



Characters' Prejudice in Maugham's "Mr. Know All" (1924)

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Abstract

This study aims at analyzing the types and the impacts of prejudice in Maugham's "Mr. Know All." Using close reading approach focusing on the specific details of the story deeper meaning with the theory of prejudice, the researcher reveals the prejudice types of the characters as well as their impacts. The result of the study is that the characters do prejudice to each other and have the impacts on the characters. Such types of prejudice as stereotype, categorization, discrimination, and social learning as well as the impacts of the prejudice on the characters are evidences that the researcher's study has the novelty.

Keywords: *categorization; discrimination; social learning; stereotype*

INTRODUCTION

It is not the first thing that many people talk about differences. Since creating human civilization, God has given them a reason to understand their new life which is different from their first environment. God creates one human being with another human being with other thoughts. God also creates a group or environment occupied by people who have ideas that they have been agreed. Not only that, but God also creates various diverse groups with their

characteristics. There are differences between one group and another, and God also creates compatibility between them to complement each other's differences. These differences include differences in thinking, cultural differences, religious differences, racial or ethnic differences, language differences, and occupational differences. Talking about these differences, they are all interrelated. It is like two people with different backgrounds immediately meeting somewhere in their minds. There are differences from the other person.

Human thought is progressing along with the development of time and technology. Humans can create various new things supported by their environment. The characteristics of each strong group make the group one claim that it is better than the other groups. Therefore, there is a prejudice that meeting new people can do harms and hurts them. Prejudice is a trait a person has in judging others who are considered different. The differences referred to in prejudice are differences in culture, habits, and descent of others. It can cause someone to have a prejudiced attitude because they think their thoughts are the most correct among others. A person performs this trait to protect himself from excessive expectations of others. Prejudice can start when a person experiences childhood (Abrams, 2010). So do not be surprised if discrimination and fights occur among children. However, their arguments do not last long when children fight over these prejudices. Unlike adults, they tend to find the truth and assume that their prejudices are correct. Appearance and race can create a person's stereotype or prejudice (Mr. Know All / by W. Somerset Maugham, n.d.). So, before we judge the nature and attitude of a person, it would be nice to know them first. Do not let our judgments create stereotypes for others.

Further, prejudice refers to a person's likes, opinions, or judgments directed at specific people. These are attitudes that cause, support, or justify discrimination. The nature of prejudice tends to judge someone excessively (Rouse et al., 2011). Balmores & Paulino (2020), quoting from Dovidio & Gaertner (1999), state that prejudice is a negative attitude towards a person or group unfairly.

Social interactions synonymous with violence, hatred, bullying, or bad behavior are the definition of prejudice (Durrheim et al., 2015). Prejudice often arises in social life due to a mismatch between beliefs. The mismatch and incompatibility can lead to stereotypes or assume that their group is superior to others (Dovidio et al., 2005). As an evaluative, prejudice is considered a shift in a person's or group's attitudes that arise from their social role (Eagly et al., 2004).

Prejudice is a negative attitude that a person has towards another person. Many people have and form prejudices to improve or protect themselves regarding self-concept and image (Baron & Byrne, 2004). Negative attitudes can occur towards ethnicity, people, race, religion, gender, police, parties, officials, and others (Ruslin, n.d.).

Ruslin also cites six approaches to prejudice Allport (1958) in his book "The Nature of Prejudice." First, the historical approach must be distinct from the background of the relationship between two or more groups in the past before significant differences occurred. Second, the sociocultural approach includes social mobility, urbanization, competition, conflict, and changes in roles and

functions in a group. Third, the situational approach occurs because of the difference between what existed in the past and something new. Fourth, the personality and psychodynamic approaches view prejudice as a result of internal conflict in a group. Fifth, the phenomenological approach emphasizes the individual's perception rather than the objective world. Finally, the object stimulus approach lies in other groups' perceived behaviors and characteristics.

Tafsir Ibn Kathir explains that prejudice is a bad attitude if clear signs and evidence do not accompany it. Prejudice can be allowed as long as the signs and evidence are clear. There are two factors in the emergence of prejudice: individual and social. Individual factors usually arise due to psychodynamic theory, biological theory, and authoritarian personality. Meanwhile, social factors arise due to social identity, social comparison, and strong social categorization (Pharamita, 2021).

Stereotypical traits can be categorized into negative or positive stereotypes. Some people can categorize others based on both. For example, black men are generally perceived as sarcastic, criminal, drug-using, etc. However, positive stereotypes result, such as a black man tends to be considered a basketball player or musician. Most people also assume that white men are not portrayed as criminal or sarcastic and that good things tend to be portrayed.

