

THE STAGES OF DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL OF INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY DEPICTED IN THE *FREEDOM WRITERS* MOVIE

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Abstract

This study analyzes Freedom Writers Movie produced by Richard LaGravenese and presented in 2007 using Bennett and Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity that shows representation of the change of ethno-centric to ethno-relative. The study used qualitative method. All of the data are gathered by watching the movie, reading the movie script, identifying, classifying, and reducing the data. The primary data of the study were in the form of narration, monologue, and dialogue of the movie itself. The secondary data that supported primary data is taken from journals, articles, and internet sites related to the study. The study used qualitative method. All of the data are gathered by watching the movie, reading the movie script, identifying, classifying, and reducing the data. The primary data of the study were in the form of narration, monologue, and dialogue of the movie itself. The secondary data that supported primary data is taken from journals, articles, and internet sites related to the study. The result of the study finds that Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity is used to solve ethnocentrism by the characters. The stages of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity are ethnocentric stage and ethno-relative stage. Every stages consists of three stages. The ethnocentric stage consists of denial, defense, and minimization. Furthermore, the ethno-relative stage consists of acceptance, adaptation, and integration.

Keywords: *Ethnocentrism, Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, Freedom Writers*

1. INTRODUCTION

A movie is one of the literary works that has a high demand by people in this era. The movies entertain people through visual color and music. There are conflicts and emotions contain in the movie. It is once said that “movie can bring us to some places that we never visit yet in reality. Thus, we will get experiences from many places that can help us to see ourselves and our problems more clearly” (Johnson qtd. in Uhrig 7). From the explanation, movies do not only entertain, but it can also be a media learning for people, because people will easier imitate what they see. Thus, the visual color entertains the viewers and the story educates the viewers.

The story of the movie tells about imagination or true stories. No matter it is, it always has meaning inside it. It can be entertaining and has moral value to viewers. Sometimes, movies show what happens in the present and happened in the past, also. It means movies are reflections of human life, and contains some knowledge. Thus, people can take the lesson and make the better future.

Nowadays The United States becomes a big country that produces many movies. It makes the story usually based on its society. One of the examples of the issues presented is cultural diversity. The United States is one of the countries with cultural diversity. As Wilkinson (2015) has stated that “the U.S. has always been and will always be a multicultural society – one where people from many distinct ethnic backgrounds have come together and formed society as a whole”. Multicultural and cultural diversity are the terms that usually used to describe societies of different culture as statement of Mishra and Kumar “Cultural pluralism, cultural diversity and multiculturalism are the terms very commonly used to describe societies of different cultures, religions, languages and races” (63).

One researcher “conceptualized diversity as representing a multitude of individual differences and similarities that exist among people. Diversity can encompass many different human characteristics such as race, age, creed, national origin, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation” (Washington 3). From that explanation above, it can be concluded that cultural diversity consists of different characteristic of human like creed, religion, ethnicity, race, age, and national origin.

A country contains many people with different characteristics, it makes some social conflicts happen as the effects of the cultural diversity, and one of the example is ethnocentrism. Differences in cultural values and basic norms can be difficult for someone to adapt. It is always be contradictory and thus facilitate the emergence of conflict. Besides, one researcher also has definition about ethnocentrism as:

A cultural narrowness in which the “ethnically centered” individual rigidly accepted those who were culturally alike while just as rigidly rejecting who were culturally different ,and ethnocentrism also refers to the belief that the in-group is the center of everything and is superior to all out-group. (Öğretir & Özçelik 237)

From the quotation, it means that people who have ethnocentric behavior will accept who were alike and automatically reject who were different.

Ethnocentrism is also a behavior that believes their own culture is the best from the others. It was once said, “Ethnocentrism is simplistically summarized as in-group

preference/solidarity out-group rejection/aversion” (John 4). In addition, ethnocentrism makes solidarity toward in-group become increase. They will protect the members of the group, support peers of the group, and agree with whatever they do as long as they still in the same group.

