aneta Wadowska. “Facing God Experience – Albert Camus and Samuel Beckett.” *Explorations: A Journal of Language and Literature*, no. 3, 2015, pp. 21–33.
- Camus, Albert. *The Stranger*. Vintage International, 1989.
- Leverage, Paula. “Ciceronian Mnemonic in Camus' 'L'étranger.’” *Romance Notes*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2005, pp. 203–09.
- Lombardo, Patrizia, et al. *Exploring Text, Media, and Memory*. Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2018.
- Makari, George J. “The Last Four Shots: Problems of Intention and Camus' 'The Stranger.’” *American Imago*, vol. 45, no. 4, 1988, pp. 359–74.
- Özden, Ayşenur İplikçi. “AN ABSURDIST PLAY: SAMUEL BECKETT'S ENDGAME.” *İnönü Üniversitesi Sanat ve Tasarım Dergisi*, vol. 6, no. 13, 13, Jan. 2016, pp. 0–0.
- Robinson, James E. *SISYPHUS HAPPY: Beckett beyond the Absurd*. Dec. 1997. *brill.com*,
<https://doi.org/10.1163/18757405-90000073>.

Uchman, Jadwiga. "Voluntary and Involuntary Memory in Samuel Beckett's Krapp's Last Tape."

Crossroads. A Journal of English Studies, no. 15, 15, Dec. 2016, pp. 10–18.

czasopisma.filologia.umb.edu.pl, <https://doi.org/10.15290/cr.2016.15.4.01>.

Ullah, Irfan, et al. "A Study of Absurdity in Samuel Beckett's Play Waiting for Godot and Albert

Camus Novel The Outsider." *Global Language Review*, vol. I, Dec. 2016, pp. 46–57.

ResearchGate, [https://doi.org/10.31703/glr.2016\(I-I\).04](https://doi.org/10.31703/glr.2016(I-I).04).

Wagner, C. Roland. "The Silence of 'the Stranger.'" *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1970, pp.

27–40.

Wulf, Catharina. "DESIRE FOR THE OTHER: OBSESSION AS FAILURE / FAILURE AS

OBSESSION. Beckett's 'Krapp's Last Tape' and Bernhard's 'Minetti.'" *Samuel Beckett Today /*

Aujourd'hui, vol. 2, 1993, pp. 87–94.

acid rain

coming down slowly
warping stone into lowly
figures of dust, rust.

charring through wood
burning black, turning what would,
reduced to ash, trash.

breathing through the mask
feeling the rain land on your suit
do you feel alive?

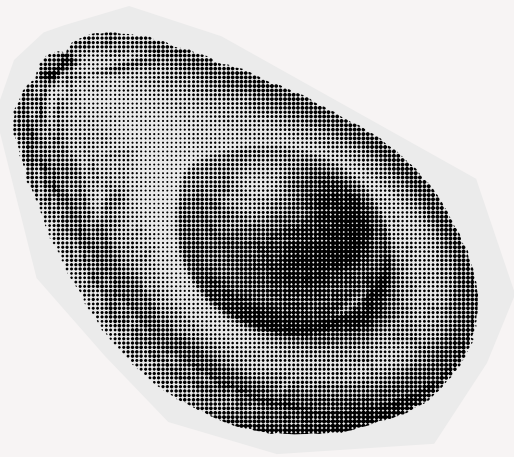
the pitter-patter
of acidic rain splatter
on streets, reeks of death.

the clouds are still here
they still stay, above the city
grey, glowing, flowing.



research paper: chinese language skills & typing proficiency

Exploring the Relationship Between Chinese Language Proficiency and Typing Performance: A Study of High School Students



ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between Chinese language proficiency and typing performance, with a focus on whether differences in Pinyin or Character handwriting skills influence typing accuracy and speed. Thirteen Chinese high school students, representing varying proficiency levels, engaged in two handwritten tests assessing their Chinese abilities: a Pinyin-to-Character Conversion test and a Character-to-Pinyin Conversion test, each containing 15 questions of increasing difficulty. Subsequently, participants typed responses in Chinese to two prompts—one descriptive and one argumentative—while screen-capture and key-logging software tracked their progress. Performance on speed and accuracy was calculated using this data. Contrary to the initial hypothesis that proficiency in either Pinyin or Character handwriting would positively affect typing accuracy and speed, results showed no significant correlation between participants' scores on the conversion tests and their error rates during the typing tasks. A regression analysis revealed a near-zero influence between the two variables, suggesting that typing proficiency in Chinese may depend on factors beyond traditional language skills.

Keywords: Chinese, typing performance, Pinyin, character handwriting, cognitive processes

Exploring the Relationship Between Chinese Language Proficiency and Typing

Performance: A Study of High School Students

In 2023, China, one of the most populous countries in the world, was home to over 1.03 billion social media users, representing approximately 73% of its total population. In this rapidly evolving digital society, efficient typing skills are integral to effective communication, spanning diverse scenarios from everyday interactions to professional documentation. Pinyin, a phonetic alphabet devised in the 1950s to transliterate Mandarin Chinese into the Latin alphabet, was adopted officially in mainland China in 1958. It is now the main method for inputting characters using a QWERTY keyboard system, with 97% of primary and middle school students using it for online activities (Chen et al., 2016).

As such, expertise with Pinyin is crucial for one's typing skills. Typing in Pinyin requires the user to not only input the sound but also choose from a list of homophonic characters, necessitating proficiency in both Chinese phonology and orthography (Chen et al., 2017). Research by Chen et al. (2021) revealed a negative link between frequent instant messaging and proficiency in handwritten characters, but also identified an indirect positive correlation due to increased use of Pinyin input in instant messaging. This suggests that utilizing the Pinyin input method could “shelter” the direct negative effect of instant messaging on teenagers' Chinese character-writing skills (Luo, 2023). Nevertheless, there remains a gap in research examining the reverse scenario--how proficiency in handwriting Chinese characters affects one's experience with Pinyin input.

Studies (Purcell et al., 2011) have shown typing and handwriting may activate different cognitive and neurological processes. This divergence raises questions about how these two modalities are influenced by language processing and proficiency. Distinctions become particularly relevant in the context of the Chinese script, characterized by intricate characters and difficult stroke patterns, where its conversion to Pinyin requires an “extra phoneme-grapheme conversion that is

not needed in English typing” (B. Lyu et al. 2021). This additional step introduces a unique cognitive demand that may impact typing efficiency and accuracy, marking a major difference from English typography and handwriting (Gong, Gao, & Lyu, 2020; Gong, Lai, & Gao, 2020; Gong, Lyu, & Gao, 2018, and others). The current study extends the line of inquiry to investigate whether these divergent processes manifest in variations in typing performance, in relation to handwriting performance, among Chinese high school students.

Though many studies have shown a correlation between typing Chinese through Pinyin and improved proficiency in the “spelling” and handwriting of Chinese characters, attributed to “activat[ing] both the phonetic sound of the Chinese character and receiv[ing] feedback reinforcement of the character’s form” (Xu et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021), again, few have explored the opposite relationship. This study seeks to address this gap by examining how language proficiency, including proficiency in Pinyin and handwritten characters, correlates with typing proficiency among Chinese users. Understanding this relationship may be highly beneficial in evaluating and adapting contemporary Chinese language pedagogy, especially within a society increasingly reliant on technology and typing for communication. Currently, traditional Chinese language-teaching practices predominantly emphasize handwriting; yet in everyday scenarios, writing is primarily done via “input software” (Gong, Ma, Hsiang, & Wang, 2020). This discrepancy is further highlighted by the fact that handwriting is noted for its inefficiency and tendency to produce messy script (Zhang & Min, 2019). Understanding the degree to which these foundational skills translate into comparable efficiency in typing—the predominant mode of written communication in contemporary society—becomes relevant. Therefore, this study investigates: to what extent does one’s proficiency in Pinyin and Character handwriting affect one’s typing performance?