In addition, categorization, discrimination, and social learning are also part of prejudice. Categorization is where a person can be prejudiced against others because of differences in lineage. Lineage can be seen in a person's DNA or physical characteristics and the family tree. Discrimination is treating someone differently than usual and can even be considered unfair. For example, John accepted Mark to work in his company because he is a man and rejected Jeselyn because she is a woman. John assumes that men have more energy than women. At the same time, social learning is claiming a person's nature or behavior from the habits or judgments of others, like someone judged to be chatty or arrogant because they hear other people's words or lousy behavior towards that person (Savitra, 2018).

Many literary works have the theme of prejudice, one of which is the short story "Mr. Know All" (1924) by William Somerset Maugham, caused by differences in culture, outward appearance, and manners. The story takes place on a ship in international waters, the Pacific Ocean, sailing from San Francisco (United States) to Yokohama (Japan). In the story, the narrator meets someone who makes him always prejudiced against him. From the first time he hears Max Kelada's name, the Narrator immediately dislikes him. Mr. Kelada's attitude makes the narrator dislike him, and all the passengers on the ship dislike him too. They are not ashamed to call him "Mr. Know-it-all." Nonetheless, Mr. Kelada took the call as a compliment to him because he had more knowledge to share. Due to the fact that what happens on the ship as well as the elaborated theory of prejudice above, the researcher analyzes types of prejudice: categorization, categorization, discrimination, and social learning as well as the impacts of prejudice on the characters.

There has been some writers dealing with prejudice as well as with this novel. In their article, Abidin et al., (2001) analyzes that Acehese students claim

themselves as a very religious society and consider Javanese and Sundanese relatively less religious. Acehnesse students say this because Aceh Province is dubbed the "Porch of Mecca." In addition, Papuan students also have a high level of prejudice against the Sundanese. Papuan students' assessment of the Sundanese tends to be negative in Avoidance and Morality.

In analyzing "Mr. Know All" (1924), Kurraz (2015) uses New Criticism to analyze the plot-subplot and characterization in Somerset Maugham's *Mr. Know All: A New Critical Review*. The writer uses a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the main characters and find the dominant themes in the story. The writer has successfully shown that the narrator's character, who has prejudice, ethnicity, and racism, then transforms into a positive character to Mr. Kelada.

This story is also used by Mbon (2022), who discusses the first-person point of view in contrast to globalization in Somerset Maugham's "Mr. Know All." The article aims to analyze the protagonist as an obstacle to globalization. The story underlines that the protagonist can make travelers. It is thus concluded that the narrator has an unpleasant personality, as evidenced by the observation of the diction used by Maugham.

The fact that Abidin dealing with the Acehness students, Kurraz only explains a little about the prejudice possessed by the characters, whilst, Mbon analyzes the protagonist as a barrier to globalization, the researcher in this study tries to find what types of prejudice influenced by cultural differences are as well as the impacts of prejudice in William Somerset Maugham's "Mr. Know All" (1924).

METHODS

Research Approach

The approach used in this study is close reading approach referring to the literary analysis that focuses on the specific details of a passage or text to discern deeper meaning. The meaning derived from the close reading is the reader's interpretation of the passage or text. A close reading should never be the first reading of a text. Before focusing on the details of a text or passage, it is essential to understand the text as a whole (Pickering, 2019).

Kind of Research

This research is a literary research whose main sources are taken from Maugham's "Mr. Know All" (1924) from which the researcher quotes the words that have things to do with types of prejudice influenced by cultural differences as well as the impacts of prejudice. Thus, not all items in the works are worth quoting here.

Data Collection Technique

The researcher collects the data in two tables in a note; one table of the data is with the stereotype type of prejudice, the categorization type of prejudice, the discrimination type of prejudice and the social learning type of prejudice. The other table is with the impacts of prejudice. Therefore, this kind of technique makes the researcher easy to analyze the problems.

Data Analysis

The researcher elaborates the stereotype type of prejudice, the categorization type of prejudice, the discrimination type of prejudice as well as the social learning type of prejudice and second the researcher elaborates the impacts of prejudice based on the understanding of the prejudice mentioned in the introduction in order that the researcher confirms that the quotations are worth quoting.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Types of Prejudice in "Mr. Know All"

Stereotype

Stereotypes are judgments of others, and in this story, the Narrator stereotypes Mr. Kelada. The judgment comes from observing Mr. Kelada's physical features that are different from those of the English, namely:

"Mr. Kelada was short and of a sturdy build, clean-shaven and dark skinned, with a fleshy, hooked nose and very large lustrous and liquid eyes. His long black hair was sleek and curly. He spoke with a fluency in which there was nothing English and his gestures were exuberant" (Maugham, 1924, page 2).