Every problem always has its own way to overcome, and also ethnocentrism. The way that helps to overcome ethnocentrism is the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. The first is ethnocentric stage, consist of three stages. They are denial, defense, and minimization. The second stage is ethno-relativism. It consists of acceptance, adaptation and the last is integration (Dong et al. 30). It means that the ways to overcome ethnocentrism consists of six stages where it is divided into two kinds of stages.

One movie that presents cultural diversity, ethnocentrism, and the ways to overcome it is *Freedom Writers*. The movie is produced by Richard LaGravenese and released in 2007. The movie is based on a true story. It tells about the teacher and her students at Woodrow Wilson High School. The movie can entertain and give knowledge to the viewers because it is a reflection of the situation of human life.

As stated before, *Freedom Writers* shows cultural diversity. There are many people with different beliefs, customs, nationalities, and races in one class. The movie takes setting of place in Woodrow Wilson High School, Long Beach, where the teacher comes from white people and the students come from many regions. Almost all the students of 203 class are immigrants, except Ben. Ben is a white people and the others come from many regions such as Mexico, Asia, also there are some black people.

In the *Freedom Writers* movie, the portrayals of ethnocentrism can also be found. It happens between the teacher and the students, and also between students. The students of 203 class are the characters who become the victims of ethnocentric behavior from teachers in Woodrow Wilson High School, but it is different from what happens in the class. Because almost all of them have different races, so certainly they have a different culture. In the class, one group ignores the other group. In addition, they interact with their group only.

Most of them think that they are superior more than the other cultures, and it makes many conflicts happen around them. Besides that, ethnocentrism gives impacts on their attitude toward the other, they always ignore, judge and do not give attention to people who differ from them including friends or even the teachers. Although at the beginning of the movie they always gather with the same group, but different in the end. In this movie, ethnocentrism can be solved, and they can receive the diversity around them.

Ethnocentrism still happens until now. It can be experienced by everyone, wherever they are and whoever they are. All of the explanations above are the reasons why the writer takes *Freedom Writers* movie as the object to analyses with the title “*The Portrayal of Ethnocentrism and The Ways to Overcome It in the Freedom Writers Movie*”.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research is the type of methodology that used by this study. According to Babbie (2014) descriptive qualitative method is “scientific method of observation to gather non-numerical data”. While Hughes adds that qualitative research aims to obtain deeper or broader understanding toward something experience toward happen in social life (8). This research method describes the ethnocentrism using the script of the movie *Freedom Writers* by analyzing and interpreting the data research.

There were five steps that used by this study in collecting data technique. Here were the steps of data collecting methods: 1) Watching the movie, 2) Reading the Script of the Movie, 3) Identifying the Data, 4) Classifying the Data, 5). Reducing the Data. The first step was watching the movie, the movie was played for many times in order to achieve the deeply understand about the issue that happens in the movie. The second step was reading the movie script following the movie every scene by scene closely and repeatedly read to get the right proof of the issues. The third step is identifying the data by highlighting, marking and labeling the data in the movie script that related with the issues, then the data were identified. The next step that should do was classifying the data, the data from movie script were taken, and then put them on the table based on problem formulation called appendix that consists of columns of numbers, form the data, and where the data is found, reference, and comments. The last step was reducing the data, the data were selected from the data that have been collected in appendix until the final conclusions can be drawn.

In case to report the data clearly, this study used descriptive technique to analyzed the data. This technique was stated by descriptions, statements, and quotations or described through explanation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity of simply called as DMIS by Bennett and Bennett is the ways to overcome ethnocentrism. According to Bennet as cited in Dong et al. Developmental Model Of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) tends to transform people from ethnocentric to ethno-relative (30). DMIS has two stages which every stage consists of three stages. The first stage is the ethnocentric stage and the second is the ethno-relative stage (Bennett and Bennett, 14). The ways to overcome ethnocentrism is shown by five characters. They are Ben, Eva, Marcus, Sindy and Andre.

