

AMERICAN SOCIAL AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIP ASPECTS FOUND IN FITZGERALD'S *THE GREAT GATZBY* NOVEL AND ITS APPLICATION IN ENGLISH SPEAKING CLASS

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Abstract

Language and culture are closely related to each other. Learning a language should be also completed learning its culture. In communication, difficulty or misunderstanding usually occurs because of the lack of cultural understanding. In line with this, to be able to speak English and interact culturally especially with the English native speakers, students of English should learn the culture of them. This writing is under a research with the objectives of finding some of the culture components especially on the social and family relationship aspects found in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* novel and its application in Speaking Class of English Department. It is a descriptive qualitative research. In conclusion, in the novel, it is found that in American social relationship, the people create nice relationship in which friendliness, informality, and equality marks are involved. In family relationship, Americans seem keeping their good relationship among family members by paying attention to one another. As the application in teaching speaking class, the findings can be good sources for doing some activities of learning some expressions and practicing role play based on the story of the novel. It can facilitate English students to improve their English speaking, especially in the communication with the English native speakers, in good cultural awareness.

Keywords: American culture analysis, social and family relationship, speaking class

Introduction

According to Rees (1973, p. 15), literature is a permanent expression in words of some thought or feeling or idea about life and world. Koesnosobroto (1988, p. 2) says that literature offers hints, suggestions and flashes of insight in such a way as to refresh and encourage our own thinking, and so leads us to the insight of our own. In conclusion, there are so many values we can reach from reading literature: an understanding, a new sensitivity, a feeling or perhaps simply a sense of enjoyment from the worth of information, knowledge and experience.

Culture is one of the values that we can get from literature. When we read a novel, for example, we may find a culture of a certain area especially the area where the story takes place. So, literature can be source of culture information. In learning a language, the learners should also learn the culture of its native speaker to be able to

speak and interact culturally especially with the native speaker. Sage (cited in McKay, 1989, p. 46) supports that literature is important for increasing cultural awareness, exposing students to literary language and broadening students' general knowledge. Damen (1987, p. 211-213) states that as we learn the target language, our learning activity includes learning the culture of the native speaker. In this research, the writer analyzes a novel, since it contains valuable insights that reflect the culture where the story takes place. Reeve (cited in Kennedy 1983, p. 182) defines novel as a picture of real life and manner, and of the time in which it was written. In its growth, a novel world is also a manifesto, advertising its author's understanding of the limits and possibilities of the form. This can be explicit, nebulous, and even political... (Smith, 2016). So, it is possible for students to learn a nation's culture through a novel.

The writer chooses Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby* (GG for short), to be analyzed since it is written in English with setting of American culture, one of the English native speakers. Another reason is it is very interesting, in which Fitzgerald presents the currents of the story attractively through the actions of the characters.

In learning a culture, there are so many components of culture that can be analyzed, since the culture itself involves almost the whole life sides of people. Damen (1987, p. 89) says that we may examine culture from the point of view of its individual components or parts or from the more social points of view of its systems. Variations of human life styles may be found in: dress, system of reward and punishment, uses time and space, fashions of eating, means of communication, family relationship, beliefs and values; or societal system such as: kinship, education, economy, government, association, and health. In line with this, the writer limits the discussion just on the social and family relationship aspect found in this novel and its application in teaching English speaking class. Possibly, some parts of this finding on culture are still reflected until today. Berkes et al. (2000, p. 1252) state that a culture phenomenon may be a cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment.

Methodology

This research uses descriptive qualitative research design. The main source of the data is F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*. Besides she uses data taken from some other references related to the subject matter as the supporting data through doing a library research. They are references dealing with literature, novel, culture, American culture, and teaching.

In analyzing the novel, the writer applies four steps, they are collecting the data, classifying the data, interpreting the data, and drawing conclusion. The first step is collecting the data with the following procedures:

1. Reading the novel carefully in order to understand deeply the content of it.
2. Searching the components of culture reflected on the novel through the dialogues, the actions of the characters, or the expositions.
3. Determining the given components of culture that primarily stated on GG.

