Abstract

The purpose of this research is to analyze conflicts of the main character as seen in The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri. The writer used structuralism theory to find relationships and connections among intrinsic elements in literary work, such as the relationship between characters, settings, and plot, in this research. This research was done by doing close reading technique. Based on the result of the research, the writer found Gogol has external conflicts and internal conflicts that were influenced by his traits and his cultural background.

Key words: character, setting, plot, and conflicts.

Introduction

Human being cannot be separated from problem in their lives. Problems are the process of life which plays role in the shaping of the character of human being. In life human faces many problems such as problem of love, problem of work, problem of family, problem of themselves and others. People attempt to find solution of that problem in order to make their life better. Yet in life, human must face these situations, because it is normal for people in life.

Problem or some people say conflict is to fight hard or to try hard to do something. Based on Oxford, conflict is “struggle, fight or serious disagreement” (89). Conflict is experienced by everyone, children, teenager, parents, and others. Conflict can be in several situations, such as conflict with other people, conflict with environment, conflict with themselves and others. Conflict can be found in literary work. It can be in novel, drama, short story, and others. One of the novels that depicts about conflict is The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri. Conflict in The Namesake is a complicated conflict which is faced by one of the characters in this story where the problem comes continuously. Therefore, the writer decides The Namesake to be the object of the research.

Jhumpa Lahiri is an Indian American author. Lahiri's debut short story collection, Interpreter of Maladies (1999), won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. Her first novel, The Namesake (2003) is her collection of an international bestseller, was adapted into popular film of the same name (2007). She was born in London on July 11, 1967. Lahiri is a member of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, appointed by U.S. http://www.gradesaver.com/author/jhumpa-lahiri/

The novel tells about Ganguli family who bring Bengali culture from Calcutta...
India when they moved to America. As the new couple, this little family had children who were born in America, a son and a daughter. The boy was named Gogol who is the main character in this novel. Physically, Gogol was good looking. He was an educated student. He was a member of Yale and Columbia University. Gogol had everything, but this did not make his life to be perfect. Many things made Gogol dissatisfied with his life that made Gogol got problem or got conflicts in his life, then it made him respond it and turn him into a more mature person.

Based on the explanation above, the writer analyzes conflicts of the main character, both external conflicts and internal conflicts.

**Method of Research**

For this research the writer has chosen the novel entitled *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri as the object of the research. To understand the text the writer uses close reading technique. According to Madden in his book *Exploring Literature Writing and Arguing about Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and the Essay*, a close reading is “not once reading, it is a re-reading” (55). It means that the writer reads the text several time as far as the writer catches the intention of the author through the novel. After the writer understands or comprehends the meaning of the text, the writer collects the data that supports the research and then the writer analyzes the data based on structuralism theory.

**Result and Discussions**

**Character and Setting of the Novel**

**Gogol**

Gogol is the main character of this story. Gogol is a son from Bengali family who stays in America. Gogol was born in America but raised with Bengali culture. He grew up with the influence of Bengali culture from his family and American culture from his friends and environment and formed Gogol’s traits. Gogol have some traits that will be described below. The traits are stubborn, independent, sensitive, and obedient.

**Stubborn**

Stubborn is Gogol’s trait that is most dominant. Stubborn makes Gogol to seem like a hard person. Stubborn is “refusing your ideas or to stop doing something and difficult to deal with or remove, etc.” [http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/](http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/).

The writer shows some quotation to prove the statement above.

In the part of the conversation in the story Gogol shows about himself that does not understand about Bengali way of giving name and he wants to change his name.

“What’s done is done”, his father had said. “It will be a hassle. Gogol has, effect, become your good name.” “it’s too complicated now,” his mother said, agreeing. “You’re too old.” “I’m
not,” he persisted. “I don’t get it.” Why did you have to give me a pet name in the first place? What’s the point?” “It’s our way, Gogol, his mother maintained, it’s what Bengalis do.” (56).

