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Humanist Charlotte P. Gilman: An Ecofeminist Logic Viewpoint

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Abstract

Herland and with her in our Ourland is Gilman's adventure composed in arrange to donate clarifications interior the crossing point of ecofeminism and women's activist practicality. Mary Jo Deegan and Christopher W. Podeschi (2001:19) state that Charlotte Perkins Gilman was a forerunner and maybe an establishment for modern ecofeminism. The hypothesis of these proficient female sociologists is critical for recognising the eco women's activist logic, eco logic, and natural practicality. Imperative and critical thought, underscored by Podeschi and Deegan (2001:19) are found in articulation by Joanna Macy, that eco women's liberation speaks to "a radical alter from a millennia-long amnesia as to who we truly are". The eco woman's rights are verifiably created and based on writings of women's activist down-to-earth individuals who were basically female proficient sociologists. These works are once in a while said in conventional sociological reading material, and include works and reports from verifiable periods between 1890-1930-ties. Gilman's Adventure Herland and with her in Ourland, is "an effective investigation of sex relations which moreover incorporates commentaries on nature and the human connection to nature" (Podeschi & Deegan 2001:20).

Keywords: ecofeminism, women's founders in sociology, matriarchal, patriarchal

1. Introduction

The society that is comprised as it were of ladies, with adjusted approach between ladies and environment is Herland. Ellador, is the fundamental hero of this story, and she voyages, in portion entitled with her in our Ourland. Not at all like, the life in Herland, in this travel Ellador encounters the devastation and squander in patriarchal organised society where females are ruled and controlled by the male. Patriarchy is central to understanding the mastery of ladies, races, and nature due to the patriarchal drive to overcome, ace, control, persecute and misuse what is dreaded and seen as less powerful (Podeschi & Deegan, 2001:21). Women's activist practicality is created as resistance and universal elective thought for patriarchal viewpoint, and it is based on ladies centred culture and values. This hypothesis is primarily created in sociological Mecca, Chicago's Office of Human Science, College of

Chicago and Frame House extended in the period between 1989-1918. Jane Addams, Florence Kelley, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Marion Talbot, are a primary female practical person and upheld and created these thoughts. Nobel Prize victors Emily Greene Balch and Jane Addams, emphatically supported balance between guys and females, in accepting that majority rule government and instruction are solid constrain of changes in society. Numerous female sociologists upheld these thoughts which were brought about in "thousands of books and articles" (Podeschi & Deegan, 2001:22). Ecofeminism is too characterised as a major mental Venture approximately ladies, the self, and community. The most vital thought of women's activist practicality was to examination of matriarchal social orders, centring towards the Incredible Mother and female representation of goddesses.

Picture 1. Mother Earth (www.artsbymia.com, page gone by on 1.3.2016) Gilman's contrast in comparison to other women's activist practical person, (who was in some cases solely white and tip-top), is that her hypothesis was based on Darwinist reformist hypotheses, based on natural female refinements in culture, generation, support, etc.

2. Empirical Study

This study is performed in the group of MA students during the summer semester of 2015/2016, at the Faculty of Political Sciences Sarajevo, University of Sarajevo.

2.1 Do You Think that the Cult of Mother Existed?

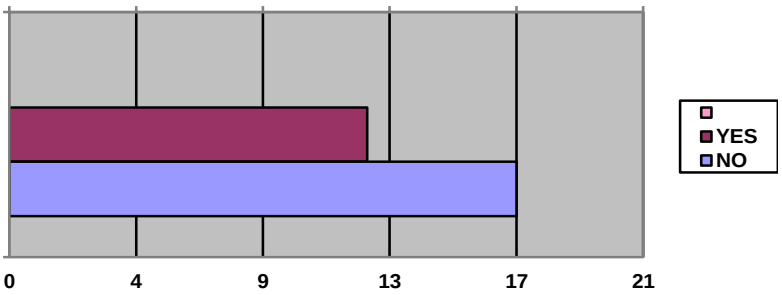

Figure 1.

The examinees had responded, more than 50% that they do not believe that matriarchy existed.

2.2 Do You Think that the Patriarchal Society Is Non-Righteous Towards the Women in Society?

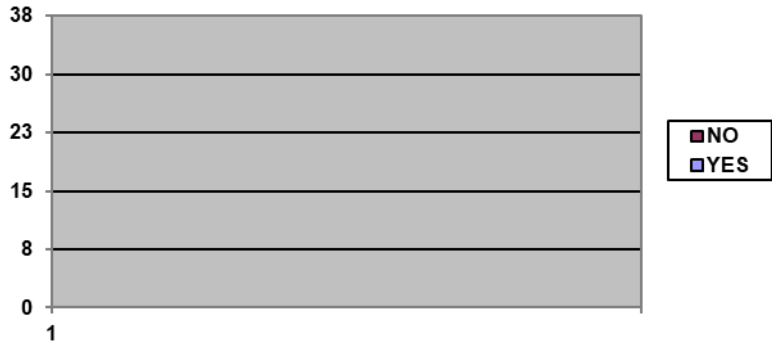

Figure 2.

Less than 30% of the examinees had responded that patriarchy is not non righteous system towards the Women in Society, and more than 50% of the examinees stated that they think that it is not righteous system.

2.3 Do You Think that the Patriarchal System Excludes Women in Society?

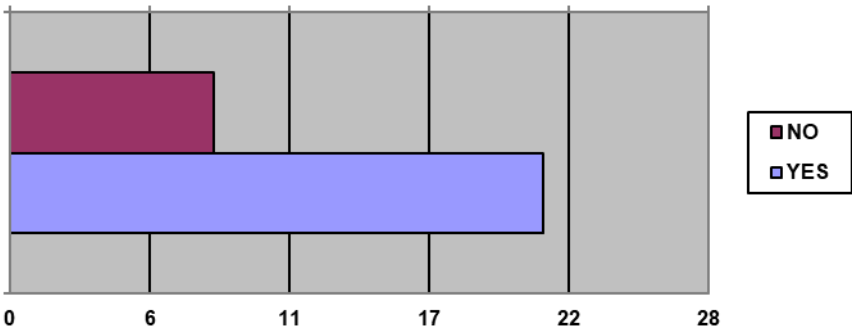

Figure 3.

More than 60% of the examinees believe that patriarchal system excludes Women from Society. Less than 30% believe that it does not.

2.4 Would You Chose Matriarchy for a Social Condition?

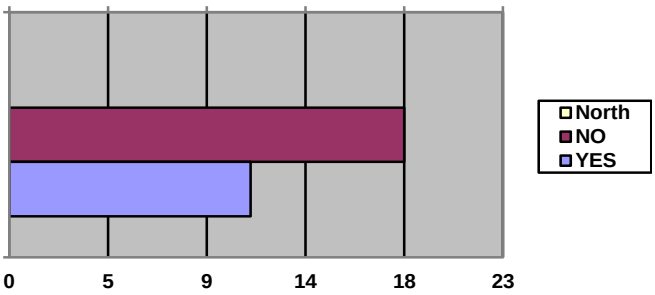

Figure 4.

Around 60% of the examinees would not chose the matriarchy for the social condition.

3. Herland and Ourland

Adventure composed by Gilman is not as it were professional women's activist and matriarchal but too pacifistic and anti-militaristic. Ecofeminism and eco women's

activist logic share the eco women's activist condition thoughts, and subsequently are utilised as equivalent words interior the eco women's activist practical person sociological speculations of female experts in human science. Herland is a social and natural ideal world, at slightest reminiscent of the pre-patriarchal social orders eco women's activist researchers discuss (Porsche & Keegan in Music 2016: 25). As Harland in women's activist ideal world, the Orland is a patriarchal society that is damaging and without environmental awareness. The male match for Ellador is named Van. Ellador has ideas on natural sad spirits in Ourland commenting that "In Ourland, we have victimised, dismissed, and squandered the soil, and that overpopulation is crushing the arrive in places… The environment in the Joined Together States particularly, Ellador comments, disregard, squander, horrendous, dazzling squander. It makes me wiped out. It makes me need to cry. As for water, disregard and squander once more, and ugly, self-destructive defilement" (Ibid in Mušić, 2016:26).

4. Papahānanaumoku

These thoughts are comparative to Hawaiian local social conventions where goddess Dad (Papahānanaumoku), soil mother is burnt by fiendish acts of people, particularly towards the nature. This goddess is uncommonly revered by local Hawaiian ladies, and her put of adoring is called Solidness of Father. (Mušić, 2017:2-7) In comparison to involvement of males, in adventure, when coming to Herland, Van is dumbfounded by the normal assets and magnificence of the urban towns. Generation and mothering is one of the topics that are examined interior the idea of the rationale of care vs. rationale of dominance, and hence Herland is practicing the perfect of care morals vs. human, normal and creature world, whereas as in Ourland patriarchal society annihilation is causing the parenthood and nature as having less significance. Gilman proceeds to talk about, social connections interior the female ideal world, which is scholastic and more civilized than others since it is truly compassionate and genuinely civilised (Podeschi & Deegan in Mušić, 2016:30). Hence the social relations are based on the thought of communalism and interconnects. All children are children of all moms, and after to beginning year of their life, they are taught interior the community, by proficient teachers and co-mothers, and their natural mother is given less significance. The crucial thought of instruction is displayed as it were in association with parenthood: "Education and supporting of children clearly illustrate a conviction in communal living as well as a celebration of interconnectivity and solidarity: parenthood and mothering tie Herlanders together, it is their religion" (Podeschi & Deegan in Mušić, 2016:32).

5. Conclusion

Since this adventure creates an authentic comparison of matriarchal social orders with more up to date patriarchal society. Ellador voyages with Van through time, and brutally criticizes I World War seeing it as ridiculous and dangerous, and so distinctive from tranquil, caring, and conscious for humans, creatures and all sorts of life, matriarchal social orders of prior periods. Podeschi and Deegan, shaping the last conclusions on Herland adventure state: "Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Herland/Ourland adventure is an effective explanation condemning patriarchal society and its ill-effects, a classic case of the eco women's activist equation". However, they too make ideas of Gilma's avoidances and inclinations for various levelled social orders that are not eco women's activist thoughts.

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A Study of Non-Traditional Security Cooperation Between India and the European Union

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Abstract

In today's world, globalization brings with it a variety of opportunities and challenges, and the intertwining of traditional and non-traditional security threats creates complex challenges to national security. In the face of increasingly complex non-traditional security issues such as climate change, terrorism, and public health incidents, international cooperation has become an important option. India, a country that is rapidly emerging as a significant power in the Indo-Pacific region, has demonstrated its growing economic and military strength, as well as its active involvement in global governance. In this context, the European Union (EU), a unique normative force, has also increased its focus on India in recent years and is actively approaching India. This paper seeks to explore the dynamics of cooperation between India and the EU in the realm of non-traditional security. It delves into the historical background, the current state of collaboration, and the prevailing challenges that lie ahead. The study of non-traditional security cooperation between India and the EU could potentially serve as a valuable reference for the future non-traditional security cooperation between China and Europe and China and India. Additionally, it could contribute to enhancing global non-traditional security cooperation between the North and South.

Keywords: India, The European Union, India-EU relations, non-traditional security, global cooperation

1. Introduction

In recent years, the global geopolitical landscape has undergone profound transformations, with the Indo-Pacific region rapidly ascending in strategic importance and attracting heightened attention from major global powers. In this situation, India and the European Union (EU) have increasingly deepened their collaboration on non-traditional security issues such as energy transition and public health. In September 2021, the EU officially released The EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, emphasizing that developments in the Indo-Pacific are increasingly intertwined with EU interests. Research on India-EU non-traditional security cooperation not only enhances our understanding of the EU's strategic trajectory and India's evolving strategic intentions but also contribute to enhancing global non-traditional security cooperation between the Global North and South.

2. Literature Review

International scholarship on India-EU

cooperation spans both broad overviews and specific analyses. For example, Rajendra K. Jain (2023) focuses on non-traditional security challenges, exploring potential cooperation in trade, counterterrorism, nuclear security, refugee governance, and human rights. Sakti Prasad Srichandan (2019) argues that while India does not regard the EU as a primary political partner, bilateral engagement should transcend economic negotiations to prioritize shared interests alongside values-based collaboration in security domains.[1]

Chinese scholars have also established a comprehensive and distinctive theoretical framework in the field of non-traditional security studies. These researchers have also examined the impact of the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy on China-EU relations. For instance, Li Jingkun, Zhang Lei, Zhao Chen, Cao Hui, and Zhang Haiyang (2017) from the Institute of European Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences provide an exhaustive analysis of China-EU political relations in their monograph China-EU Political Relations, covering political, economic, cultural, and global governance dimensions while offering expert assessments of future bilateral dynamics.[2]

This study innovatively evaluates India-EU non-traditional security cooperation, offering fresh perspectives on its important role in bilateral relations. By incorporating multilingual sources, the research enriches its theoretical depth and analytical rigor.

3. History of EU-India Cooperation

Following the establishment of the European Community through the 1957 Treaty of Rome.[3] India's engagement with Europe remained limited until the post-Cold War era. The 1990s was a turning point as India's economic liberalization and the EU's expansion catalyzed closer ties. The EU's "Towards a New Asia Strategy" signified a strategic shift in Europe's Asian policy, creating institutional opportunities for India-EU dialogue.[4]

The 2004 Hague Summit elevated bilateral relations to a 'Strategic Partnership', formalizing five priority cooperation areas under the New Strategic Partnership Agreement. [5]From 2006 to 2016, mechanisms such as annual summits and joint working groups became central to bilateral engagement. [6]The 2016-2020 period witnessed accelerated collaboration in non-traditional security, notably through the EU-India Clean Energy and Climate Partnership (CECP) and the India-EU Water Partnership (IEWP), [7] which aligned with India's domestic initiatives.[8]

EU-India relations have witnessed significant progress. The establishment of the EU-India Trade and Technology Council (TTC) in 2023 represents a crucial institutional achievement in bilateral cooperation, serving as a critical platform for advancing strategic partnerships. [9]Notably, negotiations regarding the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) have been reignited, signaling potential breakthroughs in economic integration. However, empirical analysis reveals that recent collaborative outcomes between the EU and India demonstrate an increasingly discernible correlation with geopolitical determinants, suggesting complex interactions between strategic interests and cooperative frameworks.

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4. Status of India-EU Non-Traditional Security Cooperation

Non-traditional security topics are richer in EU-India cooperation. Currently, the EU sees India as its key pillar in the Indo-Pacific region, both economically and geopolitically. Both sides have stepped up their actions in the Indo-Pacific region to achieve their geopolitical goals, making India the EU's preferred partner in reducing its dependence on a single country. The EU's aggressive pivot to the Indo-Pacific region is in dire need of focus, and the area of non-traditional security is where its influence will be most prominent. Therefore, this section will focus on three typical non-traditional security issues, namely climate change, energy transition and terrorism, to provide an account of the current state of EU-India non-traditional security cooperation.

4.1 Governance of Climate Change

As early as 2004, the EU and India had undertaken joint research on climate change and natural disasters. [1] However, policy dialogue and cooperation mechanisms at the governmental level began in 2005 with the first India-EU Summit on Climate Change. In addition, India and the EU have continued to advance their cooperation in multilateral settings: in 2019, the EU engaged with India and other G20 countries and established the Strategic Partnership for the Paris Agreement (SPIPA) to promote policy change in climate change governance, foster bilateral cooperation and investment, and raise public awareness on the implementation of the Paris Agreement. [2] In 2020, India and the EU jointly developed and committed to work closely on a global framework for biodiversity conservation, which was eventually adopted at the United Nations Conference on Biodiversity in 2021.

Since Prime Minister Modi's 2014 inauguration coinciding with the Paris Agreement, India and the EU have prioritized climate action. Collaborative efforts focus on financing, technology cooperation and infrastructure. Between 2012 and 2023, the EU allocated €4.6 million to Indian environmental projects targeting water management, sanitation, and community resilience.[3] Despite progress, India's conservative climate policies and implementation gaps contrast with the EU's leadership, creating opportunities for future cooperation in energy pricing and regulatory frameworks.[4]

4.2 Cooperation on Energiewende

The concept of 'Energiewende' (energy transition), originally coined in Germany, refers to the structural transformation in a nation's energy consumption paradigm whereby one dominant energy source is replaced by another. [5] Currently, India's energy consumption pattern remains heavily reliant on fossil fuels, exhibiting a relatively homogeneous structure.

Against this background, bilateral cooperation in energy transition has progressively intensified. The collaborative agenda encompasses renewable energy transition, eco-city development, and smart grid infrastructure construction. This partnership continues through substantial EU financial support and technology transfers aimed at facilitating India's energy transformation. A notable example includes the EU's 2017 financing program for renewable energy projects in Rajasthan, Telangana, Maharashtra, and Karnataka, designed to increase India's renewable energy capacity. [6] The EU-India collaboration spans multiple domains including renewable energy development, energy infrastructure modernization, and green finance mechanisms, operationalized through technical cooperation and policy-financial frameworks.