The second step is classifying the data in which the writer classified the above determined components of culture according to their fields. They are social and family relationship. The following step is interpreting the data. Here, the writer interprets the data in the form of meaningful and understandable paragraphs presented in a systematical discussion. As part of this step, the writer presents quotations taken from GG that contain the related data in the discussion attached to each culture component to turn the description touch its clarity. The last one is drawing conclusion in which the writer emphasizes the main points of the discussion of each culture component and the contributions of the analysis result to English speaking class.

Findings and Discussion

As what stated on the previous chapter, culture is a unique life style of a particular society that tells the given society's members how to think, feel, believe, act, and behave.

In conveying the currents of the novel story, Fitzgerald tells us largely about American culture because it takes place in New York in 1922. We can catch the insights of the American culture through the actions and dialogues of the characters, besides through the expositions.

The writer wants to present two forms of human relations that clearly reflected on this novel. They are social relations and family relations.

1. Social Relationship

In GG, it is found that social relations among Americans are marked by friendliness, informality, and equality. In this novel, Fitzgerald has described the real application of the social relation marks through the actions of the characters.

The mark of friendliness was reflected on the intimate expression among friends like the habitation of shaking hand to one another every time they met or said good bye, and treating someone else kindly. In addition, showing their good relation, they were often involved in togetherness especially in relaxation as eating, traveling, riding horses together, holding party, and any other activities.

Tom and I shook hands, the rest of us exchanges a cool nod, and they trotted quickly down the drive,... (Fitzgerald 1953, p. 105)

“If you want anything just ask for it, old sport,” he urged me. “Excuse me. I will rejoin you later.” (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 49)

Taking care of each other was portrayed on Michaelis’ effort in rising the life spirit of Wilson, his neighbor, when his wife died.

“You ought to have a church, George, for times like this. You must have gone to church once. Didn’t you get married in a church? Listen, George, listen to me. Didn’t you get married in a church?” (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 158)

In social interaction reflected in GG novel, they early reached the use of first name although they just knew to one another. Sometimes, to create such close relation, they addressed their friends with special names. Those were the forms of informality in social interaction.

Just as Tom and Myrtle (after the first drink Mrs. Wilson and I called each other by our, first name) reappeared, company commenced to arrive at the apartment-door.

I knew the other clerks and young bond-salesmen by their first names, and lunched with them in dark, crowded restaurants..... (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 57)

Michaelis to George Wilson, his neighbour:

“How long have you been married, George?” (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 157)

Gatsby to Nick, his very close friend: “It’s pretty, isn’t it old sport?” he jumped off to give me a better view. (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 64)

Gatsby to Klipspringer, his friend : “Klipspringer plays the piano,” said Gatsby, cutting him off. “Don’t you, Ewing, old sport?” (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 96)

Pammy called Jordan, her mother’s close friend, with “aunt”:

“Yes, admitted the child calmly. “Aunt Jordan’s got on a white dress too.” (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 117)

Still talking about informality mark, Jordan was not reluctant sitting down at the table when she was in conversation with Daisy, Tom, and primary Nick whom she just knew.

“We ought to plan something, “yawned Miss Baker, sitting down at the table as if she were getting into bed. (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 12)

Moreover, the informality marks also much appeared at parties like dancing, and even business transaction among the guests. However, the informality among Americans stood on its limitation. Love kissing or expressing love between a man and a woman in front of the other persons was vulgar.

As he left the room again she got up and went over to Gatsby and pulled his face down, kissing him on the mouth.

“You know I love you,” she murmured. “You forget there’s a lady present,” said Jordan.

Daisy looked around doubtfully. “You kiss Nick too.”

“What a low vulgar girl!” (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 116)

Meanwhile, the equality of all persons could be noticed at Gatsby’s parties in which everybody, invited or not, could attend. Furthermore, all of the guests got the same good treatment.

I believe that on the first night I went to Gatsby’s house I was one of the few guests who have actually been invited. People were not invited – they went there. (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 41)

2. Family Relationship

In American family relationship found in GG novel, there was a good mutual attention among the family members. Parents took part the responsibility of the success of their children’s future. The life of Nick’s family talked much about it. Parent’s responsibility might be expressed through giving advice to their children as the education about life, providing their facilities and fees of their education, and so on. The other family members like uncle and aunt also took care of their nephew / niece’s future. However, the success of the children’s future was basically as the responsibility of themselves.

