

A Study on the Movie “Flipped” according to the Communication Principle of Adapting to Others

Sun Yuan

Lyceum of the Philippines University, Manila, the Philippines
Furong College, Hunan University of Arts and Science
Email: 28767314@qq.com

Received for publication: 11 July 2023.

Accepted for publication: 04 September 2023.

Abstract

This paper analyzes the movie "Flipped" through the lens of the principle of adapting to others, with a focus on identifying the barriers to bridging cultural and gender differences depicted in the film. It also explores the ways the characters adapt to those who are different from them.

Keywords: Adapting to others, barriers, culture and gender

Introduction

"Flipped" is a heartwarming film that beautifully portrays the tale of a boy and a girl experiencing their first love as they grow up together from a very young age. The movie cleverly weaves two perspectives, presenting contrasting thoughts. One perspective is from the girl, Juli, who believes that Bryce, the male protagonist, secretly likes her but is too shy to admit it. The other perspective comes from Bryce, who initially dislikes Juli and goes to great lengths to avoid her. As the story unfolds, Bryce gradually discovers the unique and captivating qualities within Juli, leading to a change of heart.

Unfortunately, misunderstandings arise when Juli learns about Bryce's true feelings, causing her to question her own feelings for him and deliberately avoid him. However, as the story progresses, Bryce decides to mend the rift between them and plants a symbolic friendship tree in front of Juli's house. Through this gesture, they both let go of their misconceptions and prejudices, allowing their friendship to blossom once again.

Theoretical Framework

Culture and Gender

Culture is a complex concept that defies a clear and straightforward definition or distinct boundaries. It encompasses a wide range of elements, including values, beliefs, behaviors, and more. At the micro-level, culture influences the values, attitudes, and actions of specific groups, shaping social behavior within families, neighborhoods, and communities. On the macro-level, culture extends to external institutions that influence the infrastructure of societies, such as governmental systems, educational programs, religious practices, and the influential role of media as a major channel of macro-communication (Linda Stillman, 2006).

Gender is a significant aspect of culture. Gender differences in conversational style can be seen as cultural differences, leading to communication challenges between women and men that can be regarded as intercultural miscommunication. This proposition has elicited two main responses. One approach involves treating it as a hypothesis and empirically exploring whether "culture-based" conversational style differences can be attributed to socialization practices (Aki Uchida: 1997).

More recently, John Gray's book "Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus" has further exaggerated the nature of gender differences, suggesting that women and men are fundamentally distinct, even comparing them as if they were from different planets.

Perhaps the most obvious form of human diversity is gender—the division of human beings into female and male. As we pointed out in Chapter 2, a person's sex is determined by biology. Gender is the culturally constructed and psychologically based perception of one's self as feminine, masculine, androgynous (having both feminine and masculine traits) or transgender (biologically born one gender while psychologically and culturally living as the other gender). One's gender is learned and is socially reinforced by others as well as by one's life experience and genetics. (Beebe et al., 2009)

Barriers to Bridging Differences and Adapting to Others

Prejudice

Prejudice is a judgment we make based on the assumption that we already know all of the information we need to know about a person. To prejudge someone as inept, inferior, or incompetent based upon that person's ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, gender, or some other factor is a corrosive force that can raise significant barriers to effective communication. (Steven A. Beebe, 2009)

Different communication codes

The interpretation of nonverbal cues, leading to misunderstanding. (Steven A. Beebe, 2009)

Adapting to others

Seeking information is a very important way to adapt to others. Philosopher André Gide said, "Understanding is the beginning of approving." Prejudice often is the result of ignorance. Learning about another person's values, beliefs, and culture can help you understand his or her messages and their meaning. (Steven A. Beebe, 2009)

Methodology

Film Content Analysis was introduced in this paper. Watch the movie "Flipped" and meticulously document pivotal scenes and interactions between characters. Pay particular attention to how characters adapt their behaviors and expectations in various situations when dealing with others.

The other method is textual Analysis. Gather the movie script or dialogues and analyze the interactions and conversations between characters from the perspective of the "Adapting to Others Theory." This will aid in gaining a deeper understanding of the characters' psychology and motivations.

