Cross-Cultural Understanding in Emily in Paris Series Season 1: Episodes 1 and 2

M R Yuwita[1*]

[1]English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Jl. Dipatiukur No. 112-116 Bandung 40132, West Java, Indonesia

E-mail: mia.yuwita@email.unikom.ac.id

Abstract. Many experts believe that language is broadly defined as an external expression reflecting its social groups' behaviour and cultures. The relationship between language and culture is deeply rooted and inseparable as they may affect each other. This article presents and explores cross-cultural understanding in Emily in Paris Series Season 1, specifically Season 1 and 2. Emily, the protagonist, is portrayed as an American woman who is unexpectedly hired at a marketing firm in Paris, French. The series explicitly showed Emily's struggle encountering language and culture clash in Paris due to her lack of understanding and pragmatic mismatch. This current study adopts a descriptive qualitative method to examine 7 data taken from conversations transcription from Season 1: Episodes 1 and 2. The collected data is then carefully analyzed and elaborated using relevant theories. This result of this research evidently demonstrates multiple ways of how Americans and French behave. In summation, this research has demonstrated distinctive ways of greeting, giving compliments, the concept of time and space, the idea of business and personal space, and idiomatic expressions. In brief, this holocultural research could promote awareness and understanding of cultural differences as a tool to overcome this intertwined world as well as avoid cultural shock.

1. Introduction

Culture has been broadly described as the sum of attitudes, manifestations, arts, customs, social behaviour, and ways of life of particular cultural group members. According to Mara and Levine [1], culture is linked with a shared background of social life's intangible aspect, such as communication style, customs, values, and attitudes. These key components are generally passed down from generation to generation, enabling the new generations to preserve their values and beliefs. Peoples and Bailey [2] sum up that culture is learned, shared, and owned together.

Culture is specifically divided into two elements; "big C" culture and "little c" culture [3]. "Big C" culture refers to the most visible culture, such as art, popular literature, ritual ceremony, songs, etc. "Little c" culture, in contrast, indicates the invisible type of culture like language, social interaction, and verbal and non-verbal language symbols. Thus, culture is not always associated with traditions, music, and arts, yet, it includes language, social interactions, cultural expressions, and perspectives of its cultural members. As a matter of fact, cultural members often consider their culture as their standardized patterns of behaviour. People might subconsciously think that their way to behave is "right", while the unfamiliar culture is "wrong" [4]. For instance, it is acceptable to eat using a hand in a certain culture, while in other cultures, eating using a hand is considered rude. However, there is no "right" or "wrong" in terms of culture. People need to move from this wrong-or-right perception to be tolerant and

accepting. Thus, cultural awareness has been enormously viewed as one of the most pivotal tools to overcome these differences.

In the present day, the term Cross-Cultural Understanding has gained attention as it is relevant to what happened in this highly integrated world. Cross-cultural understanding refers to a study that compares two or more different cultures from different countries [5]. Furthermore, Cross-Cultural Understanding is more than realizing phenomena across cultures; it is a powerful tool to learn, respect, and appreciate other cultures, views, and perspectives. The urgency of cross-cultural understanding in education is unequivocally clear as it could help students enhance their knowledge about other cultures as well as build tolerance for others. Through cross-cultural understanding, students will be able to broaden their minds, break down cultural barriers, and minimize cultural conflict.

As stated in the previous paragraph, cross-cultural understanding is vital to creating inclusion and building trust in each other. Hence, unnecessary conflicts, mistakes, and misunderstandings, whether it is intentional or unintentional, could be eliminated if one sensitively has cultural competence. According to Mattoo [6] people from different cultures do act and behave differently from each other. She specifically elaborated the examples of some important issues to be considered:

1. Time, punctuality and deadlines work variously on several countries. Some regions like North America, Northern Europe, Japan, and China are very time conscious, while in Asia, the Middle East, Southern Europe, and Saudi Arabia, there is always plenty of time.
2. The Style of Interaction. Some countries are soft-spoken and do not appreciate loud talk, particularly in business meetings. Others, on the other hand, indicate loudness as enthusiasm, openness, and excitement.
3. The Use Of Small Talk as a Courtesy. Some countries use minimal small talk and get directly down to business while others use it as a courtesy.
4. Expressions of Emotion. In the west region, it is fairly common and acceptable to give emotional feelings. In the Far East, showing anger in public is considered rude and consequently, one might 'lose his face'. Remaining silent could also disturb westerners.
5. Body Language. People use diverse gestures, touch, and facial expressions. It is crucial to prevent misinterpretation of body language to minimize conflict.
6. Eye Contact. In the west setting, strong eye contact represents confidence, openness, sincerity, and trust. Yet, in the Far and the Middle East, intense eye contact indicates disrespect and aggressiveness.
7. Facial Expression. Some countries rely on eyes to represent facial expressions, while others use their mouth to portray them.
8. Personal Space. In the west area, the proximity does matter, one may feel uncomfortable if the person he is talking to is too close. However, the French and Italians touch quite frequently. This indicates solidarity and friendliness.
9. Gestures. In some cultures, pointing using the upright forefinger is considered rude. In France, the "okay" sign means zero or useless.
10. Postures. Some countries believed that standing up when seniors enter the room is appropriate.

Cross-Cultural Understanding can now be learned through multiple means of media without ever leaving the language classroom. The superpowered growth of technology has in fact facilitated people to access media such as a movie. Through a movie, students can be exposed to real-life cultural expressions and practices portrayed by the cultural movie without personally experiencing them. Students can learn societal and cultural norms, values and social interactions associated with the culture in the movie. One of the movies that portray cross-cultural practice is Emily in Paris. This movie illustrates the cross-cultural experience overcome by an ambitious marketing executive from Chicago, Emily Cooper, who unexpectedly worked in Paris and how she immersed herself in her work and environment. The cross-cultural understanding displayed in this movie could provide learners with benefits as they could gain knowledge and understanding of certain cultural norms through media.

Prior research on Cross-Cultural Understanding has demonstrated the benefits of the awareness of cultural differences as it could help learners better understand them. A study by Nur [7] mentioned the

advantages of watching a cultural movie as a tool to develop learners' cross-cultural understanding. The participants of her study believed that studying cross-cultural practice is essential to prevent them from cultural shock in the future. Likewise, Barwani, Mekhlafi and Neisler [8] agreed that developing cultural awareness is beneficial for enabling cultural values exchange in Oman setting, specifically for English teachers who teach expatriate. Another research conducted by Bell and Riol [9] demonstrated the importance of cross-cultural understanding in multicultural basketball teams. The result of their study revealed that those who were culturally sensitive exhibited a significant positive relationship with collective efficacy. Similar to this, the research carried out by Zang [10] highlights the importance of cross-cultural understanding and cultural adjustment to aid expatriates in better adjustment to overseas assignments. In addition, research by Prest [11], with its focus on promoting cross-cultural understanding in music education, underlined the importance of cross-cultural understanding to promote Indigenous cultural practices in one's school. This may help educators apply the culturally appropriate curriculum and pedagogy in their schools. Overall, these prior studies have shown that cross-cultural understanding plays an essential role in creating and protecting good international relationships.

This current research, with its focus on cross-cultural understanding in Emily in Paris Series, aims to answer this research question: 'To what extent does Cross-Cultural Understanding portrayed in Emily in Paris Series: Season 1?' The answer of this research is expected to provide a better understanding of how people from certain countries differently and culturally behave in a certain situation. Thus, this article will be beneficial for those who intend to work or study abroad to help them develop cultural sensitivity and as a reference for them to avoid cultural shock.

2. Method

This current study adopts a qualitative method, specifically the descriptive qualitative method as it focuses on providing an in-depth examination and understanding of cultural behaviors and experiences [12]. As a matter of fact, the study of language may be quite complex. Thus, to uncover this complexity, the writer conducted a qualitative method to describe the language phenomenon and its characteristics which involve naturalistic data. The goal of this research is to discover how or why something has occurred. In this study, the researcher conducted secondary research, where the data were collected from the existing data in the form of transcription from tvwriting.co.uk.

