

**CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN SELECT NOVELS OF
AMY TAN WITH ALLUSION TO HOFSTEDE'S THEORY**

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Abstract

Culture can be pointed as a particular way of life, combined with particular patterns of beliefs, values, symbols, habits and activities that are shared, lived or expressed by young people. The fundamental conflicts of twentieth century America was between two cultures- an older culture, labeled as Puritan-republican, producer-capitalist culture and a newly emerging culture of abundance. It was cultural and social, never merely or even centrally political. When we take up cross-cultural societies, people face lots of problems that involve the necessity of choosing among conflicting goals, long-range against short-range concerns. The paper aims at bringing Hofstede's cultural theory with its dimensions in Tan's Novels.

Keywords: Culture, Conflicts, Beliefs, Activities, Dimensions, Theory

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Culture is defined as the ways, forms and patterns of life in which socially identifiable groups interact with their environment and express their symbolic and material existences. Young people experience the conditions of their lives, define them and respond to them, and in the process, they produce unique cultural forms and practices that become the expressions and products of their own experiences. Culture can be pointed as a particular way of life, combined with particular patterns of beliefs, values, symbols, habits and activities that are shared, lived or expressed by young people. The Orientalist cultural assumptions, which obliterate the differences between Chinese and themselves. Chinese immigrants create the impression that they could identify with mainstream America.

Amy Tan's writings are a model of the writer's truism that the best subject lies close to home. Her domestic scenarios have the ring of authenticity, in part because she draws material from anecdotes and events that impact her own family, which is closely related to culture. Amy Tan in all her novels has portrayed the family emotions, which can be specifically told as cultural diversities. A product of culture proves to have its own genuine characteristics, such as standardization, stereotype, mendacity etc. The fundamental conflicts of twentieth century America was between two cultures- an older culture, labeled as Puritan-republican, producer-capitalist culture and a newly emerging culture of abundance. It was cultural and social, never merely or even centrally political. It is seen that the cultural conflicts in American history was between classes, between regions and sections, between urban and rural worlds, between native and immigrant population, between races and ethnic groups and most recently with gender, which is also considered as cultural groups.

The view of culture as characterizing societies or sub-societies in appropriate with the problems that involve by comparing societies as organized human systems or that call for the classification of societies according to one or another scheme. Anthropologists traditionally have acted on the assumption that most societies are not multicultural, that for each society there is one culture. They have seen multicultural societies as developing only in the wake of urbanism, economic specialization and social stratification.

When we take up cross-cultural societies, people face lots of problems that involve the necessity of choosing among conflicting goals, long-range against short-range concerns. Major of Amy Tan's works deal with the cultural perspective which can be compared with

Hofstede's cultural theory. This is a cross-cultural communication, which describes about the effects of a society's culture on the values and the values are related with the behavior by analysis of factor. Tan's novels are occupied with the beginnings, added to a history and ended to which Chinese American subjects born in the United States encounter general difficulties gaining easy access. Tan renders taping cultural roots as a preoccupation of American-born children seeking cultural connection with their mothers whose past lives in china are often shrouded in mystery. Serving as a source of cultural information and historical knowledge, parental figures are indispensable despite cultural tensions that usually define their relationship with their children; they continue to be primary link connecting American-born Chinese to ancestral culture.

In the beginning of all her novels, she has narrated the history of China in early 1920s and late 1940s, where they underwent lot of difficulties due to war and that is the reason they have to emigrate to the other place in search of shelter. Tan's novels briefly spells out about the emigration to America and their sufferings in the country by the Chinese and the Chinese born Americans. Cross-cultural communication is the communication within people with various cultural backgrounds, in different ways among themselves. In Hofstede's cultural dimension theory, there are six dimensions by which the culture of the people can be well characterized with that of Tan's novels.

Power Distance Index (PDI) expresses the degree to whom the members having less power of a society expect the power and which is well seen in Tan's novels. In *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Suyuan Woo and Pearl respectively try to mingle with the Americans but unfortunately the society would not accept them. They have the inferiority complex within them which tends to have low Power Distance Index.

