

## **CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Background**

Culture has been a part of humans' life. People often mention the word 'culture' when referring to arts and custom of a particular group or society. When people learn another group's culture, certainly they learn the custom, arts, language, literature, and other cultural products of the group. However, the meaning of 'culture' here is not merely arts and custom. It also includes the way of life and thinking of a particular group or society. Hall (in Rogers and Steinfatt 1999: 79) states that "Culture [is] those deep, common, unstated experiences which members of a given culture share, which they communicate without knowing, and which form the backdrop against which all other events are judged."

Every person belongs to particular cultures. The culture might be a nation's culture (e.g. American culture), an ethnic's culture (e.g. Javanese culture), a community's culture (e.g. reggae community), etc. Among those cultures, the nation's and/or ethnic's culture becomes the first culture that encounters a person's life. This first encountered culture usually sets the basic way of life of a person. How a person talks, how a person thinks, and how a person behaves are determined by what culture he/she belongs to.

When a person has to move or migrate from his/her home environment to a new environment, he/she faces a different culture. In this state of

difference, an adaptation is required. This adaptation then might result in hybridity.

Hybridity is a creation of new transcultural forms (Ashcroft et al., 2007: 108). It is a process in which new unique individuals are created from a cross between two cultures. These individuals have access to both cultures, the old one and the new one. This is when their identities can gradually become doubled, hybrid, or unstable. It can be said that they have hybrid identity (Barry, 1995: 195). In other words, they belong to more than one culture.

In a group of immigrants, however, the way they deal with hybrid identity can be different from one to another. Some still hold their original culture while maintaining a relationship with the new culture, while others have been influenced by the new culture more than the original one. Such phenomenon often happens between the older and the younger generation of immigrants. Both groups have hybrid identities, but their values and beliefs are different because the older group is still influenced by the original culture while the younger one is more influenced by the new culture. This difference in the way of thinking can lead to cultural clash.

The researcher chooses hybrid identity and cultural clash issue to be explored in this research because the issue is still happening in many parts of the world. In Indonesia, for example, in colonial period, there were a large number of Chinese immigrants. Nowadays, this group of Chinese people has been a part of Indonesian people. The second and next generations of immigrants have adapted to Indonesian culture. They speak Indonesian

language and they use Indonesian customs. However, they still keep some of their Chinese heritage, such as celebrating Chinese New Year, maintaining Chinese beliefs and philosophy, and, for some people, speaking Chinese language.

Another example of a country which has many immigrants is USA. Known as the 'melting pot', USA is occupied by immigrants from around the world. In Oregon, for example, 9.7 percent of the total population are foreign born (Bussel (ed.), 2008: 9). According to 2000 Population Census, most of the immigrants come from Latin America. Currently, 379,000 Latinos are living in Oregon (U.S. Census Bureau in Bussel (ed.), 2008: 57). These Latinos' identities can also be considered as hybrid, since they have been U.S. residence yet they have Latino blood. Furthermore, some of them also have assimilated with American culture, particularly children. These Latino children more quickly adopt American culture. They learn English better and show interest in popular clothing, music, and technology. However, their parents tend to resist to the new culture.

This cultural gap between parents and children sometimes results in a cultural clash. It particularly happens when the cultural difference between the original and the new culture is huge. An example of this is the Suni Muslims immigrants in North Miami who come from the Middle East and Pakistan. These Suni Muslims immigrants still keep their own culture and resist the dominant American culture. The cultural clash happens between youth and their parents. For example, an adolescent daughter asks for

permission to go shopping with her friends. Her parents will not allow her since Suni Muslim values do not allow an unmarried woman to go out without her parents or older brother. If the daughter insists, the parents will chain her to her bed (Steinfatt & Christophel in Rogers and Steinfatt, 1999: 97).

The same experience of hybrid identity and cultural clash also occurs within literary works. Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* is one of the examples. It portrays the life of four Chinese-American immigrant families in California. As immigrants in the United States, they have hybrid identities as both Chinese people and American citizens. However, how the first and the second generation deal with their hybrid identities are different. The difference then causes cultural clash between the first and the second generation.

The writer, Amy Tan, also comes from an immigrant family. She particularly belongs to the second generation immigrant. She was born in Oakland, California, on February 19, 1952. Her parents are Chinese immigrants. Besides the fact that Tan also comes from a Chinese immigrant family, there are also some similarities between Tan's life and the Joy Luck Club daughters' life, particularly Jing-Mei's. Her year of birth is in 1950s, almost the same as Jing-Mei's year of birth. Her mother was forced to leave her first children and moved to the United States because of war, like Jing-Mei's mother. In the end, Tan also visits China with her mother to meet her half-siblings, like Jing-Mei although she comes alone.