The researcher specifically chose Emily in Paris Season 1: Episodes 1 and 2 as in those episodes, the main character – Emily, a young American woman who has just moved to Paris – encounters several cultural experiences, which displayed cross-cultural understanding. These episodes portrayed Emily's struggle to fit in as a newcomer. Thus, there are many cross-cultural points to be examined in Episode 1 and Episode 2. Below are the steps of how the researcher collected the data and analyzed it [13]:

1. Gathering qualitative data from Emily in Paris Season 1: Episodes 1 and 2 from a transcription available on tvwriting.co.uk. This research is more holistic and evidently involves a rich collection data to gain an in-depth understanding of the individual's behaviour, perspectives, and attitudes.
2. Coding qualitative data manually. Here the researcher organized the data to identify themes in it and the relationships between these themes. This includes an inductive exploration of the data to identify recurring themes, patterns, or concepts. The themes conducted in this research are related to cross-cultural experiences, cultural clashes, and cross-cultural understanding.
3. Compiling the data in a spreadsheet.
4. Analyzing the data to find meaningful insights using relevant theories.
5. Creating subcategories based on the key findings to improve the quality of insights.
6. Reporting the result (the data are fully developed and the focus is to present the narrative to the reader).

3. Results and Discussion

The results of this study have demonstrated the advantages of a movie as a learning medium. This movie has displayed multiple occurrences of cross-cultural understanding where learners may subsequently draw benefits from it. Below are the themes which have been subclassified into two points:

3.1. The difference in the style of interaction

In this movie, Emily engaged in cross-cultural interaction quite frequently in Paris. In point of fact, cross-cultural communication is associated with the exchange of information, ideas, and notion between people belonging to different lingua-cultural backgrounds. Below are the data which summarize the different styles of cross-cultural interaction in Episodes 1 and 2.

Data 1:

> *Sylvie*   *: Paul, I'd like to introduce you to.. Emily. The American girls who has come to work with us. Emily, Monsieur Brossard is the owner of Savoir.*
>
> *Emily*   *: (Extends her hand) Emily Cooper. Nice to meet you Monsieur Brossard.*
>
> *Jean Paul*   *: Ahh, it's a pleasure. Welcome to Paris! (grabbing her hand, then kisses her once on both cheeks)*
>
> *Emily*   *: Oh.. (awkwardly)*

(Emily in Paris/Season 1/Episode 1/09:31)

The excerpt in data 1 depicts different ways of greetings between Americans and French. As stated by Herron [3], culture includes not only arts or poetry but also the complexity of language and cultural behavior. The dialogue above demonstrates the distinctive ways of greeting for the first time between those who just met. Emily, an American woman, has a culturally perspective that the courtesy of greeting someone for the first time in a workplace is shaking hands. She believed that grasping hands followed by a brief up-and-down motion is a gesture of greeting in general. Yet, the French common greeting is called "la bise" or positioning one's cheek against another's, making a kiss sound, then repeating it on both sides. That is the reason why Emily awkwardly said, "Oh.." since her right hand was not "well-received" by Jean Paul. This excerpt confirms Mattoo [6] who asserted that one of the issues to be considered in cross-cultural communication is the style of interaction.

Data 2:

> *Emily*   *: For those of you who haven't met me, I'm Emily Cooper, and I'm so excited to be here in Paris. I'm looking forward to getting to know each and every one of you, and, likewise, having you get to know me.*
>
> *Luc*   *: (Raising hand).*
>
> *Emily*   *: Your name, monsieur?*
>
> *Luc*   *: My name is Luc.*
>
> *Emily*   *: Yes, Luc?*
>
> *Luc*   *: Why are you shouting?*
>
> *Emily*   *: (Showing an embarrassed smile) Sorry..*

(Emily in Paris/Season 1/Episode 1/11:32)

Another distinctive style of interaction is the degree of loudness in a business meeting. In data 2, Emily excitedly opened a discussion in front of her French colleague. Surprisingly, her new colleague, Luc, thought she was talking too loud. According to Mattoo [6], some Americans perceived that

loudness suggested expressiveness, passion, and confidence. French, in contrast, are portrayed as soft-spoken people in this movie. Thus, communication turbulence unavoidably occurred due to Emily's lack of cross-cultural understanding. To overcome this, Emily immediately apologized and continued her speech in a low voice.

Data 3:

Emily met Antoine Lambert for the first time.

Jean Paul   : *Antoine, of course, owns Maison Lavaux, and he is the best nose in France.*

Emily   : *Oh! Well.. it's.. it's very symmetrical.*

Sylvie, Antoine, Jean Paul: (laugh)

Emily   : *(Confused)*

Antoine   : *(Smiles) Not literally my nose. A nose is what we call the perfumer, the one who composes the scent.*

(Emily in Paris/Season 1/Episode 2/05:31)

The excerpt in data 3 has demonstrated Emily's lack of understanding of French expression, which is the figurative meaning of nose. In the movie, the nose is associated with a perfume maker, while Emily thought that the 'nose' they were talking about has a literal meaning. This naturally occurred due to the fact that Emily did not have that conceptualization in her mind. In fact, conceptualization refers to fundamental cognitive processes in one's mind. This is culturally learned and it may shape one's idea about something. This result confirms Levine [1] who stated that one of the aspects of culture is communication style. In the above-mentioned dialogue, the French portrayed their communication style by implying the term which might not be familiar to those who do not belong to their cultural members.