METHODS

Participants

The participants consisted of 13 male Chinese high school students aged between 15 and 18 from Shanghai, China, enrolled in private high schools. All participants were native Chinese speakers from middle to upper socioeconomic backgrounds. They were selected through quota sampling to represent a range of Chinese proficiency levels.

Instruments

Conversion Tests

Conversion tests were used in this experiment to gather quantitative data on each participant's level of proficiency in Pinyin and Character writing. The study employed two tests: a Handwritten Pinyin-to-Character Conversion test and a Character-to-Pinyin Conversion test, each comprising 15 questions of increasing difficulty.

In the Pinyin-to-Character Conversion test, participants were shown a string of pinyin (representing a short word or phrase) next to a blank space where they were asked to handwrite the corresponding Chinese characters. Scoring was conducted on a one-word, one-point basis. Partial credit, in the form of a half-point, was awarded if part of the character was correct. Full points were assigned for fully accurate entries. In the Character-to-Pinyin Conversion test, participants were shown Chinese characters and were required to provide the correct pinyin representation for each. The scoring system for this test was binary, with participants receiving one point for fully accurate entries and no points for incorrect entries.

The maximum score achievable for the Pinyin-to-Character Conversion Test was 42 points, and 32 points for the Character-to-Pinyin Conversion Test. Consequently, the total maximum score across both tests was 74 points.

Figure 1*Conversion Tests Measuring Language Proficiency in Chinese*

看拼音写词·(15题)

1. tiāo xuǎn (挑选) ✓
2. qiān míng (气明) -2
3. shěng lüè (省略) ✓
4. liáo cǎo (潦草) ✓
5. zhù zhái (住宅) ✓
6. jǔ sàng (沮喪) -0.5
7. diào xiè (凋谢) -0.5
8. chuāi cè (揣测) ✓
9. yào shì (钥匙) -0.5
10. lín lí jìn zhì (淋漓尽致) ✓

看词写拼音·(15题)

1. 荒野 (huāng yě) -1
2. 巩固 (gǒng gù) ✓
3. 陶瓷 (táo cí) ✓
4. 殷红 (yīn hóng) -1
5. 棱角 (léng jiǎo) ✓
6. 贫瘠 (pín jí) -1
7. 血液 (xuè yè) ✓
8. 声音 (shēng yīn) ✓
9. 氛围 (fēn wéi) -1
10. 垄断 (hǒng duàn) ✓

Note. The first 10 questions on the Pinyin-to-Character and Character-to-Pinyin Conversion test.

The text at the top says “Look at the Pinyin / word, write the word / Pinyin. (15 questions)”.

Questions and markings are shown above.

Typing Tests

After completing the conversion tests, participants were presented with two open-ended questions, one descriptive and one argumentative, to assess their typing proficiency. Flowers & Hayes (1984) discovered that writers use different schemata in different modes of writing (descriptive, persuasive), with descriptive requiring the highest level of writer engagement (Reed et al., 1985). Given this, it was anticipated that participants might exhibit higher error rates and spend more time on descriptive writing. To ensure consistency and control for potential differences in performance between the two types of questions, participants were required to respond to both descriptive and argumentative prompts. Participants were asked to write a minimum of 50 characters in their answers.

The two questions used in the study, translated from Chinese, were as follows:

1. “Describe one of your roommates.” (Descriptive)
2. “In a digital age (such as now), do you think traditional paperback books should still exist?” (Argumentative)

Figure 2

Typing Task Measuring Typing Proficiency in Chinese

1. 请描述你的一名室友。(50字)

我的室友身长八尺，双目闪闪如雷电，相貌惊人，颇有奇人异相的筋骨。说话声调高昂，内容丰富有趣，时常让人捧腹大笑。行走时健步如飞，经常三步并作两步飞奔出门。

2. 在数字时代，你认为传统纸质书籍是否仍然有其存在的必要性？(50字)

我认为有其必要性。比起电子书籍，纸质书籍在阅读时更有韵味，在每次翻页之余，总能与作者产生联系，阅读电子书籍时常常因为屏幕的关系与书中内容之间升起一道坚墙，难以产生共情。

To ensure consistency of the testing environment, participants completed these tasks using the same laptop. Screen-capture and key-logging software were employed to measure participants' typing speed and accuracy during the typing tasks. The time taken by participants to complete each question was recorded from when the participant began typing one question until its completion, excluding the time spent between questions. Keystrokes-per-second were calculated as a quantitative metric for typing speed.

Every mistake resulting in the deletion of a character incurred a one-point deduction, categorized as a character error. If a participant corrected the mistake before the character was selected to appear on the screen, it was classified as a Pinyin error, and a half-point deduction was applied instead. This is because typing Chinese on a QWERTY keyboard involves typing the pinyin

first, then waiting for an array of Chinese characters that match the phonetic input to appear. The desired character is then selected from this array

Two main variables were quantified: ERS (Error Rate Score) and KPS (Keystrokes Per Second). ERS is calculated as such:

$$\text{ERS} = \frac{\# \text{ of character errors} + \# \text{ of Pinyin errors} \times 0.5}{\# \text{ of keystrokes}}$$

This paper hypothesizes that students demonstrating higher accuracy in both Pinyin-to-Character Conversion and Character-to-Pinyin Conversion tests exhibit higher accuracy and speed in typing tasks, leading to a lower ERS.

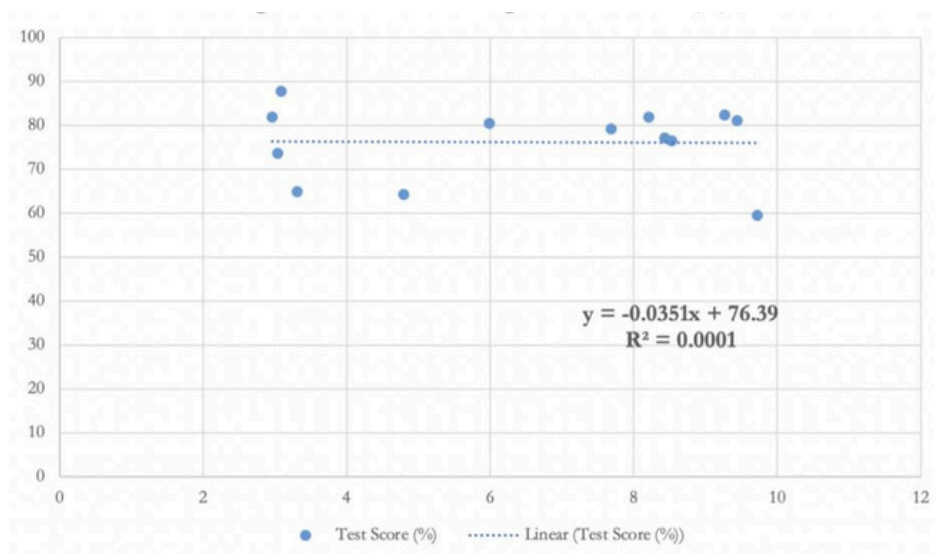
RESULTS

There are 13 data points from this study.