From the quotation above, it can be seen that Gogol persisted to change his name. He says “Why did you have to give me a pet name in the first place?” this quotation gives information to readers that in his parents mind Gogol is stubborn because Gogol cannot accept Bengali way of giving name and accept the name that they give to him. Gogol’s trait is influenced by American Culture. American culture supports individual freedom like changing his name.

Through the quotation above, it can be seen that Gogol is refusing his mother’s ideas to come home. Gogol says “I’m going on a vacation” this statement indirectly shows Gogol who is influenced by American culture that is free life style. In Bengali life style Gogol does not find something like vacation because Bengali life style is strict. He needs time to enjoy his life.

**Independent**

In this research Gogol is also shown as a figure that is independent. Gogol tries to set himself and he stays away from his parents. Independent is “showing a desire for freedom.” [http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/](http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/)

In one of the paragraphs in the story Gogol reveals choosing drawing class but he does not tell his parents. He doesn’t tell his parents about the drawing class, something they would consider frivolous at this stage of his life, in spite of the fact that his own grandfather was an artist. (59)

Through the quotation above, it can be seen that Gogol wants to be free in choosing what he wants without rejection from his parents. Gogol wants to do things that makes him happy. Gogol wants freedom in any case. Gogol’s trait is influenced by American culture that is supporting individual freedom.

In the next paragraph in the story Gogol chooses to live in New York which is away from his parents who stay in Massachusetts. He prefers New York, a place which his parents do not know well,
whose beauty they are blind to, which they fear. (71)

Through the quotation above, it can be seen that Gogol chooses to live in New York whereas his parents did not know that city. Gogol is deliberately doing it because Gogol wants to live freely. He wants to be independent in running his own life. Gogol’s trait is influenced by American culture.

**Cultural setting**
Based on Oxford “cultural is customs, beliefs, art, way of life, etc of particular country or group.” So cultural setting is a condition of a society that is seen through way of life, daily activities, manner and others, real or invisible.

**Bengali culture**
Bengali is “people or Bengalis are the principal ethnic group native to the region of Bengal, which is politically divided between Bangladesh and India.”

http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bengali_people. Bengali culture is Bengali way of life like religious ceremonies and strict lifestyle

**American culture**
American or American people or Americans are “citizens of United States of America. This definition also includes certain individuals who are considered to be nationals of the United States of America.”

http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Americans. American culture is to support individual freedom and free lifestyle.

**Plot and Conflicts of The Main Character**

**Plot of the novel**

**Exposition**

The exposition of *The Namesake* starts by the introduction of characters and setting. The first part of the story describes about Ashima Ganguli in her home.

On a sticky august evening two weeks before her due date, Ashima Ganguli stands in the kitchen of a Central Square apartment, combining Rice Krispies and Planters peanut and chopped red onion in a bowl. (1)

The story begins by introducing one of the characters. From the name of the character, Ashima Ganguli, it can be deduced that this is not an American name. Ashima Ganguli as it turned out is an Indian born who is expecting a baby.

On the other part of the story describes about place in the story that is setting in the story.

At down a taxi is called to ferry them through deserted Cambridge streets, up Massachusetts Avenue and Past Harvard Yard, to Mount Auburn Hospital. Ashima registers, answering questions about the frequency and duration of the contraction. As Ashoke fills out the forms.(1)

Based on the quotation above another character is introduced, Ashoke. Ashoke is the husband of Ashima. From this quotation the readers are being informed of the setting that takes place. These two characters are at
Mount Auburn, Hospital. From the name of the streets mentioned the setting takes place in America.

**Rising Action**

The rising action is the part of the story in which the sides creating conflict are shown in details, enlarged and prepared for some disaster. In *The Namesake*, the rising action starts when Gogol asks his parents about his desire to change his name and the things about Bengali that he does not understand because he grew up in America as in the quotation below.

