

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The introduction chapter provides an insight into the background of the research, statements of the research question and its aims, and lastly, give some clarification of the terms used frequently in this research.

1.1 Background of the Research

Marriage is something that most people value the most. People want to marry someone that they love and have a beautiful married life. They cross boundaries, become selfless, change into someone else, or do anything to work out their marriage life. Marriage comes with their problems to solve. Among people who marry someone with the same culture, their conflicts may occur around their differences in personality or preferences. However, for intercultural or interracial marriage, their problems were not only about the things mentioned above. They also have to overcome their cultural differences. McFadden (2001) states that empowerment traits for intercultural marriage and intimacy are core ingredients in promoting positive relationships. He elaborates that each of the couples' families might work toward achieving optimal interracial satisfaction and simultaneously cope with external forces such as nationality, community, family, and individual. If they fail in promoting positive relationships towards each other's cultures, their marriage life will not work out.

A memoir by Susan Blumberg-Kason entitled *Good Chinese Wife* (2014) is an example of how intercultural marriage is very complicated. The story is about an American woman named Susan, who married a Chinese man named Cai Jun. Susan was very interested in Chinese culture since she was in high school. After a few years of learning the Chinese language, she went to The Chinese University of Hong Kong to pursue her master's degree. She met Cai, and after a few months of knowing each other, they decided to get married. Susan thought that Cai was someone very considerate, kind, intelligent, and easy to talk. She always dreams of a fairytale-like marriage with a Chinese man since she loves Chinese culture so

much. Throughout their marriage life, Susan was faced with the truth that Cai was not near what she imagined. Cai turns into an abusive husband, not physically but mentally. He took the power of their marriage life and made it his own version. He dictates Susan on how to act and never lets her have her personal opinion on their life. Cai always feels like others' opinions except for him and his Chinese beliefs are not valid. This attitude makes Susan questions her marriage life and tries to save her and their son's life from Cai. One of the major problems encountered by intermarried couples is the lack of understanding and appreciation of each other's culture (Tseng, 2001). Either Cai is conscious or not, he has taken control of Susan's life and exerts some power to her. The imbalance of power in their marriage life eventually broke their marriage.

Power, according to Foucault (1982), is not merely a relationship between partners, individual or collective, but rather, it is a way in which specific actions modify others. He then further elaborate that the relation of power expands horizontally and deeply, rather than vertically, and penetrates into each point (Becerman, 2018). It means that anyone can exert power no matter what their age, or social status. In line with Foucault's theory, French and Raven (1959) also believe that power exists when it can influence someone's action and results in resistance. They propose five bases of power to explain the notion further. However, Raven adds one more base of power and make it six. The six bases of power proposed by Raven (2008) are informational power, expert power, legitimate power, reward power, coercive power, and referent power. Raven (2008) explains that the bases of power differ in the manner that the social change is implemented, the permanence of such change, and the ways in which each basis of power is established and maintained.

There are some studies that analyze power. Hallenbeck (1966) published a study entitled *An Analysis of Power Dynamics in Marriage*. The study shows that the dominance between the husband and wife usually results from who makes the most decisions or who wins the arguments in their marriage life. The study also reveals that the spouses' behavior and attitude reflect the cultural norms that they

have internalized. Another recent study that focuses on analyzing power is the study conducted by Novela in 2017. Novela (2017) analyses power in a young adult literary works in her undergraduate paper entitled *Power Relations Between Parents and Children in the Novel "My Life as a Stuntboy."* The research concludes that the role of society affected parents' expectations towards their children; therefore, they use power over their child to teach them to be more responsible.

Other than previous studies on power, there are also some studies on interracial relationships. Bell and Hastings (2011) study about how Black and White interracial couple responses when they anticipate or after they experience a threat due to racism or prejudice. This study shows that the couples believe they are helping to bridge the racial divide in the US, although they were faced with racism and prejudice from society. Hibbler and Shinew's (2002) study also reveals similar results. In their study entitled *Interracial Couples' Experience of Leisure: A Social Network Approach*, Hibbler and Shinew analyses the leisure patterns of African-American and European-American couples. Similar to the study conducted by Bell and Hastings, Hibbler and Shinew's study reveals that the interracial couple felt socially isolated in their daily life due to race and racism. It includes their work life, family, and their leisure time. The couples admitted feeling uncomfortable to have a leisure life in public places.

The previous studies mentioned above gave some insight into research on issues of power and interracial couples. However, based on the previous studies mentioned above, there have not been many studies that analyze power exercise in an intercultural marriage. Therefore, the recent study tries to fill in that gap.