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[1] Carine Barbier, Ritu Mathur. (2008). Opportunities for an India-European Union Partnership on Energy and Climate Security, Paris: Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRl), http://www.iddri.org/Publications/Collections/Idees-pour-le-debat/Opportunities-for-an-India-European-Union-Partnership-on-Energy-and-Cimate-Security.Accessed: 22 January 2025.

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This strategic partnership yields mutual benefits: India advances its national energy objectives while the EU secures market expansion opportunities in the Indo-Pacific energy sector. Nevertheless, challenges persist in operationalizing this cooperation. Issues such as suboptimal efficacy of capital and technology transfers, multifaceted policy coordination complexities, and political system influences on transnational collaboration require systematic investigation. These impediments underscore the necessity for enhanced institutional mechanisms to optimize the implementation of joint energy transition initiatives.

4.3 Collaboration on Counter-Terrorism

Since terrorism emerged as a global security priority in the early 21st century, Europe has maintained an intrinsic connection to this challenge, while South Asia has evolved into a critical theater of terrorist activities. At the multilateral level, both parties are signatories to the UN Counter-Terrorism Strategy, committed to advancing its implementation domestically and globally. [1] However, the cooperation between India and EU started around 2016, culminating in a reinforced commitment formalized during the 13th India-EU Summit in March 2016, which explicitly prioritized collaborative counterterrorism efforts.

In recent years, divergences in cyber counterterrorism governance have revealed complementarity in Indo-EU collaboration. By contrast, India adopts a "hard security" paradigm, mobilizing traditional instruments including military, naval, air forces, law enforcement, intelligence agencies, and judicial systems. Conversely, the EU emphasizes "soft security" approaches characterized by intelligence-sharing frameworks, policy harmonization mechanisms, and technical assistance programs.

In summary, EU-India counter-terrorism cooperation demonstrates steady progress, featuring focuses on prevention, countering terrorist financing, and operational responses. This partnership exhibits growing emphasis on cyber-enabled counter-terrorism. This domain has emerged as one of the most productive areas within EU-India non-traditional security collaboration, reflecting both their adaptive strategies in addressing 21st-century asymmetric security challenges.

5. Challenges in Cooperation

As the actors in the multi-polarization process, the non-traditional security cooperation between India and the European Union (EU) encompasses both constructive contributions to global governance and challenges stemming from institutional deficiencies and constraining factors. During the third decade of the 21st century, India and the EU have actively institutionalized cooperative mechanisms and dialogues. Nevertheless, these efforts remain constrained by imperfect institutional design, the EU's limited operational efficacy, and persistent value-based divergences.

5.1 Institutional Deficiencies

As the cooperation projects are carried out on the ground, the shortcomings of the cooperation mechanism continue to be exposed. Firstly, the non-traditional security cooperation mechanism between India and the EU is still a framework, and still lacks sufficient concrete projects to support it. EU-India Clean Energy and Climate Partnership, for example, in the official website of the "completed projects" column only eight completed projects, including India and Europe to build a hydroelectric power plant project is still in the planning and proposal stage, so far three years there is still no follow-up to promote the future of when it can be built on the ground is still not clear. [2]Secondly, the system is under pressure to improve. From the internal point of view, India and Europe in the field of non-traditional security capabilities and technical level differences, which makes the existing cooperation mechanism is mainly manifested in the EU's unilateral support for India.

In short, although India and Europe in the field of non-traditional security cooperation has made some progress, but due to the framework characteristics of the cooperation mechanism, the implementation of the content of the lack of depth, as well as the two sides in the capacity and technical differences and other factors, India and the European Union in the field of non-traditional security cooperation between

[1] UNCCT. (2006). United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/zh/un-global-counter-terrorism-strategy。Accessed: 24 January 2025.

[2] EU-India Clean Energy and Climate Partnership, "Completed Projects", 15 August 2024, ttps://www.cecp-eu.in/resource-center/completed-projects, Accessed: September15, 2024.

India and the European Union is still faced with a lot of practical problems. India and the EU have shown a positive attitude to cooperation in public, but actual implementation has been low. These problems not only affect the depth and effectiveness of existing cooperation, but also pose challenges to the sustainability of future cooperation.

5.2 Fragmented EU Engagement

When it comes to India-EU relations, the role played by the EU is hardly comparable to that of an individual country. The EU has not been a good normative leader in practical cooperation, and the EU's approach to cooperation has weakened the holistic and strategic coherence of the EU's actions, with little practical effectiveness to be achieved. Therefore, India prefers to establish co-operation with EU countries at the national level, and bilateral cooperation mechanisms and projects are more targeted and implementable.

Germany is one of the most important countries for India to cooperate with in Europe. To the field of energy transition, for example, India and the EU in the field of energy cooperation from the establishment of the Indo-German Energy Forum (Indo-German Energy Forum, IGEF) in 2006 since more than 10 years, the two sides have been maintaining more active interaction. It is worth noting that, with the accelerating pace of Germany's energy transition, the prospects of the Indian hydrogen energy market have greatly attracted Germany's interest, and is gradually developing into an emerging area of cooperation between the two sides.[1]

As one of the five Nordic countries, Denmark is a leading country in offshore power generation. A look at India's interaction and partnership with Denmark shows more focus on co-operation in the offshore wind sector of clean energy. In contrast, the EU's support program for wind power development is very macro but lacks detail. It is only known that the EU invested up to 30 billion euros in renewable energy in India in 2002, while the rest of the specific measures are less mentioned.[2]

Apart from Germany and Denmark, France cooperates most closely with India in the fields of nuclear energy development and ocean governance. The Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project (JNPP) is representative of India-France cooperation. France and India have already played a prominent role in the sustainable utilization of marine resources and the maintenance of maritime security. India and France collaborate in the blue economy and ocean governance on the pillars of dialogue, economics, infrastructure and science and academia.[3]

In summary, while India and countries like Germany and France are more focused on investing and cooperating in specific areas, cooperation at the EU level is more based on ambitious common positions and consensus. The fragmented nature of the EU has given India a great deal of choice, fueling India's 'speculative' strategy of making flexible choices based on its own interests. Such differences have reduced India's cooperation with the EU to some extent to a platform lacking in substance, and the lack of strategic integration of the EU as a whole has led to inefficiencies and wasted resources in India's cooperation with the EU and exacerbated the fragmentation of cooperation.

5.3 Constraints in EU-India Cooperation

Firstly, the divergence of EU member states in terms of policy objectives and resource allocation limits the coherence of its foreign policy, weakening the stability and implementation efficiency of non-traditional security cooperation with India. Second, the EU's Western-centered thinking is reflected in India's cooperation with the EU, and the cooperation model guided by this thinking may lead India to question the equality of cooperation, which is a potential obstacle to deep cooperation between the two sides.[4]

Although the EU's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" plans

[1] Dr. Abdullah Fahimi et al., (Jun 04, 2024). Toward an Indo-German Green Strategic Partnership Aligning Partnership Agreements with Foreign Policy Goals. DGAF Policy Brief, No.18, https://dgap.org/en/research/publications/toward-indo-german-green-strategic-partnership. Accessed: September, 15 2024.

[2] European Commission. (May 2022). REPowerEU: Affordable, secure and sustainable energy for Europe. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/repowereu-affordable-secure-and-sustainable-energy-europe_en#producing-clean-energy. Accessed: 26 January 2025.

[3] Zhixin Cheng. (2022). Analysis of the New Trends, Motivations and Prospects of the Strategic Partnership between India and France. *Pacific Journal, 30*, p. 52.

[4] Farrell, Mary E. (2005). Editorial: EU External Relations: Exporting the EU Model of Governance?. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, p. 461.

its strategy in the Indo-Pacific region in many areas, the EU member states are not united, and the special internal composition of the EU and the divergence of interests between member states have become an important factor restricting the further development of bilateral relations. The EU as a supranational actor has structural obstacles to its common foreign policy that are rooted in the conflict between the sovereign interests of member states and the Union's collective supranational identity. This conflict has led to a triple problem in the EU's external action: a lack of coherence in collective action, inefficient decision-making and a deficit of democratic legitimacy that has weakened the EU's influence in international agenda-setting.

Second, India's domestic political and cultural factors, including domestic party politics and an increasingly strong great-power ideology intertwined with Hindu nationalism, affect India's agenda-setting and willingness to cooperate internationally in non-traditional security areas. Domestic politics and diplomacy are inextricably linked, and domestic politics have a strong influence on foreign policy formulation. Therefore, India's great power strategy has adopted a multi-directional alliance strategy to achieve the 'great power dream' by leveraging the strengths of multiple parties.

In addition, history and culture are the basis for the formation of national security ideology and strategy, which are at the center of diplomatic thought, and the identity of national identity. Kautilya puts forward the 'Mandala Theory' in his Treatise on Politics, which starts from geopolitical factors and constructs four identities, namely, "center state, ally, enemy state and neutral state", thus forming a system of international relations with unique Indian characteristics. [1]He believed that a country can only survive in the international system if it is strong, and whether it can use strategies and policies to achieve the requirements of increasing its strength. This Mandala-centered view is reflected in Indian diplomacy in the form of a distinct hierarchical order, i.e., a differentiated treatment of large and small states. In practice, it would be reflected in a strong desire for expansion, with the monarch striving to move to the center of the mandala system and become the master. [2] The "India-center view" is influenced by this thinking and is linked to India's foreign strategy today. In the cooperation with the EU, the influence of Hindu nationalism cannot be ignored. Take the Indo-Pacific Strategy as an example, there are differences in the understanding, positioning and expected results of this concept. In addition, the projection of Indian nationalism in foreign policy also affects India's perspective on the EU, India tends to regard the relationship with the EU as a kind of complementary diplomacy, and has reservations about its advocacy of a multilateral institution-driven global governance system, and does not fully agree with the EU's emphasis on the norms of the norms-driven global governance structure, and believes that the EU does not play a dominant role, which leads to a mismatch between the two sides in the process of cooperation.

6. Trends in India-EU Non-Traditional Security Cooperation

From the current process of non-traditional security cooperation between India and the EU, the cooperation between the two sides shows a trend of gradual deepening. This paper argues that the future cooperation between India and the EU in the field of non-traditional security will maintain a stable development trend, but by the impact of geopolitical changes in recent years, the future direction of cooperation needs to be further analyzed.

In the future, from the perspective of cooperation topics, India's non-traditional security cooperation with the EU generally shows a structural characteristic from single to composite. In addition, the influence of geopolitical factors should also be controlled in India-EU non-traditional security cooperation. Although the political purpose in international cooperation cannot be ignored, if geopolitical factors overly dominate the relationship and non-traditional security issues themselves are not given sufficient attention, it will lead to a difficult cooperation. Non-traditional security cooperation should not become a tool of geopolitics and a new battleground for traditional security rivalries.

Once upon a time, India was seen as a country

[1] Jincui Zhang. (2013). Artha Shastra and the Classical Roots of India's Diplomatic Strategy. *Foreign Affairs Review, 30*.

[2] Benoy Kumar Sarkar. (August 1919). Hindu Theory of International Relations. *The American Political Science Review, 13*(3), pp. 400-414.

that needed to passively accept non-traditional security norms, but now India is actively changing its role towards that of a norm advocate, a change that also offers more possibilities for future Indo-European non-traditional security cooperation. Therefore, India and Europe need to establish a more efficient and flexible cooperation mechanism on the basis of equal dialogue, and seek common ground while reserving differences to maximize common interests. If the two sides can establish a more efficient cooperation mechanism in non-traditional security cooperation, it will set an example for global non-traditional security cooperation and play a positive role in promoting a sound global governance system.

7. Conclusion

Because of the transnational nature of non-traditional security issues, international cooperation has become an important means of advancing non-traditional security governance. As a rising power, India's active interest in non-traditional security issues is not only a response to the challenges of globalization, but also an inevitable choice to enhance its voice in international affairs. The EU, on the other hand, in its capacity as a 'norm-setter', seeks to enhance its influence on India and even the Indo-Pacific region by shaping international rules. Climate change governance cooperation, energy transition cooperation, counter-terrorism cooperation and maritime governance cooperation are the four areas of non-traditional security cooperation between India and the EU is the most representative of the four areas and the smoothest progress. The cooperation has involved technical exchanges, financial support and infrastructure development related to non-traditional security issues.

In recent years, India's relationship with the EU has been warming up, and the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy has included India in the EU's group of 'like-minded partner'. However, the current level of non-traditional security cooperation between India and the EU is difficult to break through the bottleneck of the EU's governance effectiveness, and difficult to meet India's needs. Moreover, as non-traditional security issues are not a high priority in India's diplomacy and the EU is not at the center of India's strategic cooperation framework, the future direction of cooperation remains uncertain. To sum up, India's non-traditional security cooperation with the EU presents a typical feature of 'multi-dimensional governance', whose evolutionary trajectory not only reflects the paradigm shift in global security governance, but also exposes a triple contradiction in India's non-traditional security cooperation with the EU: the discrepancy between the mechanism of cooperation and its implementation, the fragmentation of decision-making, and the misalignment of identities.

First, there is a gap between cooperation mechanisms and concrete implementation. India's cooperation mechanism with the EU remains more at the initiative level, lacking a concrete and practical cooperation framework and a regular feedback mechanism, and there is a gap between top-level design and implementation on the ground. Most of the policies cover a wide range of areas, while the in-depth development of specific areas is lacking. Second, the EU governance system has led to fragmentation of decision-making. India's cooperation with individual EU member states, such as France and Germany, has been deeper and more concrete, with more projects on the ground in areas such as hydrogen and wind energy, making the EU's facilitation of this cooperation particularly ineffective. Third, the values factor as the cornerstone of cooperation between the two sides still lacks solidity. Indian-style democracy is not the Western democracy expected by the EU, the heterogeneity of democracy is gradually exposed in the cooperation, and the limited identity of values constrains the construction of strategic mutual trust. The root cause is that the EU is not an integrated decision-making body, and member states prioritize their inputs on different non-traditional security issues, making it difficult to create synergies. India's multilateral hedging strategy, guided by its policy of strategic autonomy, has kept India's strategic maneuvering space in its cooperation with the EU, which is not conducive to further cooperation between the two sides. In addition, the external pressure of the international system, especially after the Russia-Ukraine conflict, India's swing between the Russian and Western camps, further increase the uncertainty of cooperation between the two sides.

In summary, this paper argues that there is still room for further development of EU-India non-traditional security cooperation, and that the two sides should continue to explore their common interests, give full play to their

respective strengths, formulate practical co-operation plans, improve the closed-loop from implementation to evaluation, bridge the differences in culture and values, and set an example of cooperation in global non-traditional security. China, as one of the important countries in the Indo-Pacific region, should pay close attention to the strategic dynamics of India and Europe, and adopt diversified strategies to strengthen its engagement with India, such as expanding humanistic exchanges and strengthening mutual visits of scholars, and gradually trying to carry out project cooperation in low-sensitive areas. In today's era of globalization, all countries should look for consensus amidst differences, promote a mutually beneficial and win-win situation, so as to lay a solid foundation for a stable and far-reaching relationship between the two sides.

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How Women Construct Emotional Identity and Empower Themselves Through Romantic Mobile Games in China

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Abstract

In contemporary China, Otome mobile games—interactive romance simulations designed for female audiences—have emerged as significant cultural spaces where women engage in emotional self-construction, empowerment, and subjective expression. This paper explores how Chinese women utilize Otome games to articulate emotional resonance, affirm their self-worth through consumption, and navigate new forms of digital intimacy. Far from being mere escapism, Otome games provide an interactive emotional landscape where players exercise narrative authorship, rehearse relational agency, and cultivate emotional self-efficacy. Through monetized engagement, players transform consumption into acts of feminist self-assertion, challenging traditional gender norms and reframing emotional labor as valuable and autonomous. These digital platforms foster communal forms of emotional solidarity, enabling women to collectively reimagine intimacy, desire, and identity in ways that contest both mainstream media representations and entrenched patriarchal structures. By analyzing these dynamics, this study reveals how Otome games serve as profound mediums for cultural negotiation, emotional meaning-making, and the redefinition of female subjectivity within China's rapidly evolving digital and social landscape.

Keywords: Otome games, emotional identity, female empowerment, digital intimacy, narrative authorship

1. Introduction

In recent years, the popularity of Otome mobile games—narrative-driven romance simulation games designed primarily for women—has surged across China's digital entertainment landscape. These games, often centered on idealized romantic narratives and interactive storytelling, have transcended their initial function as casual leisure activities. Instead, they have evolved into emotionally immersive platforms where users, predominantly young urban women, explore, construct, and affirm deeply personal affective identities. In a sociocultural environment where gender roles remain in flux and expressions of female desire are often constrained or marginalized, Otome games provide a rare digital sanctuary for emotional experimentation, self-narration, and agency.