<i>Trial</i>	<i>ERS (Error Rate Score)</i>	<i>KPS (Keystrokes per second)</i>	<i>Total time (s)</i>	<i>Time 1 (s, Des.)</i>	<i>Time 2 (s, Arg.)</i>	<i>Test Score (%)</i>	<i>Pinyin (%)</i>	<i>Handwriting (%)</i>
1	8.43	4.2	127	80	47	77.1	75	80
2	7.69	2.6	190	140	50	79.1	75	84.4
3	8.21	2.63	329	144	185	81.8	77.4	87.5
4	3.09	3.52	141	63	78	87.8	83.3	93.8
5	9.44	4.3	206	109	97	81.1	85.7	75
6	4.8	2.56	183	115	68	64.2	56	75
7	9.72	3.49	165	85	80	59.5	54.8	65.6
8	5.99	3.04	192	77	115	80.4	77.4	84.4
9	9.27	2.46	307	177	130	82.4	80.1	84.4
10	3.31	3.92	158	87	71	64.9	52.4	81.3
11	8.53	3.15	177	98	79	76.4	72.6	81.3
12	2.96	4.03	189	65	124	81.8	82.1	81.3
13	3.04	3.91	164	78	86	73.6	82.1	62.5
Averages	6.498461538	3.37	194.4615385	101.3846154	93.07692308	76.16153846	73.37692308	79.73076923

Figure 3

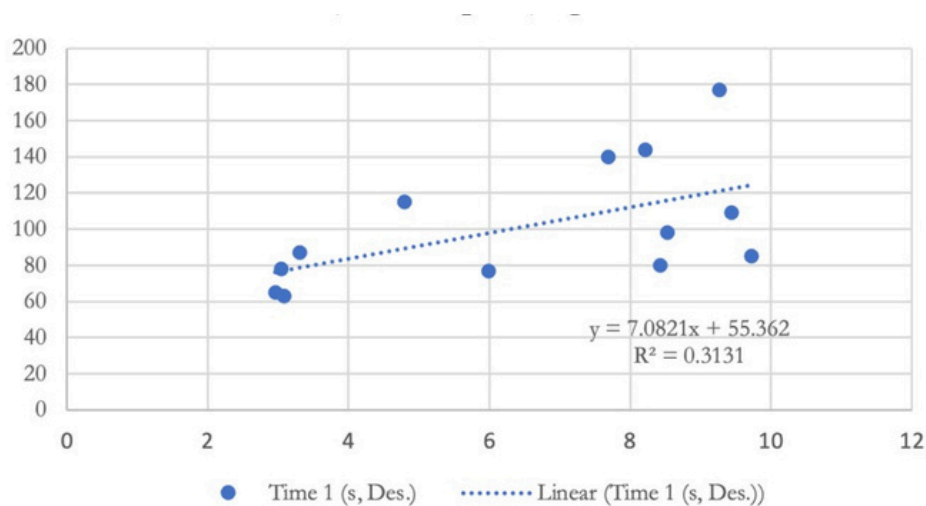
Regression Line of ERS Against Test Score (%).



A regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between participants' scores on the conversion tests and their error rates during the typing tasks, as shown in Figure 3. The results indicated that there was no significant correlation ($R^2 = 0.0001$), suggesting that proficiency in either Pinyin or Character handwriting alone may not be strong predictors of typing accuracy or speed among high school students.

Figure 4

Regression Line of Time Spent during Descriptive Writing Section Against ERS.



Furthermore, regression analysis revealed a low positive correlation ($R^2 = 0.3131$) between the duration (in seconds) participants spent on the descriptive writing task and their Error Rate Score (ERS), shown in Figure 4. Higher time spent on the descriptive writing tasks may be associated with a higher error rate during typing. This implies that the ERS might be influenced by participants' engagement in rumination and revising during typing, perhaps stemming from the high cognitive demands of the descriptive writing task (Reed et al., 1985). However, there was minimal correlation between ERS and both time spent in argumentative writing ($R^2 = 0.011$) and total time ($R^2 = 0.1535$).

DISCUSSION

Despite the initial hypothesis that proficiency in Pinyin and Character handwriting would influence typing accuracy and speed, this study finds a near-zero influence between the two variables. This result suggests that typing proficiency in Chinese may depend on factors beyond

traditional language skills alone. One possible explanation is that typing in Chinese requires a unique set of motor skills, visual processing abilities, and cognitive strategies that are distinct from those involved in handwriting Characters or Pinyin. Studies in cognitive psychology (Higashiyama et al., 2015) have concluded that “higher orthographic working memory demands” were apparent in “typewriting than in handwriting”. Brain activity in the left premotor cortex was also more rostral, indicating that there are brain regions specific to typing when compared to handwriting. These findings suggest that the cognitive demands of typing and handwriting may be sufficiently distinct, potentially contributing to the lack of significant correlation between handwriting proficiency and typing performance.

Purcell et al. (2011) has shown that the motor planning and execution processes involved in typing are intertwined with other concurrent processes coordinating the spatial frames of reference for hand and finger movement on an external keyboard, which may be the reason behind the difference in brain activity. Furthermore, Zheng (2011) has also shown that approximately 7.46% of typographical errors made in Pinyin are “transposition[al]”, which are solely dependent on keyboard layout. This might explain unexpected cases where results showed a large discrepancy between typing ERS and test score percentage. For example, take the participant who received a test score of 81.1% (fourth highest) but had an ERS of 9.44 (highest) in Trial 5. The participant, despite being a native Chinese speaker, may excel in recognition and memory retrieval tasks but struggle with components specific to typing. In other words, he or she may have sufficient orthographical knowledge to remember characters, but not possess the fine motor coordination and rapid visual- processing abilities required for efficient typing. Errors may occur not because of a lack of proficiency in the language, but rather due to the differing physical and cognitive demands unique to typing.

Another explanation drawn from observations and results during the study is that proficient participants exhibit a tendency to ruminate more during the writing process, contributing to their longer completion times and higher ERS. This propensity is reflected in the slight positive relation between the time participants spent in descriptive writing and their ERS, as depicted in *Figure 4*. A study by Alamargot et al. (2011) says that writers with a “higher working memory capacity” made “longer pauses,” and on average, participants also spent more time on descriptive writing tasks (101.4s) compared to argumentative tasks (93.1s), suggesting that descriptive writing does require higher levels of writer engagement and cognitive processing. This finding aligns with the aforementioned research by Reed et al. (1985), which suggests that descriptive tasks demand the highest level of writer engagement. Thus, a heightened cognitive engagement, while beneficial for refining the quality of their writing (which was not assessed), may have caused participants with a high proficiency in conversion tasks to spend more time—repeatedly typing and deleting small chunks of text—thereby increasing their ERS and reducing the correlation between proficiency and ERS.

Limitations

One of the primary limitations of this study is the relatively small sample size of 13 participants. Despite attempts to recruit participants across varying proficiency levels, the limited sample size may have impacted the comprehensiveness of the findings. Future research with larger and more diverse participant samples could provide a more precise understanding of the relationship between language proficiency and typing performance.

Another limitation is the focus solely on high school students, which may not fully capture the range of typing skills across different age groups or educational backgrounds. Including participants from more diverse demographic backgrounds and age ranges could offer a more

accurate understanding of typing skills in Chinese. However, it should be noted that additional variables such as unfamiliarity with technology could impact the validity of results. In addition, the use of quota sampling may have also introduced researcher bias due to subjectivity in choosing participants. Future research may opt for more objective methods like stratified sampling, to ensure a fair representation of participants across different proficiency levels.