For this research, the issue of power between the characters is analyzed using Raven's bases of power theory. The data that is analyzed is in the form of a memoir, *Good Chinese Wife* (2014), written by Susan Blumberg-Kason. In this memoir, power is being exercised by Cai as the husband to his wife, Susan, throughout their marriage life, and even before they got married. This study aims to show which types of power that the characters exercised and to understand how

the power is exercised. In addition to those purposes, the results of this study fill in the gap that previous researchers miss, which is power exercise among interracial marriage. The study also serves to give a better understanding of the memoir and of the issue of power between husband and wife and between two different cultures in society.

1.2 Statement of Problem

This research strives to answer the following question:

1. How are the types of power relations exercised by the characters in the story?

1.3 Purposes of Research

Based on the research question above, this study aims to uncover the types of power relations that the characters in the *Good Chinese Wife* memoir exercised. The types of power are derived from Raven's theory of bases of power. The study also aims to understand in what ways the power is exercised throughout the story.

1.4 Significance of Research

This study tries to give a new insight into how power can manifest itself in an intercultural marriage through a literary work. Marriage is a private relationship between the husband and the wife. However, there are often issues happening, such as domestic violence, that can possibly occur in every marriage. The issue of power between husband and wife still becomes an apparent issue and still relevant in society nowadays. Especially in an intercultural marriage, the differences in cultures between the spouses result in an imbalance of power, just like in the *Good Chinese Wife* memoir by Susan Blumberg-Kason (2014). By conducting this research, the writer wants to encourage readers to understand the power issue through analysis of literary works and not take the matter for granted. Hopefully, this research can raise awareness about how power is an imbalance in the institution

of marriage, especially in an intercultural marriage that involves different cultures. Furthermore, there have not been many studies about the issue of power in a cross-cultural marriage.

1.5 Scope of Research

This study focuses mainly on analyzing conflicts that occur as a result of power exercised by the characters, precisely between the husband and the wife that involves the overall plot of the story. The study analyzes a memoir by Susan Blumberg-Kason entitled *Good Chinese Wife*. The issue of power relation is examined using Raven's (2008) six bases of power, which are informational, reward, coercion, legitimate, expertise, and referent. However, not all of the bases of power are applied in this study. The expert power, referent power, and coercive power are the only visible bases of power in this study. The exercise of power identified in the conflicts does not include the rest of the bases. Hence, it is expected that the highlighted evidence falls into these categories in order to analyze them and uncover the way power is exercised in the memoir.

1.6 Clarification of Terms

The following terms need to be clarified to avoid vague understandings, which are as follows:

1. Power

Foucault (1975, 1982) explains that power is a relationship between people in which one affects another's actions, and it only exists when it is put into action. Power is also the capability of someone to change people's minds or behavior. Lewin (1944/1951, as cited in Raven; 1993) defined power as “the possibility of inducing forces’ of a certain magnitude on another person.”

2. Culture

Quoting from Matsumoto (1996, as cited in Spencer-Oatey; 2012) culture is ‘... the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of

people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next.’ Moreover, Spencer-Oatey (2008, as cited in Spencer-Oatey; 2012) also proposes that culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioral conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behavior and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behavior.

3. Intercultural Marriage

The term “Intercultural marriage” refers to a marriage formed by partners with relatively diverse cultural backgrounds so that different cultural factors, including different views, beliefs, value systems, and attitudes toward couples, become the main issues in their marital adjustment (Tseng, 2001).

4. Memoir

Roorbach (2008, as cited in June; 2016) states that memoir is a true story, a work of narrative that is built directly from the memory of the writer, with an added element of creative research. A literary memoir is usually about a special theme or about a part of someone’s life, as it is a story with the narrative shape, focus and subject matter, involving reflection on some particular places or events (Literary Devices website; 2015, as cited in June; 2016).

1.7 Organization of Paper

This paper is organized into five chapters, as follows:

CHAPTER I: Introduction

The Introduction parts present the background of the research, statements of problems and its purposes, subject of the research, some clarification of most used terms in the study, and the significance of the study towards the field of the research.

CHAPTER II: Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses the theories that purposes as the framework in conducting this research. It also provides some relevant studies on the same topic.

CHAPTER III: Research Methodology

This section provides the methodology used in this paper. It is divided into several parts, which are Methodology, Data Collection, and Data Analysis, as well as the Summary of the Memoir.

CHAPTER IV: Findings and Discussion

This section gives a thorough explanation of the research and the results of the data analysis. The data is also discussed based on the research questions for the research, and using the relevant theories.

CHAPTER V: Conclusion

This chapter sums up the study by concluding the results of the research. There are also some suggestions present for future studies regarding the same topic.