The physical characteristics mentioned above describe the physical characteristics of a Levantine person, even though Mr. Kelada's passport shows that he is British. Mr. Kelada is short, dark-skinned, with big eyes and curly hair. What amazes the Narrator is that Mr. Kelada can speak other than English (American) fluently, even though his passport shows that he is British.

Categorization

The Narrator toward Mr. Kelada

The Narrator's prejudice arises when he learns that his cabin mate's name does not include the words Brown or Smith. The researcher found a quote in paragraph 1 that clearly shows that the Narrator dislikes Mr. Kelada. The sentence is reinforced by the phrase "I did not like Mr. Kelada" (Maugham, 1924, page 3), which is mentioned four times.

"But when I was told the name of my companion my heart sank. It suggested closed portholes and the night air rigidly excluded. It was bad enough to share a cabin for fourteen days with anyone (I was going from San Francisco to Yokohama), but I should have looked upon it with less dismay if my fellow passenger's name had been Smith or Brown" (Maugham, 1924, page 1).

In the first paragraph and the first sentence, "I was prepared to dislike Max Kelada even before I knew him" (Maugham, 1924, page 1), the Narrator already dislikes Mr. Kelada. The Narrator probably would not have worried if his friend was of Smith or Brown descent. When he finds out that his cabin-mate has the name "Max," the Narrator is immediately disappointed and thinks all sorts of things about Max Kelada. It would have been expected if the assumption had

ended at the second and subsequent meetings. However, this is different from the Narrator, who dislikes Max Kelada to the point of almost hating him.

Mr. Ramsay toward Mr. Kelada

Like Mr. Kelada, Ramsay is a dogmatic person who explains things without wanting Criticism. "He was as dogmatic as Mr. Kelada and resented bitterly the Levantine's cocksureness. The discussions they had were acrimonious and interminable" (Maugham, 1924, page 3). They were unwilling to budge and strengthen their arguments, and Ramsay resented the Levantine's cockiness, Mr. Kelada's cockiness. The conversations that ensued were long and fierce. Even at the pre-dinner gathering, Ramsay and Mr. Kelada discussed pearl farming until an argument broke out between them. Ramsay maintained his belief that his wife's pearls were fake, while Mr. Kelada said they were genuine.

Ramsay's prejudice against Mr. Kelada came when he learned that his friend was Levantine. He claims that Mr. Kelada is Levantine because of his physical features that show that he is different from him. Because Mr. Kelada is Levantine and they are both dogmatic, their discussion becomes an argument.

Discrimination

The discrimination in the story "Mr. Know All" is done by the Narrator to Mr. Kelada. Discrimination itself means treating someone differently from others, meaning that the Narrator is ignorant when meeting Mr. Kelada and other cabin dwellers. The significant difference is shown after Mr. Kelada calls the Narrator without the title "Mister" before his name.

"I do not wish to put on airs, but I cannot help feeling that it is seemly in a total stranger to put mister before my name when he addresses me. Mr. Kelada, doubtless to set me at my ease, used no such formality. I did not like Mr. Kelada. I had put aside the cards when he sat down, but now, thinking that for this first occasion our conversation had lasted long enough, I went on with my game" (Maugham, 1924, page 2).

As Mr. Kelada walked over and sat beside the Narrator, he immediately put away his playing cards. It is not that Mr. Kelada is not chatty and talks about everything with everyone else. The Narrator initially wanted to end the card game, but she picked it up and played it again to avoid being bored by Mr. Kelada's chatter.

Social Learning

The Narrator toward Mr. Kelada

The social learning that the Narrator does when he sees Mr. Kelada's messy luggage. This attitude arises because the same activity is again present in one person or another. It causes prejudice to emerge and may be stronger than before.

"I did not like the look of it; there were too many labels on the suitcases, and the wardrobe trunk was too big. He had unpacked his toilet things, and I observed that he was a patron of the excellent

Monsieur Coty; for I saw on the washing-stand his scent, his hairwash and his brilliantine" (Maugham, 1924, page 1).

His suitcase was full of stickers, and his toilet articles were in the sink. Being different from Mr. Kelada, it was easy for the Narrator to infer the customs of the Levantine environment. However, not all Levantines have bad habits. Monsieur Coty is a French brand with a distinctive smell, and Mr. Kelada collects some of its items.