The typing tasks used in this experiment, while designed to assess proficiency in typing Chinese, may not fully capture the nuances of typing itself. Future research may choose to create tasks that more accurately assess a participant's typing proficiency using more naturalistic and comprehensive measures (real-world typing tasks like blog posts, etc.) to ensure the ecological validity of the study, as participants may have typed more carefully and with more revision when encountering the artificial typing task. More precise metrics other than the ERS may also be employed, as the ERS considers all typographical errors, including ones not dependent on the participant's proficiency in language. Classifying types of typographical errors into groups like "deletions", "insertions", "substitutions" and "transpositions" (Zheng, 2011) could provide further insight into the specific areas where participants may have made errors, offering a clearer assessment of their typing proficiency.

Furthermore, some participants may have taken longer to complete the typing tasks not because of their actual typing proficiency, but because they were trying to guess the aim of the assessment, repeatedly deleting sentences with slight imperfections to "improve" the perceived quality of work produced. This behavior might have led to inflated error rates and increase in time taken for task completion, despite the participant having a high score percentage in the assessment tests (Trial 9), affecting the accuracy of the data. Future research could consider using measures to minimize the influence of confounding variables, such as providing clear instructions and minimizing time pressure during the typing tasks.

Future Research

Future research could explore additional variables that may more directly impact typing performance, such as individual differences in motor skills, visual processing abilities, or keyboarding techniques, to pinpoint factors influencing Chinese typing proficiency. This may include longitudinal studies that could be used to investigate how typing proficiency develops over time and whether interventions aimed at improving Pinyin or Character handwriting skills have a measurable impact on typing accuracy and speed, or comparative studies with participants of different age groups or language backgrounds which could provide valuable insights into the universality of typing skills and the role of language proficiency in typing performance.

Much research has been conducted to find whether typing should be a crucial part of the teaching Chinese language learning experience (Chen, 2018; Di, 2014; Xu, 2011), but there is still disagreement on the effectiveness of typing when in comparison to traditional methods like handwriting. According to a review by Lyu et al. (2021), “typing and handwriting strengthen different aspects of Chinese character learning and retrieval, and that typing enhances the quality of writing performance for beginners”. Despite concerns about typing potentially hindering language acquisition, ample research suggests that utilizing typing in beginner-level classrooms can increase the efficiency and quality of writing quality, enhancing students’ “phonology and phonologic- semantic mapping” (Chen et al., 2016; Guan et al., 2011, 2015; Guan & Wang, 2017, among others).

Therefore, understanding the relationship between handwriting proficiency and typing performance can have significant implications for language learning and educational practices. Educators can tailor language learning curricula to optimize students' acquisition of both skills, adjusting the timing, format, and emphasis placed on handwriting and typing practice accordingly. For example, if further research finds a significant correlation between handwriting and typing proficiency, educators may allocate more time and resources to developing handwriting skills in early

language learners to enhance their typing abilities, which could prove more useful later. Conversely, if typing is found to have minimal correlation with handwriting proficiency, the traditional emphasis on handwriting skills could be reassessed. Educators may choose to prioritize typing to improve students' efficiency and accuracy in digital communication platforms, aligning with the demands of contemporary communication methods.

CONCLUSION

While this study did not find a significant correlation between Pinyin or Character-handwriting proficiency and typing performance, it raises a few key questions about the characteristics of the modern education methods of the Chinese language. In an era dominated by digital communication, if there is little correlation between one's proficiency in handwriting characters and the proficiency at which they type, the necessity of formal handwriting training in Chinese education systems (for, e.g. native primary school students, those who learn it as a second language for business, etc.) may need some reform. However, due to the limitations of the ERS in accurately measuring typing proficiency, more research with improved measurement tools needs to be conducted to properly evaluate whether typing should be incorporated in Chinese-language instruction.

References

- Alamargot, D., Caporossi, G., Chesnet, D., & Ros, C. (2011). What makes a skilled writer? Working memory and audience awareness during text composition. *Learning and individual differences*, 21, 505-516. doi: 10.1016/j.lindif.2011.06.001
- Barkaoui, K. (2016). What and when Second-Language learners revise when responding to timed writing tasks on the computer: the roles of task type, second language proficiency, and keyboarding skills. *The Modern Language Journal*, 100(1), 320–340.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12316>
- Boning Lyu, Chun Lai, Chin-Hsi Lin, Yang Gong, Comparison studies of typing and handwriting in Chinese language learning: A synthetic review, *International Journal of Educational Research*, Volume 106, 2021, 101740, ISSN 0883-0355,
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2021.101740>.
- Chen, S. H. (2018). A research on Chinese character writing ability of Vietnamese students. Master's thesis. China: Yunnan Normal University.
- Chen J. J., Lei X., Cheng X. R., Liu H. S. (2016). Chinese character practice: comparison between children using hand-writing and pinyin keyboarding. *Acta Psychol. Sin.* 48, 1258–1269. doi: 10.3724/SP.J.1041.2016.01258
- Chen J. J., Luo R., Liu H. S. (2017). The effect of pinyin input experience on the link between semantic and phonology of Chinese character in digital writing. *J. Psycholinguist. Res.* 46, 923–934. doi: 10.1007/s10936-016-9470-y
- Chen J. J., Xia Y., Wan L., Luo R. (2021). The effect of instant message on Chinese character handwriting among teens: pinyin input experience as a compensating role. *Asia Pac. Educ. Res.* 30, 177–185. doi: 10.1007/s40299-020-00524-y

- Di, P. P. (2014). The research on the teaching strategy of senior high school students writing in the background of keyboard input. Master's thesis. China: Hebei Normal University.
- Flower, L., & Hayes, J.R. (1984). Images, plans, and prose: The representation of meaning in writing. *Written Communication*, 1(1), 120-160.
- Gong, Y., Lyu, B., & Gao, X. (2018). Research on teaching Chinese as a second or foreign language in and outside mainland China: A bibliometric analysis. *The AsiaPacific Education Researcher*, 27(4), 277–289. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-018-0385-2>.
- Gong, Y., Gao, X., & Lyu, B. (2020). Teaching Chinese as a second or foreign language to non-Chinese learners in mainland China (2014–2018). *Language Teaching*, 53 (1), 44–62. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444819000387>.
- Gong, Y., Lai, C., & Gao, X. (2020). The teaching and learning of Chinese as a second or foreign language: The current situation and future directions. *Frontiers of Education in China*, 15(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11516-020-0001-0>.
- Gong, Y., Ma, M., Hsiang, T. P., & Wang, C. (2020). Sustaining international students' learning of Chinese in China: Shifting motivations among New Zealand students during study abroad. *Sustainability*, 12(15), 6289–6302. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12156289>.
- Guan, C. Q., Liu, Y., Chan, D. H. L., Ye, F., & Perfetti, C. A. (2011). Writing strengthens orthography and alphabetic-coding strengthens phonology in learning to read Chinese. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 103(3), 509–522.
- Guan, C. Q., Perfetti, C. A., & Meng, W. (2015). Writing quality predicts Chinese learning. *Reading and Writing*, 28(6), 763–795.
- Guan, C. Q., & Wang, Y. (2017). The effect of handwriting training on language learning among deaf children and their matched hearing peers in China. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 162(3), 265–276.