Gogol has, in effect, become your good name. It’s too complicated now, his mother said, agreeing. You’re too old. I’m not, he persisted. I don’t get it. Why did you have to give me a pet name in the first place? What’s the point? It’s our way, Gogol, his mother maintained. It’s what Bengalis do. (56)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that the beginning of the conflicts between Gogol and his parents. The first conflict is Gogol wants to change his name but his parents do not allow him and the second conflict is Gogol who does not understand about Bengali ways (a pet name) that are used by his parents which he does not find in America.

The middle part of the story explains conflicts continues after his parents allow him to change his name.

They switch from red wine and white. Now that it is just the two of them it seems to him, more than ever, that they are living together. And yet for some reason it is dependence, not adulthood, he feels. He feels free of expectation, of responsibility, in willing exile from his own life.” (80)

Through the quotation above it can be seen that, Gogol is not married yet but he was living together with his girlfriend. This thing is not Bengali way of life but American way of life. From this quotation the readers are being informed of Gogol who is influenced by American culture. He follows the American lifestyle that is full of alcohol and free sex. He does not care of Bengali lifestyle that is very different with American culture.

The other paragraph shows Gogol gets conflict with Maxine which makes Gogol finally goes back to his family home and he leaves Maxine’s life.

Initially she’d tolerated his silences at the dinner table, his indifference in bed, his need to speak to his mother and Sonia every morning, and to visit them, on weekend, without her, but she had not understood being excluded from the family’s plans to travel to Calcutta that summer to see their relatives and scatter Ashoke’s ashes in the Ganges. (106)
Based on the quotation above, it can be seen that after Gogol’s father’s death many things change. Gogol stays cool to Maxine, and Gogol has to go to Calcutta to scattering his father’s ashes in the Ganges to follow Bengali religious ceremony. Maxine does not understand with Bengali lifestyle so Maxine cannot tolerate with Gogol anymore. Their relationship is over because one of them does not understand the culture of their partner.

**Climax**

The climax is the point of highest interest. In the story, climax appears after Gogol decides to get married with Moushumi. She is a Bengali girl who lives in America. She is mostly influenced by American culture. She is chosen by his mother.

They were in the middle of a conversation about how to spend the coming summer, whether to rent a house in Siena with Donald and Astrid, an idea Gogol was resisting, when she’s said, “Dimitri says Siena is something out of a fairy tale. “immediately a hand had gone to her mouth, accompanied by a small intake of breath. And then silence. “Who’s Dimitri?” he’d asked. And then: “Are you having an affair?” The question sprung out of him, something he had not consciously put together in his mind until that moment. It felt almost comic to him, burning in his throat. (158)

From the quotation above, it can be seen the conversation between Gogol and Moushumi. Moushumi mentioned a name of a man, the name is not Bengali name. From Moushumi’s expression “Immediately a hand had gone to her mouth, accompanied by a small intake of breath.” The reader can see that Moushumi kept a big secret in her life with someone who is called Dimitri. When she accidently mentioned Dimitri’s name. Therefore, Gogol finally knows about his wife’s affair. Gogol is so angry. Affair is not Bengali way of life. Moushumi is too influenced with the American way of life that ended her marriage.

**Falling Action**

Falling action follows the climax. Then after Moushumi’s affair is known by Gogol, their households split up. The following quotation explains about Moushumi who leaves the apartment.

By the time he arrived at they apartment, her clothes were gone, and her makes up and her bathroom things. It was as if she were away on trip. But this time she didn’t come back. She wanted nothing of the brief life they’d had together; one she appeared one last time at his office a few month later, so that he could sign the divorce papers. (158)
From the quotation above it can be seen that Moushumi takes her clothes, make up, and her bathroom things. Moushumi leaves their apartment, Moushumi and Gogol finally decide to get a divorce. Gogol’s households become extinct with divorce paper.

**Resolution**

Resolution is the events following the climax and falling action. The resolution is told in the quotation below.