The increasing popularity of these games is no

accident. It coincides with the rise of "she economy" in China—a market phenomenon and cultural shift that recognizes and monetizes female consumer power, autonomy, and lifestyle aspirations. Within this context, Otome games become not just sites of emotional engagement, but also terrains of social meaning and gender negotiation. These digital worlds simulate romantic companionship, emotional intimacy, and personalized attention, allowing players to craft idealized relational experiences that often serve as counterpoints to the emotional labor and alienation experienced in real-world interpersonal dynamics.

Unlike traditional gaming genres that emphasize competition, conquest, or strategy, Otome games prioritize emotional depth, relationship-building, and choice-driven storytelling. Through branching dialogue trees and customizable story arcs, female players are encouraged to make decisions that shape their character's emotional journey. In doing so, they enact agency, express desire, and engage in reflective play that can mirror or reframe their real-life relational paradigms. These emotional narratives are not isolated fantasies; they are embedded in the sociotechnical infrastructure of mobile platforms, shaped by algorithmic recommendation systems, user-data feedback loops, and monetization mechanics that center emotional capital.

This paper seeks to explore how Chinese women construct emotional identity and empower themselves through their participation in Otome mobile games. It investigates two primary avenues through which these digital experiences foster meaning and autonomy: first, the ways in which affective interactions and narrative intimacy within the games elicit emotional resonance and a sense of being understood; and second, the manner in which consumption within these platforms becomes a practice of self-affirmation, whereby players translate spending into symbolic acts of self-worth and empowerment.

By analyzing these dynamics, the essay not only unpacks the cultural and psychological dimensions of Otome game engagement but also considers the broader implications for understanding female subjectivity in digital spaces. It argues that within the affective economies of mobile gaming, Chinese women articulate new forms of identity and intimacy that challenge conventional norms of gender, desire, and relational labor. Far from being passive consumers, these players actively participate in the creation of meaning, emotional selfhood, and cultural agency—revealing the critical social significance of what might otherwise be dismissed as "virtual romance."

2. Emotional Resonance and Constructing Identity

Otome games typically center around interactive romantic storylines involving idealized male characters—often portrayed as attentive, sensitive, emotionally intelligent, and unwaveringly supportive—designed to respond intimately to the player's actions, dialogue choices, and emotional expressions. These meticulously constructed virtual relationships are the result of sophisticated narrative engineering, aimed at maximizing emotional resonance by simulating feelings of connection, validation, and personalized affection. For many Chinese women navigating a socio-cultural environment where emotional needs are often subordinated to familial obligations, rigid gender expectations, and hyper-competitive urban life, these games offer a rare experiential space where they are deeply seen, heard, and emotionally nurtured. In this simulated relational environment, players encounter a fantasy of emotional reciprocity that remains elusive in many real-world interactions.

Through the game's branching narrative structures, players are empowered to actively shape their emotional journeys. Each choice—whether to confess affection, demand respect, assert boundaries, or pursue independence—becomes a significant narrative act that reflects the player's inner desires and emotional priorities. Unlike passive modes of media consumption, Otome gameplay demands emotional decision-making, encouraging players to engage in responsive intimacy—a dynamic feedback loop where the player's emotional investments are acknowledged, mirrored, and validated within the digital world. This interactive agency transforms the gaming experience into a semiotic playground for identity construction, where emotional selves are not inherited or externally imposed but actively authored through intimate, reflective engagement.

This phenomenon also exemplifies what theorists like Arlie Hochschild describe as affective labor—the management, regulation,

and production of emotions in social contexts, here adapted into a virtual, self-directed arena. Unlike the traditional forms of emotional labor women are socially conditioned to perform—such as managing familial harmony or workplace morale—the emotional labor within Otome games is voluntary, self-rewarding, and deeply personalized. Players are not expected to regulate others' emotions; instead, they invest in emotional experiences that prioritize their own feelings, desires, and emotional authenticity. Emotional labor is reconfigured from a site of exploitation into a tool for self-empowerment and emotional self-affirmation.

The narrative affordances of *Otome* games validate a broad spectrum of emotional expressions rarely sanctioned in traditional cultural scripts. Players can embody vulnerability without stigma, assert emotional needs without fear of reprisal, or reject romantic advances that fail to meet their standards for respect and care. These narrative possibilities function as emotional rehearsals, offering low-risk environments where players practice articulating their emotional truths, negotiating relational boundaries, and envisioning emotionally reciprocal partnerships. This capacity to rehearse and refine emotional agency marks a significant departure from cultural models that have historically valorized female emotional suppression and self-sacrifice.

In psychological terms, navigating the emotional labyrinths of *Otome* narratives cultivates what is known as *emotional self-efficacy*: the belief in one's ability to influence emotional dynamics and manage relational outcomes effectively. Each successful negotiation of intimacy, every articulation of need or boundary, reinforces players' confidence in their emotional competence. Rather than seeking external validation for their emotional worth, players internalize a coherent, self-directed emotional identity. They come to view their emotional experiences not as derivative of others' approval but as intrinsic, legitimate, and deserving of self-respect and nurturance.

Repeated engagement with emotionally rich, responsive narratives enables players to create what can be termed *affective archives*—reservoirs of emotional memory that extend beyond the gaming experience. These accumulated affective experiences—moments of being cherished, respected, understood—inform how players perceive their own relational worth and emotional entitlement in everyday life. Rather than viewing gaming as mere escapism, these affective archives contribute to a gradual, iterative process of emotional meaning-making and self-authorship, providing players with emotional scripts and frameworks they may apply in offline relationships and self-conceptualizations.

The emotional resonance generated through Otome gameplay is neither superficial nor transient. It constitutes a profound cultural and psychological practice wherein Chinese women articulate, validate, and construct emotional selves in ways that defy traditional gender expectations and challenge the restrictive relational models embedded in their social landscapes. Through digital intimacy, they reconfigure emotional labor as a site of empowerment, narrative authorship as a form of self-construction, and consumption as an act of emotional and cultural resistance. In doing so, they demonstrate how even within commodified, technologically mediated environments, genuine acts of emotional self-making and feminist subjectivity can emerge.

3. Spending on Oneself: Consumption as Empowerment

A key component of Otome gameplay lies in its carefully designed monetization systems. Players are encouraged to purchase exclusive dialogue sequences, rare collectible character cards, elegant avatar outfits, limited-time romantic scenarios, and other premium content that personalizes and intensifies their emotional immersion. To external observers, these microtransactions may appear frivolous, a symptom of excessive commercialization or digital exploitation. However, for many women players, this consumption operates on an entirely different symbolic and affective register. It is not about material possession but about emotional investment: the conscious choice to nurture their own emotional worlds, to prioritize personal pleasure, and to reaffirm self-worth through acts of deliberate spending.

By investing in emotional experiences, players reframe their consumption as an affirmation of personal value. Every transaction becomes a declaration: that their emotional lives matter, that their fantasies are legitimate, and that their emotional satisfaction is worthy of financial

investment. In a cultural context where women's emotional needs have often been minimized or instrumentalized, this practice reclaims emotional fulfillment as a self-owned, self-funded right.

In contemporary Chinese society, the emergence of the "she economy" signifies a major cultural and economic shift. Urban Chinese women now possess unprecedented purchasing power, reshaping consumption as an act of personal expression, aspiration, and autonomy. However, this economic empowerment still operates within lingering gendered frameworks that idealize female sacrifice, emotional labor, and relational dependency.

Against this background, spending money on Otome games acquires profound counter-cultural significance. It challenges traditional relational scripts that suggest women must passively await affection, recognition, and validation from men. Instead, Otome players assert sovereign control over their emotional experiences, choosing when, how, and with whom to engage romantically. This sovereign consumption severs the link between emotional gratification and male approval, suggesting instead that intimacy, romance, and affection can be self-selected, self-created, and self-legitimized.

Through these acts, players are not just buying content—they are rewriting the narrative of romantic agency. They demonstrate that emotional satisfaction need not be contingent upon social norms, marital institutions, or heteronormative expectations. In doing so, they create new models of relational autonomy where desire is neither policed nor pathologized but celebrated as a personal right.

Another critical dimension of Otome consumption lies in its redefinition of emotional labor. In traditional heterosexual romantic economies, women's emotional labor—nurturing, empathizing, soothing—is expected yet often rendered invisible or devalued. In contrast, the Otome environment makes emotional labor explicit, curated, and valued. Romantic attention, emotional sensitivity, and responsiveness from male characters are premium commodities that players actively choose to invest in.

By paying for these carefully designed emotional interactions, female players symbolically affirm the worth of emotional labor. They declare that being listened to, being cherished, and being emotionally prioritized is not a luxury but a necessity—one so valuable that it commands investment. This inversion of traditional emotional economies reconfigures intimacy itself: it reframes care and affection not as asymmetrical expectations but as services and gestures deserving of conscious selection and reward.

Through this dynamic, Otome players also redefine what constitutes valuable labor in relationships. Emotional attunement is no longer invisible, assumed, or expected for free—it is a prized component of relational experience, one that players actively seek, pay for, and curate according to their own emotional standards.

The practice of spending in *Otome* games suggests a more radical cultural implication: it reframes consumption from passive commodification to active self-making. Female players are not simply subjected to consumer culture; they use economic resources to co-author personalized emotional worlds, sculpt affective experiences aligned with their fantasies, and assert control over narratives of love, affection, and relational fulfillment.

In this context, consumption becomes a feminist act. It represents a refusal to subordinate emotional needs to external validation or patriarchal relational expectations. Instead, women claim the right to pursue emotional satisfaction, fantasy, and self-recognition on their own terms, without apology or shame.

The act of spending in *Otome* games is far more than a transaction—it is a complex performance of identity, autonomy, and feminist subjectivity. In these intimate, digitally mediated spaces, Chinese women transform everyday acts of micro-consumption into profound expressions of emotional agency and cultural resistance, revealing how private pleasures can become sites of public significance and socio-political critique.

4. Digital Intimacy and the Expression of Female Subjectivity

The digital intimacy enabled by Otome games fosters a distinctive and transformative form of cultural expression, one that moves beyond simple fantasy to become a vital site of meaning-making, emotional articulation, and gendered self-fashioning. These games do not merely reproduce traditional romantic scripts; rather, they reimagine the very structure of

intimacy through a user-centered, interactive model that prioritizes the woman's perspective, agency, and pleasure. Unlike mainstream media narratives, which often marginalize, distort, or commodify female desires, Otome games construct spaces where women's emotional experiences are not only acknowledged but celebrated, offering alternative imaginaries of love, reciprocity, and relational autonomy.

Within these immersive, emotionally charged environments, intimacy is not a static story delivered to a passive audience; it is a dynamic process shaped by the player's choices, desires, and interpretations. Through customizable avatars, branching dialogue trees, and relationship-building mechanics, players participate in narrative authorship—actively scripting their own emotional realities. Each decision made within the game becomes an act of relational and emotional world-building, allowing players to externalize and refine their ideals of love, respect, care, and mutual recognition. The Otome platform thus functions both as a mirror reflecting internal emotional needs and as a laboratory where alternative relational paradigms can be explored, practiced, and validated.

The male characters in Otome games, although virtual, are far more than empty romantic archetypes; they are symbolic vessels through which players negotiate complex emotional and relational themes. These interactions allow women to pose critical questions often suppressed or marginalized in real-world relationships: What does unconditional emotional support feel like? How should genuine respect and emotional attunement be expressed? What does it mean to establish boundaries without fear of emotional retaliation? In answering these questions through play, players rehearse the emotional scripts they aspire to enact in their offline lives, confronting and redefining notions of vulnerability, independence, and relational equity.

In the context of contemporary Chinese society—marked by rapid urbanization, shifting family structures, rising career competition, and escalating emotional fatigue—Otome games provide an urgently needed emotional refuge. They offer a simulated relational world where women can temporarily transcend the demands of filial piety, social conformity, and economic survival to center their own emotional narratives. Here, players are not daughters, workers, or wives bound by societal expectations; they are emotional subjects free to imagine relationships that prioritize their needs, boundaries, and aspirations. This freedom allows women to momentarily reclaim a sense of emotional sovereignty often eroded by the pressures of modern life.

The emotional investments cultivated through Otome gameplay complicate conventional binaries between real and virtual, public and private, serious and frivolous. Emotional experiences within these "unreal" spaces are no less authentic or transformative for their digital mediation. Instead, they demonstrate that affective life is increasingly hybridized, with digital technologies expanding the field of emotional expression and experience. Otome players inhabit a hybrid subjectivity—one that seamlessly navigates between embodied emotions and virtual relationality—challenging reductive understandings of digital play as escapism and asserting its role as a legitimate extension of lived emotional life.

These digital performances of subjectivity are not politically neutral. By centering female emotional agency, Otome games offer subtle but potent critiques of prevailing gender hierarchies. They subvert cultural narratives that position women's emotions as secondary, excessive, or disruptive by portraying emotional needs and desires as central, legitimate, and narratively privileged. Through their engagements, players reassert the value of emotional experience, challenging the marginalization of affect within both public discourse and private relationships. This emotional re-centering constitutes a quiet but meaningful form of feminist resistance, redefining how intimacy, care, and emotional labor are valued and enacted.

Beyond the individual, Otome games foster communal forms of emotional solidarity through expansive fan communities, online forums, social media discussions, and creative cultural production such as fanfiction, fan art, and alternate storylines. These networks enable players to share emotional experiences, co-construct narratives of alternative romance, and validate each other's affective realities. In doing so, they extend the personal intimacy of gameplay into collective modes of emotional affirmation and feminist storytelling, creating digital publics where women's voices, fantasies, and emotional self-inventions are not only visible but celebrated.

Otome games, therefore, do not merely offer women a retreat into fantasy; they open up profound cultural spaces for emotional self-invention, communal validation, and feminist critique. Through the mechanisms of interactive intimacy and emotional authorship, women carve out new terrains for articulating desire, negotiating relational power, and affirming emotional agency. In a rapidly modernizing Chinese society, these games illuminate how digital intimacy serves not as an escape from reality, but as a critical medium through which female subjectivity is expressed, contested, and continuously reimagined.

5. Conclusion

Otome mobile games in China serve as far more than ephemeral entertainment; they have emerged as powerful cultural instruments through which women actively construct emotional identities, assert economic and emotional agency, and articulate complex subjectivities within the evolving landscapes of digital intimacy. In worlds designed around responsiveness, choice, and emotional resonance, Chinese women engage in profound acts of self-definition, using interactive romance not merely to fantasize but to rehearse, negotiate, and affirm their affective realities.

These games illuminate broader societal shifts in the understanding of female desire, autonomy, and relational agency. In a context where traditional models of femininity are being simultaneously reinforced and contested, Otome games create new arenas where emotional needs are not marginalized or pathologized but placed at the center of experience. They enable women to reclaim emotional labor for themselves, to monetize emotional value on their own terms, and to narrate their desires without shame or external validation. The experience of spending for emotional satisfaction, crafting individualized romantic arcs, and participating in community storytelling becomes an emancipatory practice—one that challenges the normative structures of both digital economies and gendered expectations.

Far from being mere escapism, Otome games constitute a meaningful and nuanced form of digital storytelling and cultural negotiation. They reveal how affect, agency, and identity intersect in a uniquely gendered and localized way, particularly within the pressures of China's rapid modernization, urban alienation, and shifting gender politics. Through these platforms, women explore new configurations of intimacy that blend fantasy and authenticity, control and vulnerability, emotional realism and aspirational idealism.

Otome games invite a rethinking of what constitutes "real" emotional experiences. They show that emotional authenticity is not diminished by virtuality but can be expanded through it. The affective engagements within these games create genuine emotional impact, contributing to players' emotional self-efficacy, reinforcing their sense of value, and allowing for the rehearsal of relational models that may not yet be widely available in offline life.

The flourishing of Otome gaming culture among Chinese women reflects an emergent form of digital feminism—one that is subtle yet potent, personal yet collective. It exemplifies how even within commercially driven, algorithmically mediated spaces, women find avenues for resistance, self-affirmation, and imaginative reconstitution of the emotional self. It underscores the need to understand digital intimacy not as a retreat from reality but as a vibrant site of cultural production, emotional experimentation, and social critique.

Through the lens of Otome games, we can better appreciate the layered, dynamic, and often subversive ways that contemporary Chinese women are negotiating their place in a rapidly changing world—one digital love story at a time.