- Higashiyama Y, Takeda K, Someya Y, Kuroiwa Y, Tanaka F (2015) Correction: The Neural Basis of Typewriting: A Functional MRI Study. PLOS ONE 10(8): e0137265.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0137265>
- Luo, R., Peng, Y., & Chen, J. (2023b). Internet use predicts Chinese character spelling performance of junior high school students: multiple mediating roles of pinyin input proficiency and net-speak experience. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1153763>
- Purcell, J. J., Turkeltaub, P. E., Eden, G. F., & Rapp, B. (2011). Examining the central and peripheral processes of written word production through meta-analysis. *Frontiers in psychology*, 2, 239.
- Reed, W. M., Burton, J. K, & Kelly, P. P. (1985). The effects of writing ability and mode of discourse on cognitive capacity engagement. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 19, 283-297.
- Xu, L., Chen, J., and Liu, H. (2020). The effect of junior middle school students' digital writing on Chinese character writing ability: pinyin input proficiency as mediating role. *Educ. Res. Exp.* 4, 86–90.
- Xu, Y. P. (2011). The cultivation of college students' writing ability in the age of thumb. *Journal of Inner Mongolia Normal University (Educational Science)*, 24(9), 67–69.
- Zhang, Q. and Min, G. (2019). 'Chinese writing composition among CFL learners: A comparison between handwriting and typewriting'. *Computers and Composition*, Vol 54. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2019.102522>
- Zheng, Yabin & Xie, Lixing & Liu, Zhiyuan & Sun, Maosong & Zhang, Yang & Ru, Liyun. (2011). Why Press Backspace? Understanding User Input Behaviors in Chinese Pinyin Input Method. 485-490.

research paper:
moving beyond the “proper”
language: a case study of tibet



Moving Beyond the “Proper” Language: A Case Study of Tibet

Introduction: The Proper Language

How a “proper language” is defined, is fluid. In school, we are often taught the suitable or appropriate way of speaking and writing, but rarely do we pause to consider what defines a language’s suitability or appropriateness. According to Wardhaugh (40), it is usually a combination of political, social, religious, and economic factors that determine how a language is “proper”. Take English, for example: objectively, no variant of English is correct. However, Standard American English (SAE) is often considered “proper” in educational and professional settings due to its wide social acceptance, solidified through nationwide education, governance, and political discourses, where highly educated and powerful people speak what is generally considered SAE (Lippi-Green 15). However, despite its official political recognition, there are still no concrete guidelines for learning a natural SAE, and labeling it as “standard” only perpetuates the notion of linguistic propriety and discrimination against other variants of English (Coupland). Nevertheless, students in the US are expected to learn and use SAE as the country’s “proper language”.

Mandating the education and adoption of a “proper language” in any country has an obvious downside. Like SAE, when the “proper language” of a country is made obligatory on “official occasions and in official places (schools, public administrations, political institutions, etc.)”, educational or economic pressures often force students of a socially subordinate language to assimilate into the empowered language (Bourdieu). The problem arises during assimilation, where educators or lawmakers rarely create effective pathways to help those who do not speak the “proper language” transition, nor actively try to preserve the minority language (Lippi-Green 85). When minority languages fall out of use, the “proper language” is affirmed as standard, leading to linguistic

purism - where one variety of a language is deemed higher quality. As a result, the chosen “proper language” is empowered, other languages are seen as subordinate, and minority language groups are marginalized.

Considering this, this essay will use the Tibet Autonomous Regions (TAR), or Tibet, as a case study to examine the extent to which “proper languages” in a society contribute to marginalization and class separation; whether the idea of a “proper language” should be discarded; and if not, what changes, if any, should be implemented regarding this phenomenon.

I. Language and marginalization

In China, the role of the “proper language” is filled by Mandarin. Based on the phonology of the Beijing dialect, Mandarin is an artificially constructed language designed to be the lingua franca for the entire nation. It was established to be the “language of the people,” providing a common vernacular and writing system to unite the otherwise diverse nation in the mid-20th century. (Jeffery Weng 618).

The marginalization of minority language groups grew increasingly apparent when Mandarin started to be officially recognized. With Mandarin’s implementation in China’s school system and official Chinese documents, “its acquisition and use became “aggressively promoted” and “enforced” (Roche, *Articulating language oppression*). In Tibet, despite there being Tibetan education resources in primary and middle school, most students are forced to transfer to Mandarin during later stages of education to pursue better education opportunities. Many schools in Tibet teach math and sciences in Mandarin, and state policies often set Mandarin as the standard language of education for STEM classes (Rikha 4). Widespread educational programs like *Neidiban* Schooling send Tibetan students away from home, enrolling them in a system where courses are taught in

Mandarin and Tibetan language proficiency scores are discounted from the final exam (Dai and Cheng 59). While these programs appear to offer benefits, the heavy emphasis on education in Mandarin only serves to distance Tibetan students from their mother tongue. Thus, learning Tibetan is systematically disincentivized, and its lack of political recognition in national and global events only further restricts its speakers.

Moreover, educational and employment opportunities offered in Mandarin are inaccessible to those not fluent in Mandarin. Radio Free Asia, a non-profit news service, reports that public sector jobs are largely “out of reach” for Tibetan graduates, and the “requirements for proficiency in Mandarin Chinese” required by many firms further discourage Tibetan students from learning Tibetan (Kunchok, “*Tibetan university graduates...*”). In response to limited job prospects, more and more Tibetan students enroll in Mandarin schooling. However, this process leads to a decline in Tibetan proficiency among the following generations, increasing the likelihood that Tibetan music, poetry, knowledge, and culture are lost to time. Without use, Tibetan is also increasingly associated by both speakers and non-speakers with “disadvantage, backwardness, [and] poverty”, while Mandarin is promoted as “prosper[ous], progress[ive]”, and powerful (Roche, *Lexical necropolitics* 114). This association then breeds disuse. Ultimately, the native language of minorities is devalued, while the position of the “proper language” is “unambiguously privileged” (Roche, *Articulating language oppression*).

While Mandarin and Tibetan may be an extreme example, similar kinds of linguistic oppression are not uncommon in other parts of the world. In Nepal, languages of indigenous groups like the Kham Magar are often sidelined and forgotten, as the language policy pushes “proper” languages such as English or Nepali, dismissing those who speak Kham Magar (Khanal). In Zimbabwe, those who speak minority languages like Sotho are reluctant to speak their language,

preferring “national languages” like Ndebele due to its broader use in communication, media, education, and economic mobility (Ndhlovu). Such widespread linguistic “propriety” can not only be restrictive but downright harmful to marginalized communities, as they speak a language not supported or recognized in their homeland.

Hence, should we abandon the notion of a “proper language”? Let’s consider China again. A comparison of statistics before and after the implementation of Mandarin suggests that introducing a “proper language” into Chinese society has promoted social interactions, trust, and justice, as well as reducing poverty simply because citizens can now communicate more effectively through a common language (Qin et al.). From a broader standpoint, a standardized writing system makes “religious, literary and legal documents” (Lippi-Green 15) more widely accessible, fostering a sense of ethnic solidarity and national unity (Llamzon 265).

Having a *common* language is quite practical; it is the “propriety” inevitably associated with it that leads to the marginalization of minority communities. Therefore, instead of abandoning a common language, it may be beneficial to reassess how the common language is established and take action to address the inevitable dominance associated with usage. This way, we can better address the needs of a multicultural, multilingual, and rapidly globalizing society while lessening the negative effects of adopting a common language (Loper 19).

II. Implementation

It is undoubtedly difficult to balance the need for a common language to enhance communication and governance with the preservation of linguistic and cultural diversity. The practical challenge lies in creating methods that allow for the learning of a common language, while actively preserving and promoting minority languages. Instead of associating “propriety” with a

single, dominant language, it should be expanded to include multilingualism as a norm rather than an exception – thus, this essay will summarize and propose three areas of improvement: the educational, political, and the cultural.

II.i Educational improvements

“In the process which leads to the construction, legitimation and imposition of an official language, the educational system plays a decisive role.”

