



**ETHNOCENTRISM AND THE IMPACTS IN *SAVING
FACE* MOVIE**

A FINAL PROJECT

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In English Department, Faculty of Humanities
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PRONOUNCEMENT

I state truthfully that this final project is compiled by me without taking the results from other research in any university, in S-1, S-2, S-3 degree and in diploma from other research in any university. In addition, I ascertain that I do not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned.

Semarang, December 2019

Permata Henryastuti

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

Dan Allah bersama orang-orang yang sabar.

(An Anfal: 66)

Happiness is not something ready-made. It comes from your own actions.

(Dalai Lama)

Home and family are our starting point and also our goal.

(Anonym)

I dedicate this project to my beloved parent and myself.

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MOVIE**

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I realize this project is still far from perfect. Therefore, I will be glad to receive any constructive criticisms and suggestions to make this project better. I hope this project will be useful for the readers.

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ABSTRACT

There are several different ethnic groups living in the same place often called plural society. Cultural differences in plural societies may lead ethnocentrism. This project is focused in ethnocentrism and the impacts on *Saving Face* movie directed by Alice Wu. This movie tells about Chinese ethnic groups in America who uphold their own culture from other cultures. The writer uses descriptive method and library research to collect the data. The writer also uses William Graham Sumner's theory. The purpose of this project is to analyze ethnocentrism and the impacts shown by Chinese ethnic groups through the Chinese culture point of view. The results of this project show one of the impact of ethnocentrism is a prejudice expressed by ethnic Chinese towards other cultures. Chinese ethnic groups tries to protect their own culture from the bad effect of other cultures.

Keywords: Ethnocentrism, Impacts, Prejudice, *Saving Face* movie

1

INTRODUCTION**1.1 Background of Study**

Each region and country has different values, norms, and cultures. If in one place there are more than two different cultures, it can be called cultural diversity. Cultural diversity in the same place does not guarantee that those groups member will always live in harmony. Sometimes, these different cultures can make dissent between some individuals. Some of them consider the cultural differences that exist in their environment must be respected and find ways to find a middle ground to become an intercultural bridge. Based on Mead (2013:14) cultural diversity presents major opportunities for synergy - the output of two or more individuals or groups working separately. Then, the bridge will gradually become a new culture that has been handed down from generation to generation as a habit.

In spite of that, some people think that their own culture is better than other cultures. They consider that other cultures are not much better than their own culture because these other cultures are not in accordance with the cultural concept that everything has been arranged to achieve a peaceful life. Situation like this can be ethnocentrism or someone who considers their culture better than other cultures. Based on Sunmer (2008:11) ethnocentrism is the view of things in which one's group is the centre of everything, and others are scaled and rated with reference to

it. From the definition, ethnocentrism must have some impacts. The impacts of ethnocentrism can be positive and negative. The writer will focus on negative impacts of ethnocentrism in *Saving Face* movie. According to Neulip, Hintz, and Mc.Croskey (2005:41) ethnocentrism will shape the character to be prejudiced, ethnic cleansing, and discriminated others.

Ethnocentrism can lead a negative opinion/judgement to other culture without knowing the truth. The way of looking at other cultures with their own cultural standards, which can occur in a plural society can create negative attitudes or prejudices against other cultures. Prejudice based on Gordon Allport (2012:179) is a negative response to another person based on his or her membership in a particular group. According to Friske, Gilbert, & Gardner (2010) prejudice is a negative emotion or attitude that is not right or wrong towards a group or members from other social group and it can be determinant of discriminatory behaviour. A society consisting of diverse groups such as in America is susceptible to have ethnocentrism and prejudice because of the differences of mother's cultural background that they bring from homeland to the new land.

Today, culture can be learned by everyone, especially those who are interested in it. Learning culture can be through anything, one of which is watching movies. A film is one of the media that can be chosen to know and learn a particular culture. In the present era, many films raise the theme of culture, one of which is *Saving Face* movie.