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How Miranda's Direct Gaze Challenges Narrative Distance in the Contemporary British Sitcom

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Abstract

This paper examines how Miranda Hart's use of the direct gaze in the BBC sitcom *Miranda* (2009–2015) challenges conventional narrative distance and redefines gendered performance in British television comedy. Drawing on theories of intermediality, performativity, and feminist media critique, the essay argues that Hart's frequent breaking of the fourth wall does more than generate humor—it constructs an intimate, dialogic relationship with the audience that destabilizes the traditional sitcom format. Through textual analysis of recurring phrases (e.g., "Such fun!"), key scenes of physical comedy, and Hart's embodied self-presentation, the paper explores how the show turns bodily excess, social failure, and romantic awkwardness into tools of feminist subversion. The direct gaze functions not only as a comic device but as a site of narrative authorship and affective solidarity, repositioning the viewer from passive observer to emotional co-conspirator. In doing so, *Miranda* reimagines the sitcom as a medium for emotional realism, feminist agency, and shared vulnerability.

Keywords: British sitcom, direct address, narrative distance, intermediality, fourth wall, embodiment

1. Introduction

The British sitcom *Miranda* (2009–2015), created by and starring Miranda Hart, stands as a distinctive contribution to contemporary television comedy, not merely for its slapstick humor or nostalgic charm, but for its bold formal experimentation. Central to this experimentation is the show's frequent use of direct address—what is often referred to as "breaking the fourth wall"—through which the protagonist, Miranda, looks directly into the camera to speak to or share moments with the audience. This technique, while rooted in older performance traditions like British pantomime, music hall, and even Shakespearean asides, finds new resonance in *Miranda* by destabilizing the distance typically maintained between viewer and character in sitcom narrative structures.

Unlike traditional British sitcoms such as *Fawlty Towers* or *The Vicar of Dibley*, where the audience is positioned as an external observer of a fictional diegetic world, *Miranda* collapses that boundary, pulling viewers into the affective and comic interiority of the central character. Hart's character doesn't merely perform for the audience; she confides, complains, and conspires with them. The camera, typically an invisible witness in conventional television, becomes an active interlocutor. In doing so, *Miranda* complicates the standard dynamics of narrative distance, replacing detachment with a

direct and often disarming intimacy.

This strategy operates not only as a comic device but also as a form of narrative and authorial control. Miranda's direct gaze invites viewers to enter a shared, ironic understanding of her experience, but it also allows Hart to modulate tone, self-ironize, and pre-empt audience judgment. This active negotiation with the audience repositions Hart not merely as a performer but as a co-narrator and self-reflexive authorial figure. Her gaze is not innocent—it is strategic, shaping the rhythm and direction of narrative interpretation.

Critically, this reflexivity also intersects with broader questions of gender and genre. In subverting the traditional role of the sitcom heroine—typically demure, reactive, and contained—Hart presents a deliberately "unruly" figure: physically awkward, emotionally expressive, and verbally self-aware. Her frequent glances to camera invite the audience not only to laugh at the absurdity of social conventions but also to align themselves with her deviation from them. As such, the direct gaze becomes a site of feminist resistance, contesting norms around performance, visibility, and bodily presence in mainstream television.

This paper therefore explores how *Miranda*'s use of the direct gaze fundamentally challenges narrative distance in the contemporary British sitcom. Drawing on theories of intermediality, feminist performance, and television narrative, and with close attention to the formal construction of the show, it argues that Hart's gaze is not merely a stylistic quirk, but a radical gesture—one that invites new ways of seeing, telling, and laughing in the comic tradition.

2. Intermediality and Self-Reflexivity

The concept of *intermediality*, as employed by J. Bucknall-Hołyńska in her analysis of *Miranda*, offers a critical framework for understanding the show's unique aesthetic and narrative structure. *Intermediality* refers to the interaction between different media forms within a single work, where the boundaries between stage, television, and audience-oriented performance become porous (Bucknall-Hołyńska, 2016). In *Miranda*, this intermedial mode manifests most clearly in the show's repeated use of direct address and theatrical convention, where the protagonist actively acknowledges the presence of the audience and the artificiality of the television frame.

Hart's frequent turns to the camera function not simply as comedic asides, but as metatextual commentary. The viewer is constantly reminded that they are watching a show—an act that breaks with the seamless realism expected of the sitcom form. This "intermedial reflexivity" blurs the lines between character and actor, fiction and performance, and even medium and message. Miranda is not only acting within a sitcom but is also—through her glances, gestures, and verbal cues—recasting the sitcom itself as a performance space akin to the theatre, or even to stand-up comedy, where audience engagement is a fundamental part of the comic rhythm.

This intermedial play serves several narrative and thematic purposes. It creates a double consciousness in the viewer: while we are immersed in the narrative of Miranda's romantic misadventures and social faux pas, we are also continually aware of the constructedness of those situations. This dual awareness produces a complex comic effect, inviting laughter that is both diegetic (rooted in the fictional world) and extra-diegetic (based on formal awareness). In other words, we laugh not just at *what* happens to Miranda, but at *how* the story is being told.

The intermedial structure reclaims narrative agency for Hart as both character and creator. As she literally and figuratively steps out of the narrative to speak directly to us, Hart asserts her position as the orchestrator of the comic space. This is particularly significant given the historical marginalization of female voices in comedy. Rather than being merely the subject of comic misunderstanding, Hart becomes a commentator on the conditions of her own performance. The reflexivity of *Miranda* is thus both aesthetic and political: it makes visible the power structures embedded in the act of storytelling and invites the viewer to question them.

The show's intermediality repositions the audience's role. Unlike traditional sitcoms that enforce a voyeuristic stance—viewers watching characters unaware of being watched—*Miranda* treats its audience as active participants in the comic process. Hart's eye contact and commentary do not just deliver punchlines; they create complicity, intimacy, and trust. The television screen becomes a permeable boundary, with Miranda occupying both the fictional world of the sitcom and the real world of audience engagement.

This formal strategy links *Miranda* to a broader lineage of British comedy that includes the self-referential performances of Eric Morecambe, the subversive commentary of *The Young Ones*, and the theatricality of pantomime. However, what distinguishes Hart's approach is the specificity of her intermedial technique: it is explicitly grounded in personal narrative, bodily presence, and gendered performance. Her use of intermediality is not just stylistic—it is a method of identity negotiation and comic authorship.

The intermedial and self-reflexive features of *Miranda* do more than innovate sitcom form; they offer a mode of performative authorship that reclaims narrative from passive consumption. Through these strategies, Hart not only tells stories but interrogates the conditions under which those stories are told and received—transforming the sitcom into a site of both comedy and critique.

3. Disruption of Narrative Distance

The traditional sitcom structure depends heavily on maintaining a stable diegetic boundary: the world of the show remains internally coherent, unbroken by acknowledgment of the audience's presence. In *Miranda*, this boundary is not only violated but deliberately dismantled. The result is what Fran Gray describes as a sitcom that is "perhaps the most camera-aware" in British television history, due to its unapologetic, frequent use of direct address (Gray, 2012). Miranda's engagement with the camera invites the audience into a privileged narrative position that transforms the sitcom's comedic effect from observational to conspiratorial.

In traditional narrative theory, narrative distance refers to the psychological or emotional space between the narrator and the audience or between the audience and the characters. This space is typically preserved through representational techniques that maintain the illusion of an autonomous fictional world. *Miranda*, by contrast, collapses this distance by allowing its protagonist to speak directly to the viewer, share private reactions, or preemptively comment on unfolding events. These "gazes" become sites of narrative intimacy, establishing a dialogic structure that flattens the hierarchy between viewer and character. The result is a comedic mode built less on situational irony and more on shared awareness.

What makes this strategy especially potent is how it shifts the viewer's role. The audience is no longer a voyeur but a participant. As Miranda turns to the camera during moments of awkwardness, triumph, or emotional vulnerability, she offers the audience not only a laugh but a tacit understanding: "You see what I'm dealing with, don't you?" These moments of mutual recognition are foundational to the show's charm and function as structural interventions in narrative form. They foster an affective relationship that would be impossible under traditional sitcom logic, where the audience is kept at arm's length.

The frequent breaking of the fourth wall also introduces temporal layering. Each glance to the audience brings with it a sense of presentness that contradicts the fictional timeline of the show. Miranda's awareness of being watched injects the "now" of performance into the "then" of narrative, creating a hybrid temporality where viewers are both watching a story and witnessing its construction in real-time. This simultaneity erodes the boundaries between performer and character, heightening the show's self-reflexivity and further destabilizing narrative distance.

Crucially, the disruption of narrative distance in *Miranda* is not a gimmick—it is integral to the show's ethos. Miranda Hart's comedy thrives on a politics of awkwardness, vulnerability, and emotional honesty. Her direct gazes function as mechanisms for emotional alignment: the audience is invited into her internal monologue, made complicit in her social failures, and offered insight into the comic pain of not fitting in. This closeness redefines the limits of audience-character engagement in the sitcom form.

In this way, *Miranda* stands in contrast to other contemporary sitcoms that maintain a polished, immersive distance between the viewer and the screen. Whereas series like *The IT Crowd* or *Outnumbered* create comedy through observational detachment, *Miranda* collapses this detachment into shared experience. The comedy is not about watching someone else fail, but about failing together—and laughing at the absurdity of that shared condition.

The disruption of narrative distance, then, is not merely a formal quirk of *Miranda*. It is a deliberate and effective reimagining of the relationship between narrative and audience, where the gaze is not a rupture but a thread—one that binds viewer and performer in

a uniquely comic communion.

4. Gender and Performance

Miranda Hart's performance in *Miranda* does far more than elicit laughter; it initiates a fundamental challenge to the gendered norms of television comedy. Central to this challenge is her use of direct address, a technique that allows her to simultaneously inhabit and critique the role of the female protagonist. Rebecca White observes that Hart's direct gaze is not only entertaining but assertive, enabling her to retain authorship over her character's image even as she blurs the boundary between her fictional persona and real-life self (White, 2015).

Hart constructs a comic femininity that is openly flawed, physically awkward, romantically unsuccessful, and emotionally exposed—qualities that resist the polished image of the conventional sitcom heroine. Instead of concealing these "deficiencies," Hart foregrounds them through performance, self-commentary, and meta-humor. This becomes most visible in the way she frames her own body. In one scene, after failing to squeeze into a tight-fitting dress, she looks straight at the camera and quips:

> "I don't think Spanx were made for the Valkyrie."

The joke operates on multiple levels: it satirizes cultural pressures on women to mold their bodies into slim silhouettes, while the reference to Norse mythology simultaneously reclaims her physicality as strong and majestic—even if incongruously so in the context of a date-night outfit.

Her frequent use of the phrase "Such fun!", often delivered after a complete social failure, functions as both ironic self-deprecation and subversive commentary. For example, after knocking over an entire dessert tray in front of a romantic interest, she turns to the audience and brightly exclaims:

> "Such fun!"

Here, the phrase mocks the expectation that women must remain cheerful, poised, and agreeable regardless of circumstances. Hart transforms this into a performative tic—a catchphrase that satirizes compulsory femininity while offering a comic survival mechanism.

Textual moments like "Is it just me?"—uttered directly to the camera in moments of social awkwardness—further deepen the gender critique. They establish a dialogic relationship with the viewer that destabilizes the isolation traditionally felt by female characters who fail to conform. By sharing her perceived inadequacy in real time, Hart refuses to internalize shame. Instead, she externalizes it and reframes it as a collective observation. This challenges the genre's reliance on female characters as objects of judgment, and repositions Miranda as a comic subject with agency and perspective.

These strategies intersect with Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. Hart is not performing a "natural" femininity but staging its failure and instability. Her body is loud, clumsy, and expansive—qualities that violate the discipline of gender decorum and instead align with Bakhtin's notion of the grotesque body as a site of resistance and rebirth. One especially potent example is when Miranda attempts yoga in a crowded studio, flailing through poses while loudly announcing:

> "I feel like a windsock in a hurricane!"

Her comedic exaggeration transforms bodily incapacity into a mode of protest: she fails to contain herself, and in doing so, draws attention to how femininity is a constraining physical performance.

Miranda's discomfort in romantic situations offers insight into how the show subverts the heterosexual script. She often pursues love but constantly derails her chances through awkwardness and over-eagerness. In one such moment, preparing for a dinner date, she nervously rehearses small talk before turning to the camera:

> "He's seen me in gym leggings. It's over before it's begun."

Rather than glamorizing the pursuit of male validation, the line undercuts the romantic fantasy with self-aware realism. Her humor becomes a mechanism not to win the man, but to win the viewer's trust—building solidarity through shared recognition of performative absurdity.

Hart's direct address functions as a feminist tactic. It grants her the narrative authority to frame her own body, failures, and experiences, challenging dominant media gazes that reduce women to either romantic prizes or comic relief. Through this gaze, Hart invites the viewer not to laugh at her, but with her—and more crucially, at the social norms that make her comedy

necessary.

5. The Comedic Intimacy of the Gaze

Among the many formal strategies that define *Miranda*, none is more foundational than the protagonist's habitual gaze to the camera. These glances—winks, grimaces, eyebrow raises, and deadpan stares—form a distinct narrative grammar that reconfigures audience engagement. As Anne Clayton describes, these are not simply "instinctive turns" that break the fourth wall, but intentional gestures that transform the audience from distant observers into emotional co-conspirators (Clayton, 2019). The comedic power of *Miranda* is thus deeply relational: it is not just performed but shared.

This emotional intimacy is enacted most clearly in scenes of acute embarrassment or social failure. In one representative moment, Miranda slips on the pavement in front of a romantic interest, lands flat on the ground, and pauses. She then slowly lifts her head, looks directly into the camera, and mutters:

> "Well, that was graceful."

This moment fuses physical comedy with metacommentary. The gaze acknowledges her humiliation, but reclaims it by involving the audience in its absurdity. Rather than being the object of our detached laughter, she becomes the narrator of her own fall—a gesture that invites empathy and recognition. The joke, then, is not just about falling down; it is about how life constantly undermines the polished scripts we're expected to perform.

This kind of moment recurs throughout the series, forming a structure of emotional alignment. The classic example appears in an early episode when Miranda, after yet another failed attempt at flirtation, turns to the camera and sighs:

> "I'm not good with people. Or eye contact. Or decisions. Or—just everything, really."

Here, the comic rhythm of escalating self-deprecation is undercut by the vulnerable gaze. She is not performing for applause; she is confiding in the viewer. The intimacy created is not merely a comedic effect—it is affective. Viewers do not simply laugh at Miranda; they recognize themselves in her.

This aligns closely with Lauren Berlant's concept of *intimate publics*—audience communities bound by shared feelings and lived experience. Miranda's frequent looks to the camera serve to foster such a public. By breaking narrative immersion and revealing the raw emotional subtext of everyday moments, she transforms her sitcom into a platform for emotional realism. Her direct address is not just narratively disruptive—it is emotionally reparative.

These moments often rely on the synchrony of text (what she says) and body (how she moves) to amplify intimacy. In an episode where Miranda is attempting to impress a crush at the gym, she becomes tangled in resistance bands, falls off a treadmill, and lands in a heap. Rather than cutting to the next scene, the camera lingers as she looks up, adjusts her hair, and delivers a simple:

> **"**Nailed it."

The humor here lies in the obvious contradiction between the visual failure and verbal bravado, but the gaze again turns it into a joke not about her incompetence, but about our collective attempts to maintain dignity in undignified moments. These are the kinds of moments that form *recognition humor*—a key component of contemporary feminist comedy, where laughter arises not from superiority but from shared vulnerability.

The direct gaze undermines traditional comic distance. In shows like *The Office*, the humor stems from awkwardness and audience detachment. In *Miranda*, that detachment is collapsed. The audience is implicated in the narrative, not simply watching Miranda's world unfold, but being drawn into her emotional interior. This affective contract—grounded in shared looks, emotional asides, and unfiltered confession—renders the comedy participatory. Miranda's world is not just shown; it is felt.

Miranda Hart's use of the gaze is central to her comedy's emotional architecture. It disrupts narrative immersion not to break the story but to build a relationship. Through small gestures and well-timed lines—"Well, that was graceful," "Such fun," or "Just me?"—she reorients the sitcom toward a feminist, relational model of storytelling where laughter is grounded in recognition, solidarity, and shared imperfection.

6. Embodiment and Transgression

Miranda Hart's body—tall, broad-shouldered, clumsy, and unapologetically physical—is not merely an element of her comedic persona; it is a central axis around which the politics of *Miranda* revolve. The sitcom foregrounds Hart's physical

difference from the normative ideals of femininity typically valorized in British television, turning what might conventionally be framed as a lack—of grace, beauty, or sexual desirability—into a site of comic strength and cultural critique. As B. O'Leary compellingly argues, Hart mobilizes her "unruly body" as both comic spectacle and feminist intervention (O'Leary, 2016).