Mr. Ramsay toward Mr. Kelada

Mr. Ramsay overheard much talk about Mr. Kelada being pretentious, arrogant, and dogmatic. It is called the social learning that Mr. Ramsay receives, where he is easily influenced by what others say about Mr. Kelada. Regarding the pearls that Mrs. Ramsay wears, they are willing to fight and bet, which is shown in the following conversation:

"Can't I? If I get a chance of easy money like that I should be all sorts of a fool not to take it." "But how can it be proved?" she continued. "It's only my word against Mr. Kelada's." "Let me look at the chain, and if it's imitation I'll tell you quickly enough. I can afford to lose a hundred dollars," said Mr. Kelada (Maugham, 1924, page 5).

Mr. Kelada asked Mr. Ramsay to bet 100 dollars on the truth of the pearls Mrs. Ramsay was wearing. He was also curious about how much Mr. Kelada knew about the pearls. When he was about, Mr. Kelada saw Mrs. Ramsay, who was pale because her secret would soon be revealed in front of the crowd. Mr. Kelada, who saw that, immediately undid his intention. Ultimately, Mr. Kelada lies to others to protect Mrs. Ramsay, even though his pride is at stake.

He took out his pocketbook and from it a hundred dollar note. He handed it to Ramsay without a word. "Perhaps that'll teach you not to be so cocksure another time, my young friend," said Ramsay as he took the note (Maugham, 1924, page 6).

Mr. Ramsay said, "It will teach you not to be arrogant" to Mr. Kelada for his defeat. As the gossip on the ship spread, Mr. Ramsay claimed that his young friend was a snob, which was a lie to cover up his wife's secret.

The Impact of Prejudice in "Mr. Know All"

Prejudice often occurs due to differences in opinions, views, and physicality. Prejudice occurs not only in individuals but also in a group. Nowadays, prejudice has become a social phenomenon that will be difficult to separate from our social life. Regardless of the type of prejudice, everyone who commits or is a victim of prejudice will be affected.

The Impact on the Narrator

In the story "Mr. Know All," the Narrator is the first person to have prejudice towards his interlocutor, Max Kelada. In addition, he is also prejudiced against Ramsay and his wife. The impact obtained by the Narrator is quite a lot and mainly occurs because of his attitude towards Max Kelada.

The Narrator always thinks negatively about Max Kelada because of the statement "I disliked Max Kelada" at the beginning until he mentions it several times. This impact is vital for the Narrator and does not impact the other characters. Whatever Max Kelada does, in the eyes of the Narrator, he is always wrong, overreacting, and different from others.

Because he always has negative thoughts toward Max Kelada and others, he often experiences anxiety, unhappiness, and worry. It is a natural thing to get when someone is negative thinking. If it continues, his days are always less grateful, and he always gets negative energy.

As a result of often getting negative energy, a person or this Narrator will create enmity with others. It was, moreover, coupled with negative thinking in the brain that always creates and looks for other people's mistakes to continue antagonizing them. It can also affect others who are directly involved.

The Impact on Max Kelada

In this story, Max Kelada is the victim of prejudice from the Narrator, Ramsay, and his wife. Even though he received prejudiced words or actions, Max Kelada remained kind to others. He does not intend to retaliate against the Narrator, Ramsay, and his wife, let alone hate them. With the act of prejudice, he had few friends, and others underestimated his knowledge during the journey from New York to Yokohama.

The impact on Ramsay

Ramsay often wanted to pick a fight with Max Kelada when defending his wife that the pearls she was wearing were fake. The good prejudice that Ramsay created for his wife persisted because he was loyal and felt that Max Kelada had doubted the truth. The prejudice was given to Max Kelada because he was pretentious about the purity of the pearls Mrs. Ramsay was wearing. Ramsay even accepted a \$100 bet to keep the prejudice from Max Kelada. Another effect Ramsay had was that he thought everyone was the same. Most people do not like her modest appearance despite being a consular officer in Japan. That is why other people intend to bring his family down.

The Impact on Ramsay's Wife

Mrs. Ramsay is a beautiful and modest woman, and Mrs. Ramsay's pearls have been the subject of her husband's quarrel with Max Kelada. When Max Kelada said that he owned a pearl business in Japan and knew the type of pearls Mrs. Ramsay was wearing, she became negative thinking and anxious. She feared Max Kelada would expose the lie she had concealed from her husband. She thought that Max Kelada was talking and did not know the truth, so what started as a casual attitude became anxious about the fact that the pearls were genuine.

CONCLUSION

The researcher finds it difficult to apply the types of prejudice since there are some writers having dealt with prejudice as well as the same novel. However,

through hard work, the researcher is able to get the gap of the study. That the impacts of prejudice: stereotype, categorization, discrimination, and social learning as well as the impacts of the prejudice on the characters are the finding of the study are evidences that the researcher's study has the novelty.

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