Saving Face is a film whose characters are descent of Chinese ethnic groups who live in America and still highly uphold their original culture. The *Saving Face* movie tells the story of how a Chinese ethnic family views American culture that they think is not better than their original culture, such as in manners, fashion, lifestyle, and food. Various kinds of conflicts that occur in this film show that ethnic Chinese society highly upholds their original culture, even though they do not live in China. Unlike the attitude of Wilhelmina Pang (Wil), the main character, a Chinese girl who can accept American culture but still respect her Chinese culture. In this film, there is another character beside Wil, Wil's biological mother. Her name is Hwei-Lan Gao or commonly Wil calls her "Ma". Ma only speaks Mandarin, but Ma understands English. The attitude is shown by Wil's family in this film result in several ethnocentrism and prejudices.

The writer aims to analyze the cause of ethnocentrism shown by Chinese ethnic family to some of American lifestyle, and to show the prejudices phenomenon through the Chinese's point of view. This final project is entitled "Ethnocentrism and Cultural Conflicts in *Saving Face* Movie".

Methods of study of this paper is descriptive analysis, while to collect data, the writer uses library research. There are two sources that will be used, namely primary source and secondary source. The primary source is *the Saving Face* movie by Alice Wu. The secondary source are sources on ethnocentrism and prejudice. The writer uses ethnocentrism theory by Sunmer, prejudice by Gordon Allport.

2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**2.1 Ethnocentrism**

Culture based on *Cambridge Dictionary* is the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time. In the other hand, culture based on Spencer-Oatey (2015:400) is

“A fuzzy set of values behavioral conventions, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions shared by a group of people, and influence their behavior and interpretations of the behavior and believes of other people.”

From the definitions above, it can be clear that culture cannot be separated because the society brings the ideas, attitudes, values of culture in their daily life and activity. If there are different cultures in the same place, there are some people from the group feeling that their culture is a culture that is better than other cultures.

Each group nourishes its pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities and looks with contempt on outsiders. This is called ethnocentrism. Based on Sunmer (2008: 11) ethnocentrism is the view of things in which one's group is the center of everything, and others are scaled and rated with reference to it. This is addressed to other cultural groups and recognizes the area as his own. They usually show it with religious symbols, clothing, or other things that indicate their existence.

Ethnocentrism is not only about the way a cultural group views other cultural groups, but also about how they cooperate with each other in their daily life. Ethnocentrism can occur in places that inhabited by people from different cultural backgrounds, it can be seen like America. Most of the American population are immigrants, such as immigrants from Europe and Asian countries.

2.2 Racial Prejudice

There are still some examples of prejudice that develop in plural societies nowadays such as racial prejudice. Because of the many differences that exist between various ethnic groups, prejudice can arise in it. Racial prejudice can be seen in the way how an ethnic group views a person or other ethnic groups. According to Friske, Gilbert, & Gardner (2010)

prejudice is a negative emotion or attitude that is not right or wrong towards a group or members from other social group and it can be determinant of discriminatory behaviour.

Another definition of prejudice based on Gordon Allport (2012:179) is a negative response to another person based on his or her membership in a particular group. Myers (2012:308) said that prejudice is a preconceived negative judgment of a group and its individual members. From those can be concluded that racial prejudice is negative attitudes and judgments that are formed due to spontaneity towards someone from another ethnicity without an introduction.

3

RESEARCH METHOD

The writer uses descriptive methods to analyze the *Saving Face* movie. A descriptive method is a method in the form of a description of the situation or an event that has happened and has a relationship with the object in the form of people or the environment. There are two sources that will be used; primary source and secondary source. The primary source is *the Saving Face* movie by Alice Wu. The secondary source that will be used in this project is some journals or movie reviews about ethnocentrism or prejudice that may be suitable for this project with library research.