Data 4:

Sylvie   : *Are you crazy? You don't talk about work at a party.*

Emily   : *He asked me.*

Sylvie   : *Well, then you change the subject.*

(Emily in Paris/Season 1/Episode 2/06:50)

The data 4 is the dialogue between Sylvie and Emily at a party. Prior to that, Emily has just talked to another character – Antoine – and she had a long elaboration about a pharmaceutical product she has successfully sold and how digital marketing positively affected sales. She highlighted the immense impact of digital marketing to boost sales and how to optimize contents for audience. Unfortunately, everyone in the room frowned and felt uncomfortable when Emily talked about business at a party. This phenomenon shows that the French culturally have respect for time off and do not mix business and pleasure.

3.2. The concept of time, space, and cultural trait

Data 5:

Emily	: This is the fifth floor.
Property Agent	: In France, first the ground floor, then the first floor, then the second floor, and so on.
Emily	: That's weird.
Property Agent	: Non, c'est normal (No, it's normal).

<div align="right">(Emily in Paris/Season 1/Episode 1/05:46)</div>

The above-mentioned dialogue in data 5 portrayed Emily's confusion about the concept of the space, particularly storey. This dialogue occurred when Emily has just moved to Paris and unloaded her things. She would be living on the fifth floor of the apartment and she had to take the stairs to get to the fifth floor. However, when she thought that was the fifth floor, it appeared that it was still the fourth floor. In fact, Emily has a concept that the first floor was also called the first floor. Yet, in France, the first floor is called the ground floor. This miscommunication occurred due to the fact that conceptualization in Emily's mind is built and learned from her experience. This is the fundamental building and it may be different across cultures. As a matter of fact, this data endorses Rachmawati [4] who confirms that one of the cultural aspects that shape our views about the world is cultural perspective.

Data 6:

Julian	: What are you doing?
Emily	: I've been here since 08.30.
Julian	: Pourquoi? We open at 10.30.

<div align="right">(Emily in Paris/Season 1/Episode 1/17:15)</div>

This excerpt from data 6 demonstrates the different concepts of time, specifically morning arrival between Americans and the French. Emily came to work at 08.30 am as it has always been her mourning routine in the United States. Yet, she did not acknowledge that work starts at 11.30 am in French, specifically in the office she worked at. As suggested by Mattoo [6] the concept of time should be seriously considered as time works variously in several countries.

Data 7:

Emily	: Ugh. This steak isn't cooked at all.
Waitress	: The chef tells me the steak is correct.
Emily	: Well, correct for him, but not for me.
Mindy	: You know what, I'll take yours, you take mine.
Emily	: No. Come on. The customer's always right.
Mindy	: See, no, here, the customer is never right.

> Emily   : Well, maybe I'll educate the chef a little bit about customer service.
>
> Mindy   : You think you're gonna change the entire French culture by sending back a steak?
>
> (Emily in Paris/Season 1/Episode 1/14:27)

Data 7 displays distinctive cultural traits in America and French. Emily thought that the phrase "the customer's always right" – which is when staffs give the highest priority to a customer – could be applied universally. Nonetheless, in the French culture, customers are apparently not king. In fact, customers might make mistakes, turn out to be wrong, or get confused. Thus, this excerpt is in tune with Levine [1] who suggested that each culture may have its own values, and these values might differ from each other.

4. Conclusion

This article explores cross-cultural understanding in Emily in Paris Series Season 1: Episodes 1 and 2 and how culturally different actions are represented. The findings of this study point out the distinctive attitudes and behaviour between Americans and the French, e.g. the greeting rituals, the ideas of business and personal space, idiomatic expression, and the concept of time and space. The cultural shock portrayed by Emily in this movie is normally common as a result of living in an unfamiliar situation. Cultural adjustment is necessary to minimize conflict caused by miscommunication across cultures. In summation, this current research corroborates the relevant theories about cross-cultural understanding; that language and culture have a homologous relationship; that language and culture are closely related.

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