Materials and Analysis

All the materials are from the movie script and dialogues. I use Film content analysis and textual analysis methods to analyze these materials on the guidance of Communication Principle of Adapting to Others. Through film content analysis, we can examine various elements of the movie, such as character interactions, nonverbal cues, and visual symbolism. Through textual analysis, we can closely examine the dialogue between characters, identifying language patterns and rhetorical devices used to convey emotions and attitudes. Analyzing how characters speak about each other and their backgrounds can reveal underlying prejudices and stereotypes.

1) JULI: You're just visually challenged. I feel sorry for you.

BRYCE: "Visually challenged"? "Visually challenged"? This from the girl who lived in a house that was the joke of the neighborhood? They had bushes growing over windows and weeds all over the place. It bugged my dad bigtime.

In the movie, Juli expresses her belief that Bryce cannot appreciate the beauty in the world. This statement leaves Bryce feeling incredulous, as he holds a negative perception of Juli. In his eyes, Juli is someone who lives in an underprivileged household, unable to experience visually beautiful things. Bryce's dislike for Juli and the prejudice he carries in his heart contribute to his belief that Juli has no connection to the world of beauty.

The scene captures the clash of perspectives and preconceived notions between Juli and Bryce. Their differing backgrounds and experiences shape their perceptions of each other, creating a barrier to understanding and empathy. Juli's comment highlights her view of Bryce as someone who may be privileged but lacks the ability to truly appreciate life's beauty beyond material possessions.

2) PATSY: Well, the main thing is the eggs are okay. It's all settled.

BRYCE: Not for me. There was no way I was ever gonna eat anything that had anything to do with Juli Baker.

BRYCE: I'm not eating them.

PATSY: Well, why not?

BRYCE: Have you seen their yard? It's... There's not even any grass. It's all mud and chicken turds.

LYNETTA: Ew. Gross. Salmonella.

Juli believes that the Loskys have always been kind to her mother, and she wants to show her gratitude by giving them some eggs for free. Her kindness knows no bounds, and she sees nothing negative about Bryce. One reason for this is that she does not harbor any prejudice towards their families, and the other reason is her genuine fondness for Bryce. However, Bryce's perspective differs significantly.

In Bryce's eyes, he associates Juli's messy living conditions with the Loskys' judgment. He believes that the Loskys carry a prejudiced view that even the eggs from Juli must be contaminated. They never take the time to consider the state of the yard or the conditions in which the hens are raised. This reflects the extent of the Loskys' distrust and dislike for Juli, which manifests as a form of prejudice.

The Loskys' negative remarks about Juli's eggs, even suggesting they might have Salmonella, illustrate the depth of their distrust and aversion towards her. Their attitude reflects a clear case of prejudice, viewing Juli and her offerings with unwarranted skepticism and suspicion.

This portrayal in the movie sheds light on the damaging effects of prejudice on relationships and interactions. It demonstrates how preconceived notions and biases can cloud judgment and lead to a lack of empathy and understanding. Juli's perspective, characterized by kindness and an absence of prejudice, contrasts sharply with the Loskys' negative and distrustful stance.

3) GARRETT: A retard? Well, shoot, that ought to tell you something.

BRYCE: About what?

GARRETT: About Juli.

BRYCE: What are you saying?

GARRETT: The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

Garrett, too, harbors prejudice towards Juli. When Bryce confides in him about missing Juli and possibly having feelings for her, Garrett firmly dismisses it as mere guilt. He further insults Juli, using derogatory terms similar to those used by her uncle, reinforcing his negative perception of her.

This dialogue reveals Garrett's strong dislike for Juli; he attributes all negative aspects to her, without considering the underlying reasons behind her uncle's condition or her own personality.

Garrett's prejudiced attitude prevents him from seeing Juli in a fair and objective manner, overlooking any positive qualities she may possess. Instead, he associates any mishaps or negative incidents with Juli, reinforcing his preconceived bias. This dialogue exemplifies the harmful consequences of prejudice, as it creates a barrier between individuals and inhibits genuine exchange and understanding.

The film effectively portrays the detrimental effects of prejudice on interpersonal relationships. Garrett's refusal to see Juli beyond his preconceived notions hinders any potential for empathy or compassion. His prejudiced view of Juli serves as a reminder of how bias can distort perceptions and obstruct the ability to recognize the true essence of a person.

