

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an introduction to the research, consisting of the background of the study and research questions. It also includes the aim of the study, significance of the study, and clarification of key terms.

1.1. Background of the Study

Chinese ethnic group is one of the biggest diasporas in the world. This is in accordance with the statement by Poston and Wong (2016), who report that Chinese ranked the third after Germans and Irish as the largest diasporas in the world. Chinese diasporas are known as overseas Chinese. Poston and Wong (2016) describe overseas Chinese as Chinese people who reside outside the mainland (People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan). These overseas Chinese spread over the globe, residing in almost every country in the world. Being in foreign places and interacting with people in different cultural contexts, overseas Chinese need to modify their notion of cultures. New environments oblige them to learn new language skills, different etiquette patterns, different culinary possibilities, different parenting customs, etc. The new cultures, either adapted or assimilated, are not necessarily taken from superior cultures, they are just simply different from the cultures overseas Chinese have when they first come to certain countries. The emergence of these intermixed cultures is often referred to as hybridity.

Hybridity is one of the most widely employed concepts in post-colonial study. This term is closely associated with the work of Homi K. Bhabha which discussed the interdependence and mutual construction of subjectivities of the colonizer and colonized. According to Bhabha (1994), hybridity refers to the emergence of new cultures due to colonialization and a conscious movement of cultural suppression. The occurrence of new cultures is possible because culture is not a static entity that can be fixed in time and space, rather, culture is something which is fluid and perpetually in motion (Bhabha, 1994). Furthermore, Bhabha (1994) states that culture is a melting pot of several disparate elements which are regularly being

added and negotiated in a space called “Third Space of Enunciation”. The new cultures as a result of negotiation in the “Third Space of Enunciation” can be investigated through the manifestation of culture such as morals, customs, norms, values, language, ideas, etc. (Kumaravadivelu, 2008).

Regarding the topic of hybridity, there are several studies that have been conducted. Jopi Nyman (2007) in his article entitled “The Hybridity of the Asian American Subject in Cynthia Kadohata’s *The Floating World*”, Shirin Zubair (2012) in her journal article entitled “Crossing Borders, Reinventing Identity(ies): Hybridity in Pakistani English Fiction” and Shahbaz Arif and Nighat Parveen (2014) in their research entitled *Cultural Hybridity in Nadeem Aslam’s Maps for Lost Lovers*. The studies conducted by the researchers show that the cultural hybridity or identity can be represented and manifested through very diverse cultural forms. Nyman (2007) found that memory and ghost are utilized to show the representation of the character’s cultural identity in the novel. Zubair (2012) identified language, dressing, and thought as the signifier of cultural identity. Lastly, Arif and Parveen (2014) categorized language as the indicator of nation, ethnic, and religion mixture in the novel.

The present research aims to investigate the issue of representation in Chinese characters who are hybrid in the novel by Kevin Kwan entitled *Crazy Rich Asians* (2013). The novel is written by a Singaporean Chinese who has been living in the United States for almost two decades. This novel is interesting because it tells about the story of hybrid characters from America and Singapore using the perspective of hybrid writer. Published in June 2013, the novel instantly gained worldwide success as a best-selling book in many countries and recommended by influential celebrities like Oprah Winfrey, Anna Wintour and Bryan Boy. Due to its popularity, the novel is adapted into a movie and released in August 2018. The movie is also a big hit and its engagement can be seen in the creation of other ‘Crazy Rich’ terms such as *Crazy Rich Surabayan* or *Crazy Rich Tasikmalayan*. The big impact given by this piece of literature to society has become one of the reasons this study is conducted.

Despite the fame of the movie in popular media, this study chooses to analyze its novel since it is the source of the story. Due to limited screen time, a movie may alter and adjust the story to fit its limitations. In addition, when made into a movie,

the story is told from the director's point of view instead of the novel's writer. Thus, the novel is more suitable to be discussed in the present research to find the representation of Chinese characters, who are hybrid, in the story. Regarding the novel, the issue of hybridity and representation is less discussed. Studies on this novel have discussed the authorial ideology via the class structure and class conflict reflected in the novel using Marxist theory (Adhitya, 2015) and the family conflict reflected in the novel using sociological approach (Dwi & Prastiwi, 2013). The present study, on the other hand, focuses on analyzing the issue of hybridity and representation of Chinese characters, who are hybrid, in the novel using the theoretical framework of hybridity by Homi K. Bhabha (1994) and representation by Stuart Hall (1997).

1.2. Research Questions

This paper focuses on the issue of hybridity in *Crazy Rich Asians* (2013) through the following question:

1. How Chinese characters, are represented in *Crazy Rich Asians*?
2. What is the meaning behind the representation?

1.3. Aim of the Study

Based on the following research questions, the study aims to reveal the way Chinese characters are represented in the novel *Crazy Rich Asians* (2013) by Kevin Kwan. In addition, the study also attempts to make meanings of the representation in the novel. The analysis in the present study employs the theory of hybridity by Homi K. Bhabha (1994) and the theory of representation by Stuart Hall (1997).

1.4. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to find the way Chinese characters are represented in the novel and also to subvert the mainstream fixed representation of Chinese character in literary works by investigating the culturally hybrid Chinese characters as the object of study. The present research explored the aspects of cultures namely thought, behavior, and language in each chosen character to

disclose their hybridity. This study thus contributes to enrich the research on representation and hybridity in literary works.

1.5. Clarification of Key Terms

To sustain the convenience for this research, several main terms in this research will be described as follows:

1. **Representation:** Representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the 'real' world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events (Hall, 1997).
2. **Hybridity:** The emergence of new cultures due to colonialization and a conscious movement of cultural suppression (Bhabha, 1994).
3. **Diaspora:** A condition of ethnic groups living outside their original homeland (Mitchell, 1977).
4. **Character:** Character is the most important literary element in a work of fiction which gives story a purpose (Reams, 2015).
5. **Characterization:** Characterization is the attempt of author to shape, develop, and present a character in a fiction (Reams, 2015).