

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides five prominent subchapters in introduction such as background of study, research problem, objective of the research, scope and limitation and significant of the research.

1.1 Background of Study

Commonly, people love to shape themselves as what their surrounding is. They do anything only to look perfect in front of others. Everything that they do instantly captured as what they are. Their behavior, decree, utterances and acts represent themselves as part of certain image or figure. The result of their journey in discovering their true self would create the thing that commonly call as “Identity”, as states by Buckingham :

Identity is an ambiguous and slippery term. It has been used and perhaps overused in many different contexts and for many different purposes, particularly in recent years

(Buckingham, 2008, p. 1).

Identity for most of people plays an important role to shape their image within a society or community. Identity is something unique to each of us that we assume is more or less consistent (and hence the same) over time (Buckingham, 2008). Most of people tend to show their identity through many kinds of aspect such as fashion, behavior and the way of life. That aspects drive from the condition of

basic human's nature that is the need to be different and unique from the others.

Further, as Buckingham states:

Identity is not merely a matter of playful experimentation or “personal growth”: it is also about the life-or-death struggles for self-determination that are currently being waged in so many parts of the world

(Buckingham, 2008).

Self-determination stands as one of the crucial stage of human identity development. By the time, individual stands as the one who fully able to become the architect of their own identity construction. The construction of their identity is mostly triggered by the desire to be different from the other. As if Eastern person has desire to act and behave like eastern people in common among western community, he will do anything to stick on his roots as eastern people even when it confronts and opposes the western community. Individual's desire controls and covers most of their act, decree and behavior. Further, as Dashtipour state before that Lacan point out desire as one of fundamental element within his psychoanalysis theory.

Constructing identity or identity construction figuratively involves metaphorical or symbolical representation of thought or emotion in an expressive way, creating a conceptual visual representation (Dowling, 2011). The involvement of thought and emotion within identity construction in Lacanian perspective is called as unconsciousness construction. Lacan claims that unconsciousness has similar structured with language which means that it is not

an abstract thing. On the other hand, Lacan also states that unconsciousness is the sources of all motivation and stimulant from inside of the individual.

In his approach, Lacan broadened undoubtedly the scope of unconscious saying that the unconscious is always at work and the being of everything (Qazi, 2011). According to that statement; Lacan explicitly states that unconsciousness stand as the whole sources and control of identity construction. On the other hand, Lacan groundwork also points out the importance of language in representing the unconsciousness mind of individual such as dreams, desires and wishes. Through the language it is also possible to trace the individual's identity.

Moreover, while focusing on the relations between signifiers, Lacan argues that the elements in the unconscious, wishes, desires, dreams and images are form of signifier and these signifiers form a signifying chain: one signifier has meaning only because it is not some other signifier (Qazi, 2011). Hence, as it stands as single signifier's element, unconscious domain needs to be scrutinizing because it hides a special message about individual identity.

The idea that the unconscious is spatial, that the unconscious consists of a place in which the most intense confused assemblage of thoughts whirl around, fuelled again by irrational instinctual forces but operating by fragmenting and combining thoughts

(Parker, 2015).

Parker and Dowling are emphasizing on the work of unconscious thought and irrational forces in shaping the individual's identity. Those things in Lacanian world clustered into an imaginary stage. In Lacanian perspective, imaginary stage

triggers individual to find their self as incomplete entity. Further, those things will lead individual to follow their irrational forces in order to complete that lack.

On the other hand, within literary works, characters' identity or mostly is so-called as characterization has evolved and affected in significant way toward the literary work. Author's magnificent touch toward the figure or character within a literary work influences the way the character presented within the story.

To begin with, *The Vegetarian* is seen to be interesting to be part of this analysis. Due to some considerations which the writer intends to conduct this analysis is that the novel possesses prestigious noble awards and it suits perfectly to theory of Lacan's psychoanalytic. Meanwhile, the writer decrees that this analysis is definitely interesting to bring up for several possible reasons.

Firstly, in recent few years, the novel has amazingly raised the good image of Korean novelist in international stage as it won the *Man Booker International Prize* in 2016. It was the first English translation of the novel which won that prestigious award. Han Kang is highly praised through that achievement. Then later, she admitted as one of phenomenal Korean author in novelist world and stands on top five most influencing newcomer-author (Hahn, 2018). Further, Korean authors pondered as one of remarkable authors through Han Kang's achievement.

Secondly, through her unique and magnificent touch within the plot, Han Kang's novel appears as one of the most readable novel for the reader. The plot serves thrilling sequences and amazing riddle event. The entanglement of culture

element and family tradition within the novel also increase the tension and the mesmerizing atmospheres of the plot.

Lastly, the portrait of women within the story gives a bit of feminism sense. Somehow, feminism able to trigger reader interests especially the female readers to fuse with the story. The issues about women identity construction and the quest of self-completeness are also possible to boost the amusement from the reader. Further, how the main character uses the language as the tools to represent her identity reconstruction and become the central issues within the novel.

Regarding statement above, theory of Lacan's psychoanalytic is summoned to fit this analysis perfectly. One of prominent scholars of psychoanalytic—he is, Jacques Lacan—proposed a fundamental psychoanalysis approach which headlines the identity construction and self completeness issues. According to Lacan, identity construction is driven by the desire of individual which constructed by their unconscious thought. He clustered desire into symbolic stage which later becomes one of the crucial stages in human psyche development. Symbolic stage also located the desire as the prominent element which controlled most of individual desires. The existence of desire is fully controlled by unconsciousness.

Therefore, Lacan's psychoanalysis is very suitable to be the tool of analysis of this study. Elaborating the process of identity construction and self-completeness through the use of languages in the form of narration and utterances are one of the focuses in Lacan theory.

1.2 Research Problems

Referring to the background of the research, the issue will transform into the following questions.

1. How does unconsciousness construct Yeong-Hye's identity?
2. How does the processes of self-completeness that experienced by Yeong-Hye?

1.3 Objective of the Research

Concerning with the preceding research question, this research are attempt to explain:

1. The way unconsciousness constructs Yeong-Hye's identity
2. The processes of self-completeness that experienced by Yeong-Hye.

1.4 Scope and Limitation

This research deliberates the main character's identity construction and self completeness. Through her unconsciousness mind which is represent by a dream, the main character attempt to complete herself image as the vegan. Unfortunately, it goes wrong and triggers conflict toward her surroundings.

In order to set a better focus, this study limits on the character's utterances and the author's narration which concern on identity construction and self completeness in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*. In addition, the limitation gives better ways to the researcher in establishing direct study.

1.5 Significance of the Research

These studies are focus on two prominent objectives. The first objective is the theoretical objective and the second is practical objective.

1. Theoretically, the study is expected to give various advantages in the development of science especially in literary research field. Through the analysis of identity construction and self completeness under the umbrella of psychoanalysis theory which proposed by Jaquase Lacan, hopefully this study can give a valuable knowledge toward the development of psychoanalysis study in the future.

2. Practically, this study can extend and develop to the previous research and become the ground work to the following researcher. Further, this study can give better understanding to the readers about identity construction process and self completeness in literary work