A.1. Ethnocentric Stage

The ethnocentric stage according to Bennett and Bennett, means one culture is experienced as the only and the central in some ways (14). This stage consists of the denial stage, the defense stage, and the minimization stage. The following is a detailed explanation of the three stages of the ethnocentric stage.

A.1.1. Denial

Denial is the first stage in the DMIS and the earliest stage in the ethnocentric stage. In Denial, “one’s own culture is experienced as the only real one, and consideration of other

cultures is avoided by maintaining psychological and/or physical isolation from difference” (Bennett and Bennett 14). People in this stage usually avoiding cultural differences by denying their existence. The denial stage can be found in the student of 203 class when they are inside the classroom.

Students sit their chairs. Drop the bags down. They change the chair position to gather with their group. **They are ignoring Erin and the other friends who come from a different group.** Erin looks around, her eyes were on ankle cuffs that were worn by a student. (00:08:45-00:09:30)

This scene matches the quotation. The quotation says that people in the denial stage denying the existence of cultural diversity. It can be seen in the students of 203 class. The students come from many regions. It means that there is cultural diversity in the 203 class. The students after entering the room, sit and change the chair position to gather with their group. It shows that the students denying cultural diversity by interacting just with the person who comes from the same group.

In conclusion, the first stage is the denial stage. Ethnocentric people deny the existence of cultural diversity. It can be seen in the students of 203 class. They prefer to sit around their group and interact with their group only. They also do not give attention to the people who differ from them.

B.1.2. Defense

According to Bennett and Bennett “in Defense, one’s own culture (or an adopted culture) is experienced as the only good one, and cultural difference is denigrated (14). People in this stage may discriminate against people from the other group in a complex way because they do not believe in another (Bennett and Bennett 16). It pushes them to protect themselves and be careful about diversity. The discrimination, the protection of diversity can be seen in the movie from the character of Andre.

ERIN: You don't feel respected. Is that what you're saying, Eva? Well, maybe you're not. But to get respect, you have to give it.

ANDRE: That's bullshit.

ERIN: What?

ANDRE: Why should I give my respect to you? 'Cause you're a teacher?
I don't know you. How do I know you're not a liar standing up there? How do I know you're not a bad person standing up there? I'm not just gonna give you my respect because you're called a teacher. (00:32:49 – 00:33:13)

This is a conversation between Andre and Erin. Erin is white people and Andre is black people. Andre will not give respect to Erin because both of them come from different backgrounds. From Andre’s behavior, it can be seen that Andre feels that his race is the only good one, so when his teacher is different from him, he will not give respect to her. Andre as black people does not believe that all of the white people are kind people. It can be seen in Andre’s statement “I don't know you. How do I know you're not a liar standing up there? How do I know you're not a bad person standing up there?”. Andre's behavior also indicates that he discriminates against other cultures to get his respect. Andre also

protects himself from the person who has a different culture from him. So, he decides to not give his respect to Erin because of their difference.

In conclusion, people in this stage tend to discriminate against people who come from other groups, because do not believe in another. It can be seen in the character of Andre who does not give respect to his teacher who comes from other groups.

B.1.3. Minimization

Minimization is the final stage in ethnocentric stages. It was once stated that in this stage “elements of one’s own cultural worldview are experienced as universal, so that despite acceptable surface differences with other cultures, essentially those cultures are similar to one’s own” (Bennett and Bennett 14). People in this stage start to change their worldview and to accept diversity. In Minimization, Bennett, and Bennett state that “superficial cultural differences in etiquette and other customs are acknowledged, but the assumption is made that “deep down, we are all the same” (18). This stage is experienced by the students of 203 class after playing a game arranged by Erin.

ERIN: We're gonna play a game, all right? It's a lot of fun ... This is called the Line Game. I'm gonna ask you a question. If that question applies to you, you step onto the line, and then step back away for the next question. Easy, right?

