

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction of the study. It consists of five sections, (1) background of the study, (2) research questions, (3) objectives of the study, (4) significances of the study, and (5) scope and limitations of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Real life is inextricably linked to literary works because literary works are the ideas of the writer. That means that literary works are created from the writer's ideas, obtained based on the writer's own experiences in real life. Each writer has their own characteristics, such as story ideas and concepts, and the product created would also be unique. However, the problems they tackle are largely same, mainly those that deal with life. This is in line with Wellek and Warren's (1956, p. 79), "The poet's work may be a mask, a dramatized conventionalization, but it is frequently a conventionalization of his own experiences, his own life." It means that literary works are influenced by the experiences and real lives of the writers themselves.

One of the issues that often appears in literary works is migration. Migration in the current era of globalization is increasing. The term "migration" refers to a wide range of mobility and events involving people from various societies and backgrounds. Kallio (2016) states that human migration encompasses all human movements and occurs on a local to global scale. The complex phenomenon that touches on various aspects such as economic, social, and cultural is referred to as migration. Immigrants are different from the immigrants diaspora. Immigrants refer to people who move to a different area in search of settlement. This could be for social, environmental, political, or even economic reasons. On the other hand, the term immigrants diaspora refers to a population that has a common heritage spread across different parts of the world.

“Diasporic populations do not come from elsewhere in the same way that “immigrant” do. In assimilationist national identities such as those of the United States, immigrant may experience loss and nostalgia, but only en route to a whole new home in a new place. Such narratives are designed to integrate immigrant not people in diaspora. Diaspora involves dwelling, maintaining collectives, having collectives home away from home.” (Clifford, 1994, p. 307-308).

The key difference between diaspora and migration is that in diaspora, people maintain a very strong tie to their homeland, their roots, and their origin, unlike in migration. Immigrants experience loss and nostalgia only when they have just arrived in a new place. Meanwhile, the immigrant diaspora experiences this even when they are in a new place for a long time.

One of the largest immigrant diaspora populations is China. The Chinese community is spread all over the world, and one of the biggest is in America. “The second largest concentration of the Chinese in diaspora is in America which accounts for 19%.” (Chee-Beng, 2013, p.4). This immigration resulted in them doing diaspora. Vertovec (1997, p. 277) states that 'Diaspora' is a concept that originates from a country other than the country in which it is currently inhabited, and whose social, economic, and political networks span national or even global borders. As a result, the term diaspora refers to nations or ethnicities that leave their homeland for other countries with certain goals. One of them is the Chinese diaspora.

The Chinese diaspora are studying the culture in which they live today. They realize that their culture is different from the host culture. “First generation Chinese immigrants who may retain the nationality of China but have settled in another country, as well as descendants of Chinese immigrants, who may have fully assimilated into the adopted country of their migrant ancestors.” (Chee-Beng, 2013, p.8). It assumes that there are differences of doing diaspora in each generation. The parents, as the first generation immigrants, still perpetuate their original culture and traditions while remaining assimilated into the host culture. Second generation immigrants, on the other hand, who are born and raised in the

host country like America, are more Americanized and at ease with the American way of life.

The second generation of immigrants has to struggle between two cultures. Therefore, we need what is called culture consciousness. "Culture consciousness" is embedded due to a combination of ethnic pluralism and diaspora conditions that are influenced by the dominant discourse. (Vertovec, 1997, p. 284-285). The culture consciousness of the second generation of immigrants is greater than the first generation immigrants. It allows them to blend in with American culture in order to intermingle with the majority. Consciousness in the diaspora helps to bridge the gap between local and global life.

Until now, cultural issues have become an interesting topic because they are often experienced by immigrants, especially the second generation of immigrants. Cultural issues are often raised in postmodern literature. Postmodernism also sees culture as one of the important aspects of postmodern studies. "Postmodernism is centred on important cultural changes in contemporary life. Postmodern culture is said to be marked by a sense of the fragmentary, ambiguous and uncertain nature along with high levels of personal and social reflexivity. It's stress on contingency, irony and the blurring of cultural boundaries." (Barker, 2008, p. 201). Postmodern studies are characterized by a person's reflexivity to changes that exist in contemporary life, where boundaries between cultures are increasingly invisible. This issue is also found in the novel *American Panda* (2018) by Gloria Chao.

