

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter depicts five sub-chapters which are noteworthy to be enlightened in this research, such as the background of the study, the statement of research question, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, and the last one is the scope and limitation.

1.1 Background of the study

Sociology of literature studies literature in its relation with society. Besides, this study also deals with the social context of literature. It studies the sociology of literary work itself, the sociology of the author, the construction of literary work, and the correlation between literary work and society. “The sociology of literature in particular has focused on the relation between society and literature, usually employing the metaphor that literature mirrors society (Schram & Steen, 2001: 359).”

Furthermore, literature is the reflection of society. It captures the existing phenomena that happened in society or in the real life precisely. The existing phenomena of social, political, religion, economic, culture and many others are the examples of these. From these phenomena, cultural issue becomes one of the topics of discussion by the authors.

Nowadays, the term cultural issue especially cultural conflict becomes one of themes in literature. Since there are many people migrated to various countries

in the world, this term then arises because there are clash or conflict between two or more distinct cultures. This phenomenon then portrays in literary works. For instance, *The Joy Luck Club*'s novel written by Amy Tan in 1989. It depicts cultural issues between the main character, Chinese American daughter and her mother. Other novel is from P.P. Wong whose title *The Life of A Banana*. It was published in 2014. It tells about cultural clash of British Chinese cultures from the main character and her Chinese grandmother. In addition, the novel created by Indian American author, Jhumpa Lahiri also brings the cultural issues. The novel's title is *The Namesake* published in 2004. It depicts a condition in which the main characters being trapped between two contrary cultures, Indian and American. Then, another novel is *American Born Chinese*. It is a graphic novel written by Gene Luen Yang in 2006. It shapes the problems encountered by Chinese American children in America.

Besides the novels mentioned above, the writer finds another novel which carries socio cultural issue from the main characters. The novel titled is *American Panda*. It is written by Gloria Chao. This novel was first released on February 6, 2018. It is also her debut novel. The researcher has several reasons why this novel is worthed to be analyzed. *American Panda* describes cultural issue and conflict of Chinese American culture from the main character as the US born and Chinese elder generation. Subsequently, the novel shows the confusing in deciding life choices. Besides, it also depicts the pressure under Chinese American culture which happens to the main character.

Moreover, the novel is successful. It has been the Best Debut Young Adult Book and received four starred trade reviews from A Junior Library Guild Selection, Booklist, Publishers Weekly and VOYA magazine. In addition, this novel achieved some valuable awards, nominations, and praise. According to the website author organization (2020) by the title Gloria Chao, the novel *American Panda* has won several top awards for instance Friend's of American Writer's Young People's Literature Award Winner, Society of Midland Authors Award-Children's Fiction Honoree, Nerdy Book Club Award Winner 2018. Moreover, it has received some nominations. They are YALSA's 2019 Teen's Top Ten Nominee, YALSA's Best Fiction for Young Adult 2019 Nominee, YALSA's Amazing Audiobook 2019 Nominee, and YALSA's Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers 2019 Nominee. Furthermore, this novel obtains a number of amazing Praise such as Amelia Bloomer List 2019, YMCA's Summer Reading List for Teens, Illions Reads 2019, Indie's Next Pick, and Best Young Adult Book of 2018 from Seventeen Magazine, Pop Sugar, Bustle, Chicago Public Library, and Paste Magazine.

The other reason why the writer chooses this novel is that the novel can attract the reader because the story is based on the author's experience. Besides, Gloria Chao is smart to insert the tension in every chapter hence it guides the reader to keep reading the novel and to feel curious. Then, the author becomes one of the reasons why the writer used this novel. Even if Gloria Chao is new in literature, she has received many great appreciations of her works and critically acclaimed author. Recently she also becomes one of the best young adult author.

Additionally, after her debut novel—*American Panda*, Gloria Chao has released a new novel, *Our Wayward Fate* in 2019. Furthermore, her third novel will be published in 2020 entitled *Rent A Boyfriend*.

Regarding the novel *American Panda*, it tells about a Taiwanese American girl who studies as premed at MIT. Her name is Mei Lu. She is only seventeen when she becomes a collage student. It is because she had skipped fourth grade when the teenager her age should be in Senior High School. It is because her life has been planned since she was kid. Her parents have planned which path she must do such as where she should study and with whom she is married. For them, they are the best choices for Mei's future but she wants to live by her own choices. She does not want to be judged on every step she does. She wants to be free and finds her true self. However, in her family, if someone is disobedient, he or she is considered to defy his or her family's rules.

The story of this novel is quite similar with the life of the author, Gloria Chao. She is also a Taiwanese American as the main character in her novel, Mei Lu. She begins to write this novel because it is the book she needed when she was in High School and when she switched her careers from dentist to writer. Due to her decision, she deals with her parent's disagreement about her career. Then, she is difficult to communicate with them. She conveys her feeling through this novel that whoever we are, we must respect and love each other even though we are from different culture background (Chao, 2018).

This study, however, attempts to examine socio cultural issues in Asian American. The appropriate theory which is used in analyzing the novel is sociology of literature theory by Laurenson and Swingewood. It covers the concept of sociology of literature in which literary work acted as social documentation that reflects the conditions when the literary work is created, literary work as the reflection of the author and the production, and literary work as the representation of history, social, and culture situations. However, not all of these perspectives used in analyzing the novel. The writer only used the suitable perspective that can be applied in the novel. Moreover, sociology of literature is the study which considered literature as “a direct reflection of various facets of social structure, family relationship, class conflict, and possibly divorce trends and population composition (Laurenson and Swingewood, 1972: 13).”

1.2 The Statement of Research Question

Through this research, the writer seeks to address one question of problem, as follows:

1. How are Asian American conflicts represented in this novel?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

According to the statement of research question, there is one primary aim of this study:

1. To describe the representation of Asian American conflicts in the novel.

1.4 Significances of the Study

This study is expected to deliver theoretical and practical values. Theoretically, it is hoped that the results of this study will give the readers more knowledge and deeper understanding in learning literary theories, particularly the sociology of literature by Diana T. Laurenson and Alan Swingewood. Furthermore, this study practically is hoped to be a great reference for the further studies and researchers to analyze literary works by using similar theory or even to give the inspiration to theories to make a new theory.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

Many things from the novel can be analyzed through sociology of literature theory. Then, the scopes of this study are the sociology of literature theory by Laurenson and Swingewood. The analysis of this study will be limited on discussing the main characters' utterances and author's narrations which has correlation with the sociology of literature and answer the research question.