The transgressive power of Hart's embodiment becomes especially vivid in conjunction with her frequent use of direct address. Her body is not observed passively, framed by the gaze of others, but instead actively performed and interpreted for the audience. Through the direct gaze, Hart insists on controlling how her body is seen. She comments on its size, gestures, and failings before others can, transforming vulnerability into agency. This self-aware framing converts physical awkwardness into a tool of resistance against both narrative and societal norms.

Importantly, this performance of bodily excess does not seek to neutralize or normalize the body through refinement. Instead, Hart draws attention to its unruliness—she flails, falls, squats, lunges, and stretches across the frame in ways that violate the constrained, graceful comportment traditionally expected of women on screen. In this, her comedy echoes theories of the grotesque body articulated by Mikhail Bakhtin, where bodily exaggeration, openness, and defiance become acts of rebellion against closed systems of control and decorum. The physical comedy in *Miranda*—falling into bins, failing at yoga, awkwardly navigating tight clothing—does more than generate laughter; it destabilizes the disciplinary codes of femininity.

Hart's frequent references to her own body within the diegesis further emphasize this self-framing. She routinely jokes about being a "giant," being mistaken for a man, or towering over romantic interests. These comments, made often via direct address, perform a dual function: they acknowledge and disarm potential audience judgments while also undermining the cultural authority of those judgments. The laughter these moments provoke is not directed at Hart's failure to embody femininity, but at the absurdity of femininity's narrow social script.

This transgressive performance is not limited to the physical but extends to the emotional and social expectations attached to female behavior. Hart's character is emotionally open to the point of embarrassment; she cries, panics, over-shares, and admits her desires and anxieties in real time. These disclosures, when accompanied by the direct gaze, become intimate affirmations of personhood that stand in direct contrast to the sitcom trope of the emotionally restrained woman. They also align with a feminist ethics of care and vulnerability, in which strength is found not in stoicism but in authenticity and relational honesty.

Hart's embodiment contests the sexual scripts that typically define female characters in romantic narratives. Miranda is not cast as the seductive heroine or the asexual best friend, but as something else entirely: a woman whose sexual desire is frequently articulated but seldom fulfilled. This in-betweenness—the continual negotiation between visibility and invisibility, desire and denial—renders her comic persona profoundly subversive. She is neither the object nor the reward in the romantic arc; she is its disoriented, self-aware, and often disappointed center. This ambiguity, far from weakening the show's coherence, enhances its richness by resisting resolution into traditional gender roles.

Finally, Hart's comedic transgressions can be situated within a broader genealogy of British female comedians who have used the body as a site of subversion—from Victoria Wood to Jo Brand and French & Saunders. But while those predecessors often worked within sketch or stand-up formats, *Miranda* brings this mode into a narrative sitcom space traditionally dominated by male protagonists. It turns the single female comic body into the narrative engine of a prime-time series, with the direct gaze anchoring its comic and political energy.

Miranda's transgressive embodiment—foregrounded and empowered by Hart's control of the gaze—constitutes a deliberate and joyful challenge to normative femininity. Her performance does not ask for permission to be seen; it insists on being seen on her own terms. Through this mode of embodied comedy, *Miranda* does not merely represent a woman out of place—it celebrates a woman who makes a new kind of place, one that is awkward, hilarious, and radically her own.

7. Conclusion

In *Miranda*, the act of looking—of breaking the

fourth wall and directly engaging the viewer—is neither a gimmick nor a mere stylistic embellishment. It is, instead, a radical narrative strategy that reconfigures the foundations of the British sitcom form. Miranda Hart's consistent use of the direct gaze operates across multiple registers: formally, it collapses narrative distance; emotionally, it cultivates an unprecedented level of comedic intimacy; politically, it subverts gendered norms of visibility, performance, and authorship. What emerges is not just a show that is funny, but one that uses its comedic structure to critique the very systems in which television comedy has historically been embedded.

At the level of narrative, the direct gaze transforms the sitcom from a representational medium into a relational one. The viewer is no longer a distant spectator but an acknowledged presence, drawn into the protagonist's interior life through eye contact, confession, and complicity. This shift in viewer-character dynamics creates a hybrid space—part performance, part conversation—in which comedy is not merely witnessed but co-produced. Hart's performance thus becomes dialogic: every joke, every awkward pause, every bodily failure is filtered through a shared understanding that the audience is not just watching the story unfold, but is emotionally embedded within it.

This intimate relationship is inseparable from the show's feminist undercurrents. By centering a protagonist who is physically atypical, socially awkward, romantically unsuccessful, and emotionally transparent, *Miranda* challenges the sanitized, polished femininity often demanded by mainstream television. And crucially, by giving this character not only a voice but a gaze—a direct, knowing, and self-authorized gaze—the series undermines the traditional power imbalance between viewer and viewed, between subject and object. Hart's ability to control the terms of her visibility destabilizes the male gaze that so often governs female representation on screen, replacing it with what we might call a "reclaiming gaze": one that is self-aware, humorous, and radically humanizing.

The series disrupts genre conventions by infusing a highly theatrical, intermedial sensibility into the sitcom format. Drawing from pantomime, sketch, stand-up, and classical theatre, *Miranda* becomes a site of genre hybridity where boundaries between performance modes are deliberately blurred. This fluidity extends beyond aesthetics to narrative form, inviting audiences to reflect on the nature of storytelling itself—who gets to tell stories, how they are told, and to whom they are addressed.

The gaze, then, is the central device through which *Miranda* articulates its comic and cultural politics. It is a gesture of inclusion, an invitation to laugh with rather than at, and a rejection of traditional sitcom detachment. Through this device, Hart cultivates a space in which awkwardness becomes endearing, failure becomes resistance, and comedy becomes a tool for emotional connection and social critique.

In this way, *Miranda* reimagines the sitcom not as a closed, repetitious loop of situational humor, but as an open, participatory structure grounded in vulnerability, authorship, and shared humanity. It offers a model for future narrative comedy that is not only more inclusive but also more intimate—where the act of looking is not about objectification but recognition, not surveillance but solidarity.

Through its performative innovation and affective generosity, *Miranda* stands as a landmark in the evolution of British television comedy—a series that makes us laugh, not from a distance, but from within the messy, joyful, self-aware spaces we share with its protagonist.

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A Survey on Language Life in Lanxi Under the Rural Revitalization Strategy

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Abstract

Lanxi City, Zhejiang Province, a typical representative of ancient villages in southern China, once faced hollowing out of traditional villages due to urbanization but has since achieved integration of cultural heritage protection and modern industries through the Rural Revitalization Strategy. Field investigations reveal that socioeconomic transformations in villages have triggered profound changes in language life, including: 1) The evolution of linguistic landscapes from single slogans to diversified systems, where official signs, commercial markers, and stone carvings of local elites jointly construct regional cultural narratives; 2) Intergenerational and situational differentiation in communicative codes, manifested as the transition from 'dialect preservation—bilingual interaction—trilingual service' (Mandarin, dialect, and English); With the empowerment of digital technology, cultural institutions and residents exhibit high internet dependency, forming new "language + digital" ecosystems such as dialect livestreaming and cultural creative products.

Keywords: rural revitalization, language life, language landscape, language technology

1. Introduction

In October 2017, the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed the Rural Revitalization Strategy, emphasizing the priority development of agriculture and rural areas and accelerating their modernization. By 2021, China had fully built a moderately prosperous society, bringing about profound changes in the socio-economic landscape of rural areas. To accurately capture the contemporary transformation of rural society, my team conducted an 18-day "observation, listening, questioning, and diagnosing" language survey in Lanxi City from July 15 to August 1, 2024. The survey was based on a theoretical framework, employing methods such as participant observation and in-depth interviews, using a combination of chance sampling, snowball sampling, and purposive sampling, adhering to the principle of data saturation (Sun Xiao'e, 2011) to advance the research work. Ultimately, we produced seven observation logs, three interview recordings, and 475 linguistic landscape data points.

It can be seen from the survey that the rural revitalization strategy has significantly reshaped the language life of villagers, and at the same time highlights the practical space for language and writing to feed back the development of rural areas, providing a fresh sample for understanding the interaction logic between language life and economic society.

2. The Change of Language Life in Lanxi, Zhejiang

Language life is an essential component of social life, and the changes in village society are also vividly reflected in the language lives of villagers. Li Yuming believes that "language life encompasses various activities involving the use, learning, and study of language and writing, linguistic knowledge, and language skills (Li Yuming, 2016)." Based on this understanding, we analyze the survey results of language life from three aspects.

2.1 Language and Writing Life

(1) Changes in the landscape of language

The language appearing on public road signs, billboards, street names, place names, shop signs, and public signs on government buildings collectively form the linguistic landscape of a certain territory, region, or city cluster. This concept of "linguistic landscape" was first proposed by Canadian scholars Landry & Bourhis (Rodrigue Andry & Richard Y. Bourhis, 1997). The primary finding of this survey is the linguistic landscape. Compared to the urban linguistic landscape that resembles [1]a "jungle of symbols," most local residents in Lanxi recall their childhood rural linguistic landscape as very monotonous, with only two wall slogans remaining: "Only socialism can save China" and "The people have infinite creativity." During our field visits, we found that rural linguistic markers had significantly increased, and according to the identity of the marker creators, there are three types: official, commercial, and private.

The first category of official signs is indicative signs. At the entrances of traditional villages in Lanxi, there are unique wooden signs with a Jiangnan style, featuring gilded calligraphy that reads "Zhuge Bagua Village," "Youbu Ancient Town," and "Zhiyan Ancient Village." Some of these signs also come with QR codes, which can be scanned to access dialect audio guides. Within the Youbu Ancient Town scenic area, signs such as "Provincial Historical and Cultural Town" and "Youbu Morning Tea Street" stand; inside Zhuge Bagua Village, signs like "Premier's Shrine" and "Old Site of Tianyi Hall Traditional Chinese Medicine Shop" exude an ancient charm. These signs not only facilitate visitors' tours but also highlight Lanxi's rich historical and cultural heritage. The second category is public notice boards. With the advancement of the rural revitalization strategy, numerous public notice boards have appeared on the streets and alleys of Lanxi, such as the "Lanxi City Traditional Village Protection Project Notice Board" and the "Ancient Building Restoration Project Progress Notice Board." These boards document achievements in "village restoration" and "cultural revival," witnessing the process of protecting and revitalizing traditional villages in Lanxi. The third category is promotional signs. Focusing on key tasks of rural development, Lanxi City has launched diverse promotional slogans, forming distinctive linguistic landscapes. For cultural tourism promotion, there are slogans like "A Thousand-Year-Old Commercial Port, Ink-Wash Lanxi," "Fish with You — Folk Art Workshop," and "Lanxi Days, Full of Fun and Flavor," along with their associated cultural and creative products. For ecological protection, there is "Guarding the Three Rivers' Clear Waters, Building a Beautiful Home Together." For intangible cultural heritage preservation, there is "Tasting Youbu Morning Tea, Inheriting Millennium Skills." These promotional slogans create a strong cultural atmosphere and play a significant role in enhancing residents' cultural identity and promoting the image of rural areas.

The first category of commercial signs includes fixed wall advertisements and signs, such as the wooden signs "Zhuge Lianlu Craft Store" and "Bagua Banquet Restaurant" around the Zhuge Bagua Village scenic area, and the wooden signs "Lang Jingshan Memorial Hall Cafe" and "Old Teahouse" within Youbu Ancient Town. There are also three-dimensional check-in spots like "Come to Youbu Early in the Morning" and "Welcome to Lanhu Tourism Resort," which are wall-painted advertisements. The second category consists of mobile commercial flyers and posters. During holidays or peak tourist seasons, promotional leaflets for events such as "Intangible Cultural Heritage Handicraft Exhibition" and "Lanxi Yangmei Picking Festival" appear around the scenic area, along with discount posters from homestays and agritourism sites. These commercial signs reflect the thriving development of Lanxi's cultural and tourism industry and the vitality of its local economy.

Private signs are commonly found among

[1] All the linguistic landscape mentioned in this paper is preserved in its original written form.

returning entrepreneurs and local virtuous figures. For example, in Zhuge Bagua Village, the entrance to the "Kongming Woodcraft Workshop," founded by a young returnee, features a wooden sign carved with the words "Ancient Craftsmanship, Craftsmanship Inherited." In Youbu Ancient Town, the "Li Yu Book House," established by a retired teacher, has a bluestone sign at its alley entrance inscribed with "The Legacy of Jiezi Garden, Fragrance of Books Passed Down Through Ages." Additionally, some local virtuous associations set up cultural stone carvings at their courtyard entrances, such as "Cultivating and Reading Passed Down for Long, Poetry and Books Continuously Passed Down," and "Lan Water Nurtures Beauty, Stream Rhythms Flowing Fragrance." These not only showcase personal cultural refinement but also add cultural charm to the countryside, becoming unique humanistic landscapes in the revitalization of rural culture.

In terms of quantity, the Lanxi language markers have increased significantly, but there is a problem of missing some signs in type. The lack of directional signs on rural road signs is particularly evident in officially established ones. When my team and I visited the ancient town of Youbu in Lanxi as tourists, we had to take multiple detours due to the absence of clear road signs while looking for the "Lang Jingshan Memorial Hall," ultimately missing the best time for our visit. It is evident that a scientific and systematic road sign system is a key factor in enhancing visitor experience and promoting high-quality development of the cultural tourism industry. Lanxi still needs to strengthen its foundational language landscape construction.

(2) Changes in language communication

Dialects are undoubtedly the core language medium for daily communication among the people. However, with the continuous advancement of Mandarin's popularization, significant changes have occurred in the intergenerational transmission of Lanxi dialect. The vivid and regionally distinctive colloquialisms used by the older generation are gradually fading from the everyday speech of the younger generation. For example, terms like "tian guang" (Lanxi dialect for 'morning'), "yan zhou" (noon), and "ye kua bian" (evening) are rarely heard in the speech of middle-aged and young adults.

In specific communication scenarios, the linguistic ecology of Lanxi is more diverse. On one hand, young parents unconsciously align their language with the Mandarin used in early childhood education when interacting with toddlers. When assessing children's self-study achievements, besides traditional literacy and arithmetic tests, English expression has increasingly become a new focus. Phrases like "What does the cat say? Cat!" and "Where is the dog? Dog!" have frequently appeared in many families with young children, becoming a new norm in family language interaction, reflecting society's emphasis and pursuit of multilingual education today. On the other hand, some teenagers who have lived in cities for a long time lack an environment to use their hometown dialects. When visiting relatives back home, they can only rely on Mandarin to communicate with their grandparents. To achieve smooth communication, the grandparents also try to use less standard Mandarin, striving to bridge the generational gap in language. For example, Uncle Zhang, influenced by his grandson's Mandarin, occasionally replaces his usual "Nong qu wu qu" phrase with "You qu bu qu." This mutual influence in language use not only demonstrates the efforts made by different generations to maintain emotional connections but also indirectly reflects how Mandarin permeates the usage contexts and habits of dialects.

The evolution of language is not merely a simple replacement of vocabulary; it vividly reflects the transformation of rural economic structures, changes in social interaction patterns, and the expansion of information dissemination channels. The massive influx of commercial and internet terms highlights how villages are rapidly integrating into the modern market economy and the digital information age. Under the impact of new economic waves, the traditional agrarian language system is undergoing profound changes and reshaping. In this process, balancing the modernization of language with the protection of traditional language has become an urgent issue for rural revitalization.

2.2 Language Knowledge and Life Conditions

(1) Changes in language knowledge and life

In the revitalization of traditional village cultural heritage in Lanxi, Zhejiang, the group of local virtuous figures uses language and writing

as core tools to construct a regional cultural narrative system, forming a revitalization model characterized by "shaping the soul through words." The ancient town of Youbu is named after its "First Morning Tea Street in Southern Jiangnan," integrating elements from Lang Jingshan's photography with dialect-based promotional texts to create immersive intangible cultural heritage experience scenes; Xiaoli Village, the hometown of Li Yu, retains the historical place name "Qie Ting Pavilion," conveying cultural spirit through handwritten couplets, complemented by a series of illustrated exhibition boards that interpret the ideas of famous people. Additionally, digital technology empowers cultural dissemination, such as the full-platform video commentary on Zhuge Bagua Village achieving 74,000 likes per video, and the discussion volume of the "Youbu Morning Tea" topic in Youbu Ancient Town reaching tens of millions. These practices transform historical resources into perceptible cultural IPs through the reconstruction of place names, interpretation of landscape texts, and integration of digital language technologies, enhancing regional recognizability and tourism appeal. This demonstrates the creative transformation value of language and text as cultural capital in rural revitalization, providing a practical example of the theory of "language knowledge life" for the cultural revitalization of ancient villages in southern Jiangnan. The Publicity Department of the Lanxi Municipal Committee fully utilizes the "Cultural Hall Senior School" cultural platform, forming a senior university silver-age art troupe, actively building a "senior cultural circle," and launching the "Folk Art Plan" and elderly university cultural outreach activities across the city, bridging the "last mile" of education for the elderly in rural areas.