4) BRYCE: I mean, nothing would stop her. I was about to tell her to get lost when the weirdest thing happened. I couldn't believe it. There I was holding hands with this strange girl. How did I get into this mess?

JULI: His family had just moved into the neighborhood... and I'd gone over to help them. I'd been in the van all of two minutes when his dad sent him off to help his mom. I could see he didn't wanna go. So I chased after him to see if we could play a little before he got trapped inside. The next thing I know, he's holding my hand... and looking right into my eyes. My heart stopped. Was this it? Would this be my first kiss? - But then his mother came out.

In this particular scene, Bryce is attempting to distance himself from Juli. In his efforts to push her away, he extends his hand, unintentionally touching Juli's hand. However, Juli misinterprets this physical contact, believing that Bryce likes her. The situation exemplifies how two individuals can perceive the same event very differently due to a miscommunication of intentions.

Bryce's actions are driven by his desire to avoid Juli, but Juli misreads the signals, not fully comprehending the true meaning behind Bryce's attempt to distance himself. This misinterpretation creates a stark contrast in their perspectives, leading to conflicting views on the same incident. The scene demonstrates how one person's actions can convey a different message to another individual, resulting in a miscommunication of feelings and intentions.

In essence, the boy unknowingly conveys the wrong information, while the girl receives a misinterpreted communication code. This situation highlights the significance of effective communication, where the clarity of intentions and the accurate understanding of messages are crucial. Miscommunication, as illustrated in this scene, can lead to misunderstandings and further complicate relationships.

5) CHET: You know why the Bakers haven't fixed their yard?

STEVEN: Yeah, because he's too busy with his paint-by-numbers kit. CHET: They don't own that house. The landlord's supposed to maintain it. Mr. Baker puts every extra penny he has into caring for his brother.

GARRETT: Exactly. Of course, the place is a dump anyways.

BRYCE: It's not her fault. Her dad's got a retarded brother and all their money goes to helping him.

Chet's appreciation for Juli is evident as he genuinely likes her for the special qualities she possesses. He looks at Juli without any prejudice and actively seeks to befriend her, showing a genuine interest

in getting to know her and her family. This genuine approach allows him to understand the reasons behind their choices, such as why they don't clear their yard and why they lead a relatively simple life.

Gradually, Bryce begins to open his heart and sympathize with Juli. He no longer associates negative thoughts with her and stops running away from her. Instead, he makes an effort to accept her for who she is and embraces a more normal life with her. This transformation occurs because Bryce begins seeking more information about Juli, which enables him to understand why she behaves and speaks in certain ways.

The movie beautifully illustrates the power of seeking understanding through genuine communication. Chet's example shows that by approaching others without prejudice and actively learning about their lives, we can build meaningful connections and develop empathy for their choices and actions. As Bryce begins to adopt this approach, his perception of Juli changes, and he becomes more accepting and understanding of her.

Results

Based on the analysis of the materials, the result indicates a clear theme of prejudice and miscommunication present in the interactions between the characters, particularly between Juli and Bryce. Prejudice is depicted as a significant barrier to understanding and empathy, leading to negative perceptions and judgments of one another. On the other hand, miscommunication plays a role in how events are interpreted differently by the characters, leading to misunderstandings and complicating their relationships.

The movie portrays how biases and preconceived notions can cloud judgment, hinder genuine exchange, and obstruct the ability to recognize the true essence of a person. It highlights the importance of effective communication, where clarity of intentions and accurate understanding of messages are crucial to avoiding misinterpretations and misunderstandings.

However, it also demonstrates the potential for positive change and growth in characters like Bryce, who starts to transform and become more accepting and understanding of Juli once he seeks more information about her life and experiences.

Overall, the film's analysis reveals the impact of prejudice and miscommunication on relationships and the significance of seeking genuine understanding and empathy to overcome these barriers.

Discussion

The discussion of the analysis would likely focus on several key points related to the themes and implications presented in the materials.

Prejudice and its Impact

The analysis highlights how prejudice plays a central role in shaping the characters' perceptions of each other. Each character's preconceived notions about the others lead to negative judgments and hinder their ability to truly understand one another. The discussion could delve into the harmful effects of prejudice on relationships, empathy, and communication.

