

THE DYNAMICS OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIP: A NARRATIVE COMPARISON BETWEEN *HILLS LIKE WHITE ELEPHANTS AND DEAD STARS*

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Abstract

This research analyzes two short stories, "Hills Like White Elephants" by Ernest Hemingway and "Dead Stars" by Paz Marquez Benitez, with a focus on the influence of communication, perception, and cultural differences in shaping the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Through a qualitative approach with content analysis, this research shows how ineffective communication and different perceptions can hinder the development of interpersonal relationships. Analysis shows that in both stories, unclear communication and promises to express feelings honestly lead to conflict and conflict. Apart from that, cultural differences and social values also play an important role in shaping the perceptions and actions of the characters in the story. The results of this research provide a deeper understanding of the complexity of human relationships in different cultural and temporal contexts.

Keywords: Communication, Perception, Cultural Differences, Relationship Dynamics

INTRODUCTION

According to experts, literature is an expression of human expression in the form of written or oral works based on thoughts, opinions, experiences and feelings, all of which are realized in imaginative form, a mirror of reality, or original data wrapped in aesthetic packaging through the medium of language (Santoso, Abdulkarim, et al., 2023). Literary works can be divided into three main forms: poetry, drama, and prose. Folk prose has several types, namely myth, fairy tale and legend. Apart from that, prose literature also consists of various varieties such as short stories, romances and novels. Of the three, short stories are a literary genre that is relatively younger than poetry and novels. The history of short story writing in Indonesia recorded an important milestone in the early 1910s with contributions from Muhamad Kasim and Suman Hasibuan (Umamy, 2021).

According to Priyatni, a short story is a work of fictional literature. Short stories are short in terms of story content, number of actors, and number of words used (Priyatni, 2010). Characteristics of short stories: 1). The word count is less than 10,000

words, 2). The contents of the short story are fictional, 3). There is only one plot, 4). The form of writing is short, 5). The content of the short story is used in everyday life, 6). Use language that is easy to understand, 7). The characters in short stories are very simple. (Aprilia Susanti & Samad, 2023).

One of the works I discussed was a short story from Filipino literature entitled "Dead Stars" by Paz Marquez Benitez. "Dead Stars" depicts the emotional journey of a man named Alfredo Salazar who is trapped in a dilemma of love and desire. Despite being engaged to Esperanza, Alfredo feels a strong emotional pull towards Julia Salas, a woman he meets on a trip to Baguio. This journey brings Alfredo to the realization that his love for Esperanza may have been misjudged and is now fading like a dead star.

Then in Ernest Hemingway's work entitled "Hills Like White Elephants". This story is famous for its minimalist writing style and dialogue rich in subtext. Hemingway depicts a man and woman waiting for a train at a station in Spain. Their conversation, although brief and seemingly simple, reflects a deep conflict about important decisions in their relationship, especially regarding the pregnancy that the woman is facing.

Comparative literature is a literary genre that emerged in Europe in the second half of the 19th century under the influence of positivism; part of literary history that studies international literary relations and relationships, similarities and differences in literature and art in various countries. Representatives of comparative-historical literature focus on identifying similarities between literary currents, national literature and individual works, images and plots, see the migration of plots, that is, transitions from person to person, as a factor in the development of literature. It should be noted that the similarity of literary events is based, on the one hand, on similarities in the social and cultural development of peoples, and, on the other hand, on cultural ties and literary ties between them; hence the typological similarities of the literary process as well as 'literary relationships and influences' are also distinguished. Susan Bassnett highlights that when different cultures meet, complex tensions and conflicts often arise. In his words, "When different cultures meet, we can expect clashes, disagreements, and often chaos involving fundamental misunderstandings and violations of norms." We can see how differences in language, norms, and values can produce deep disagreements, which in turn substantially influence the dynamics of relationships between individuals (Bassnett, 1993).

In "Hills Like White Elephants," Ernest Hemingway presents a concrete example of the conflict that arises when individuals from different cultures interact. The men and women in the story reflect different values and expectations, which are reflected in the conflicts they face. As Bassnett points out, cultural differences often lead to fundamental misunderstandings, and in this case, it is reflected in the disagreement between the two characters.

On the other hand, Paz Marquez Benitez's "Dead Stars" explores the conflict arising from the difference between personal love and social duty. In this story, Alfredo is caught in confusion because his feelings for Julia are contrary to the social norms of his time. Bassnett will analyze differences in culture and values as factors that lead to

Alfredo's internal conflict, highlighting how culture and values can influence an individual's perceptions and actions in the context of human relationships.

Through a comparative narrative approach, we can expand our understanding of how cultural conflicts, values, and expectations influence the dynamics of human relationships in literary works. By combining Bassnett's perspective on interculturalism with literary analysis, we can delve deeper into the complexity of human relationships as reflected in cultural differences and the values that accompany them.