These practices not only include the contemporary translation of historical and cultural symbols, but also poetic expression of life wisdom, showing the villagers' subject consciousness to empower cultural tourism with language knowledge, verifying the practical effectiveness of grassroots language practice in cultural transmission and economic transformation, and providing a "bottom-up" language empowerment sample for rural cultural revitalization.

(2) The construction of language knowledge and life as the focus

Despite the active use of language and text by local virtuosos and villagers to revitalize cultural heritage, some villages suffer from inefficient dissemination of place names due to inadequate professional planning, such as the confusion caused by the lack of systematic narrative after the early renaming of Zhuge Bagua Village. However, the situation has improved. In response, Lanxi has adopted a path of "professional empowerment + multi-party collaboration" to deepen the construction of a standardized system for "place names + culture." For example, Zhuge Bagua Village has set up a "village name interpretation" archway, and Youbu Ancient Town has erected a stele explaining the history of the "Youbu" commercial port, clarifying the cultural connotations of core place names like "Zhuge Bagua Village" and "Youbu Ancient Town."

Another prominent issue is the lack of clarity in language and text standards, primarily manifested in the improper use of Chinese characters and inconsistent styles in tourism language products. For example, in Zhuge Bagua Village, ancient building couplets are mixed with simplified and traditional characters, while in Li Yu's hometown, stories are written in both classical and vernacular Chinese. To address this problem, Lanxi has established a layered language system, using "written language as the mainstay + dialect accents" for core cultural explanations, and adopting "internet-savvy dialects" for cultural and creative products to enhance their appeal. Additionally, they have collaborated with universities to establish the "Lanxi Dialect Resource Bank," providing standardized language samples for intangible cultural heritage interpretation and creative product development, promoting the transition of dialect products from fragmented to systematic. These measures not only uphold national language standards but also preserve regional cultural characteristics, offering the Lanxi experience to solve the issue of "confused expression" in rural cultural venues.

2.3 Language Technology Living Conditions

(1) Changes in language technology and life

The deep penetration of Internet technology is reshaping the rural language life. The language life in Lanxi is gradually transitioning from a "physical village" to a "digital community", and

constantly promoting the transformation of villagers into "digital citizens".

The first step is to lay the foundation for residents' digital language life through network infrastructure. At the provincial level, Zhejiang Province launched the "Silver Age Science Popularization Action," providing smartphone training resources on the "Zhe Li Ban" platform, including demonstrations of practical functions such as binding bank cards with WeChat and making appointment appointments. In 2024, 16 senior schools in Youbu Town offered multiple courses involving the application of digital technology, such as using health codes and online payments, helping seniors bridge the digital divide. The Nubu Subdistrict of Lanxi also initiated a series of activities titled "Silver Age Bridging the Digital Divide," gradually reducing the number of "digital outsiders" through mobile service points and family assistance programs like Qingyin Qinfamily.

The second step is to reshape the information interaction model through the widespread use of smart terminals. Villagers in Meijiang Town use the mobile APP "Lanxi Language School" to learn dialect nursery rhymes, while Zhuge Bagua Village has developed an "AR Guide for Bagua Village" mini-program that triggers dialect audio explanations when scanning ancient buildings. Lanxi Rural Commercial Bank leads with the "Zhejiang Agricultural Code," upgrading its existing "Digital Doorplate" system and collaborating with the city's Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs to advance the "Smart Village Code." This initiative establishes a "village household basic data system" and a "one village one code + one household one code" application scenario. Village officials can manage village affairs by scanning codes, and visitors can obtain village introductions, find local homestays, farmhouses, and specialties through scanning codes.

The third step is to leverage integrated media promotion to activate the dissemination power of rural culture. Young people and virtuous villagers in rural areas proactively use digital technology to empower cultural tourism, forming a three-dimensional communication matrix of "official website + Weibo, WeChat, and Douyin." As traditional TV viewership has declined, short video platforms have become the primary channels for villagers to access content such as "resisting negative information" and "national policies," like the video on "Weishi Lanxi" TikTok account about the "Lanxi home purchase subsidy policy," which achieves down-to-earth policy promotion. The Lanxi City Culture and Tourism Bureau operates the "Lanxi Culture and Tourism" official account, regularly releasing cultural content such as Li Yu's plays and Youbu morning tea, attracting a large fan base. Villagers are not only beneficiaries but also creators of short videos. Meat Shenzi from Youbu Ancient Town, a local specialty, has become an internet sensation through short video sharing in recent years. In addition, there are many people from Lanxi on various video platforms; for example, the hashtag "#ZhugeBaguaCun" on TikTok has over 60 million views; "Lanxi" on Xiaohongshu has over 34 million views; "Jiangnan Youbu Matchmaker" shares personal life experiences and receives over 300,000 likes; Liu's sharing of a happy family life on TikTok has received over 170,000 likes.

(2) The direction of improvement of language technology life

While the rural language technology in Lanxi is deepening and developing, the double-edged sword effect of digital technology has become increasingly prominent, manifesting as the "three lacks" issues: lack of interaction, lack of design, and lack of collaboration. For example, the WeChat public account "Xia Li Village, the Hometown of Li Yu" mostly publishes news articles in the form of "XX leader's inspection" or "XX event held," with less than 10% of posts receiving over a thousand views in 2023; a merchant's TikTok account in Youbu Ancient Town posted a video about making morning tea, with the caption only stating "delicious and not expensive," without incorporating historical anecdotes or dialect terms related to "Rou Chenzi," resulting in limited dissemination effects. The live stream by the youth team "Zhuge Maker" once received criticism from netizens for being "just wandering around the alley, failing to see any unique features" due to a lack of planning.

Lanxi's cultural and tourism sector should take the lead, with other government departments playing a supporting role. The core IPs such as "Li Yu Drama" and "Lanxi Days, Full of Fun" should guide the content division for WeChat public accounts, TikTok, and B stations. Led by the government, training sessions on "hit copywriting" should be organized for villagers, incorporating popular phrases like "the essential

meat sink for early morning gatherings," to enhance the appeal of the content. The "Zhuge Bagua Village Guide" account on Xiaohongshu should adopt a "local guide" perspective, posting content like "Lost in Zhuge Village? Understand these three symbols and you won't be afraid," to increase interaction rates. A pilot "digital narrative workshop" will be set up in scenic areas, providing editing software, voice prompts, and other equipment, along with material libraries such as "internet-famous check-in spots" and "dialect hotword banks" to enhance the fun, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the unique rural culture.

3. Epilogue

The linguistic life in Lanxi has harmoniously evolved alongside economic and social life, with the role of language in promoting rural revitalization beginning to show. Practice has shown that the transformation of linguistic life in the digital age is essentially a two-way interaction between "technological empowerment" and "cultural awareness". When ancient villages encounter digital technology, language not only serves as a medium for information transmission but also becomes a "digital bridge" linking tradition and modernity, countryside and city, continuously injecting linguistic and technological benefits into rural revitalization.

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Professional Literacy of College English Teachers in Smart Teaching Environments: Connotations, Challenges, and Development Pathways

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Abstract

The smart teaching environment is fostering a new foreign language education ecosystem and demanding new professional literacy and development pathways for college English teachers. By integrating knowledge structure theory, TPACK theory, policy document analysis, and practical requirements, this paper redefines the connotations of professional literacy for college English teachers within the smart teaching environment. In light of the current state of professional development among college English teachers, it clarifies the challenges faced and proposes development pathways to enhance professional development under such conditions.

Keywords: smart teaching environment, college English teachers, professional literacy, challenges, development pathways

1. Introduction

In February 2019, the State Council issued the "China Education Modernization 2035," which outlined the strategic task of "accelerating educational transformation in the smart teaching environment, promoting reforms in educational organizational forms and management models, and advancing educational modernization through informatization." It emphasized that "the professionalization of educators, governance modernization, informatization, and internationalization are critical pillars supporting educational modernization." Educational informatization has become an inevitable pathway for talent cultivation. For college English teachers, the transformation brought about by the smart teaching environment represents both an opportunity for professional growth and significant professional challenges. In an era where opportunities coexist with challenges, college English teachers must not only focus on consolidating professional skills, optimizing teaching content and methods, and reforming assessment mechanisms but also reflect on how to enhance overall quality to meet the demands of talent cultivation in the information age.

Within the context of smart teaching, as educational technology continues to deeply integrate with teaching practices, recognizing the situation, clarifying the connotation of professional literacy for college English teachers,

objectively analyzing their current professional development status, leveraging favorable factors of educational informatization, enhancing professional qualities and skills, and transforming challenges into drivers for professional development have become essential considerations for every college English teacher.

2. Connotations of Professional Literacy for College English Teachers in Smart Teaching Environments

In the field of teacher professionalization research, the knowledge structure theory proposed by Professors Lin Chongde and Shen Jiliang holds considerable influence in China. This theory posits that the essential knowledge of teachers comprises ontological knowledge, conditional knowledge, and practical knowledge. Ontological knowledge refers to subject-specific knowledge related to taught courses; conditional knowledge pertains to pedagogy, psychology, and other areas necessary for becoming a teacher, serving as a prerequisite for conducting teaching activities; practical knowledge involves empirical insights gained from solving problems in specific teaching contexts.

The TPACK theory introduced by American scholars Koehler and Mishra suggests that the knowledge structure of teachers in the information age primarily consists of three core components: subject content knowledge, pedagogical method knowledge, and technical knowledge. Additionally, it encompasses four composite elements: pedagogical method knowledge integrated with subject content, subject knowledge integrated with technology, pedagogical method knowledge integrated with technology, and subject-specific pedagogical knowledge integrated with technology. The pedagogical knowledge in TPACK integrates conditional and practical knowledge from the knowledge structure theory, while technical knowledge is treated as a parallel core component, underscoring its importance in the knowledge structure of teachers.

Based on these theories, along with China's "Standards and Guidelines for Professional Development of Primary and Secondary School Teachers" and "Standards for Educational Technology literacy of Primary and Secondary School Teachers," as well as the demands for professional development of college English teachers in the smart teaching environment, the author contends that the professional literacy of college English teachers in this context should encompass five aspects: modern educational theories and teaching concepts, solid professional knowledge and skills, the ability to apply modern educational technology, comprehensive teaching and research capabilities, and the ability to build harmonious teacher-student relationships.

2.1 Modern Educational Theories and Teaching Concepts

The depth of modern educational theoretical knowledge reserves directly impacts educational and teaching effectiveness. Here, knowledge reserve refers to the level of understanding, emphasis, and mastery of modern educational theories and teaching concepts. Beyond mastering general theoretical knowledge required for educators, college English teachers must adapt to the demands placed on them within the smart teaching environment, undertake moral education and talent cultivation responsibilities, and implement ideological and political education reforms in courses to achieve the goal of "all-round" education. Simultaneously, they must continuously update their educational theoretical knowledge, guide teaching practice with advanced teaching concepts and modern educational theories during foreign language instruction, and integrate and innovate. This represents the inevitable direction for the professional development of college English teachers.

2.2 Solid Professional Knowledge and Skills

Solid professional knowledge and skills form the cornerstone of professional development for college English teachers. These are first reflected in robust language skills, including standard pronunciation, fluent oral expression, standardized writing, and appropriate classroom language. They are also demonstrated through management and response capabilities when addressing actual teaching situations and organizing teaching activities. These represent specific methods and experiences for resolving various practical problems in the teaching process. College English teachers with strong professional skills can identify issues more acutely, analyze them more deeply, and solve them creatively in real-world teaching scenarios. College English teachers should fully utilize their knowledge reserves, maximize the

application value of professional qualities, and cultivate talents with multiple foreign language skills.

2.3 Ability to Apply Modern Educational Technology

Information technology is deeply embedded in foreign language teaching. Appropriately applying modern educational technology to serve teaching has become a crucial component of professional ability development for college English teachers in the information age. According to the "Standards for Educational Technology literacy of Primary and Secondary School Teachers," college English teachers should enhance their modern educational technology literacy across four dimensions: awareness and attitude, knowledge and skills, application and innovation, and social responsibility. Regarding awareness and attitude, college English teachers should recognize that educational technology constitutes an indispensable aspect of professional development. In actual teaching, they should possess the awareness of utilizing educational technology for teaching assistance, evaluation, and professional learning. Regarding knowledge and skills, college English teachers should master relevant theoretical knowledge of educational technology, understand commonly used teaching media, and manage and evaluate teaching resources. Regarding application and innovation, college English teachers should effectively integrate technology into courses, optimize the teaching environment, and conduct teaching research using educational technology. Regarding social responsibility, college English teachers should leverage educational technology to address inequalities in teaching resources, ensuring students from diverse backgrounds and abilities can access the same learning resources for balanced development.

2.4 Comprehensive Teaching and Research Capabilities

Inspired by British scholar Stenhouse's concept of "teachers as researchers," the idea of teachers becoming researchers has gradually taken root. Many Chinese scholars have acknowledged that engaging in teaching and research enhances teachers' professional qualities. Through teaching and research activities, teachers can organically combine theory with practice, use theory to guide teaching, explore teaching in-depth, reflect on issues arising in teaching practice, and systematically distill teaching experience. Consequently, teaching and research capabilities constitute a vital component of professional development. Given the current individual development status of college English teachers, insufficient teaching and research achievements remain a significant factor affecting their professional ability development. Therefore, participating in teaching and research projects, conducting teaching and research activities, and reflecting and summarizing in a timely manner are imperative for college English teachers.

2.5 Ability to Build Harmonious Teacher-Student Relationships

Interacting with students and managing them effectively are integral components of professional development for college English teachers. Whether in classroom teaching, daily teaching activities, or extracurricular collective activities, the smooth progress of these activities depends closely on teacher-student interaction and communication skills, as well as class management abilities. A harmonious teacher-student relationship ensures effective teaching implementation and positively influences students' mental health, personality development, interpersonal communication skills, and campus humanistic education. Thus, whether college English teachers can establish a harmonious teacher-student relationship significantly impacts teaching progress and student cultivation.

3. Challenges Faced by Professional Literacy of College English Teachers in Smart Teaching Environments

3.1 The Challenges of Smart Teaching to the Educational Technology Competencies of College English Teachers

The educational technology competencies of college English teachers refer to their knowledge and skills in utilizing network information technology and multimedia technology to assist foreign language teaching. This is aimed at transforming teaching paradigms, enhancing teaching quality, and promoting personal professional development within a smart teaching environment. Despite years of exploration and practice, college English teachers have developed a certain level of information awareness and skills; however, these remain insufficient to meet the demands of information-based language teaching. The specific challenges are outlined as follows:

Firstly, some college English teachers lack proactive motivation to enhance their information literacy. They exhibit limited innovation and tend to rely on traditional teaching methods, focusing more on their own professional knowledge and skills rather than exploring innovative teaching models through the use of information technology. Secondly, many teachers predominantly rely on general search engines like Baidu and Google for resource acquisition, rarely utilizing specialized teaching resource platforms, e-book libraries, or corpora. Even when resources are obtained, they often undergo only basic text processing due to a lack of familiarity with advanced software tools such as editing and format conversion programs. Consequently, teachers face difficulties in handling multimedia formats such as audio and video files. Thirdly, Information-Based Teaching Environments are inadequate. Limited funding has resulted in insufficient investment in the software and hardware required for educational informatization. Self-study centers and language laboratories are scarce, and existing facilities often suffer from low configurations and outdated equipment, which fail to meet standard teaching requirements. Additionally, campus networks frequently experience lagging issues. High-quality teaching software and resources are also lacking. Existing software, typically developed by computer science professionals, may not align with teaching principles or syllabi across various subjects. There is thus an urgent need for high-quality software resources tailored to the needs of college English teaching.

3.2 The Challenges of Smart Teaching to the Role of College English Teachers

With the deep integration of the Internet, information technology, and foreign language teaching, the entire ecosystem of foreign language education has experienced significant transformations, exhibiting the following characteristics: 1) Abundant teaching resources. In the context of smart teaching, the content of foreign language instruction is no longer confined to textbooks or teachers alone. The advancement of the Internet has made a wide variety of learning resources readily accessible. 2) Transformation of the foreign language teaching model. There is a shift from traditional teaching methods to blended learning approaches, with the emergence of new paradigms such as flipped classrooms, micro-lessons, MOOCs, and WeChat-based learning. 3) Challenging teacher authority. In today's networked era, knowledge has become diversified, and teachers are no longer the sole custodians of knowledge. Teachers and students collaborate in constructing knowledge, and the teacher's control over learning activities has diminished. Based on these characteristics, the role of college English teachers is being redefined. If college English teachers continue to position themselves solely as knowledge transmitters or teaching managers, it becomes evident that they cannot adapt to the evolving demands of foreign language teaching in the smart teaching environment. Consequently, college English teachers must proactively adjust their roles, enhance their information literacy, and align themselves with the requirements of the new era.