As for all the people in the house, all the mashis and meshos to whom he is still, and will always be, Gogol – Now that is mother is moving away, how often will he see them? Without people in the world to call him Gogol, no matter how long he himself lives, Gogol Ganguli will, once and for all, vanish from the lips of loved ones, and so, cease to exist. Yet the thought of this eventual demise provides no sense of victory, no solace. It provides no solace at all.(162)

From the quotation above it can be seen that Gogol was accepting to be a Gogol. He enjoys life to stay around his Bengali family. When he feels it, he gets a thing that is different with his expectation. When he wants to be called with Gogol, nobody who is calling his Gogol anymore. Especially his mother will move to India.

**External conflicts**

External conflicts are kind of conflict that is experienced by human being. Based on that argument, it can be seen that people who faces external conflicts are people who have different vision, mission, and discomfort to teach other. The writer found Gogol in conflicts with other characters and environment where there are bad relationship between them.

**Gogol vs Ashima**

The relationship between Gogol and his mother does not always run smoothly. There are some things which make them in conflict with each other. Ashima uses Bengali culture and Gogol has been affected by American culture.

In a conversation Gogol debates with his mother. His mother does not agree Gogol’s opinion and Gogol also understands how his mother thinks.

Gogol has, in effect, become your good name. It’s too complicated now, his mother said, agreeing. Your’re too old. I’m not, he persisted. I don’t get it. Why did you have to give me a pet name in the first place? What’s the point? It’s our way, Gogol, his mother maintained. It’s what Bengalis do. (56)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that Gogol and his mother have conflict. Gogol asks his mother about his name why his parents do not give him a pet name in the
first place, and his mother says in Bengali
everyone has two names outside name and
inside name, outside name as official name
and inside name as pet name in family. Yet,
Gogol who was born in America does not
understand Bengali culture.

On the other conversation via phone
Gogol lies to his mother. He searches reason
to avoid his mother’s question.

“Why you are calling me here so late?
he ask her, distracted, his eyes still
focused on the computer screen.
Because you are not at your
apartment, his mother says. You are
never at your apartment, Gogol. In
the middle of the night I have called
and you are not there. I am, Ma, he
lies. I need my sleep. I shut off the
phone. I cannot imagine why anyone
would want to have a phone only to
shut it off, his mother says.” (81)

Based on the quotation above, it can
be seen that Gogol debates with his mother
about Gogol’s phone that is not active when
his mother called him. Gogol searches reason
to make his mother believes him. He does not
want to mention to his mother that he spends
all his nights at Maxine’s place. He does not
want to make his mother shock because it is
taboo in Bengali culture.

As seen in the following quotation
Gogol’s mother knew that Gogol spent his
nights at Maxine’s parent’s house which is
unusual for Bengalis.

By now Ashima knows that Gogol
spends his nights with Maxine,
sleeping under the roof as her parents,
a thing Ashima refuses to admit to her
Bengali friends. (93)

Through the quotation above, it can
be seen that Ashima and Gogol in bad
situation. Gogol stays under his girlfriend’s
home without getting married. Gogol’s
action makes Ashima embarrassed so
Ashima refuses to admit to her Bengali
friends. In Bengali that thing is taboo.

**Gogol vs Maxine**

Gogol and Maxine are the portraits of
relationship between two different cultures.
They have different culture and religion. The
differences that exist between them become
conflicts between them.

In the conversation below is seen
Gogol and Maxine debate about their
planning that was canceled by Gogol
suddenly.

“Do you still want to try to go up to
New Hampshire?” For they had
talked of this, going away together,
just the two of them, Maxine is
picking him up after Christmas,
staying at the lake house. Maxine was
going to teach him how to ski. “I
don’t think so.” “It might do you
good,” she says, tilting her head to
one side. She glances around the
room, “to get away from all this.”
(102)
Through the quotation above, it can be seen that Maxine and Gogol have discussion without solution. Maxine invites Gogol playing ski. Yet, Gogol refuses her invitation because Gogol is still in distraught condition after his father’s death. Maxine invites him on the less precise condition.

In the other conversation Maxine tries to be patient but finally she shows limit of her patient is over.