Through the analysis of these two works, it can be seen that communication and perception play an important role in developing or hindering interpersonal relationships between characters in the story. In "Dead Stars," Alfredo fails to communicate his true feelings, both to himself and to Esperanza and Julia, which ultimately results in deep emotional conflict. In contrast, in "Hills Like White Elephants," the couple's lack of clarity and reluctance to communicate openly about pregnancy causes uncertainty and tension in their relationship.

These two short stories provide valuable insight into the complexity of human relationships through multiple cultural and temporal perspectives. "Dead Stars," set in Filipino culture in the early 20th century, depicts the traditional values and social expectations that bind love relationships. In contrast, "Hills Like White Elephants," set in mid-20th century Spain, shows more modern and liberal relationship dynamics, but is still characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity.

This research aims to explore how communication and perception can develop or hinder interpersonal relationships between characters in "Hills Like White Elephants" and "Dead Stars." In addition, this research will also compare cultural and temporal differences in the narratives of the two stories to provide a deeper understanding of how cultural background influences interpersonal relationships.

This research will use qualitative methods with a content analysis approach. Data will be collected from the original texts of the two short stories. The analysis steps include identifying and interpreting dialogue and narratives that reflect the communication and perceptions of the characters. Comparative analysis will be carried out to understand the differences and similarities in the dynamics of interpersonal relationships depicted in the two stories.

The literature underlying this research includes studies on interpersonal communication in literature, as well as comparative research that highlights how cultural and temporal differences influence narrative and characters in literary works. Articles discussing "Dead Stars" and "Hills Like White Elephants" specifically will be used to provide context and support the analysis.

In this research, several main points will be discussed in depth: first, how effective or ineffective communication between characters influences the development of their relationships; second, how the characters' perceptions of the situation and each other play a role in their emotional conflicts and decisions; third, how cultural and temporal differences in "Dead Stars" and "Hills Like White Elephants" shape the dynamics of their

interpersonal relationships; and finally, the implications of these findings for our understanding of interpersonal communication in literary contexts.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION (12pt Cambria, 1.5 line spacing)

As a concept, narrative has now become increasingly old. Whereas in the past people might have spoken of “stories”, today they refer to “narratives”, indicating an awareness that story events are highly organized phenomena, and the fact that the way narratives are used is of great importance. We can also trade narratives interpersonally on a scale unprecedented in human history. It is not surprising then that “narrative” has become a central category in how humans understand themselves: it is likely that humans live through narratives, and humans quite often think in narratives (Stocks, 2016).

Influence of Communication and Perception

Communication is an inseparable part of human life. Without communication, someone will feel "lost" because they cannot organize themselves in a social context. According to Rudolph F. Verderber (in Mulyana, 2010), communication has two main functions. First, social functions which include the goal of enjoyment, showing bonds with other people, and building and maintaining relationships. Second, the decision-making function, namely helping individuals decide to do or not do something at a certain time (Permatasari & Pawito, 2016).

In the story "Hills Like White Elephants" by Ernest Hemingway, communication between the main characters, a man and a woman, plays a crucial role in shaping their perception of the situation and the decisions they have to make. Their dialogue, full of ambiguity and ambiguity, creates space for different interpretations and reveals how ineffective communication can hinder shared understanding. Communication between men and women in this story is characterized by ambiguity and indirectness. They speak in codes and metaphors, especially when referring to “surgeries” intended to terminate a woman's pregnancy. Men say, "It's really an awfully simple operation, Jig," while women respond with ambiguous statements like , "And if I do it you'll be happy and things will be like they were and you'll love me?" This dialogue shows that they are not communicating directly about their true feelings and desires.

Men's and women's perceptions of the situation differ fundamentally, which is further exacerbated by their ineffective communication. Men perceive that aborting a pregnancy is an easy solution and will return their relationship to its previous condition. For him, this "operation" was a way to maintain their freedom and uninhibited lifestyle. In contrast, women perceive that men do not value or want children, and that this decision will have a major impact on their lives and their relationships. Unclear communication leads to confusion and uncertainty, with women feeling pressured to make decisions that will satisfy men, while men are unaware of the full emotional burden women carry.

This ambiguous communication and different perceptions greatly influence the decisions that will be taken. Their inability to speak honestly and openly causes

uncertainty and tension. Men, who seem to dominate the conversation, are not fully aware of or may ignore women's emotional needs, and this affects how women process the situation. On the other hand, women feel pressured by men's desires and are not completely sure what they themselves want. The lack of clarity in their communication creates a gap between their understanding, making it impossible for them to reach an agreement that truly satisfies both parties. In "Hills Like White Elephants," Hemingway shows that ineffective communication can lead to misperceptions and significantly influence decisions. This story illustrates how important clear and open communication is in understanding and resolving complex situations in interpersonal relationships. Differences in perception and unclear communication between men and women not only hinder making the right decisions, but also threaten the integrity of their relationship.

