

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

We live in a globalized world. People go from one place to others by a ship or planes in a very rapid way. Not only that, news in the U.S. has been transported to Indonesia via TV or more. News in the US has been transferred to Indonesia through TV or recently through the internet. With this feature we can understand and learn what is happening outside our country. We can learn their culture, tribes, and customs of other countries.

In Indonesia, people have an incredible cultural heritage, and so do other parts of the world. Each culture has its own uniqueness such as its own traditions and beliefs. Not only that, Indonesia also has an incredible cultural heritage. But with these differences, sometimes there have been problems related to ethnicity, culture and religion due to the lack of tolerance between cultures. For example, marriage between 2 people who have different religions. Interfaith marriage is a prime example of where cultural and religious differences interact with legal frameworks, often creating significant problems. One of the core problems lies in the interpretation of the 1974 Marriage Law, Article 2, Paragraph (1), which states that a marriage is valid only if it is performed according to the laws of each religion and belief. