

Representation of Intercultural Communication in Series “Emily in Paris – Season 1”

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Abstract

Emily in Paris is a series by Darren Star which is set in Paris, France. This series tells about American women who have to work in France, where cultural differences between America and France become the main conflict in this series. This study aims to determine the representation of intercultural communication described in the series Emily in Paris Season 1 by using descriptive-qualitative research methods. The analysis technique used is semiotic analysis from Roland Barthes by looking for the meaning of denotation, connotation, and myth. The results of this study indicate that intercultural communication that occurs in it is displayed through several elements such as intonation, clothing, work culture, different perspectives, and language.

Keywords

Representation, Intercultural communication, Mass communication, Semiotics.

1. Introduction

Film is a powerful mass communication medium, not only for entertainment but also for lighting and education. Film is used to convey a message and help to give an explanation to the community. Enjoying the story in the movie is more interesting than reading a book or novel. Films can support the public to process entertainment, education, and information seen. This is because the values in the film are packaged in such a way that it is easy to understand by the audience. Films have values to influence the audience cognitively, affectively, and conatively depending on the messages that the filmmaker wants to convey (Diani, Lestari & Maulana, 2017).

Speaking of movies, *Emily in Paris* is not just a series that presents a story of love, work, or friendship in it. However, it also shows how Emily as an American had to adapt to a French culture which is portrayed quite differently in the series. Starting from the stage of *culture shock* experienced by Emily because of the obvious differences between America and France to how she managed to achieve the acculturation process presented in this series. The series also shows how to communicate between people with differences in language and culture. The series, which is presented in 10 episodes, also depicts a portrait of a different culture or custom between Emily as an American and her co-workers who are native French.

Keep in mind that the increasingly advanced times influenced the emergence of the era of information, technology, and transportation development as it is now. The easier it is for us to receive and send information, not only

domestically, but also in other countries, makes understanding intercultural communication more needed. We are all aware that the barriers between nations from different parts of the world are dwindling, this makes us inevitably must understand the importance of intercultural communication.

A person's behavior depends largely on the culture in which he lives. Culture is also the basis of communication, so if there are various cultures, then there are also various communication patterns. Communication and culture are very difficult to separate. Culture greatly influences the way of communicating to determine who is talking to whom, about what, conditions and situations, the meaning is given, and how to represent the message.

The Series *Emily in Paris* contains various implied meanings that show patterns of intercultural communication. This film series depicts how people who have different cultural backgrounds have differences in interpreting, designing, and sending a message. Thus, causing confusion and wrong perception of others in communication. Therefore, films are made referring to three functions, namely the function of informing, educating, and providing entertainment, one of which is related to cultural messages. This is stated in Law No. 33 of 2009 concerning cinema which states that films have a cultural function.

The data above is the theme of this study, which is to see the signs of intercultural communication in a film. The formulation of this study is about how intercultural communication is depicted in the Series *Emily in Paris* season 1. And the purpose of this study is to find out how intercultural communication is depicted in the *Emily in Paris* Season 1 series as well as how to deal with these problems.

2. Literature Review

A. The Semiotic Theory of Roland Barthes

In Barthes's semiotics, there are three important systems including denotation, connotation and myth. The first level system is denotation and the second is connotation. Connotation is a system consisting of markers, signifiers and processes that unite the first system into the second system, where the unity of the element is very important to pay attention to. Connotational markers called connotators are formed from signs on the denotative system.

The first system is denotation. According to Berger, the meaning of denotation has a direct nature and can be called a visualization of a map. Where, if spelled out in its connotative meaning it will be slightly different. Its true meaning will relate to the cultures implied in it. Finally, the meaning of this connotation will create a myth or a hint of myth (which will emphasize those meanings). So that in many ways, the meaning of connotation becomes the embodiment of a myth that is quite influential (Amrullah, 2021).

The second system is connotative. Connotative maps are general, global and scattered (is an ideology). For example, a book could refer to a "literature" map. These mappers have very close communication with history, knowledge, culture which has an influence on the formation of systems in the world (Amrullah, 2021).

In a message, myth belongs to the level of code, in myth there is an ideology. Myths will perform the function of naturalization, with the aim of making indigo-values of a historical and cultural nature. Sociologically, myth is a typical system constructed from a sociological system of the first degree. Tolson (in Amrullah, 2021) mentions that myths become markers to play certain messages that could have a different meaning from their origin. Even so, the meaning related to mythology is not something wrong. The appearance of myths in a message in helping readers in describing the socio-cultural or political conditions that exist around them.

The development of the science of semiotics, resulted in new thoughts. Barthes mentioned that basically semiotics will study how *humanity* interprets things. In this case, interpreting (*to signify*) cannot be equated with communicating (*to communicate*). Interpreting means understanding that objects not only provide information but also constitute a structured system of signs (Mirnawati, Amrah Kasim and Abd, 2016).

B. Definition of Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication is the process of interaction or the process of conveying and receiving messages from two or more people who have different cultural backgrounds. These cultural differences can be from country, ethnicity, religion or race. Thus, these differences affect a person's body language, intonation, way of speaking in

explaining a message. Not only about how to speak verbally, but also how a person behaves, behaves and responds to a message. As Larry A Samovar points out in (Jeric, 2015) cultural communication as a form of relationship between people with differences in cultural perceptions and symbol systems in one communication. Therefore, in the process of intercultural communication, one must understand and respect each other's culture so that there are no misunderstandings or disinformation.

Samovar and Porter revealed that intercultural communication occurs when the part involved in the communication brings with it cultural background, values, knowledge, and experience. Stewart also stated that intercultural communication is the reception and sending of different messages and cultural contexts that produce different effects (Jeric, 2015). While Carley H. Dood states that intercultural communication includes communication that represents personal, interpersonal and group representatives with different backgrounds that influence communication behavior. Thus, it can be concluded that intercultural communication is a process of communication between two or more people who are influenced by cultural differences so that they have an effect on brand behavior a (Jeric, 2015).

3. Methods

This research uses qualitative-descriptive research methods. Qualitative research is research that aims to understand the phenomena experienced by the research subject, for example, behavior, perception, action, motivation, and so on holistically as well as descriptions in the form of words and language in a special scientific context and utilizes various scientific methods (Moleong, 2018). Bogdan and Taylor explained that qualitative research is a research process that produces descriptive data (Moeloeng, 2018). This research uses a qualitative approach to understand a phenomenon about an experience such as perception in the form of sentences and descriptive language while telling the formulation of the problem based on data to describe the results clearly.

The design of this study is case study research because this research is a comprehensive study of cultural differences, especially Americans and French depicted in a film, where this research process uses analytical techniques. The existence of this case study is expected to be a reference for others on how to behave in the process of communication between different cultures.

The data analysis technique used is the semiotic analysis technical of Roland Barthes, which is a technique used to study a sign. In Barthes's semiotics, there are three important systems including denotation, connotation, and myth. Each time the study is conducted, the researcher needs to run a data validity test to determine whether the findings or data are valid. Testing the validity of data in qualitative research involves several things, namely: *credibility* (internal validity), (2) *transferability* (external validity), (3) *dependability* (dependence), and (4) *confirmability* (certainty) (Hadi, 2016).

4. Results and Discussion

Emily in Paris is an American drama, comedy, and romantic series set in Paris, one of the most popular cities in France. First published on Netflix on October 2, 2020, the entire series tells the story of Emily, an American marketing team worker who is transferred to Paris by her company. With a total of 10 episodes in season 1, the series highlights the differences between American and Parisian cultures, from the process of *culture shock*, and enculturation to acculturation experienced by Emily as an American living in Paris. Wrapped in a very charming work life, friendships, and romance, the series managed to perch in the Top 10 on Netflix during its run (Amarilisyia, 2022).

A. Forms of Verbal and Non-Verbal Intercultural Communication in *Emily in Paris Season 1*

The intercultural communication depicted in *Emily in Paris Season 1* is not just limited to verbal actions such as conversation. However, it is also shown in non-verbal behaviors. Verbal communication is communication that is carried out in writing or orally. Verbal communication has a larger portion because, in some conditions, ideas, thoughts, or decisions will be better if it is conveyed verbally. Verbal communication orally is carried out directly such as when people have conversations (Kusumawati, 2016).

Verbal intercultural communication in the series *Emily in Paris* is depicted in the scene when Emily first comes to her company. At that time, he did not understand French fluently. So, this was used by his co-workers (Frenchmen) to belittle him with the name *la plouc* which means the hicks. Meanwhile, nonverbally, intercultural communication in the *Emily in Paris* series is depicted in the form of touch. In the scene when Emily first meets a French man (The boss

of the company) and kisses her on the cheek, Emily feels shocked. In France, kissing the cheek or *la bise* is a culture of giving greetings as respect. Meanwhile, Americans were greeted by shaking hands. That's why Emily felt shocked by the act of spontaneity.

B. Elements of Intercultural Communication in Emily in Paris Season 1

Apart from verbal and non-verbal aspects, more specifically, based on the analysis of *cut scenes* in *Emily in Paris*, it highlights the existence of intercultural communication on several elements such as clothing, intonation, language, work culture, and perspective.

1. Clothing

In the context of communication, the symbol itself can be animated of them through clothing. Clothing is also called silence which interprets symbols in both verbal and non-verbal communication. According to Sabahudin, clothes can be seen before the words are spoken (Fahrozi, 2019). In the cut *of the scene* when Emily first comes to her new office in France, she is greeted by Juliet. Juliet gave Emily a cynical-looking look from head to toe. In *the scene*, Emily wears a striking outfit. This contrasts with the French people who tend to wear formal attire for work. Women generally wear *elegant dresses* to show a beautiful and smart impression, they are not used to dressing casually, even in *start-up companies*. Through the clothes, the series shows that cultural differences can be reflected in the way a person dresses.

2. Language

Then, a very important and crucial element supporting intercultural communication is Language. Language is the main thing that is important to understand when a person from one country visits another. The failure of intercultural communication is often caused by minimal language understanding. As depicted in the *scene* when Sylvie greets Emily in French, Emily looks confused about what to respond to because she doesn't understand what Sylvie is saying. In addition, there is a snippet of the scene that shows that Emily's lack of ability in French was used by her co-workers to make fun of her with the term "*la plouc*" which means the hick. In some of *these scenes*, it is shown that understanding the language of the country of origin before visiting is important to prevent misunderstandings and lead communication failures.

3. Intonation

The next element is intonation. As one of the signs of non-verbal communication, intonation is important to understand when an individual is talking to his interlocutor. Fatally, errors in intonation result in interpretations that do not correspond to their true meaning. The intonation function includes forming meaning, suppressing certain parts in a sentence, creating a certain impression, and attracting the attention of the interlocutor (Gramedia, 2021). *In a scene during a meeting together*, Emily conveys her ideas and ideas with a firm and slightly loud Intonation because she wants to show the passion and ambition of her ideas. However, He got another response from his colleague by saying "*why are you talking so loudly?*" French people tend to be relaxed in speaking and working. This scene wants to show that the passionate American style of conveying ideas is not the custom in France.

4. Work Culture

The series talks about Emily who must work in France, so it shows a lot of life working there. In this regard, the production team wanted to show how the work culture in France was and their attitude towards the inclusion of other cultures in it. In the *previously analyzed scenes*, several scenes show the differences in work culture between French and Americans. As in the cut of the scene when Emily was present at the office at exactly 8:30 a.m., it turned out that there was no one at all, even though the building was not open yet. After waiting for two hours, He only learned from Juliet that the office opened at 11:00. Generally, working hours in most countries start at 08:00 or 08:30 in the morning. However, *this scene* want to show that the work culture in France is different, they will start work after 09.30 am. Furthermore, in the scene when Emily tells Mindy that she received several orders from the American office, including prohibiting romantic relationships in one office. Emily assumed that it was a global and commonly implemented vision. On the other hand, the French implemented "*do what you like*" where they do not mix personal and work affairs. In France, most companies have no problem regarding the existence of romantic relationships between employees. From *this scene*, it can be concluded that cultural differences also affect work professionalism.

5. Difference in perspectives

Emily in Paris also sought to show a different perspective between America and France. Like in the cut of the scene when Luc says, "I think Americans have the wrong balance, you guys live to work, we work to live." It can be seen that Americans and French people have different perspectives on how they work. The French are described as more relaxed whereas the Americans have higher ambitions for work. Then on the cut of the scene when Mindy says that "You haven't been in Paris until you cheated on you at least once," this scene shows that in the French perspective, infidelity is a natural thing. Meanwhile, Emily rejects this assumption and instead wonders how it is normal to happen in Paris.

C. Culture Shock, Enculturation and Acculturation Stages in Emily in Paris Season 1

Culture shock, enculturation, and acculturation are three phases that are quite inherent in intercultural communication. *Culture shock* is the feeling of anxiety that an individual feels when he is in a new environment (Bochner in (Maizan et al., 2020)). Culture shock can occur due to insecurity of perspectives between one culture and another, this will make a new culture that enters lose hope of being able to blend in with other cultures. *The culture shock* that is most often experienced but rarely realized by a person is *culture shock* in language. Where language is very important for a person to communicate and build a relationship with others, these language differences include pronunciation, wording, intonation, and bahasa slang or *idioms* (Mayasari, Ira & Sumadyo, 2018) (Figure 1)