...

ERIN: Okay. Next question. How many of you live in the projects?

Half of the students step onto the line. Marcus and Jamal include in the students that stay in the back, which means that the question does not apply to them. (00:41:25 – 00:45:25)

This is a game that Erin used to develop her students’ sensitivity in order so they can learn more about each other. Erin is a white woman and her students consist of many different races. Erin makes a line in the middle of the classroom, and then she divides her student into two groups, one on the right side and one on the left side. She asks them many questions, they just need to step forward to the line if the answer is ‘yes’. From this game, most of the students were amazed, because in many ways they have a similarity. It can be seen from how many students who come forward into the line in every question. Through this game Erin success makes her students realize that basically, they are the same. At the end of the scene, the students do not ignore Erin again and they start to accept Erin who comes from a different group.

In conclusion, Erin’s game is the way to enter the minimization stage. At the end of the game, the students realize that they have many similarities. It matches with Bennett and Bennett’s statement that people in this stage have an assumption that deep down they are all the same creature.

B.2. Ethno-relative Stage

The ethno-relative stage has three stages. They are the acceptance stage, adaptation stage, and integration stage. People in this stage have a different worldview of cultural differences from the previous stage. Ethno-relative stage means the ways to seeking cultural differences by accepting its importance, adapting the perspective and by integrating the concept.

B.2.1. Acceptance

In Acceptance, Bennett and Bennet state that “other cultures are included inexperience as equally complex but different constructions of reality” (14). People in this stage start to aware of cultural diversity. In their perspective, diversity means different but there is always the same thing between them. Acceptance in this stage does mean agreement or liking. So, for instance, one could be ethno-relative and still dislike or disagree with the values (Bennett and Bennett 20). The stage is experienced by the character of Marcus and Ben as their conversation:

MARCUS: Good to see you, man.

BEN: Hey, yeah.

MARCUS: How was your summer?

BEN: Great.

MARCUS: **You're still white, I see.** (01:09:49 – 01:09:59)

This is a conversation between Ben and Marcus. For the first time, they talk to each other. The conversation happens on the first day of school after their summer holiday. Ben is white people and Marcus is black people. They are aware that they are equal although they have a different color. This is the reason why they are talking to each other that never happened before. This conversation proofs that Marcus and Ben have to change their worldview about cultural diversity.

In conclusion, the acceptance stage happens between Marcus and Ben. They start to accept the differences between them. It can be seen when they have a conversation that never happened before.

B.2.2. Adaptation

The second ethno-relative stage is the adaptation stage. The movement to adaptation becomes increase when people need to act or think outside of their own culture. “This need typically occurs when casual contact with other cultures becomes more intense, such as in a posting abroad or when working on a multicultural team.” (Bennett and Bennett 21). Based on that quotation, it can be concluded that contact with other cultures is the key in this stage. More contact with other cultures and make it intense will help people to move in the adaptation stage. The students in the “Freedom Writers” movie also experienced the adaptation stage through the multicultural team. It can be seen in their ways to collect money to bring Miep Gies there.

TEXT: NEWSPAPER UPDATE “LOCAL LONG BEACH RESTAURANT TO HELP H.S. STUDENT

The students create a local restaurant to collecting money which will be used to invite Miep Gies.

NOTE: THERE ARE SOME TENTS FOR SELLING FOOD

TILT DOWN: THE LOCAL RESTAURANT “TASTE FOR CHANGE”

Erin and Gloria guard at the entrance. There are many visitors who come. The restaurant is very crowded. They sell food and drinks.

