



**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA MEETS JAPAN, THE MEANING OF  
CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN SAN FRANSOKYO IN DISNEY'S MOVIE  
BIG HERO 6**

**A FINAL PROJECT**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for  
the Bachelor Degree in American Studies in English Department  
Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University**

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## **PRONOUNCEMENT**

The writer states truthfully that this final project is compiled by him without taking any result from other researchers in other degrees of any universities. And in addition, the writer confirms he does not take the material from other publications or someone else works except for the references mentioned.

Semarang, April 2017

Fitriyadi Sulistiyono

## MOTTO AND DEDICATION

*This final project is dedicated to  
the people that I hold dear.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Big Hero 6 is an animation movie about cultural exchange created by Disney. The purpose of this essay is to analyze the meaning of cultural exchange in San Fransokyo. The focus of this essay is cultural exchange which happen in the city. There are two steps in the main discussion. First, the writer identifies the cultural exchange in the city through narrative and cinematic aspects to be used in the interpretation. Second, the writer uses interpretation based on triadic relation found in the sign theory by Charles Sanders Peirce. From the analysis, it can be concluded that the meaning of cultural exchange in San Fransokyo is the people who have reached new stage in civilization which is the need to live together with people from other culture, and it represents our real world.

**Keywords:** *cultural exchange*

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Background of the Study**

Now, technology becomes an important part to the human society and it has penetrated various aspects of our lives. Entertainment is one of the basic human necessities which have been affected by the course of technology. Film, or motion picture, is invention born from the contact of technology and entertainment. Film is invented with the purpose to entertain people, but over time its role becomes more important which is to capture the history and culture of human society. A large quantity of literature piece from the past is turned into film version in order to make it more consumable to modern generation. According to Wellek and Warren, literature consistently appear in close proximity to social institution and society (1977:94). In that sense, film is considered to be the new form of literature from modern time because it appears from the society and is intended for the society.

Technology has helped mankind in advancing culture and promoting the process of cultural exchange between society in the world. Culture is used to be limited and exclusive to one specific place due to distance barrier. Information is now able to travel to far place almost instantly with the help of technology and it makes cultural exchange inevitable. There is a case in which dominant culture devours the weaker one, but there is also exchange of culture which leads to mutualism and prosperity. A city which emerges from this process would have rich cultural background and become magnet to tourist from around the world,

certainly it brings great benefit to the people of the city in the term of social and economic development.

San Fransokyo is fictional city from the film *Big Hero 6* and it serves as example of an ideal multicultural city. The city houses two major cultural power; American from the west and Japanese from the east. It is called ideal because the city applies both cultures into every aspect of the city; architecture, food, everyday item, and people behavior, and the people is able to live in harmony with no cultural conflict arise in the city. San Fransokyo is located in the same location as the San Francisco of our world, but a certain event has made the Japanese come into the city and change the course of history. As for the story of the film, it follows the live of a robotic genius *Hiro Hamada* and his pursuit to solve the mystery surrounding the masked villain which plan to bring destruction to the city.

In this paper, the writer uses narrative and cinematic analyses from intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of the literature to identify the cultural exchange in the city. The writer also analyzes the meaning of the identified cultural exchange with the assistance of interpretation mechanism found in Charles Sanders Peirce sign theory. Hence, the title of this paper is **“United States of America Meets Japan, the Meaning of Cultural Exchange in San Fransokyo in Disney’s Movie Big Hero 6”**

## **1.2 Objective of the Study**

There are two objectives in this study. The first objective is to identify the cultural exchange which is present in the city with narrative and cinematic aspects. The second is to analyze the meaning of the identified cultural exchange.

## **1.3 Scope of the Study**

In analyzing the film, a certain focus is needed to limit the discussion. The writer focuses on the cultural exchange which is presented in the people and inanimate objects in San Fransokyo.