In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I’ve been turning over in my mind ever since.

“Whatever you feel like criticizing any one,” he told me, “just remember that all the people in this world haven’t had the advantages that you’ve had.” (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 1)

All my aunts and uncles talked it over as if they were choosing a prep school for me, ... Father agreed to finance me for a year,.....(Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 3)

Still about parent’s responsibility, especially toward their children’s safety and growth, usually rich parents took nurse to help them looking after their children. Buchanans’ child was the example.

The child, relinquished by the nurse, rushed across the room and rooted shyly into her mother’s dress. (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 117)

As the expression of love, Jordan’s aunt did not permit her to run around the country as a sports girl.

“She’s a nice girl,” said Tom after a moment. “They oughtn’t to let her run around the country this way.”

“Who oughtn’t to?” inquired Daisy coldly.

“Her family.”

“Her family is one aunt about a thousand years old.....” (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 19)

Anyhow, the condition was not always like the above illustration. Gatsby, for instance, should reach his future by himself at all, since his parents were too poor to fulfill all of his son’s needs. Although Gatsby hid his father from everybody, after being a very rich man, he was very kind and generous to his poor father who was greatly proud of his son’s success. He never counted the bad temper of his son toward him. Moreover, after Gatsby’s death, he just saw his kindness through his pure love. To see his beloved son for the last time, he asked the funeral to be postponed until his coming. It showed that whatever happen there was a deep heart relationship between parents and children.

He come out to see me two years ago and bought me the house I live in now. Of course we were broke up when he run off from home, but I see now there was a reason for it. He knew he has a big future in front of him. And ever since he made a success he was very generous with me. (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 174)

His pride in his son and his son’s possessions was continually increasing and now he had something to show me. (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 173)

I think it was on the third day that a telegram signed Henry C. Gatz arrived from a town in Minnesota. It said only that the sender was leaving immediately

and to postpone the funeral until he came. (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 167)

The lovely relationship of American families was also portrayed through their way of addressing to one another. Parents usually had special address for their children. Gatsby's father used to call him with special nick name, "Jimmy". Meanwhile Daisy called her little daughter with "sweetheart". To Tom, his daughter usually called "Daddy". Among brothers, they called to one another with their names. For American, there was no certain title like *kakak* or *adik* as Indonesian. But sometimes Mrs. Wilson called her sister with "my dear". It was also familiar for Nick to be called with "my dearest one", by Daisy, his cousin. Between a couple of husband and wife, they called to each other with their names.

"Jimmy sent me this picture." He took out his wallet with trembling fingers. "Look there." (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 173)

Daisy to her daughter:
"Good-bye, sweetheart!" (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 117)

Pammy to her father:
"Where's Daddy?" (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 117)

Catherine to her older sister:
"Why did you, Myrtle? Demanded Catherine. "Nobody forced you to." (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 35)

Myrtle to her sister:
"My dear," she told her sister in a high, mincing shout, "Most of these fellas will cheat you every time....." (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 31)

Daisy to Nick, her cousin:
"Is this absolutely where you live, my dearest one?" (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 86)

Tom to his wife:
"Come on, Daisy", said Tom, pressing her with his hand toward Gatsby's car. (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 121)

Daisy to her husband:
"Please, Tom! I can't stand this anymore." (Fitzgerald, 1953, p. 135)

The application of the finding of this writing on American social and family relationship in teaching English Speaking is various depends on the students' need and condition. For example, the teacher may teach them some expressions taken from the novel then ask them to practice in front of the class after ask them to read the novel. After they master well some expressions they can do role play of some actions in the novel. Hopefully, realizing of applying some cultures of English native speaker, the students will be more encourage involving the class.

Conclusion

Through the GG novel, it is found that in American social relationship, the people create nice relationship in which friendliness, informality, and equality marks are involved. They could also take the lesson of life from the current of their interaction.

Another form of human relation is family relation. Here, they seem keeping their good relations among family members by paying attention to one another. Parents participated to realize their children's ideal. But the success of children's future was basically the responsibility of themselves. The lovely relation among them was also reflected on their way of addressing to one another.

The analysis of GG through its elements of culture is very useful in improving the English students' cross cultural understanding and also English speaking since it is rich of the information about American culture, the culture of English native speakers.

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