(Bourdieu)

Various research supports the funding of education in linguistically marginalized areas as a means of improving teaching resources, educational materials, and reducing schooling fees (Agnihotri; Lombardo; Mutekwe and Sedibe; etc.). In Tibet, the current curriculum, which is identical to the Han Chinese system, places less importance on “linguistic competence in two languages” at the secondary education level, instead prioritizing the “study of Chinese and other subject matters”. Variations in the quality and enthusiasm of teachers also greatly impact the willingness of students to learn Tibetan (Dai and Cheng 68). Bilingualism should not come at the expense of the minority language. Bangsbo’s *“Teaching and Learning in Tibet: A Review of Research and Policy Publications”* suggests two main improvements: adopting “child-centered schools” and providing “quality teaching”. This corresponds with the International Campaign for Tibet’s (ICT) suggestions, which point out that teachers should be provided with adequate training in both bilingual and minority language education techniques, and that minority groups should also have the authority to design and implement their own curricula. Thus, an ideal bilingual educational model ensures fluency in a common language for wider communication, while fluency in one’s mother tongue is sustained and encouraged to maintain a connection with one’s cultural roots.

II.ii Political improvements

According to the Tibet Policy Institute, laws in China often contain seemingly liberal and internationally accepted policies regarding minority languages. These include: "...all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages" (Article 4, PRC constitution, 1982); "minority nationalities may use in education the language of the respective nationality" (Article 12, Law of the PRC, 1995); and "organs of self-government... guarantee the freedom ... to use and develop their own spoken and written languages" (Article 10, Law of the PRC on Regional National Autonomy, 1984 & 2001). Due to negligence, however, these laws are often ignored, or simply "not implemented". According to the UNESCO Language Endangerment and Vitality Framework, one of the most important factors contributing to language vitality is its "official status and use". Concurrent with studies on *China's Policy on Tibetan Autonomy*, to maintain an equal status between Mandarin and Tibetan, much more "official recognition by the Chinese state" should be given to Tibetan, ensuring its involvement in "formal language policies" and "planning initiatives" (Lhundrop et al. 19). To ensure the autonomy of Tibet's political system, and that already implemented laws are functional, "locally elected legislative bod[ies]" should also be able to "interpret[] local laws" (Smith), both monitoring educational policy implementations and advocating for the linguistic rights of minorities. This way, minority languages can be involved in the "planning and policy" of the state, increasing their visibility and importance, and decreasing the relative dominance of Mandarin.

II.iii Cultural improvements

"Once a language dies, a part of human culture is lost – for ever."

(Dixon 199)

To revitalize the language of Tibetan and encourage its use, many have suggested minority languages be included in local institutions for media (Dalha), and that minority groups maintain their own

“literary traditions” and “free press” (Lombardo 9). The language used for “work”, in “media/cinema/music” or “technological advances”, should be in the language of the region (Bastardas-Boada 152), to avoid associating “propriety” with any singular language. According to Roche, to form an inclusive linguistic community in Tibet, we must first destroy the “false dichotomy between “advancement” (Mandarin) and “identity” (Tibetan) (Roche, *Lexical necropolitics* 118), and instead advocate for fair, unbiased, and inclusive development. Research and action organizations such as the Tibet Policy Institute, Tibet Action Institute, Central Tibetan Administration, and other similar groups also help to raise awareness of and call attention to such cultural issues. With enough support from governments, NGOs, and individuals, perhaps the Chinese government would someday be compelled to uphold its commitments to linguistic equality, cultural preservation, and minority rights.

Conclusion

The notion of linguistic propriety that allows only a single language to thrive within a region is harmful. Languages spoken by minorities should not be left uncared for, nor should they be marginalized so that speakers are forced to abandon their mother tongue in favor of a more widely used alternative. Minority languages should be protected, embraced, and considered equal. Thus, the idea of linguistic “propriety” should allow for linguistic diversity. Instead of the hierarchical approach of designating a “proper language”, it should be reconceptualized as the “common” language: a “common” language for people of different cultures to openly interact, confidently collaborate, and share with others the beauty of being different.

Works Cited

- Bangsbo, Ellen. *Teaching and Learning in Tibet: A Review of Research and Policy Publications*. NIAS, 2004.
- Bastardas-Boada, Albert. “Linguistic Sustainability for a Multilingual ...” *Sustainable Multilingualism*, University of Barcelona, Spain, May 2014, philarchive.org/archive/BASLSF. Accessed 06 May 2024.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. “Bourdieu Language and Symbolic Power.” *Monoskop*, Polity Press, 1991, monoskop.org/images/4/43/Bourdieu_Pierre_Language_and_Symbolic_Power_1991.pdf. Accessed 04 May 2024.
- Coupland, Nikolas. “Sociolinguistic Prevarication about ‘Standard English.’” *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, Cardiff University, 2002, www.researchgate.net/publication/229702904_Sociolinguistic_prevarication_about_'standard_English'. Accessed 04 May 2024.
- Dai, Qingxia, and Yanyan Cheng. “Typology of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education in Chinese Minority Nationality Regions.” *Bilingual Education in China*, edited by Anwei Feng, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, UK, 2007, pp. 50–75.
- Dalha, Tenzin. “Chinese Censorship vs Tibetan Activism On Social Media.” *Tibet Policy Institute*, 4 June 2016, tibetpolicy.net/chinese-censorship-vs-tibetan-activism-on-social-media/. Accessed 06 May 2024.
- “International Campaign for Tibet.” *International Campaign for Tibet*, 19 Apr. 2024, savetibet.org/. Accessed 04 May 2024.

Khanal, Jeevan, et al. “Exploring Marginalized Indigenous Communities’ Expectations and Experiences with the National School Education System in Nepal: A Study of Kham Magars - Discover Global Society.” *SpringerLink*, Springer International Publishing, 21 Sept. 2023, link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s44282-023-00008-6. Accessed 04 May 2024.

Kunchok, Sangyal. “Tibetan University Graduates Can’t Find Work despite Promises of Opportunity.” *Radio Free Asia*, 22 Nov. 2021, www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/work-11222021155847.html. Accessed 04 May 2024.

“Language and Dialect.” *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, by Ronald Wardhaugh, 5th ed., Blackwell Publishers Ltd, Oxford, 2006, pp. 27–43, Accessed 04 May 2024.

Lhundrop, Sonam, et al. “1. Language Contact and the Politics of Recognition amongst Tibetans in the People’s Republic of China.” *The Politics of Language Contact in the Himalaya - 1. Language Contact and the Politics of Recognition amongst Tibetans in the People’s Republic of China - Open Book Publishers*, Open Book Publishers, 30 Apr. 2020, books.openedition.org/obp/9411?lang=en. Accessed 06 May 2024.

Lippi-Green, Rosina. “The Linguistic Facts of Life.” *English with an Accent*, 2nd ed., Routledge, New York, NY, 2012, pp. 5–26.

Lombardo, Philip A. “Linguistic Situations in Tibet: Perspectives on Language, Society, Politics, and Identity.” *Academia.Edu*, Iowa State University, 25 May 2016, www.academia.edu/25614299/Linguistic_Situations_in_Tibet_Perspectives_on_Language_Society_Politics_and_Identity. Accessed 04 May 2024.

Loper, Kelley. "Minority Language Rights and Education in China: The Relevance of Human Rights Law and Substantive Equality." *CORE*, The University of Hong Kong, 2011, core.ac.uk/. Accessed 04 May 2024.