## **1.4 Method of the Study**

In this paper the writer uses close observation methods to collect data and information from the film. It consists of three separate parts; close viewing, close reading, and close listening. Close viewing deals with watching the film, close reading deals with reading the subtitle, and close listening deals with listening the audio. Furthermore, the writer also uses an interpretation mechanism found in the sign theory proposed by Charles Sanders Peirce which contain three interrelated components; the *sign*, the *object*, and the *interpretant*, to better explain the meaning of cultural exchange in the city through systematic and academic analysis.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In analyzing the cultural exchange of San Fransokyo, this paper applies narrative and cinematic analyses to identify the cultural exchange which present in the people and in the inanimate objects of the city. The identified cultural exchange is later categorized into three parameters to ease the interpretation process.

### **2.1 Narrative Aspects**

In the literature field, narrative is best described as telling a story and it mainly concerns with intrinsic element such as character and setting. According to Abrams, narrative is a told story involving events around character and actions performed by character (1999:173).

Character and setting play important role in a literature work because the two are the center to everything and a story would not be complete without them. In the film, character is essential part on their own because huge portion of the story is revolving around the narration of character. Setting also hold similar importance because it constructs the world in which the story take place and visualizes the world to the film screen so that the audience can see it.

Character in a story is always different from the others because they have their own value and personality which make them distinct. Character is usually a living being which constantly on the move, unlike inanimate objects, and this is why they are able to perform action. Character action is driven by motivation and it is the reason which make the character act or behave in that particular way.

Thus, it is important to identify character motivation in order to comprehend their action. According to Abrams, character motivation can be determined from the values of temperament, desire, and moral nature present in their speech and action (1999:33).

Setting is best described as the time, place, and condition in which a story takes place. It functions like a creation machine since it creates anything necessary for the world of the story. Setting is also able to deliver emotion to the audience even with the absence of character performance, such as creating grand intro to make the audience feel awe. Lastly, it covers various aspects in the making of story; such as social, history, geography, to humanism. According to Abrams, setting is the specific location in which the story takes place, and generally it includes geographical location, historical time, and social condition (1993:284).

## **2.2 Cinematic Aspects**

Cinematic aspect, or cinematography, is the art of making motion pictures. In filmmaking, this aspect holds crucial role because it is responsible for the visual presentation which is what a film is about. Cinematography is the counterpart to narrative aspect because it mainly handles the extrinsic part of the film and has nothing to do with development of the story.

In cinematography, there is an aspect called shot size or shot scale, which some consider to be the most important aspect in cinematography. Its function is to control the space movement in the film and decides how the film would look on the screen. According to Jane Stadler and Kelly McWilliam, shot size is the most important part in filmmaking as the distance from the camera to the subject

determine their size on the screen and affects the audience perception of distance in their screen (2009:35).

There are several types of shot size and the most frequently used are close-up shot, medium shot, and long shot. The first one is close-up shot which is used to emphasis small details which normally would be overlooked by the audience. It is often used to capture character facial expression and other tiny objects; such as knife or key. Close-up shot directs the audience to focus on specific detail which is usually small in size but highly important to understand the plot of the story.



Picture A.1. Close-up shot sample(00.14.50)

Medium shot is used to frame medium sized view, such as character from the middle half of their body or the view of house from the front. In film making field, this type of shot is frequently used in comparison to the other shot because of it versatility. It provides bigger view compared to the close-up shot while still retain more focus compared to the long shot. Medium shot made up most of the film and the audience would spend most of the time looking at this shot when watching film.



Picture A.2. Medium shot sample(00.13.46)

Long shot is used to frame scene that require lot of space, and in the term of character framing it is used to capture character in their complete body image and its surrounding. Long shot is special because of it capability to provide huge amount of space to a scene. As the result, it is used to capture big action scene such as bomb explosion or the marching of medieval army. In the modern film making with the use of advanced animation and drone as camera, this shot is also used to frame aerial view of a landscape or city. Long shot provides the audience with huge information in the form of visual aid to better understand the story plot.



Picture A.3. Long shot sample(00.59.24)

### **2.3 Cultural Exchange**

Culture is social behavior found in human community. Culture is an aspect exclusive to human community because culture is only produced and performed

by human. Culture can be manifested into several forms; value, activity, and material or thing.

The form of value encompass culture which is abstract and has no material form; such as the idea of karma or reincarnation. The form of activity encompass culture which is performed through human movement; such as martial art or dance. The form of material or thing encompass culture which is placed inanimate objects; such as statue or building.