The *American Panda* is a novel written by Gloria Chao and was published in 2018. *American Panda* has won a number of awards targeted at young adult readers, such as Booklist's Best Debut YA Book of 2018 ("American Panda"). The *American Panda* by Gloria Chao tells the story of a seventeen-year-old teenager who is already attending college at MIT named Mei Lu who is Chinese-American. Mei Lu comes from an immigrant family. Her parents are from Taiwan and migrated to the United States. Mei Lu was born in America and grew up with both cultures. Mei Lu's parents had already planned the perfect life for her, such as attending MIT, graduating to become a doctor, and planning her marriage to a

preapproved Taiwanese Ivy Leaguer. Her parents raised her in Taiwanese culture to maintain their Chinese cultural identity and ensure their family heritage, amidst the dominant American culture. But her parents are unaware about her allergy to germs, her passion for dance, or her crush on Darren, her Japanese-American classmate. As a second generation immigrant in the United States, Mei Lu struggles with her identities as both Chinese people and American citizens. The *American Panda* describes how the two cultures influenced Mei Lu, and her way of embracing both cultures while remaining true to herself.

In this study, the writer analyzes how the culture consciousness carried out by the characters and the factors that cause culture consciousness of the characters in Gloria Chao's *American Panda*. Therefore, this study uses diaspora theory to analyze the issues. Postmodernism is also used in this study because it has characteristics such as in terms of culture, identity, art, and perspectives that are related to plurality in today's multicultural society. Flisfeder (2017, p. 2) defines Postmodernism is a cultural theory that deals with new media and media, about genres and styles in cultural objects and texts, about subjectivity and identity, and emphasizes pluralism in terms of issues of race, gender, and sexuality. Postmodernism maintains a pluralistic focus in popular culture on postmodern society.

There is only one study that analyzed the novel *American Panda* by Gloria Chao, that is *Literary Perspectives on Adolescence and Adulthood: Three Contemporary Young Adult Novels* (2019) written by Ares Navarro Morlans. This dissertation analyzes how adolescence and adulthood are depicted in literature using three contemporary YAL novels: *The Problem with Forever* (2016), by Jennifer L. Armentrout; *American Panda* (2018), by Gloria Chao; and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999), by Stephen Chbosky. The thesis uses life course theory as the main theoretical framework.

This study is the first study to analyze culture consciousness in the novel *American Panda* by Gloria Chao. In this study, the writer used a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the culture consciousness of Mei Lu and her mother's characters. and for more details, it is explained in chapter 3.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the writer focused into two research questions, those are:

1. How do the characters perform the culture consciousness in Gloria Chao's *American Panda*?
2. What are the causes of culture consciousness experienced by the characters in Gloria Chao's *American Panda*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions above, the writer determines the objectives of the study as follows:

1. To describe how the characters perform the culture consciousness depicted in Gloria Chao's *American Panda*.
2. To describe the factors that cause culture consciousness portrayed in Gloria Chao's *American Panda*.

1.4 Significances of the Study

Hopefully, this study can provide contributions and solutions both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study is expected to give a better understanding of the issue of culture consciousness based on diaspora theory using postmodernism perspectives. This study is also supposed to provide more information and knowledge about postmodernism in literary works.

Practically, this study is expected to give information and knowledge to the academic community, especially students of English literature who conduct research in the field of literary works. This study is also intended to be a reference and guide for other researchers who will conduct further research on the field of culture consciousness in literary works using postmodernism.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of this study is the issues of culture consciousness in the novel *American Panda* by Gloria Chao using postmodern perspectives. Whereas, the limitations of the study is that this study still has many shortcomings due to limitations in data and analysis that only focuses on two characters, Mei Lu and her mother. This study solely discusses data in the form of the author's narration and character's utterances, which describe how Mei Lu and her mother perform culture consciousness and the cause of Mei Lu and her mother's culture consciousness in the novel entitled *American Panda* by Gloria Chao.