Individualism Versus Collectivism (IDV) shows the high and low sides of the people. Individualism here represents the American people and the Collectivism denotes the Chinese. Individualism does not expect to take care of others and society. Collectivism expects the family and the society to be taken care. The families in the novels are always in the collectivism category which can be seen in the case of Suyuan Woo in *The Joy Luck Club* who will not be able to take decision of her own but in a collective category. In the case of Olivia in *The Hundred Secret Senses*, struggle a lot to win the heart of her husband but it has been a failure all the time. She is assisted by her sister Kwan to plan for things to win. The job is collective here, they are not able to think only for themselves.

Masculinity Versus Feminity (MAS) which shows the domination of the gender. The male dominating the female and vice versa. This is the common case today all over the world. In *The Hundred Secret Senses*, domination of female gender is well seen through the characters of Olivia and Kwan. When Olivia expects only love from him and he always kept on insulting her with his old girl friend Elza. She is hurt all the time but never gave up her struggle for him. Tan offers her characters life-altering opportunities, some of which derive from hardship and heartbreak. Rose Hsu Jordan in *The Joy Luck Club* battles post-separation despair by defying her manipulative husband and rejecting his bribe.

Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), indicates the countries which exhibit strong belief and behavior, and are intolerant of unorthodox behavior and ideas. And the societies which has weak UAI have more relaxed attitude. Both extents are seen in the novels of Tan. The attitude of LuLing in *The Bonesetter's daughter* seems to have high UAI and Suyuan Woo in *The Joy Luck Club* seems to have weak one because she has always been patient, even though she was not interested with the members of the club were commenting on her. The nature of her was so kind towards everyone in the club.

Long Term Orientation Versus Short Term Normative Orientation (LTO), intimates the community has some connection with its own past as in *The Bonesetter's Daughter* reveals the major theme of Past haunting the Present. The narration of the past is frequently done in the novels. Chinese long for this dimension because they are not able to cherish to their American born daughters. The Chinese have their own culture which the mothers expect from their daughters to follow but the surrounding society has not made them to go on with their mothers, which arised with a sort of dislike among between both of them.

Indulgence Versus Restraint (IND), is the final Hofstede's dimension which says Indulgence stands for a society that allows free gratification and Restraint which suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict norms. There is much of Restraint and little of Indulgence in Tan's novels. Though Pearl in *The Kitchen God's Wife* is free out the society, she can't be independent toward her mother at the beginning stage because she is filled with rules and restrictions to be followed. Though Winnie's point of view is wrong, pearl should be able to accept it. In *The Hundred Secret senses*, Olivia's mother was strict in the beginning and turned to Indulgence mode as she has to take up another partner in her life. She hands over the responsibility to Kwan, who is always in a Restraint mode. She has always been narrating the incidents that took place in china and the culture being followed there. Olivia was against Kwan in the beginning but in the later stages, they started admiring her and even followed all the habits told by her.

In the study of Hofstede's theory of Cross-cultural dimension, there is a study and comparison made with Amy Tan's Novels. Tan explores the problems of miscommunication between Chinese mothers and their American-born daughters. Anthropologists have always been properly insisted that culture is learned. From the learner's point of view, the problem is to learn what the expectations are in terms of which others act. The understanding arrived at regarding the expectations of one's parents is applied to other adults. At times, culture is a source of conflict and sometimes a disaster. Communication is the primary concern for the source of culture. Thus, one comes to attribute concepts, beliefs and principles of action uniformly to a set of other people, finding that for one's own practical purposes, one can successfully do so. Hofstede's model is generally accepted as the most widespread composition of national cultures.

From this point of view, the sharing of culture by the members of a group is a matter of attribution. The apparent validity of this attribution is measured by its practical utility

for dealing effectively with members of the group in situations in which one deals with them.

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