3.3 The Challenges of Smart Teaching to the Academic Research Ability of College English Teachers

Teaching and research are interdependent and form an organically integrated and unified whole. Discussing teaching research without a focus on teaching is akin to empty theorizing, while discussing teaching without engaging in teaching research is like groping in the dark. Based on the current state of individual development among college English teachers, insufficient teaching research capability remains a critical factor hindering their personal growth and professional advancement.

The advent of smart teaching environments has triggered a wave of educational informatization, infusing foreign language education with advanced technological capabilities and significantly promoting its development. This wave of informatization has also profoundly influenced foreign language teaching and learning. A vast array of foreign language learning resources and personalized learning demands have given rise to a brand-new paradigm in foreign language instruction. The learning environment has undergone transformation, and the methods and channels for accessing resources have been greatly expanded. Learning modes have shifted from traditional classroom listening and note-taking to online active learning paradigms. Innovations in teaching methodologies have enhanced teacher-student interaction, strengthened students' abilities to identify and solve

problems, and fostered the development of critical thinking skills. These new developments pose significant challenges to the teaching and research capabilities of college English teachers.

Therefore, college English teachers should ground themselves in reality, directly address issues arising from the novel teaching model, conduct rigorous teaching research, "promote reflection through research," and "enhance learning through research." By doing so, they can genuinely improve teaching efficiency and elevate teaching quality.

4. The Development Pathways of College English Teachers in Smart Teaching Environments

4.1 Vigorously Cultivating Educational Technology Abilities of College English Teachers

The improvement of the educational technology ability of college English teachers can be approached from two levels: one is at the school level, and the other is at the teacher level. At the school level, the following three tasks can be emphasized: firstly, schools should increase investment in software and hardware infrastructure construction, such as the development of foreign language teaching resource platforms, digital campuses, smart classrooms, information technology support, etc.; Secondly, based on the characteristics and personalized needs of college English teachers, organize and systematically provide training on information technology teaching skills. The training content should not only include the application of information technology tools, but also how to improve information literacy skills in teaching practice. The training methods should be diversified, such as school-based training, off campus training, integrated training, etc. Finally, an information technology training evaluation system should be established to ensure the quality of training. Thirdly, schools should introduce corresponding guiding policies or incentive policies for information-based teaching to encourage teachers to carry out information-based teaching. At the teacher level, they should liberate their minds, enhance their information awareness, cultivate their information skills, and achieve the autonomous development of their information literacy.

4.2 Transforming the Role of College English Teachers

To enable students' all-round development, college English teachers must promptly adjust their roles and reposition themselves as course designers, organizers, guides, and supervisors, adapting to the new demands of the smart teaching environment. Firstly, to become an outstanding "designer" of a foreign language classroom, a college English teacher must possess a deep understanding of the most advanced teaching theories and concepts, demonstrate strong professional skills, and leverage information technology to comprehensively plan and coordinate the entire course syllabus, teaching objectives, content, progress, and arrangements. Furthermore, for specific teaching content, detailed designs should be implemented, such as selecting appropriate teaching methods, resources, paradigms, and scenarios.

Secondly, teachers must master information technology. In a smart teaching environment, college English teachers need to exhibit a certain level of digital literacy, proficiently apply modern information technology, skillfully use various teaching software, create courseware on platforms, design web pages, and effectively utilize computer resources. Mastery of information technology will inevitably become a fundamental requirement for teachers in future classrooms.

Thirdly, teachers should act as guides and supervisors of classroom learning. Due to the diversification of knowledge and the prevalence of ubiquitous learning models in the information age, students can access information through multiple channels. However, the overwhelming amount of online information often confuses students and makes it difficult for them to make informed choices. This requires college English teachers to guide students in navigating this complex landscape. Additionally, to adapt to new teaching modes in the information age, teachers must guide students to shift from passive participation to active engagement, foster teamwork, encourage critical thinking, and assist students in utilizing learning resources to complete tasks. Moreover, beyond cultivating language skills, teachers should incorporate moral education into their teaching, guiding students to establish correct values and develop sound personalities. Finally, teachers must supervise teaching quality by analyzing data generated from teaching platforms, evaluating teaching and learning situations, refining teaching objectives and

methods, emphasizing outputs, and enhancing overall teaching quality.

4.3 Enhancing the Academic Research Capabilities of College English Teachers

The limited academic research achievements of college English teachers significantly impact their professional development and hinder personal growth. This is not due to a lack of research ability but rather insufficient emphasis and guidance. To enhance academic research capabilities, efforts can be made in the following areas: First, improve ideological understanding and correctly recognize the dialectical relationship between "teaching" and "research." Traditionally, college English teachers have heavy teaching loads and focus primarily on improving student grades and language skills. Believing that "teaching and research" is time-consuming and labor-intensive, they often isolate these activities, failing to recognize their mutual promotion. Therefore, teachers should abandon the notion of prioritizing teaching over research, identify problems in teaching, and use "teaching research" to promote "teaching," achieving an organic integration of both. Second, strengthen "group teaching and research" and foster a research atmosphere. Teachers can form research groups, leveraging the advantages of experienced teachers mentoring newcomers, encouraging young teachers to participate actively, and promoting collaboration with peer institutions to stay updated on the latest developments and share achievements. Third, encourage teachers to attend domestic and international academic symposiums, stay informed about cutting-edge theoretical knowledge, and engage in intellectual exchanges. Fourth, improve incentive mechanisms for teaching and research to boost enthusiasm. Schools or departments should establish diverse incentives, including spiritual rewards (e.g., commendations) and material rewards (e.g., increased performance-based pay or separate bonuses), offering promotion opportunities for teachers with outstanding research achievements.

The rapid development of information, network, and multimedia technologies has reshaped the educational ecosystem in foreign language teaching. College English teachers play a pivotal role in this ecosystem. Focusing on their professional development and personal growth is vital for the healthy evolution of the system. With changes in the educational environment, the connotation of professional literacy has expanded, elevating modern educational technology to a critical position. Under this backdrop, college English teachers should proactively explore professional development paths, enhancing faculty quality through measures such as cultivating educational technology skills, transforming roles, improving research capabilities, and fostering new teacher-student relationships. This will facilitate the transition from traditional models to those suited for the smart era.

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Beyond the Drowning Child: Rethinking Moral Urgency Through Singer and the Great Leap Forward

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Abstract

Moral urgency commands immediate attention, but it can obscure deeper questions about sustainability and structure. This paper examines the logic behind emergency-driven ethics through Peter Singer's argument for alleviating global poverty via individual giving. While persuasive in its clarity, this framework risks narrowing moral focus and creating expectations that are difficult to sustain. Using China's Great Leap Forward as a case study, the paper explores how urgency-centered ethics can produce harm when detached from long-term planning and institutional context. The critique is not of urgency itself, but of its dominance in moral discourse. Drawing on Emerson's reflections on moral integrity and burnout, the paper proposes an alternative model of responsibility—one that holds space for both immediate compassion and enduring systems of care.

Keywords: emergency ethics, Peter Singer, Great Leap Forward, structural inequality, global poverty

1. Introduction

Crises demand action. We do not pause to debate long-term urban planning when a house is on fire; we grab a hose or call the fire department. When a child is drowning, we do not hesitate to pull them from the water. These moments leave no room for deliberation—only an urgent choice between intervention and inaction. But what happens when moral philosophy adopts this same sense of urgency?

Peter Singer argues that death caused by poverty is a moral emergency. In his famous analogy, failing to donate to prevent such death is like walking past a drowning child without stopping to help. If people in affluent nations can prevent immense suffering—and especially premature death—at relatively little personal cost, he claims, then they are morally required to do so. This argument, powerful in its simplicity, has shaped discussions on ethics and philanthropy for decades. But is responding to death from poverty, or any large-scale crisis, the same as rescuing a drowning child?

This paper explores the ethical framework behind emergency-driven ethics, which insists that some moral duties require urgent, almost instinctive action, often prioritizing immediate solutions over careful planning. While this approach can be compelling, it raises four key concerns. First, it tends to oversimplify complex problems, favoring speed over structural understanding. Second, it may result in

ineffective or even harmful outcomes when rushed interventions backfire. Third, it imposes extreme moral demands on individuals, risking burnout or disengagement. And fourth, the logic of urgency can be used to justify overreach, sidelining local knowledge or democratic processes. Using the historic example of China's Great Leap Forward, this paper argues that emergency ethics, though well-intentioned, often obscures long-term consequences. Ultimately, while moral urgency is valuable, ethical decision-making must be grounded in structural analysis and sustainable strategy.

2. Analysis of Emergency Ethics

Emergency ethics is compelling for several reasons. First, it provides a sense of moral clarity by framing choices in urgent, action-oriented terms. The moral logic feels immediate: help or don't. This directness can be persuasive, especially in emotionally charged crises like poverty, war, or humanitarian disasters, where hesitation can mean loss of life. Of course, some thinkers like Peter Singer arrive at this urgency through careful philosophical argument rather than instinct alone. But even in those cases, the framework ultimately aims to strip away complexity and present moral responsibility as a clear, time-sensitive imperative. In this way, emergency ethics still seeks to bypass bureaucratic or procedural delay, even when built from prolonged reflection.

Second, institutions such as governments, charities, and advocacy groups use emergency framing to rally support. Politicians invoke crisis to justify rapid policy responses, nonprofits emphasize urgency to encourage donations, and media outlets highlight dramatic narratives to capture public attention. This can be effective. For example, in the immediate aftermath of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, emergency appeals led to a surge of global donations, with the Red Cross alone raising nearly half a billion dollars. These responses show the emotional and motivational power of framing moral issues as crises.

However, the same framing can obscure the root causes of suffering. By focusing on urgency and immediate relief, such appeals often divert attention from structural problems like colonial legacies, weak governance, or economic dependency. In Haiti's case, critics later noted that while billions were raised in aid, little was done to reform the country's infrastructure or address long-term vulnerabilities. The result was an influx of short-term support without sustained change. A comparable dynamic followed the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. While emergency relief was swift, long-term concerns such as land tenure disputes, coordination across aid agencies, and investment in resilient infrastructure received comparatively less attention. In both cases, emergency framing mobilized substantial resources, but often directed them toward immediate needs rather than structural reforms. Emergency ethics can therefore be persuasive in motivating action, but its emphasis on speed can constrain the scope of strategic planning and long-term impact.

It is also important to note that despite its strengths, emergency-driven ethics faces significant challenges.

Over-Simplification: Emergency ethics often treats complex social issues as problems with clear, immediate solutions. While this framing can generate action, it risks flattening the structural dimensions of issues like poverty or global inequality. It is important, however, to clarify what "structural" means. In some cases, structural refers to tangible systems like infrastructure, logistics, and public health institutions. Many international aid organizations supported by Singer—including Oxfam and UNICEF—do work within this space, funding vaccine delivery or water systems alongside direct cash transfers. But there is a second meaning of "structural" that Singer largely leaves unaddressed: the legal, political, and economic arrangements that reproduce inequality at the international level, such as trade policies, debt regimes, or state governance capacity. His framework prioritizes measurable interventions with clear individual benefits, rather than broader systemic transformations. This emphasis on targeted aid may lead to underinvestment in long-term change, even when it engages some institutional structures. Singer acknowledges this tension in *The Life You Can Save* (p. 36), but ultimately sustains a moral model that favors immediate impact over deep systemic reform.

Yet this assumes that emergency responses are the most viable option in the absence of revolution, overlooking how they can reinforce existing inequalities and fail to address deeper systemic barriers. Here, it's worth distinguishing between different meanings of "structural." In one sense, structural refers to the social and environmental conditions that shape whether

individuals can translate resources into real freedoms—what the capabilities approach calls "conversion factors" (Shivarajan, S., & Srinivasan, A., 2013). In another sense, structural might mean the broader institutional or legal arrangements that reproduce inequality across societies, such as state governance, trade regimes, or citizenship rights. Singer's framework, and the aid organizations he endorses, do sometimes engage the first kind of structure by investing in education, health infrastructure, or distribution systems. And Singer does acknowledge that aid effectiveness can vary depending on how it is delivered, noting in *The Life You Can Save* that interventions like bed nets or oral rehydration therapy often depend on usage rates and implementation context.

Still, his moral framework continues to prioritize measurable, scalable outcomes as the benchmark for ethical action. That emphasis can marginalize less quantifiable, longer-term efforts to transform underlying institutions or redistribute political power. While some social and structural conditions can be captured through metrics, not all can be addressed through time-sensitive interventions aimed at saving lives. This distinction matters because when quantifiability becomes the moral yardstick, deeper reforms may be seen as impractical or secondary. As a result, poverty alleviation risks becoming a cycle of targeted inventions that relieve symptoms without challenging root causes. Addressing deprivation at its core requires not only providing aid, but confronting the conditions that make such aid necessary in the first place.

Doubtful Effectiveness: while emergency framing creates urgency, it does not guarantee effective solutions. History provides numerous examples of rushed interventions that failed or even made situations worse. Without careful planning and consideration of unintended consequences, well-meaning actions can do harm. China's Great Leap Forward, which will be discussed in detail later, exemplifies how emergency-driven policies aimed at rapid industrialization led to catastrophic unintended consequences, demonstrating the dangers of prioritizing speed over strategy.

No approach guarantees success, but emergency-driven ethics are especially risky because failure can magnify harm by wasting resources, entrenching harmful policies, or diverting attention from sustainable alternatives. Rather than replying solely on high-pressure, short-term solutions, a more resilient approach integrates immediate aid with structural change. For instance, poverty alleviation strategies that combine direct relief with long-term investments in education, healthcare, and economic infrastructure reduce the likelihood of failure by addressing both immediate needs and underlying barriers. While Singer does not oppose such investments in principle—and many aid organizations he supports work in these domains—his moral framework tends to foreground interventions that yield rapid, measurable outcomes. That emphasis on efficiency and scalability can sideline slower, less quantifiable forms of structural change. Strategies that balance short-term impact with long-term transformation may therefore receive less moral urgency, even if they offer greater reliability over time.

Extreme Demands: The idea that people must sacrifice for others, even at great personal cost, raises ethical concerns. While Singer does not explicitly call for extreme self-sacrifice, his framework encourages individuals to consistently prioritize alleviating suffering over personal goals, often in ways that feel open-ended. For example, he writes that we cannot live a morally good life unless we give "a great deal more than most of us would think it realistic to expect" (Singer, 2009). Although he later proposes a practical standard—5 percent of income for most, with higher rates for the very wealthy—he acknowledges that this recommendation is a strategic compromise rather than a reflection of the full moral argument. The core principle remains: if we can prevent suffering at relatively little cost to ourselves, we ought to do so, again and again.

This creates the kind of psychological pressure that Bernard Williams critiques in his demandingness objection. Williams argues that moral theories which make continual altruism an expectation risk alienating individuals from the projects and relationships that give their lives meaning. Even when Singer's specific proposals seem moderate, the underlying expectation can feel indefinite, producing a quiet moral fatigue. When moral obligation is framed as constant, ethical agency becomes less about thoughtful judgment and more about managing guilt. In that sense, Singer's model may not demand unceasing altruism in numerical terms,

but it often does in emotional experience.

Justification for Overreach: Urgency can be used to justify policies that sideline individual rights, public deliberation, or local knowledge. Governments have historically invoked crisis framing to push through sweeping measures that bypass ethical or democratic safeguards. For example, in the United States after the 9/11 attacks, the Patriot Act was passed with minimal debate, dramatically expanding government surveillance powers. While some viewed these measures as necessary for national security, others criticized them for undermining civil liberties and weakening legal protections. This kind of response raises a key tension in emergency-driven ethics: it often produces structural change, but not necessarily the kind that promotes justice or long-term resilience.

Structural does not simply mean institutional or enduring. It also refers to the quality of engagement with deeper sources of vulnerability—whether political, economic, or social. The Patriot Act was structural in form, but its logic prioritized security over deliberation, and control over capacity-building. It illustrates how emergency framing can generate policy shifts that are lasting but misaligned with the broader goals of democratic accountability and equitable reform. In this sense, the critique is not against structure itself, but against structural change that emerges from urgency rather than careful design. Without that distinction, the language of crisis can legitimize overreach under the appearance of reform.

