

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

People love traveling. For some people who love writing and traveling, their travelling experiences are congregated into travel writing. Usually travel writing is written to express a different feeling which stained after having the journey compared to what occurs at their home. Bryan Lawson's *The Language of Space* (2001) asserts people start to make decision according to how do they feel about the place.

Travel writing is a genre which was born in the 18th century when British travelers expanded to every corner of the world which driven by varied motives (Bohls & Duncan, 2005). This writing is written in many forms such as conventional travel writing, guide book, reportage and novel (Forsdick, 2005).

As human beings, we tend to search for values towards the culture of a place we live in, especially when we encounter a different place and culture for the first time. In this situation, we tend to judge other people's behavior, belief, custom, then compare them to our home or origin. This attitude leads to an unavoidable tendency of viewing our own culture as better or superior one than the others we are comparing to. This situation usually occurs in travelling when one visits a place or country which has a different or contrast culture.

Travelers' description of places that have been visited reveals their perceptions of themselves. An Italian scholar, Papa (1991), identifies the presence of traveler's subjectivity in travel writing. Apart from its objective information given in the text, travel writing expresses the author's personality and his/her curiosity towards the "other". Thus, sometimes the writing in this genre implies the writer's supremacy towards the culture of places that is visited.

Eat, Pray, Love (2006) written by Elizabeth Gilbert is also an example of travel writing. The book tells a journey of the writer herself who searched for pleasure and divinity throughout three countries: Italy, India, and Indonesia. Because the book reveals the interaction between Gilbert and the locals in different cultures, it is decent to see whether *Eat, Pray, Love* represents the writer's supreme attitude towards the other.

Said in *Orientalism* argues that travel books feature is one example of the *orientalist* discourse (Said, 1991). It is aimed to naturalize the Orient into Western knowledge in order to facilitate and legitimize Western imperialism (Ropero, 2003) which is found in Rudyard Kipling's *The Ballad of East and West*. The opening of the ballad: "Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet," was popularly criticized by many scholars as Kipling's prejudicial attitude towards the culture of the East and West. The prejudice presents the East and West social position addressed by the author of travel writing. Although the memoir is written a few decades after Said discusses the West supremacy in portraying the 'Other', *Eat, Pray, Love* has a

similar tendency of presenting the narrator's superiority towards the three countries in the novel.

Since the focus of the text is on the traveler's self, it is important to analyze Gilbert's motivation of travelling to describe how the main character perceives the places she visits as exotic. These motivations can be revealed by identifying the main character's thought and behavior towards the tourist attraction.

To find out the way the main character perceived the three countries as exotic destinations, the research focuses on the main character's description and behavior towards the attraction of places that she visited. Finally, the findings will be interpreted by using Edward Said's *Orientalism* to see whether Gilbert expresses cultural prejudice which addresses her own country's culture as superior or not.

1.2. Statement of Problem

In order to focus on the research, the research question is formulated to the appearing issue in *Eat, Pray, Love*. Generally, the question is formulated as: "does the main character perceive Italy, India, and Indonesia as equal to her origin?". More specifically, the research study hopes to answer the questions:

1. In what ways does the main character perceive Italy, India and Indonesia?
2. Does the main character portray the social position of Italy, India, and Indonesia as equal to her culture of origin?

1.3. Aims of Study

Since the research focuses on the main character's perception towards Italy, India and Indonesia, the aim of conducting the research is to find out the way Gilbert sees the three countries as exotic destinations. Besides, this study also tries to reveal whether the author expresses an ethnocentric attitude as happened in the eighteenth centuries travel writing or shifts the social position of the three countries.

1.4. Research Methods

The procedures used to reveal main character's perception about places in *Eat, Pray, Love* are:

1. Reading the book thoroughly and carefully. The strategy which is used is close reading. This strategy is an effort to get the gist and the general idea of the story.
2. Using content analysis to find the data. In this stage, the researcher identifies attributes referring to each country which then leads to the character's purpose to choose the place. The next step is revealing the character's perception from the main character's point of view and attitude towards the place including other characters she interacts with.
3. Applying Victor Segalen's notion of *Exoticism* to reveal whether the author represents the culture of three countries as exotic destinations. Then, applying Edward Said's theory of *Orientalism* to reveal whether the author expresses cultural prejudice or ethnocentricity which occurs in the eighteenth century travel writing or shifts the social position of the three

countries. This stage focuses on the character's attitude as traveler towards the diversity of the three countries' culture.

4. Drawing conclusions and suggestions based on the findings of the research.

1.5. Organization of Paper

1. Chapter I (Introduction)

This chapter contains the background of the study, the statement of problems, aims of study, research methods, and organization of the paper.

2. Chapter II (Theoretical Framework)

This chapter explains the provided theory to support and reveal the analysis.

3. Chapter III (Research Methods)

This chapter focuses on the explanation of methodology which is used in the analysis of the research. It contains the research procedure, source of data, technique of data collection, technique of data analysis, clarification of terms, and data presentation.

4. Chapter IV (Finding and Discussion)

This chapter explains further analysis of the data presentation. The data are analyzed by using the theories which are provided in chapter II.

5. Chapter V (Conclusion and Suggestion)

This chapter presents the conclusions and suggestions of the research findings.