Initially she’d tolerated his silences at the dinner table, his indifference in bed, his need to speak to his mother and Sonia every morning, and to visit them, on weekend, without her, but she had not understood being excluded from the family’s plans to travel to Calcutta that summer to see their relatives and scatter Ashoke’s ashes in the Ganges. (106)

Based on the quotation above, it can be seen that Maxine observes Gogol’s changes at the dinner table and in bed. He becomes closer to both his mother and Sonia by speaking more often and visiting them on weekends. This situation affected the relationship between Gogol and Maxine. Maxine feels like an outsider since Gogol doesn’t include her as family. This leads to conflict between the two. The problem lies in the cultural differences. According to Indian culture only family who scatter ashes.

Gogol vs Moushumi

Moushumi is Gogol’s wife. Moushumi is a daughter of Bengali family who was born in America. Before Gogol meets Moushumi, Gogol has pass through some conflicts in his life and finally he gets married with Moushumi who is much influenced with American culture. His life was still not spare from problem.

Gogol and Mousumi were in a bad condition at Moushumi’s friend’s home when Moushumi speaks to her friend about Gogol’s past.

“Nikhil changed his,” Moushumi blurs out suddenly. He stares at stunned. He has never told her not to tell anyone. He assumed she never would. His expression is lost on her she smiles back at him, unaware of what she’s done. (137).

From the quotation above, it can be seen that Moushumi tells to her friend about Gogol changing his name. Gogol is angry which can be seen from the line “his expression is lost on her”. This quotation explains Gogol is disappointed in Moushumi.

In other season when Gogol wants to give his wife a package holiday of summer. His wife is first to give him unforgivable surprise.

They were in the middle of a conversation about how to spend the coming summer, whether in to rent a house in Siena with Donald and Astrid, an idea Gogol was resisting,
when she’s said, Dimitri says Siena is something out of a fairy tale. Immediately a hand had gone to her mouth, accompanied by a small intake of breathe. And then silence. Who’s Dimitri? He’d asked. And then “Are you having an affair?” The question sprung out of him, something he had not consciously put together in his mind until that moment. It felt almost comic to him, burning in his throat.” (158)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that Gogol and Moushumi are in quarrel. He is very upset when he knows his wife’s affair. The readers catch the information from this line “it felt almost comic to him burning in his throat.” He finds his wife betraying him and he feels so ridiculed by his wife.

**Internal Conflicts**

**Cultural Dilemma**

Gogol is in dilemma to choose between Bengali culture and American culture. He follows two different culture at the same time, Bengali culture and American culture. Bengali culture is culture that is used by Bengalis or Bengali people. Every Bengali in the world preserves their culture. They bring their culture wherever they go. This case happens to Gogol family, they keep using Bengali culture although they live in America. These things make their generations who were born in America feel in dilemma with their parents’ culture where their generation interact with American culture in daily activities. In this novel the main character feels problems like mentioned above.

The following quotation reveals Gogol’s doubtful feeling towards his relationship with his girlfriend.

His parents have expressed no curiosity about his girlfriend. His relationship with her is one accomplishment in his life about which they are not in the least bit proud or pleased. She tells him she doesn’t mind his parents’ disapproval, that she finds it romantic. But Gogol knows it isn’t right. He wishes his parents could simply accept her, as her family accepts him, without pressure of any kind. (65)

Based on the quotation above, it can be seen that Gogol is confused whether to continue his relationship with his girlfriend or not. He realizes that a relationship needs approval from both parents. As for his parents the only daughter in law for them is one who comes from Bengali family.

The next quotation depicts Gogol’s feeling towards his parents who insist him on accepting their desire to have a Bengali daughter in law.

One day Maxine asks him if his parents want him to marry an Indian girl. She poses the question out of
curiosity, without hoping for particular responses. He feels angry at his parents then, wishing they could be otherwise, knowing in his heart what the answer is. (78)

Based on the quotation above, it can be seen that Gogol is torn apart since he realized that he must agree with the arranged marriage according to Bengali culture. Deep in his heart he really wants to marry the girl of his dream. Yet, it will be his dilemma, choosing the girl of his dream will hurt the parents’ feeling and agreeing with arranged marriage will break his own heart.