Mutekwe, Edmore, and Mabatho Sedibe. "South Africa's Quest for Democratic Education through a Language in Education Policy Perspective." *Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2000). Linguistic Genocide in Education-or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights. Mahwah, NJ and London Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. - References - Scientific Research Publishing, Creative Education, 26 June 2015, scirp.org/reference/referencespapers?referenceid=1504030. Accessed 04 May 2024.*

Ndhlovu, Finex. "Everyday Forms of Language-Based Marginalization in Zimbabwe." *Minerva Access*, School of Languages and Linguistics, The University of Melbourne, 2007, minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/handle/11343/34877. Accessed 04 May 2024.

Pema, Tenzin. "Tibetan Language Protected by Law but Neglected in Practice." *Tibet Policy Institute*, 15 May 2014, tibetpolicy.net/tibetan-language-protected-law-neglected-practice/. Accessed 04 May 2024.

Qin, Jianchao, et al. "Mandarin's Impact on Poverty Alleviation: An Empirical ..." *ResearchGate*, Nicolaus Copernicus University, 2022, www.researchgate.net/publication/365163971_Mandarin's_Impact_on_Poverty_Alleviation_An_Empirical_Study_Based_on_Economic_and_Social_Interaction_Dimensions. Accessed 04 May 2024.

Rikha, Sonam. "Language Oppression in the Tibetan Autonomous Region And ..." *Scholarship @ Claremont*, Pomona College, 2021,

scholarship.claremont.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=cclura_2021. Accessed 04 May 2024.

Roche, Gerald. “Articulating Language Oppression: Colonialism, Coloniality and the Erasure of Tibet’s Minority Languages.” *Taylor & Francis Online*, 2019, www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0031322X.2019.1662074. Accessed 04 May 2024.

Roche, Gerald. “Hub: Lexical Necropolitics: The Raciolinguistics of Language Oppression on the Tibetan Margins of Chineseness. *Language & Communication*, 76, 111–120: 10.1016/j.Langcom.2020.10.002.” *Elsevier*, 2020, sci-hub.se/10.1016/j.langcom.2020.10.002. Accessed 04 May 2024.

Smith, Warren. “A Reply to China’s White Paper on Tibet - Radio Free Asia.” *Radio Free Asia*, www.rfa.org/english/news/special/dalailamabirthday/TibetPublication.pdf. Accessed 04 May 2024.

Smith, Warren. “China’s Policy on Tibetan Autonomy.” *East-West Center Washington Working Papers*, 2004, www.files.ethz.ch/isn/35281/EWC_WP_02.pdf. Accessed 06 May 2024.

“Tibet - United States Department of State.” *U.S DEPARTMENT of STATE*, 2022, www.state.gov/reports/2021-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/china/tibet/. Accessed 04 May 2024.

Tsomu, Roche. “Tibet’s Invisible Languages and China’s Language Endangerment Crisis: Lessons from the Gochang Language of Western Sichuan.” *China Quarterly*, 2018, rest.neptune-prod.its.unimelb.edu.au/server/api/core/bitstreams/719675d9-658b-569f-9bfa-f6626665c863/content. Accessed 06 May 2024.

Weng, Jeffrey. "What Is Mandarin? The Social Project of Language ..." *Cambridge Core*, The Journal of Asian Studies, 2018, www.jeffreyweng.com/Mandarin.pdf. Accessed 04 May 2024.

world's last diary entry

8/3/2084, 14:35, Thursday

if anyone is reading this, deciphering this,

hello

welcome, or maybe you've been here awhile already.

...have you had a look around?

maybe you'll find traces of us, somewhere. you know.

we were once a beautiful species, and this was once a beautiful planet

flush with plants and people. and structures

that reached the sky and housed the plants and people.

it was a good, peaceful life, until war

a virus

a meteor

we decided it was time for us to go.

i've liked my time here, and

i hope the next inhabitants of "earth", you guys

treat it well, or at least better. or perhaps,

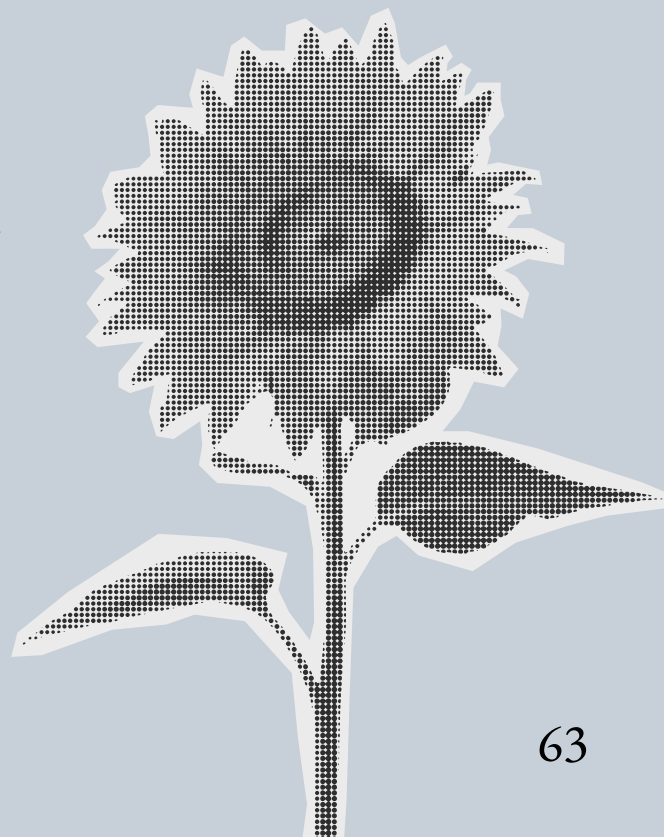
it might be better for the planet if no one lived here at all.

...

the sky is blue.

bluer than i ever remembered,

bluer than it had ever been.



IB ENGLISH HL ESSAY

eloquence in shakespeare

*How does Shakespeare use the characterization of **Richard** in **Richard II** to question whether **eloquence** is a good quality in a king?*

How does Shakespeare use the characterization of Richard to question whether eloquence is a good quality in a king?

Eloquence is admirable: it captivates crowds, inspires ideas, and commands respect. Yet, it is also extravagant: it can mask inadequacies, hide shortcomings, and be pretentious if used ineptly. In *Richard II*, the main character Richard has precisely this conflict, where his bright, ceremonial eloquence serves as both a tool of persuasion and a shield for his incompetent ruling. When we consider Richard's characterization throughout the play and the actions of his more direct, practical, and active foil, Bolingbroke, it is clear that Richard is depicted antithetically. Although courtly speeches and poetic musings create an aura of grandeur around him, beneath his eloquence lies a ruler detached from the practicalities of governance, unable to lead effectively.

Richard is often portrayed as overly talkative and eloquent: he indulges in poetry instead of taking decisive action as a king. When Scroop brings news of the surrendering of York, the betrayal of the Welsh Army, and the death of Bushy and Green, Richard is devastated. Richard expresses, "Make dust our paper and with rainy eyes / Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth": he depicts himself as the heavens, using "dust" as "paper" and "rainy eyes" with "writ[ing] sorrow", even writing on the "bosom" of the "earth". However, as a king, his purpose is to lead: his eloquent yet pessimistic speech imbued with contemplations of mortality and loss starkly contrasts with the urgent need for decisive action - focusing on "write", recording his sorrow, rather than acting to prevent it. This excessive indulgence in eloquence is extremely out of place for a king, who should prioritize action over metaphor and wordplay. His listing of words connoting death, such as "let's talk of graves, worms, and epitaphs", do not only reflect his despair, but also reveal his immediate acceptance of fate: using the commemorative item "epitaph" in his list of requests shows how quickly he decides to resign his rule. The king, aware of his diminishing authority, turns to the permanence of language on an "epitaph" to immortalize his experience and identity, a symbol which mirrors how he hides behind poetry to mask his impotence as a ruler. He invites his subjects to speak, saying "let's talk", again concentrating on discussion and rhetoric. Richard is unable to face difficulties with action, as he reacts to devastating news by indulging in melodramatic descriptions of his suffering rather than considering how he can mitigate it. Shakespeare's depiction of Richard's

eloquence, while impressive, removes Richard from the practicalities of leadership and reveals his weakness in times of need, displaying his ineffectiveness as a king.