Miscommunication and its Consequences

The materials show how miscommunication leads to misunderstandings between characters, causing them to interpret events and actions differently. This misinterpretation contributes to the conflicts and complications in their relationships. The discussion could explore the significance of clear communication in avoiding misunderstandings and building stronger connections.

Empathy and Understanding

The analysis reveals how genuine empathy and understanding, as demonstrated by Chet, can bridge the gap between individuals from different backgrounds and lead to meaningful connections. The

discussion could explore the importance of approaching others without prejudice and seeking to understand their perspectives and life experiences.

Character Development

The materials illustrate how some characters undergo transformation and personal growth throughout the movie. The discussion could explore the factors that contribute to character development, such as exposure to new information and changing perspectives, and how this impacts their relationships with others.

Communication Principle of Adapting to Others

The analysis mentions the use of Communication Principle of Adapting to Others as a guiding method for the analysis. The discussion could delve into this communication principle and its application in the movie, exploring how adapting communication styles and approaches can lead to better understanding and more effective interactions.

Social Commentary

The themes of prejudice, miscommunication, and empathy presented in the materials may also serve as a platform for discussing broader societal issues. The movie's portrayal of these dynamics could be analyzed as a reflection of real-life situations and the importance of addressing prejudices and improving communication in the real world.

Emotional Impact and Viewer Response

The discussion could also touch upon how these themes and character dynamics evoke emotional responses from the audience. Viewers might reflect on their own experiences with prejudice, miscommunication, or empathy, making the movie a catalyst for self-reflection and discussions about interpersonal relationships.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of the materials from the movie reveals a compelling portrayal of prejudice, miscommunication, empathy, and character development. The themes showcased in the movie provide valuable insights into the dynamics of human interactions and the potential consequences of biased judgments and misunderstandings.

Differences in culture and gender are ever-present and pervasive in society. Even with a narrow definition of culture, individuals come from diverse backgrounds, leading to various dissimilarities during communication. Prejudice and different communication codes act as significant barriers to bridging these differences. Prejudice clouds people's judgment and destabilizes their thoughts, hindering healthy communication with others. Meanwhile, the existence of different communication codes can lead to numerous misunderstandings. However, these challenges are not insurmountable. By adopting the right approaches to exchange with others, uncomfortable feelings can dissipate swiftly. Learning useful ways to adapt to others proves invaluable in establishing friendships across different cultures.

On a positive note, the movie also highlights the transformative power of empathy and understanding. Characters like Chet exemplify the importance of approaching others without prejudice and seeking to understand their perspectives, leading to genuine connections and personal growth. The Communication Principle of Adapting to Others serves as a guiding method for analyzing the materials, showcasing how communication styles and approaches can influence the dynamics between characters and contribute to their evolving relationships. The movie's themes and character dynamics offer valuable social commentary, prompting viewers to reflect on their own experiences and attitudes towards prejudice, communication, and empathy in real-life scenarios.

One effective method to adapt to others is seeking information. Making an effort to understand more about others allows us to grasp the internal reasons behind their unique ways of speaking and acting.

By learning about their cultural background and experiences, we can gain insights into their perspectives and intentions. This knowledge empowers us to communicate more effectively, reducing misunderstandings and fostering meaningful connections.

In conclusion, embracing cultural and gender differences requires an open mind and a willingness to learn from others. Prejudice and communication barriers can be overcome through genuine efforts to understand and adapt to others. By seeking information and embracing empathy, we can break down the walls that separate us and establish authentic and harmonious relationships with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. The journey to bridging differences may require patience and understanding, but the rewards of friendship and mutual respect are immeasurable.

References

- Beebe, S. A., Beebe, S. J., & Ivy, D. K. (2009). *Communication: principles for a lifetime* (book alone), 3/e. Communication Principles for A Lifetime.
- Gray, J. (1992). *Men are from Mars, women are from Venus: A practical guide for improving communication and getting what you want in your relationships*. New York; Harper Collins.
- Stillman, Linda (2006). *Culture, Communication and Gender: Moving the MDGs Forward*. Global Watch.
- Uchida, Aki.(1997). Bringing the "Culture" Back In: A Culture Building Approach to Gender and Communication. *Women and Language*, 20(2):15-24.