MARCUS (VOICE OVER): Ms. G sent our letters all the way to

Amsterdam to Miep Gies, herself. When Ms. G made up her mind about something, there was no stopping her, man, for real. **And after we raised the money to bring her to Long Beach, there she was.** (01:21:57 – 01:22:26)

This is the scene when the students work together to collect money and Marcus monologue after writing a letter to Miep Gies and corporates with his friend to collect money in order to make Miep Gies come to his school. Marcus is a black person. His friends consist of many races and Miep Gies is Netherland people. As Bennett quotation, the adaptation stage rises when contact with other culture become more intense. They (students of 203 class) also work together to make a festival for change. Work together and do not see what is the background of the member is prove that Marcus has on the adaptation stage.

Marcus takes the adaptation from Anne Frank's story, where Miep Gies wants help, Anne Frank, although they have a different background. It can be taken from Marcus' statement “after we raised money to bring her”. We in Marcus’s statement mean all of the students 203 class. It can be concluded that their contact with other culture become increase every day because they have to be teamwork to collect money to bring Miep Gies. In this stage, all students have become multicultural people where they never gather with their group only, but they have gathered with all students no matter who are they.

In conclusion, the adaptation stage is experienced by Marcus and the student of 203 class. It through a novel entitled Diary of Anne Frank, because the book they learn about cooperation in diversity like Miep Gies and Anne Frank. After reading the book, they try to bring Miep Gies to their school which makes them become a multicultural team. This stage occurs when contact with other people from different group become intense. So, Marcus and his friends enter the adaptation stage by work in a multicultural team like Bennett and Bennett have stated.

B.2.3. Integration

The integration stage is the final stage of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. Bennett and Bennett state that people in this stage already have bicultural or multicultural worldviews (24). In conclusion, people in this stage have not taken care of the cultural identity of other people. As Bennett and Bennett state people in this stage are already has a bicultural or multicultural worldview and have become marginal. It can be found in the character of Marcus in his statement:

Erin: I want you all to know that Dr. Cohn and I tried very hard. But it's been decided we can't continue with each other junior year.

Student: What?

Erin: What? You... Wait. Wait. Guys. Everyone.

Marcus: **No! That don't fly, Ma!**

Erin: Look, first of all, I'm not anyone's mother in here, okay?

Eva: **No, it doesn't mean mother.**

Andre: **It's a sign of respect for you.** (01:50:49 – 01:51:20)

This is a conversation between Erin and her students. Erin is white people, Eva is Mexican, Marcus and Andre are black people. The conversation happens when the students want Erin to still teach them to the next year, but it cannot. There is a regulation that Erin has not been enough to teach the junior class. She has talked to Dr.Cohn as the chief of the unified school district, but she still can be together with her students next year.

In the middle of their debate, Marcus calls Erin with “ma”. It is a sign of respect. From that scene it can be seen that Marcus, Eva, and Andre already lose their cultural identity, usually, they just give respect for people that come from the same background but they have been changed to become bicultural or multicultural people. They have had movement in different cultural worldviews.

In conclusion, people in the integration stage have changed their worldview about diversity. It can be seen when Marcus calls Erin “ma” which means respect to Erin.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the previous chapter, it can be concluded that the *Freedom Writers* movie depicts the stages of Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). Although at the beginning of the story the students reject the other culture as ethnocentric behavior but at the end of the story, they can change their worldview about cultural diversity after passing the two stages which every stages contains of three stages of DMIS.

The movie presents the stages of Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). The denial stage is experienced by students of 203 class, they deny the existence of cultural diversity by sit and gather around their group only. Then the defense stage is experienced by Andre. He discriminates his respect for Erin, his teacher because she is white people. In the next stage the students of 203 class minimization the diversity through a game called line game which made by Erin. The next stage is acceptance. It can be seen in Marcus and Ben when they have a conversation that they never do before and also can be seen in one’s poem of the students that consider the class of 203 is his home. The adaptation stage happens when the students of 203 become teamwork to bring the Miep Gies. The last stage is the integration stage. It is shown by Eva, she is brave to give the truth testimony in her case and does not protect her friend who comes from the same group with her. Besides that, the students have understood each other. They also give their respect for Erin as their teacher.

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