*The Joy Luck Club* is divided into four parts, each of which consists of four stories. These sixteen stories are related to one another, particularly evolving around the life of and the interaction between four pairs of mother and daughter from four immigrant families. Each story has different narrators whose point of view is used to tell the story. The narrators are the three mothers (one mother has died before the novel begins) and the four daughters. The mothers and daughters in the novel are the representations of first generation and second generation of immigrants which have different hybrid identities and experience cultural clash.

Hybrid identity and cultural clash still exist in many parts of the world. There are still immigrants who have to adapt to a new environment where the hybridization of identity is unavoidable. Since the hybridization may result in differences in the immigrants' way of thinking, values, and beliefs, sometimes it will create a cultural clash between the group which is still resistant towards the new culture and the one that has assimilated into the new culture. Therefore, through Tan's novel entitled *The Joy Luck Club*, the researcher explores immigrants' hybrid identities as reflected in the mothers and the daughters in the novel and the cultural clash which occurs between the two groups.

## **B. Research Focus**

This research is conducted using a novel written by a Chinese-American writer, Amy Tan, entitled *The Joy Luck Club*. There are two main

points which become the focus of this research. They are hybrid identity and cultural clash. The mothers are the first generation immigrants. Dislocation, in the form of immigration, has made the valid or stable identity, which the mothers once had when they were still in China, eroded. They have to give a place for American culture too. That is why they have hybrid identity, the double face, which they inherit to their daughters who have Chinese blood but live in American culture.

The daughters, as the second generation immigrants, have been influenced much by American culture and become ignorant of their Chinese inheritance. The mothers expect their daughters to maintain Chinese culture by talking to them in Chinese way. Talking in Chinese way means that not only do they speak in Chinese language, but they also bring the Chinese beliefs and philosophy with them. They try to teach their daughters about Chinese values but the daughters' mind has been "Americanized" so it is difficult for them to understand their mothers who expect them to maintain Chinese values. This difference of cultural background then leads to cultural clashes.

This research uses post-colonial theory. The aspect being discussed is hybridity. Hybridity is a situation in which someone belongs to more than one culture (Barry 1995: 198). Ashcroft, et al. (2007: 108) states that hybridity "commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization." However, although hybridity belongs to post-colonial study, it does not always deal with the oppressive

form of colonization such as slavery or conquest because even a free-settler, for example, who is free from the oppressive colonization, can also have a hybrid identity (Ashcroft, et al., 1989: 9).

The characters in *The Joy Luck Club* are actually almost the same as the free-settler mentioned above. They are free from either the slavery or conquest. Although they experience colonization in China by the Japanese, that is not the case studied in this research since the focus of analysis is their experience in the United States. The colonization that the characters undergo is in the matter of culture. Since their culture is minority, the American culture which is the larger culture tends to be more superior. This superiority of American culture mostly affects the daughters who were born in the United States, while the mothers still hold Chinese values deep in their mind although they also have become Americans.

This research will focus on how the mothers and the daughters deal with their hybrid identities. In this case, the difference between their strategies is explored. That is why the discussion on how the mothers deal with their hybrid identities is separated from that of the daughters. The cultural clash is explained by analyzing the differences between the mothers' and the daughters' cultural background. Thus, the interaction between the mothers and the daughters is also involved.

There are eight characters, consisting of four mothers and four daughters, which are analyzed. The mothers are Suyuan Woo, An-Mei Hsu, Lindo Jong, and Ying-Ying St. Clair, while the daughters are Jing-Mei Woo,

Rose Hsu Jordan, Waverly Jong, and Lena St. Clair. The settings of place of the novel vary from many places in China to California, USA. However, the Chinese settings of place are actually the mothers' recollection of their time in China. When they tell their stories about their experience in China, they are already in the United States. The settings of time also vary in line with the place. The mothers' stories about their time in China are mostly around 1910s to 1940s, while their lives in the United States are around 1950s to 1980s.

### **C. Research Objectives**

Based on the research focus, the objectives of the research are as follows:

1. to identify how the Chinese-American mothers deal with hybrid identity,
2. to observe how their daughters deal with hybrid identity,
3. to reveal the cultural clash that occurs between the mothers and the daughters.

### **D. Research Significance**

Based on the background and the formulation of the problem, the research is expected to have the following significances.

1. Theoretically, this research is expected to give a deeper understanding about post-colonial approach in literature, particularly related to hybridity and hybrid identity. Besides, this



research is also expected to give information about cultural clash. Therefore, a deeper understanding on cultural issue in literature will be developed.

2. Practically, this research is expected to be another reference for other researchers who conduct studies about hybridity and cultural clash in literature. The researcher also hopes that this research can lead to a further research on this area of study.