Communication expert Rudolph F. Verderber (in Mulyana, 2010) states that communication has two functions: a social function, namely for the purpose of enjoyment, showing bonds with other people, building and maintaining relationships, and a decision-making function, namely deciding whether to do or not to do something. something at a certain moment. This view is relevant to what happens in the story "Hills Like White Elephants," where a failure in the communication function in both social aspects and decision making causes an inability to reach agreement and clarity in their relationship.

In the story "Dead Stars" by Paz Marquez Benitez, communication between the main character, Alfredo Salazar, and the two women present in his life, Esperanza and Julia Salas, plays an important role in shaping their perception of the situation and the decisions that must be taken (Yudhistira & Trihastuti, 2023). This story illustrates how ineffective communication and full of ambiguity can cause confusion, misunderstandings, and ultimately influence the decisions taken by the characters. The failure in communication between Alfredo and Esperanza, as well as between Alfredo and Julia, reflects their inability to express their true feelings and desires, which ultimately impacts the development and resolution of their relationship.

The different perceptions between Alfredo and the women in his life are caused by unclear communication. Alfredo perceives that his relationship with Esperanza is something that is certain and cannot be questioned, but on the other hand, he feels a deep attraction towards Julia. His inability to clearly communicate his feelings and his confusion made the situation more complicated. Esperanza, who hoped that Alfredo would be a loyal and dedicated partner, begins to feel an emotional distance. Meanwhile, Julia, who is involved in an ambiguous relationship with Alfredo, never gets clarity about Alfredo's true feelings. This misunderstanding is exacerbated by Alfredo's inability to express his feelings openly and honestly to the two women.

In the context of communication theory, as stated by communication expert Paul Watzlawick, "we cannot not communicate." This means that every action or omission in communication sends a certain message. The lack of clarity and ambiguity in Alfredo's communication is not an emptiness of message, but rather sends an ambiguous and confusing message to Esperanza and Julia. This creates different and often opposing

perceptions, leading to internal and external conflict. Indirect and dishonest communication creates a “white space” where personal assumptions and interpretations emerge, often leading to incorrect or delayed decisions.

Additionally, according to the interpersonal communication perspective, discussed by experts such as Knapp and Vangelisti, communication is key in building and maintaining relationships. They emphasize the importance of clarity, openness, and feedback in the communication process. In “Dead Stars,” Alfredo's inability to communicate effectively and provide honest and open feedback leads to significant misunderstandings. The decisions made based on this ambiguous communication not only affect Alfredo's relationship with Esperanza and Julia, but also reflect a failure in the process of forming a healthy and transparent relationship.

Thus, the story “Dead Stars” by Paz Marquez Benitez offers a profound example of how ineffective communication and false perceptions can hinder the development of interpersonal relationships. Alfredo's failure to communicate his feelings honestly and openly, as well as his inability to clarify and provide appropriate feedback to Esperanza and Julia, resulted in decisions filled with ambiguity and uncertainty. This shows the importance of clear and effective communication in avoiding misunderstandings and in building strong and healthy relationships. The opinions of experts in the field of communication support this understanding, emphasizing that transparent and clear communication is the key to overcoming conflict and building harmonious relationships. In exploring the stories “Dead Stars” by Paz Marquez Benitez and “Hills Like White Elephants” by Ernest Hemingway, we explore the cultural and temporal contexts that shape the characters' communications and perceptions. Differences in culture and time eras have a significant impact on how the characters interact and view the world around them. “Dead Stars” presents us with a depiction of early 20th century Filipino society, where social and cultural norms greatly influenced individual behavior and expectations. Alfredo Salazar, the protagonist of this story, feels trapped between his responsibility to Esperanza and his desire for Julia Salas. This cultural context highlights how the high culture of the Filipino context creates implicit communication and strong social norms that influence the interactions and decisions of its characters. On the other hand, in “Hills Like White Elephants,” the more open Western culture allows men and women to talk explicitly about sensitive issues like abortion, even though they still find it difficult to reach a mutual understanding.

In “Dead Stars,” Filipino culture creates enormous social pressure on Alfredo to fulfill his engagement promise despite his heart's interest in another woman. Implicit communication and strong social norms make it difficult to express doubts. On the other hand, in “Hills Like White Elephants,” the more open Western culture allows men and women to talk explicitly about sensitive issues such as abortion, even though they still find it difficult to reach a mutual understanding.