Ethnocentrism according to Sumner (2008: 11) is belief that cultural norms themselves are better than other cultural norms. In this movie, cultural ethnocentrism can cause a racial prejudice. Myers (2012:308) said that prejudice is a preconceived negative judgment of a group and its individual members. The writer also uses close viewing to analyse the movie. Close viewing is an interpretation that emphasizes more on an audio visual / video object.

4

DISCUSSION

4.1 Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is one of the extrinsic aspects of this movie. It is a way of viewing other cultures / beliefs with own culture as a standard reference. Consequently, it can be something negative and arise bad though because judging other cultures by their own cultural standards. Ethnocentrism appears in the early minutes of the film.

Picture 1 and 2 are the situation at a routine gathering held regularly by Chinese ethnic. Wil, who works as a doctor, has just returned from the hospital. She comes to the gathering with a men's shirt and trousers.



Picture 1. Ma admonishes Wil's clothes.
(00:03:50)



Picture 2. Ma still disagrees with Wil's clothes
(00:04:21)

In picture 1, Ma thinks that Wil wears inappropriate attire because it looks manly. For the American, women wearing shirts and pants/trousers are common, but not for some ethnicities, one of them is Chinese ethnic. Picture 2 shows the situation when Wil, accompanied by Ma, wants to meet her

grandparent. When they meet each other, Wil's grandma says that she likes her outfit, but Ma thinks that Wil should wear a woman clothes in the gathering. The attitude shown by Ma proves that she still holds the principle that a woman should not wear and look like a man.

Ma : "I see men's clothes are still in style."
 Ma : "Let me button that for you. People are going to think..."
 Wil's Granma : "Wil, I love your outfit."
 Ma : "Don't you think it's too boyish?"
 Wil's Granma : "Nonsense. I had a pair just like those during the revolution. Sturdy and practical. Just the thing for war."
 Wil : "Your high heels on the other hand..."
 Wil's Granma : "Those things will kill you"
 (*Saving Face*, 00:03:50-00:04:34)

Apart from dressing, ethnocentrism can also be seen when Ma begins living in an apartment with Wil. According to general belief in Chinese, red symbolizes happiness and prosperity. Ma begins to change some stuffs in Wil's apartment, such as curtains, light cover, and bed cover as shown in picture 5. She hopes more happiness and prosperity with change everything in the house with red. Ma thinks red is better than black that gives depressing looks. Meanwhile in America, some people does not belief about color, they more care about aesthetic values.



Picture 3. Ma changes the curtains.
(00:20:19)



Picture 4. Red is better than black.
(00:20:25)



Picture 5. Wil looks her room.
(00:22:30)

Ma: “Look how cheerful this red is. We'll put some up here.”

Ma: “....there and there! That black is just depressing.”

(*Saving Face*, 00:20:19-00:22:30)

Picture 6 and 7 are situations in which general ethnic Chinese beliefs about color's meaning is shown again. Picture 6 tells the story of Ma going to date. Wil helps her mother to choose a dress that suits for her. Wil chooses a bright yellow dress for her mother so she will look brighter. Picture 7, Ma refuses the dress because the color is yellow. According to Chinese belief, Chinese people cannot wear yellow dresses carelessly as only the royal family that can wear it. Wil still does not understand it, because in America everyone can wear clothes of any color and in any occasions without being linked to ancestral beliefs.



Picture 6. Wil chooses a dress for Ma's date (00:43:06)



Picture 7. Ma refuses the dress. (00:43:10)

Wil : "Is that what you're gonna wear?"
 Ma : "What's wrong with it?"
 Wil : "Maybe you should wear something brighter. How about this one?"
 Ma : "Chinese people cannot wear yellow."
 (Saving Face, 00:43:00-00:43:10)

4.2 Racial Prejudice

In the previous discussion, the author talks about ethnocentrism that Ma shows towards Wil, her own child. Pictures 8 and 9 shows Ma's attitude which shows ethnocentrism towards other cultures and can cause a racial prejudice.