Shakespeare further questions Richard's eloquence by illustrating how his complete indulgence in poetic language reveals his inability to respond decisively to imminent crises. In Richard's request, "Let us sit upon the ground / And tell sad stories of the death of kings", Shakespeare uses the verb "sit" here to insinuate both the political and emotional inaction of Richard. He invites others to "sit" with him, physically lowering himself onto the "ground" with others, suggesting a vulnerability and equality with his subjects that is highly uncharacteristic of a monarch. The pessimistic adjective "sad" in relating to "sad stories" is an introspective one: it reveals Richard's preoccupation with narratives of failure and "depos[ition]" rather than resolution or action, dwelling on tragic "stories" to the point of being self-defeating. Shakespeare then shows Richard indulging in a lengthy, ornate thirty-four-line soliloquy, exemplifying his tendency to linger in eloquent poetry unrelated to the matter at hand. For example, in his extended metaphor, "For within the hollow crown / That rounds the mortal temples of a king / Keeps death his court", he refers the ability of a king to "monarchize, be feared and kill with looks". However, considering his current state, this ironic self-deprecation only accentuates the reality of his own inability to wield such power, revealing a gaping disconnection between the kingly figure he conjures in his mind and the weak reality of his reign. Again, his eloquence, while beautiful in structure and rich in imagery, is used not to inspire or rally his subjects, but only to commiserate in the shared doom of kingship. Shakespeare's display of Richard's passivity and incapability, corresponding with his flowery language, suggests that it weakens him both emotionally and politically, showing how eloquence can impact a king's capability to rule.

However, Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard's eloquence is not always one of weakness and fragility. When he is brought into the Hall of Parliament to read out the accusations against him in front of Parliament, he does not passively surrender his crown, nor meekly "read [his] offences" as commanded to do. Instead, he uses his eloquence to attack Northumberland, saying that his "crime" is the "deposing of a king / Mark'd with a blot, damn'd in the book of heaven". In this passage, he proficiently draws upon the same "blot" imagery Gaunt did in Act 2 Scene 1, where he says England "is now bound in with shame,/ With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds", this time deflecting it back to Northumberland. By repurposing Gaunt's words, Richard highlights the hypocrisy of his

accusers, insinuating that the true disgrace and corruption lie not in his rulings but in the heartless betrayal by his subjects, undermining the validity of their accusations. Shakespeare's use of a dark, "inky" blot also contrasts with the traditionally divine "heaven", the juxtaposition employed here further accentuating the disturbing contrast between the sanctity of his kingship and the immorality of his usurpers. Furthermore, Richard's eloquence allows him to mold the concept of "divine right" to his advantage, as when he characterizes Northumberland's actions as "damn'd" in "heaven[s] book". By alluding to the divine right of kings in "heaven", Richard emphasizes the injustice of his deposition by referring to it as a blatant violation of divine law. This, with the consequence of "damn[ation]", could potentially sway the opinions of those who hold these religious values in high regard, showing his quick thinking and eloquent expression. Through this powerful display, Shakespeare demonstrates that even though Richard may have lost his crown, he ultimately uses his eloquence to assert his moral and divine righteousness over Bolingbroke, leaving a stain on Bolingbroke's rule that transcends Richard's defeat.

Shakespeare also uses Richard's final moments of kingship to show that his eloquence can still be a powerful and effective tool for asserting his position and power. In his deposition of Act 4 Scene 1, he knows Bolingbroke does not dare to physically "take" the crown from him, as forcefully removing the crown from a king is a direct violation of divine right. Thus, he holds onto the crown, taunting and daring Bolingbroke to try and pull it out from his hands, mockingly repeating, "Here, cousin, seize the crown. Here, cousin." This act of defiance shows Richard's awareness of the symbolic weight of the crown, effectively setting a trap: if Bolingbroke were to physically take the crown, it would be seen by others as blatant usurpation. Despite Bolingbroke's domination of physical force, the final act of taking the crown hinges on Richard's eloquence: he cannot claim full legitimacy as a ruler until Richard's verbal surrender, a fact that Richard fully exploits to mock his rival. Richard also repeatedly alludes to this theme of usurpation with contrasting imagery of the powerful and powerless, saying "That owes two buckets filling one another, ... That bucket down and full of tears am I, / Drinking my griefs whilst you mount up on high." He metaphorically compares Bolingbroke and himself to two buckets, with him "down, unseen" while Bolingbroke "mount[s] up on high". The stark contrast between "down" and "high" emphasizes the opposition between the two characters, accentuating the dramatic shift in power resulting from Bolingbroke's usurpation of Richard's kingship. He continues to refer to himself as the "melt[ing]...snow" to Bolingbroke's "sun": Richard depicts himself as the vulnerable, transient, and powerless "snow"

against the overwhelming “sun” of Bolingbroke’s ambition, his eloquent language here condemning Bolingbroke's aggressive usurpation and embedding a lasting moral “blot” on Bolingbroke’s claim to the throne, both in front of the crowd in Parliament and the audience watching the play. In these final acts of defiance, Shakespeare presents Richard as a king who, even in his last moments of power, uses his eloquence as a tool of powerful resistance, using his own downfall to challenge the morality of Bolingbroke’s ascendance.

Through characterizations of Richard and his foil Bolingbroke in *Richard II*, Shakespeare questions whether eloquence is indeed an asset or a liability for a king. Richard's rich, poetic language, while initially appearing as a symbol of his royal majesty and sometimes giving him the upper hand, eventually reveals his detachment from the practical realities of governance and inability to adapt to the demands of kingship. Bolingbroke’s eventual rise, on the other hand, illustrate that the ability to act decisively and practically is what results in successful leadership. Thus, while eloquence can certainly elevate a ruler’s charisma and rhetorical impact, without effective action and strategic thinking, it is ultimately powerless.

Works Cited

Dawson, Anthony B., and Paul Yachnin. *Richard II*. Oxford Univ. Press, 2011.

don't worry about us

[buzz]

-lo? hello? can you h -

i'm glad the system's working, and

i'm sure you're dying to know, how

things are (*does he know how to...*), as

lots have happened, but don't worry, i still

water the (*flowers?*) *flowers* flowers in front of your stone. i told them not to remove yours, even though we don't really do that anymore.

anyways, how have you been? (*i don't think he -*) i hope well. because the dust has settled recently, and when i look up and watch the moon-brushed stars when the dust parts i think of when i used to do that with you. i wish we still had your binoculars.

[buzz]

oh, me? you don't have to worry about us, because you left so much food for us we can't even finish it! the tomatoes are especially good, but i miss

(*didn't you say -*)

miss the olive-green vines and the rainde-w-sprayed leaves and the sun that painted sunlight onto the tomato and infused it with energy and tomato-essence.

[buzz]



my arm is healing, if you remember my last message.

(but)

i won't keep you up. i'll

keep watering the flowers.

[click...]



END



jay jiang

yuqian

for colour and one
white," said Lau.
Whether in color
au's photographs a
ment of life in
m of the m
er such
ople