There are many human communities in the world and each of them has their own version of culture. A process called cultural exchange happens when two or more cultures from different background come in contact. It is a process of mutual sharing of information in the form of culture for the purpose of improvement and better understanding between the community.

#### **2.4 Peirce's Theory of Sign**

In semiotics, sign is both abstract and universal concepts because it can be anything thinkable as long as it holds a meaning. Charles Sanders Peirce proposes a theory of sign which state any sign would contain these three components; the *sign*, the *object*, and the *interpretant*, and these components also function as an interpretation mechanism which is used to interpret the meaning. These components ought to be put together in interrelated state for the mechanism to function. According to Peirce in Litzka book, the relation between sign, object, and interpretant must be interrelated because they are a single thought made from three different components (1996:19).

The interpretation mechanism, or triadic mechanism, is the main point in Peirce's sign theory which is made up from three interrelated components. *Sign* is the first of the three and it serves as the front or signifier to the meaning. It can be perceived by human in several manners; visually, verbally, and abstractly. *Object* is the second and it is the meaning of the sign itself. The first and second component has similar concept to coin which have front and back side, but both of them need to be connected by the third component. Interpretant is the last component and it is the thought of human that understand the relation between the sign and object; and bridge them altogether. It is considered to be revolutionary concept presented in Peirce's sign theory compared to Saussure's sign theory because it includes human as deciding factor in determining the meaning.

The triadic mechanism in Peirce's sign theory works as follow; *sign* (A) or the signifier could only access its *object* (B) or the meaning in being connected by *interpretant* (C) which is the thought of human that understand the correlation between sign and its object. For example, handshake (A) is seen as the sign of greeting (B) and the interpretant (C) is the process that turn the sight, or action, of handshake into the understanding of greeting. According to Peirce in a compiled journal of his work by Litzka, the first of the three components is sign which access the second called its object as both of them need to be connected by the third called interpretant which understand the relation between sign and its meaning (1996:19).

### **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

In order to collect data for this study, the writer uses close observation methods to extract data directly from the film. It consists of three parts; close viewing deals with watching the film, close reading deals with the subtitle, and close listening deals with the audio. Additional data which is also necessary for this study is collected from library materials such as hard copy and electronic book.

The discussion in this study is separated into two parts. In the first part, the discussion is about the cultural exchange presented in the people and inanimate objects in San Fransokyo. In the second part, the discussion would be more focus on the identified cultural exchange and the meaning interpretation.

In order to analyze the meaning of the cultural exchange, the writer uses sign theory by Charles Sanders Peirce about sign-meaning interpretation. It contains an interpretation mechanism which could be used to determine the meaning.

Peirce's sign theory could be applied to interpret various kind of sign and not only limited to material sign; such as road and door sign, but also immaterial sign. Sign is universal and it exists in almost everything, as Peirce himself once stated that the universe is perfused with sign. San Fransokyo is filled with signs in the form of cultural exchange presented in the people and inanimate objects.

In this study, the interpretation mechanism in Peirce's sign theory is applied to analyze and determine the meaning of San Fransokyo cultural exchange.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Disney's Big Hero 6 is an animation movie released in 2014. It attracts lot of praise at the time because it creates a concept of metropolis city from cultural exchange. There is a hidden meaning in the cultural exchange which is related to our real world. The writer uses interpretation based on Charles Sanders Peirce sign theory that contain triadic relation which can be used to find meaning.

From the analysis, the writer concludes that the meaning of the cultural exchange is human have reached new stage in civilization and the need to live with people from other culture. The interpretation is done through three interrelated steps; the meaning is accessed through the signifier and the interpretant. The writer founds two factors which drive the cultural exchange during the interpretation; they are people and technology. People initiate cultural exchange in the city, meanwhile technology set the right environment for the cultural exchange to happen and sustained it by improving the quality of the people. San Fransokyo is not only a fictional concept but it is also a reference to our world, because several major cities in our world have started to follow San Fransokyo path. Now our world is blessed with knowledge and peace, and it is the time to start live together without being separated by the label of race and culture.

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