

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction of the study. It covers background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1 Background of the Study

Young adult is a transition stage from childhood to adulthood. Young adults are considered to be in age of 12 until 20 develop faster physically, cognitively, and socially (Bucher & Hinton, 2010, p. 1-2). Bucher further said that eventually every adolescent is maturing; the road and speed of his or her journey are taking differently. In their process of maturation, young adults mostly experience the awkwardness from leaving their childhood and preparing to enter their early adulthood. Thus, there must be some different identities formed during their adolescence.

One of the most important developmental challenges of adolescence is identity construction. Identity is a process that someone creates, and it is culturally constructed due to the discursive resources signified by signs of taste, beliefs, attitudes, and lifestyle (Barker, 2004, p. 93-94). Barker (2004) further stresses that an identity builds on what we think we are now in the light of our past and present circumstances together with what we think we would like to be in the future. Hall

(as cited in Du Gay et al, 2000, p. 12) states that identities aren't fixed and are constantly in the process of change and transformation.

The issue of young adult identity construction is often adapted as a story in young adult novel. One example of the novels is *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, a popular coming-of-age novel written by Stephen Chbosky. It tells about a 15 year-old Charlie who finds the awkwardness of being a new adolescent. In the process of searching his identity, he is surrounded by different environments and exposed by various media, such as books, music, television, and magazines. Thus, he tends to perform different identities depending on what environment he is in. Chbosky wrote his novel in an unusual yet unique way by compiling the stories of Charlie in a series of letter form.

There are previous studies that have been conducted in investigating identity construction, for example Hamley (2001) on her journal entitled "Media Use in Identity Construction" that talked about how adolescents tend to use media as their fairy godmother to construct their identity. It is in line with Nealon & Giroux (2003, p. 68) who state that media teaches people how to be subjects and certain types of subjects, people unconsciously learn about themselves and can create their own individual and social identity through media. She also uncovered that an identity is not a fixed thing and it is just as difficult maintaining one as it is constructing one in the first place.

Another study conducted by Hill-Parks (2011) was concerned about identity construction of Christopher Nolan's movie characters. She revealed that

within Nolan's movies lie a concern about formation and mutability of identity. She further said that the confusion of identity is always being the center theme of Nolan's movies that marks it as a significant point to consider. However, in the end, Hill-Parks related it with Nolan's style as the author.

Due to the issue adapted in the novel, the study analyzes how Charlie's identity as a young adult is constructed in the text as he is exposed into print-rich environment in particular, that takes a large part in constructing his identity. The study was inspired by the previous studies as stated above. However, the previous studies only talked about the identity construction on young adult in real life and on movie characters, thus this study focuses on constructing identity which is influenced by media, in fictional character of the novel. The presentation of Charlie's identity construction can be seen and investigated through the main character's statements, thoughts, and acts in the form of words. The study chooses to use *The Perks of Being A Wallflower* because it is a good example of new realist fiction for adolescents that reveals how young adult overcomes his or her awkwardness in adolescence stage and constructs his identity through various circumstances.

1.2 Research Questions

The research questions of the study are designed as follows:

1. How is Charlie's identity as a young adult constructed in the text?
2. What role does the print-rich environment play in constructing Charlie's identity?

1.3 Aims of the Study

The study is conducted to:

- Find out how Charlie's identity is constructed in the text.
- Find out what role the print-rich environment plays in constructing his identity as an adolescent as evidenced in the text.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study is centred on analyzing how Charlie's, as the main character of *The Perks of Being A Wallflower*, identity is being constructed in the text and role of print-rich environment plays in constructing his identity.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to describe how a young adult's identity is constructed as shown in the novel, where the main character is highly exposed into a print-rich environment. The results of the study are expected to give some useful and positive impacts on English Department's students and larger society. In addition, the analysis is also expected to provide an alternative way as a response to literary work by critiquing a literary work.

1.6 Research Method

1.6.1 Research Design

The study is descriptive in nature and uses a textual analysis framework. The study analyzes Charlie's, the main character, identity and how the print-rich environment plays role in constructing his identity.

1.6.2 Data Collection

The data were collected by reading the novel thoroughly. It is because the study mostly deals with narrative textual analysis. The data which are in the form of words, phrases, and sentences were critically selected as textual evidence to answer the research questions.

1.6.3 Data Analysis

In analyzing the main character's identity, the study intersects two frameworks, one that talks about identity theory by Stuart Hall (2000), and the other one is new realist fiction for adolescent by Nilsen & Donelson (2001). The collected data are then analyzed by categorizing them into table of how the main character's identity is constructed and the role of print-rich environment plays in constructing his identity. In conducting the research the following steps have been taken as follows:

1. Selecting the subject of the study;
2. Formulating the statement of problem;
3. Highlighting the main character's acts, thoughts, and speeches as the textual evidences;

4. Examining the role of print-rich environment used in the novel to see how it influences the construction of Charlie's identity;
5. Analyzing the data using identity theory by Stuart Hall (2000) and young adult literature by Nilsen & Donelson (2001);
6. Interpreting the results of data;
7. Making conclusions of the study and suggestion for further research in the future.

1.7 Clarification of terms

To avoid misconception and misunderstanding, the following is the clarification of terms used in the present study:

1. Young-Adult Fiction

Young-adult fiction is a contemporary form of literature that is intended for readers in age 12 until 20 offering a unique way of social conflicts and dilemmas (Bean & Moni, 2003, p. 638). The primary source in the study is a young-adult fiction book.

2. New Realism

New realism is a genre of coming-of-age story which is read by teenagers as they made that treacherous journey from childhood to adulthood (Nilsen & Donelson, 2001, p. 113). In this case, new realism refers to a genre in the novel that covers about young adults' problems and concerns in which the readers, mostly young adults, can relate themselves with the characters of the books that they are not the only one who has certain problems.

3. Media

Media is a one of mediums in communication in which keep people being informed and entertained (Nealon & Giroux, 2001, p. 69). Media which is used in this research is print rich environment in form of books.

4. Print-Rich Environment

Print-rich environment is an environment in which reading and writing is applied for everyday purposes, for instance to increase children's and adolescents' literacy (Weaver, 1990). In this research, print-rich environment is only used as a term to describe the environment which full of printed reading materials in form of literary works.

5. Identity Construction

Identity construction is defined as a project of the ongoing creation of narratives of self-identity relating to our perceptions of the past, present, and hoped for future (Barker, 2002, p. 94). In this case, identity construction is seen from the lens of a young adult character in the novel.

1.8 Organisation of the Paper

The paper is organized as follows:

CHAPTER I

This chapter contains background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, clarification of the terms, and organization of the paper.

CHAPTER II

The chapter covers some related theories which stand as the foundation of the study.

CHAPTER III

This section provides the research method, discussing the steps and procedures of the study, and the data resources in conducting the study.

CHAPTER IV

In this part the result of the research is presented. This chapter contains the research findings and discussion.

CHAPTER V

This last chapter contains the interpretation toward the result of the research in a form of conclusion and suggestion in accordance with the research.

