

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the two novels, I conclude that miscommunication may happen in our daily life, although we do not want it or realize it. We can see in the novels that there are so many utterances which are interpreted in different ways with the speaker's intentions. The different interpretations cause miscommunication. The speakers do not realize that they have different understandings about what they say and hear.

From the two novels, the miscommunication occurs because the speaker and the hearer have different points of view. The two novels deal with two different cultures, namely Chinese and American. The stories of the two novels are about the relationship between mothers and daughters. The daughters are American-born Chinese, while the mothers are first generation immigrants who come to America to live. As a result, the mothers and the children have different cultural backgrounds. The parents still hold the values of Chinese culture whereas

the children hold the American culture. These differences cause conflict in their lives.

In The Joy Luck Club as well as Kitchen God's Wife, the miscommunication is portrayed because of the different cultural backgrounds, Chinese and American. Being raised in their cultural background, they act in accordance with the culture they believe to be true. So people of each culture are apt to think that their culture is better than the other. People tend to think that it is not important to learn about other cultures because they consider their culture the best. We can see that two different cultural backgrounds have a tendency to cause misunderstandings between people of different cultures.

In both novels, Tan describes the miscommunication between mothers and daughters which are mostly caused by their different cultural backgrounds, the daughters are actually Chinese and they physically look like Chinese. Because they have grown up as Americans, they do only know very little about Chinese culture. Consequently, it is difficult for the daughters to understand their mothers although the mothers have good intention for them.

Those miscommunications can lead us to a face-saving act or a face-threatening act. Generally, if misunderstanding occurs in our communication, it means that a face-threatening act happens. We usually do not realize that we will do a face-threatening act before the hearer feels offended and gets angry. Those face-threatening acts generally happen because of the ignorance of the different cultural backgrounds the speaker and the hearer have.

Cultural background is important in communication. It does not mean that we will not have miscommunication anymore if we have learnt other cultures.

From my analysis, I can conclude that we can decrease the miscommunication if we know the cultural background of the people to whom we are talking. In The Joy Luck Club, Waverly and Lindo finally can appreciate each other after they realize their differences. They are tired of arguing with each other all the time. So one day, they can communicate with each other well. At that moment, Lindo, the mother, tells Waverly about China. Waverly can understand and respect her mother's being Chinese. For Lindo, if someone is Chinese, they can never let China off their mind. From that moment, when they have different points of view, they listen to each other. If misunderstanding occurs, they do not consider it rude or offended, but they realize that they are just different.

The same condition happens in the second novel, Kitchen God's Wife. Winnie and Pearl have a bad relationship. They usually misinterpret each other's intention and it leads to be a face-threatening act. But then after they talk to each other, it reveals that the miscommunication happens because they have different cultural backgrounds. All these years, those miscommunications caused by different cultural backgrounds make Winnie feel afraid that Pearl will think that she is a bad mother. But actually, Pearl finds it difficult to understand her mother. She keeps thinking that her mother does not love her. This happens because her mother never expresses her love verbally, like other Chinese people do. But after they have a conversation, talk to each other, they can understand it. And in the end, Winnie can play her role as a real mother who takes care of her daughter in her sickness.

On the other hand, there are cases that conflicts cannot be avoided. For instance, someone has a good intention to another one; however, the other person

takes his intention wrongly. As a result, these two people cannot find the meeting point of their opinions. Worst of all, this can end only in regrets. There is no turning point. This tragic situation can be avoided if the two people have a better insight concerning two different cultures. For example like in The Joy Luck Club, Jing-Mei “June” Woo cannot fix her relationship with her mother. She realizes her mother’s good intention after her mother has passed away. So she can only regret it.

In my analysis, most miscommunication occurs between parents and children. For example, we can find the miscommunication between Rich and Lindo in The Joy Luck Club, and between Phil and Winnie in Kitchen God’s Wife. Although the Americans have a close relationship with their daughters, they do not have a close relationship with their mothers-in-law. Therefore, it is expected to be a face-saving act. On the other hand, because they have forgotten the importance of knowing others’ cultural backgrounds, face-threatening acts happen. In addition, I discover that when uttering the words, our utterance reflects our cultural backgrounds, as it is mentioned by Gumperz in his theory about macro-level social meaning. What a speaker really wants to convey through the utterances is in fact the micro-level social meaning.

I also find that in the novels, Amy Tan wants to make the relationship between mother and daughter closer. Basically, parents always want the best for their children. But again, the cultural gaps between them cause misunderstanding between them. Learning the differences can help people to understand each other better. Someone should not forget where they come from. Every culture has its

own strengths and weaknesses. There is no perfect culture in the world. So we have to respect other cultures.

In conclusion, I can say that we must be careful in uttering words to somebody else, either they are familiar with us or only strangers. It is important for us to learn about other cultural backgrounds besides ours. It does not mean that after we have learnt about other cultural backgrounds we can guarantee that there will be no miscommunication. If we can understand other cultures, we can at least try to avoid misunderstanding.