Understanding these strengths and weaknesses helps clarify when emergency ethics may be appropriate and when it risks causing harm. The next section turns to a historical case in China's Great Leap Forward to examine what happens when moral urgency overrides deliberation on a large scale. This example illustrates how the logic of emergency can shape not only ethical ideals but institutional behavior, often with far-reaching consequences. Later, the paper will return to Singer's model of individual obligation to consider how similar tensions emerge in less authoritarian but still morally urgent settings.

3. Case Study: The Great Leap Forward and Emergency-Driven Ethics

In the mid-1950s, China's leadership faced two pressing structural challenges: caring for the rural poor and accumulating enough capital to industrialize the nation (Mobo, 2019). The leadership, influenced by the belief that rapid development was necessary to secure China's place among global powers, redefined these challenges as a national emergency. This was not an emergency in the traditional sense. There was no natural disaster or armed conflict. Yet it was framed as one through repeated appeals to wartime sacrifice, revolutionary willpower, and moral urgency. Slogans like "a steel furnace on every commune" and campaigns like the "Three Red Flags" movement cast development as a matter of national survival, demanding immediate, collective mobilization. Mao Zedong, inspired by Soviet industrial models and impatient to surpass Western economies, proposed the radical goal of overtaking Great Britain's industrial output within 15 years. At the November 1957 Moscow meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, Mao's declaration that China could leapfrog stages of industrialization intensified this sense of national urgency (Peng, 1987).

The Great Leap Forward (GLF) was launched in March 1958 as a sweeping attempt to reorganize the peasantry into massive communes and to mobilize the population for an industrial and agricultural revolution. The leadership viewed the situation as dire: industrial incompetence threatened China's global standing, and rural poverty symbolized the failure of socialist ideals. The GLF embodied emergency-driven ethics by treating industrial underdevelopment and economic inequality as crises demanding immediate, large-scale solutions. The state believed that by utilizing the collective will of the people and pooling their resources, they could leapfrog traditional developmental stages and achieve swift industrial growth. The creation of people's communes was lauded as a "golden bridge" to communism—a way to eliminate class disparities, centralize resource distribution, and mobilize rural labor for massive infrastructure projects like irrigation, steel production, and collectivized farming (Peng, 1987).

The ethics framework underlying the GLF was rooted in sacrificial collectivism. Leaders assumed that if every family melted down their cooking pots, farm tools, and household items to produce steel, the nation could generate enough raw materials to fuel steel production growth. This moral calculus mirrored emergency ethics: just as one might sacrifice their coat to save a drowning child, Chinese citizens were expected

to sacrifice their personal property for the collective good. The moral appeal was extremely direct and emotionally charged — by contributing personal belongings, each citizen could, supposedly, play a tangible role in the nation's industrial leap forward.

Similarly, the communal living arrangements were seen as a method to exponentially increase productivity. By concentrating labor into communes, the government believed it could scale up agricultural and industrial efforts, assuming that collective work would naturally yield greater output. This approach treated the problem of underdevelopment as a singular emergency that could be resolved through mass mobilization and unwavering moral commitment. The assumption was that human willpower alone could overcome material limitations—if enough people worked hard enough, the nation would industrialize rapidly.

However, this optimistic faith in mobilization oversimplified the complex nature of economic development. Just as emergency ethics assumes that direct, immediate action will solve pressing moral issues, the GLF assumed that pooling resources and maximizing labor would automatically translate into production triumph. For example, to generate power and improve agricultural productivity, gigantic dams were built throughout the country, displacing millions of people from their homes. In Henan province alone, more than 1.3 million peasants were drafted into water-conservation or fertilizer-making projects under the radical provincial Party head Wu Zhipu. By the autumn of 1958, reports claimed that Henan's countryside had been fully irrigated. However, this so-called achievement quickly developed into an environmental disaster. Excessive irrigation made large swaths of land alkaline and barren. Waterlogged soil destroyed crops and even damaged the foundations of homes, causing many to collapse. Similar disasters struck nearby provinces like Shandong, Anhui, and Jiangsu, where poorly planned irrigation not only ruined farmland but also led to catastrophic flooding in 1960 and 1961, with villages left isolated — "like small islands in an ocean" (Xun, 2012).

These tragedies were not isolated incidents — they were symptoms of a broader ethical miscalculation. The GLF's emergency-driven approach prioritized rapid, visible results over sustainable development, reinforcing the dangers of relying on moral urgency to address complex socioeconomic problems. The logic was simple: if the nation worked harder and faster, success would follow. Yet, as the ecological fallout and human displacement revealed, moral fervor without technical expertise and long-term strategy often exacerbates the very problems it seeks to solve.

This flawed ethical framework extended even beyond While backyard furnaces produced impressive-looking heaps of metal, much of it was unusable pig iron. The fixation on meeting—and continuously raising—production quotas led to the fabrication of agricultural statistics (Duara, 1974). Local officials, eager to display their loyalty and success, reported inflated grain yields, prompting the state to procure more food than was available.

This excessive grain procurement, coupled with the urban-biased policy of diverting food to industrial centers, worsened rural food shortages. Provincial variations in death rates during the famine can be traced back to these policies, as some regions were stripped of their grain reserves to meet unrealistic state demands (Kung, J. K.-s., & Lin, J. Y., 2003). Furthermore, communal farming practices undermined individual incentives to work hard. The free-rider problem emerged: some commune members, realizing that their individual efforts had little impact on overall output, became disillusioned and withdrew effort. When everyone is responsible for collective success, individual responsibility can dissolve, weakening the very productivity the communes were meant to enhance.

The forced collectivization extended beyond labor and agricultural production—it seeped into personal property and daily life. In some areas, even private furniture, clothes, quilts, and mosquito nets were "collectivized" and became the property of the people's commune. Families, like one in Liuyang county's Hongqi commune, found themselves stripped of necessities. A family of five with only three quilts was forced to contribute one to the commune, leaving them with inadequate protection from the cold (Xun, 2012). Such extreme collectivization practices not only imposed material hardship but also deepened public resentment and further eroded morale, compounding the already disastrous economic policies.

From 1959 to 1961, foodgrain production

plummeted, and millions starved during what came to be known as the Great Leap Famine. Estimates suggest that between 15 to 45 million people died—one of the deadliest famines in human history. The "three bitter years" marked a tragic illustration of how emergency-driven ethics, when blindly applied to complex socioeconomic issues, can backfire.

The catastrophic consequences of the Great Leap Forward reveal the risks of applying emergency-driven ethics to large-scale problems without sustained attention to long-term outcomes. The rush to industrialize, framed as a moral imperative, bypassed both technical expertise and social complexity, leading to policies that were not only ineffective but deeply damaging. This case illustrates the need for a more grounded ethical framework—one that does not reject urgency but integrates it with attention to structural conditions, including governance capacity, institutional learning, and feedback mechanisms. Without that depth, moral clarity can devolve into moral overreach, with consequences far more lasting than the crisis that prompted them.

While the GLF represents an extreme example of state-imposed urgency, Peter Singer's *The Life You Can Save* presents an ethical framework that calls for individual action to alleviate global poverty, grounded in the principle of preventing suffering at relatively minimal personal cost. Unlike the GLF, Singer's approach is voluntary and decentralized. Yet both share a core assumption: that moral action must be taken urgently, with little room for hesitation. Singer does discuss long-term goals such as the Millennium Development Goals (Singer, 2009) and acknowledges that sustainable solutions involve more than handing out cash. Still, his emphasis on scalable, quantifiable interventions tends to favor immediate impact over deeper structural transformation. This raises critical questions about how best to address urgent moral problems: how do we balance the imperative to act now with the need for solutions that are both sustainable and effective in the long term?

4. The Pitfalls of Moral Urgency: Singer and Emergency Ethics

Singer's ethical framework is deeply rooted in the principle that failing to prevent suffering when one has the means to do so – without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance – is ethically indefensible. His famous drowning child analogy encapsulates this claim: if a child is drowning in a pond, and one can save them at the cost of ruining their shoes or being late for work, failing to act would be morally reprehensible. By extension, if donating a small percentage of one's income can save a child from malnutrition or preventable disease, refusing to donate is equally indefensible.

Singer's argument is compelling in its clarity, but it builds on several assumptions: that moral obligation should be urgent, direct, and centered on individual action. Each of these is distinct. Urgency, in itself, is not necessarily a problem—it can rightly call attention to preventable suffering. The deeper concern lies in how urgency pairs with directness and individualism, often bypassing broader questions of coordination, structure, and long-term reform. Large-scale problems like poverty demand more than immediate intervention. When moral action is framed in narrowly individual terms, even with good intentions, it can obscure the political and institutional work required for lasting change. In this way, Singer's framework echoes some of the risks seen in the GLF: a drive to act now that underestimates the systems through which action must operate.

That said, Singer's argument differs significantly from the GLF in both scope and implementation. The GLF was a state-led campaign that enforced radical policies on an entire population, often through coercion and ideological discipline. Singer's framework, by contrast, relies on voluntary action and moral reasoning, encouraging individuals to give based on what they can sustainably contribute. While both approaches treat moral urgency as a call to action, Singer channels that urgency through persuasion and gradualism, not mass mobilization. He also acknowledges the limits of his own proposal, offering a scaled-down standard of giving in recognition of what people are likely to accept. The contrast lies not only in the scale of implementation, but in the ethical assumptions about how change should happen.

On the surface, then, Singer's model appears much less demanding: it lacks coercion, allows for personal choice, and explicitly accommodates human limitations. Yet the moral pressure it generates can still be intense. Singer frames giving as an ongoing moral imperative,

one that persists regardless of how much one has already sacrificed. While he proposes a percentage-based guideline (five percent for most, increasing with income), this is presented as a practical starting point rather than a moral endpoint. The deeper logic remains: if further giving would prevent harm at relatively little personal cost, it is still morally required. As a result, individuals may feel that no level of giving ever fully discharges their ethical duty. The internal demands can become unrelenting, even without external enforcement. In this sense, while Singer's model is far less authoritarian than the GLF, it may not be meaningfully less demanding in terms of the psychological burden it places on individuals. The moral cost is privatized rather than collectivized, but the sense of continual moral responsibility remains.

These distinctions between GLF and Singer's proposal, though important, do not erase a shared underlying logic: both rely on a sense of moral urgency that risks overlooking long-term, systemic solutions. Just as the GLF prioritized speed over sustainability, Singer's framework prioritizes immediate financial contributions over broader structural interventions. The question, then, is not whether we should reject moral responsibility but how we can ensure that our ethical commitments are effective, sustainable, and attuned to the complexities of real-world problems.

Singer acknowledges that his original argument, which calls on individuals to give until they reach the point of significant personal sacrifice, may be too demanding for most people. To make this more practical, he proposes a donation guideline of five percent for the financially comfortable, and more for the very wealthy (Singer, 2009). But this recommendation does not replace his deeper moral standard. Singer continues to argue that we are obligated to prevent suffering whenever we can do so without sacrificing something of comparable moral importance. That principle does not disappear just because a threshold has been set. As a result, even those who meet the guideline may still feel morally compelled to give more. The standard remains open-ended, not because Singer demands more explicitly, but because his moral logic continues to imply it. This can create a sense of lingering responsibility, making it harder for individuals to feel that they have ever fully met their obligation.

5. Rethinking Moral Obligation: Beyond Emergency-Driven Ethics

If Singer's framework risks overwhelming individuals, what would a more sustainable model of ethical responsibility look like? One answer lies in rethinking the structure of aid itself. Instead of prioritizing short-term relief, ethical frameworks could emphasize long-term strategies that strengthen institutions, reduce dependency, and address the deeper conditions that make emergency intervention necessary. At the same time, moral obligation could be redefined in a way that allows for psychological sustainability. Rather than treating ethical duty as limitless, a model that sets clear boundaries and recognizes when a person has done enough would be more likely to foster continued moral engagement. These two shifts toward durable interventions and bounded responsibility work together to support ethical action that is both principled and sustainable over time.

A more sustainable ethical framework would first acknowledge that individuals have multiple moral obligations, not only to distant strangers but also to their families, communities, and personal well-being. Singer's framework, though compelling, risks demanding a level of self-sacrifice that could lead to disengagement rather than participation. Ethical responsibility should not be framed as an impossible standard that individuals can never fully achieve but as an attainable, ongoing commitment that allows people to integrate moral action into their lives without feeling paralyzed by guilt. This framing shift would encourage consistent, meaningful engagement rather than short-term, emotionally driven giving.

Moral responsibility should take structural solutions seriously rather than focusing only on short-term relief. While direct aid, such as charitable donations, can save lives in the present, it does not address the institutional conditions that produce poverty in the first place. Problems like economic inequality, limited healthcare access, and weak labor protections require sustained engagement through policy reform, movement building, and institutional change. This is not only a matter of time horizon but also of scale and coordination. Individual action can be meaningful, but structural transformation depends on collective and institutional efforts.

Singer acknowledges that long-term work and

immediate aid are not mutually exclusive. He writes that we would not ignore a drowning child just because we are also building a fence around the pond. This image captures the urgency of preventable harm, but it also illustrates the limits of rescue as a moral framework. When ethical focus remains centered on visible suffering, structural work may be seen as secondary. The task is not to reject Singer's call for action but to expand its scope. Moral urgency should include not only immediate harm but the systems that make that harm inevitable.

Encouraging sustainable moral engagement is also crucial. Instead of urging individuals to give as much as possible indefinitely, ethical discourse should promote a diverse set of moral actions beyond financial contributions. Volunteering, ethical consumerism, political advocacy, and local community work all provide ways for individuals to contribute to meaningful change without experiencing moral burnout. A robust ethical framework should offer multiple entry points for engagement, allowing individuals to participate in ways that align with their circumstances rather than imposing an overwhelming moral demand that could discourage action.

6. Rethinking About the Drowning Child

Instead of focusing solely on the act of rescuing a child in distress, a better approach would be to ask: why are so many children falling into the pond in the first place?

A more holistic ethical framework would ask whether systemic issues, such as lack of fencing, poor infrastructure, or inadequate supervision, make drowning a recurring problem. Would it be more effective to pull children out one by one, or to build barriers that prevent them from falling in at all? Would it be better to train lifeguards, implement safety programs, or educate the community on prevention? Singer might agree that both rescue and prevention are necessary, and so would I. The difference lies in where moral attention tends to settle. When urgency becomes the dominant lens, immediate rescue often feels more ethically compelling than institutional reform. Over time, this can lead to underinvestment in structural solutions, not because they are unimportant, but because they are less emotionally immediate. A sustainable ethical response must hold both forms of action in view, even when one is less visible or satisfying in the moment.

Translated to real-world moral obligations, this suggests that while charitable giving has value, it should be complemented by efforts that address the broader systems that create and maintain inequality. The most effective way to prevent suffering is not only through direct aid but through changes in legal, economic, and institutional structures that make such aid less necessary over time. These include labor protections, healthcare access, education policy, and public investment—interventions that reduce the need for rescue by shifting the conditions under which harm occurs. Instead of framing moral duty as a series of urgent responses, a more sustainable ethical framework would prioritize long-term solutions that allow communities to build resilience and sustain themselves.

7. Conclusion

Singer's emergency-driven ethics offers a compelling call to action, but history warns against prioritizing urgency over strategy. The Great Leap Forward, though vastly different in scope and context, illustrates how moral imperatives pursued without structural awareness can lead to catastrophic results. Just as forced collectivization failed to account for economic and institutional realities, the idea that individual donations alone can solve global poverty risks overlooking deeper systemic causes.

Singer acknowledges this tension by proposing practical donation guidelines. Yet the underlying principle remains that we are always obligated to act whenever we can prevent suffering at relatively little cost. That underlying standard remains in place, leaving individuals with a sense that their moral obligation continues even after meeting the recommended benchmark. Ethical responsibility must remain grounded in what is sustainable—not only in terms of economic systems, but in terms of moral psychology. We need institutions that make generosity less reactive and more embedded in the way societies function.

This need for sustainable engagement echoes Ralph Waldo Emerson's reflections on self-reliance and moral responsibility. Emerson, while deeply committed to abolition, believed that meaningful moral action must arise from within a person's sense of integrity rather than from external pressure alone. He warned that

constantly reacting to the world's demands without internal grounding could lead to moral exhaustion. This lens helps us reconsider Singer's critique of Anousheh Ansari, who spent millions to fulfill a personal dream of space travel. While Singer's concern is understandable, Emerson would ask whether enduring ethical engagement can thrive in a framework that leaves so little space for individual aspiration. Ethical responsibility is not about turning away from suffering, but about ensuring that our response to it is authentic and lasting.

Ultimately, the lesson that emerges from Singer, the Great Leap Forward, and Emerson is not that urgency is misguided, but that urgency must be held in balance. Moral responsibility should not simply ask us to give more, but to give wisely, and to build systems that reduce the need for rescue in the first place. The goal is not only to pull drowning children from the water. It is to make a world in which fewer children fall in.

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