Intercultural communication theory, as proposed by Geert Hofstede, emphasizes the role of culture in shaping individual perception and communication. Hall highlights

the differences between high-context cultures and low-context cultures, with Filipino culture representing a clear example of high-context culture and Western culture an example of low-context culture. This approach helps us understand how culture influences the way individuals communicate and view the world around them. According to Deborah Tannen, differences in communication styles between men and women can also influence their perceptions and relationships. In "Hills Like White Elephants," the different communication styles between men and women create a gap in understanding and increase tension between them. Meanwhile, in "Dead Stars," a communication style influenced by Filipino culture produces deep internal conflicts for the characters.

Narratives depicting internal conflicts and moral dilemmas

In "Hills Like White Elephants" by Ernest Hemingway and "Dead Stars" by Paz Marquez Benitez, narratives influenced by cultural and temporal differences show the internal conflicts and moral dilemmas faced by the main characters in carrying out their relationships. Of course, here are examples of dialogue from both stories:

"Hills Like White Elephants":

The American: "This is a really simple operation, Jig. It's not a big deal." Jig: "No, it's not. Everything's fine."

The American: "I know you're nervous, but you don't need to be. It's all perfectly safe."

Jig: "I know. But what if things change? What if we're not happy anymore?" (Zaini Miftach, 2018).

"Dead Stars":

Alfredo: "Julia, I can't stop thinking about you. What we have is different, it's real." Julia: "But you're engaged, Alfredo. We can't keep doing this. It's not right."

Alfredo: "I know, I know. But I can't help how I feel. I'm torn between what I want and what's expected of me." ("by Paz Marquez Benitez," nd)

In "Hills Like White Elephants," the dialogue between American and Jig explores themes of confusion and uncertainty in the face of a major decision, allegedly related to abortion. American tried to reassure Jig that the procedure they were planning was simple and harmless, highlighting how men often have a tendency to underestimate the complexity and impact of such decisions. On the other hand, Jig feels a great emotional burden regarding this decision, showing how women are often influenced by deeper moral and ethical factors in dealing with situations like this. In this dialogue, Hemingway depicts the conflict between two different perspectives in dealing with a complicated situation, highlighting how differences in perceptions between men and women can influence how they understand and make decisions regarding their relationships.

Meanwhile, in "Dead Stars," the dialogue between Alfredo and Julia describes the deep internal conflict experienced by Alfredo because of his divided feelings between the woman he is engaged to, Esperanza, and another woman he has just met, Julia. Even though Alfredo is supposed to be committed to Esperanza, his feelings for Julia give rise to deep doubts and confusion. This dialogue reflects Alfredo's inner conflict between his

attachment to social norms and his personal desires. In addition, this dialogue also highlights how cultural and social disparities can influence perceptions and interpersonal relationships. Julia tries to assert boundaries between the two of them because Alfredo is already committed to someone else, highlighting how social and cultural norms play an important role in the formation of interpersonal relationships and the determination of morality.

Thus, these two dialogues provide deep insight into the complexity of human relationships and how factors such as social norms, ethics, and culture can influence perceptions and decisions in the context of interpersonal relationships. Through careful narration and complex dialogue, Hemingway and Joko Pinurbo present insightful depictions of the internal conflicts and moral dilemmas faced by their main characters, raising relevant questions about human nature and the dynamics of interpersonal relationships.

CONCLUSION

The text critically discusses literary concepts, especially in the context of short story narratives, by analyzing two works, namely "Dead Stars" by Paz Marquez Benitez and "Hills Like White Elephants" by Ernest Hemingway. The author uses a comparative approach to explore how communication, perception, and cultural differences influence the dynamics of interpersonal relationships in both stories.

First, the author presents a definition of literature as a diverse expression of human expression, which is realized in imaginative form through the medium of language. This research highlights the differences between short stories and other prose literature, and explores the history and characteristics of short stories, focusing on "Dead Stars" and "Hills Like White Elephants" as case studies.

Then, the author discusses the role of communication and perception in both stories. In-depth analysis reveals how ineffective communication, ambiguity, and differing perceptions can influence the development of relationships between the main characters. In "Hills Like White Elephants," the author highlights the ambiguous communication between men and women on the issues of pregnancy and abortion, while in "Dead Stars," Alfredo's internal conflict between social obligations and his personal desires creates confusion and uncertainty.

Next, the author explores the internal conflicts and moral dilemmas faced by the main characters in both stories. The dialogue presented shows how social, ethical and cultural norms influence the characters' perceptions and decisions, as well as how these conflicts are reflected in the dynamics of interpersonal relationships.

The analysis steps include identifying and interpreting dialogue and narratives that reflect the communication and perceptions of the characters. Comparative analysis was carried out to understand the differences and similarities in the dynamics of interpersonal relationships depicted in the two stories.

By combining interpersonal and intercultural communication perspectives, the author succeeded in identifying and analyzing factors that influence the dynamics of interpersonal relationships in a literary context. Thus, this research provides a deeper understanding of human relationships as reflected in cultural differences, communication, and perception.

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