Guilty feeling

Gogol felt guilty for everything that he did. He was so sorry to change his name and also he was so sorry to avoid his parents. This feeling appears when his father died.

In the quotation below Gogol tries to remember what he did. The day before his father’s death.

His last meal had been at the restaurant the night before, a bright, bustling place in Chinatown. They had waited nearly an hour on the sidewalk for their table and then feasted on flowering chives and salted squid and the calms in black bean sauce that Maxine loved best. They were already drunk from the book party, lazily sipping their beers, their cold cups of jasmine tea. All that time, his father was in the hospital, already dead. (96)

Through the quotation above, it can be seen that Gogol was so sorry when his father was in agony in hospital. He was spending time with Maxine. He was not thinking of his father. He was sorry to his father because he was not caring. He felt guilty because he was not by his father’s side when his father needed him the most.

Gogol regrets not being a Bengali son like expected by his parents. He tries to think more and more about his last meeting with his father before his father’s death.

He thinks of the last time he’d seen his father, three months ago: the image of him waving good-bye as he and Maxine pulled out of the driveway on their way to New Hampshire. He cannot remember the last time he and his father had spoken. Two weeks ago? four. (99)

Based on the quotation above, it can be seen that Gogol is so sorry since he does not spend much time to meet his father when his father was alive. He feels so sorry about his treatment to his father in the past.

In the next quotation, it is explained that Gogol follows Bengali tradition as the last respect to his father.

Years later Gogol had learned the significance, that it was a Bengali son’s duty to shave his head in the wake of a parent’s death. But at the
time Gogol was too young to understand; when the bathroom door opened he had laughed at the sight of his hairless, grief-stricken father, and Sonia, just a baby, had cried. (101)

From the quotation above, it can be seen Gogol’s guilty feeling. He finally understood what his father taught him about their culture. Even though at last he did his duty as a Bengali son, yet his father cannot see it.

In this quotation we can see, Gogol is so sorry with everything that he did.

He’d confessed to her that he still felt guilty at times for changing his name, more so now that his father was dead. (138)

Through the quotation above, it can be seen that Gogol felt guilty for changing his name and he cannot admit it to his father since his father was dead.

Conclusion

Based on the research that is done by the writer about conflict of character as presented in the novel The Namesake written by Jhumpa Lahiri, the writer could give conclusion about the conflicts in the novel.

After doing the analysis, the writer finds some traits of the main character (Gogol) that caused conflicts in Gogol’s life. Those traits are stubborn, independent, obedient, and sensitive. Those traits are influenced by two culture that exist around Gogol. They are Bengali culture and American culture. The part of Bengali culture that influenced Gogol’s traits are religious ceremonies, and strict lifestyle meanwhile the part of American cultures that influenced of Gogol’s traits are individual freedom, and free lifestyle.

There are two conflicts that happened in Gogol’s life. The first one is external conflicts that happened to Gogol vs Ashima, Gogol got conflict with Ashima (her mother) because Ashima taught Gogol about Bengali culture. Yet, he prefers American culture which is not accepted by Ashima who prefers Bengali culture. Then conflict between Gogol and Maxine. Gogol is in conflict with Maxine. Maxine was his girlfriend, an American. Gogol who was not fully using American culture follows back Bengali culture which Maxine could not understand. The last is, conflicts between Gogol and Moushumi. Gogol and Moushumi were Bengali’s generation. They were born in America. Yet, Moushumi used American lifestyle that made Moushumi trapped in an affair with someone and ended her relationship with Gogol in divorce.

The other was internal conflicts which was a situation of choice in which the options were difficult as cultural dilemma and guilty feeling. Gogol was in dilemma when he learned about American culture. He found some things that were very different with Bengali culture and each of them could not accept each other. Gogol was confused
to decide Bengali culture or American culture. Gogol felt guilty with his action in the past. He wanted to say so sorry to his father but his father is dead.

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