Figure 1 Scenes depicting culture shock

In the *scene* above, Emily says to Mindy "Maybe I don't fit in here, I think it's going to be an adventure." The sentence indicates a feeling of wanting to give up from Emily because it is difficult to blend in with French friends at work. He felt that what was done was always wrong and it was difficult to place himself among the more dominant French people. This shows that Emily felt a phase of *culture shock* after not living in Paris for a long time. The anxiety Emily feels can be said to be a symptom of *culture shock*. When a person is faced with new habits that are very different from where he came from, it will be difficult for him to blend in. According to Adler (Fahime, Abbasian, and Sharifi, 2013) *culture shock* is an emotional response to unexpected cultural differences and the existence of misunderstandings of different experiences that give rise to feelings of fear.

Despite experiencing a *phase of culture shock*, a person who lives in a new environment will always be forced to learn and adapt to the new culture that exists in the environment to be accepted. According to M.J Herskotive, enculturation is a process for a person to learn a new culture both consciously and unconsciously, even though almost all aspects of life go through the process of enculturation (Fallahnda, 2020). The first stage in enculturation includes learning and imitating various social actions that will consciously or unconsciously give rise to a sense of following. The next stage is internalization, that is, the process by which an individual manages to incorporate a new culture into his personality. (Figure 2)



Figure 2 Scenes depicting enculturation.

The scene shows signs of enculturation carried out by Emily, which is when she is taking a French class to learn and understand their language. The enculturation process can be done in various ways, one of which is by taking a learning class as Emily did. Not only that, but the *scene* continues with Emily's attempt to ask her teacher about the best way to be accepted into a work environment filled with French, while she is American. In addition to taking French classes, the presence of Mindy and Camilla as Emily's friends provides many new experiences regarding the diverse cultures in France.

After going through the phases of culture shock and acculturation, generally, a person will begin to get used to his new environment and blend in with it. In this phase, a person has experienced acculturation, that is, the progressive adaptation of individuals, organizations, or classes of culture to elements of a foreign culture. According to Syarbani and Rusdiyanta, acculturation is a social process that arises when an individual or certain culture is dealing with elements of a foreign culture, where gradually the foreign culture begins to be accepted and processed in one's own culture without resulting in the loss of one's own culture (Riadi, 2020). (Figure 3)



Figure 3 Scenes depicting saturation

The results of the study on the cut of scene that has been analyzed previously shows that Emily looks doubtful and surprised when she receives *la bise* or welcome by giving a kiss on the left-right cheek that her co-worker did. However, in episode 7 depicted in the *scene* above, Emily unhesitatingly performs *la bise* with a man. In the series, it is shown that Emily only does *la bise* with the French people. This shows that Emily has successfully adapted and blended into French culture, one of which is *la bise*, but until the end of the episode, Emily did not take away her close personality to the American style.

Those are some data and analysis results that prove how intercultural communication in *Emily in Paris season 1* is represented in each episode. The series is quite representative of the difference in point of view between Emily and the French people she works with. However, the characters in this series have also shown how to respond to the new culture that enters their culture.

6. Conclusion

In the series *Emily in Paris - Season 1* there is a representation of intercultural communication depicted by the emergence of various elements of intercultural communication between the main character and the supporters, namely Emily as an American citizen and her friends or co-workers as French citizens. Some of the elements of intercultural communication seen in the *Emily in Paris* series are as follows:

1. **Clothing:** While at work, French citizens may wear clothes that are semi-formal, simple but elegant, and show their smart side. On the other hand, Emily as a representation of American citizens comes to the office in clothes that look *fashionable*.
 2. **Language:** Emily's limitations in understanding French became the main problem that led to many misunderstandings in the process of intercultural communication between Emily and her colleagues.
 3. **Intonation:** The habit of Americans who want to show a sense of enthusiasm at work tends to be applied by using higher intonation. Meanwhile, in this series, it is depicted that the French way of speaking tends to be more relaxed and slower.
 4. **Work culture:** The series chooses an office environment as its main setting, therefore the differences in work culture between America and France are pretty much depicted in the series.
 5. **Perspective differences:** Differences in cultural backgrounds between America and France greatly influence the mindset and perspective of each character in this series, causing misunderstandings.
- In addition to the elements of intercultural communication shown in clothing, language, intonation, work culture, and differences in perspectives. In this study, it was also found that there were important phases in the process of intercultural communication, a sense of alienity to French culture that Emily experienced (culture shock), her efforts to blend in by studying French culture (acculturation), and how she finally could accept the French cultures (acculturation).

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Biographies

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