Picture 8. Ma prepares a paper plate for Jay (00:23:12)



Picture 9. Ma thinks Jay will bring a disease (00:23:14)

Ma : "Is he coming?"
 Wil: "Ma, you can't give him a paper plate."
 Ma : "Safer this way. Throw it out afterwards."
 Wil: "It's rude"
 Ma : "I'll give him two"
 (Saving Face, 00:23:12-00:23:14)

Jay is Wil's African American friend who will come to her house for a dinner.

Knowing that Jay will come, Ma prepares a paper plate for Jay. She thinks that Jay

is not from Chinese like her or Wil. She is afraid of some bad things or diseases will infect them if Jay uses the same plates. Ma feels that paper plates will be better for them. Wil thinks that it is ridiculous though because people from different ethnic will not bring bad effect for them only by using the same kind of plates for eating.

After they have finished preparing the dinner, Jay comes and enters to the room still wearing his shoes shown in picture 10. He does not take off his shoes inside the house. Actually Ma tries to remind him to take the shoes off. Unfortunately she speaks in Chinese, not speak in English. Jay does not understand her words. Jay thinks she just greets him with still uses the shoes. Wil tries to explain to Jay that he cannot wear his shoes inside the house.



Picture 10. Jay comes Wil's house
(00:23:24)



Picture 11. Wil tells Jay to take off his shoes (00:23:32)



Picture 12. Jay speaks when he eat
(00:23:49)

Ma : "His shoes! His shoes!"

Jay : "Hi, Mrs. Pang."

Wil: "You remember my neighbor, Jay"

Ma : "His shoes!"

Wil: “You don't have to talk so loud. And leave your shoes by the door.”

Jay : (Take off the shoes) “So I get a call from....”

(*Saving Face*, 00:23:24-00:23:49)

Taking off footwear when entering a house is one of cultures in Asian countries, including China. This culture is a form of respect for the house owner. While they are enjoying the dinner, Jay speaks loudly and talks while eating. For American culture, it is common to talk while eating. When have a dinner with a family who are from Chinese ethnic, we should neither talk each other nor speak loudly. This is seen in Picture 12, Jay realizes that he makes a mistake, so he tries to respect Wil and Ma’s culture by removing his shoes and eating calmly.

The number of Chinese ethnic in America has become one of factors that makes them reluctant to open themselves to other cultures. They are afraid of the bad effect from other cultures for them and it will vanish their original culture if they open with other cultures.



Picture 13. Talk about Chinese boy dating with white girl (01:01:54)

Hair Stylist: “Mrs. Wong's really upset because Raymond's dating a white girl.”

(*Saving Face*, 01:01:54)

Picture 13 shows that there is a Chinese woman, Mrs. Wong, feels upset with her son because he has a relationship with a white girl. From the statement of the

hair stylist, it can be concluded that Mrs. Wong does not like her son dating a woman from different ethnic. She is afraid her son will get a bad couple. It is very contrast to a Chinese girl who can easily be known from her families and own behavior.

5

CONCLUSION

From the previous discussion, this movie puts the differences in the cultural background in the same place to produce ethnocentrism and prejudice as the impact. One of the impacts of ethnocentrism is the prejudice shown several times with different events by the Chinese ethnic as the highlight of the character's background mostly from. The attitude of Chinese ethnic groups reflects an ethnocentrism and generates racial prejudice in this movie. They show it because they want to protect their original culture and afraid of some bad effects if they are too open with other cultures.

The differences in habits or lifestyle that is not suitable with their own culture when meeting with other culture can lead a positive or negative judgment. Racial prejudice that shown in this movie is one of the impacts of ethnocentrism. Someone who treats differently other people who from different races because of her strange fear of things that cannot yet be proven is one of the examples. This movie has a lot of moral messages that can be taken such as how to respect other cultures, how people can live with diversity and never forget their own cultures.

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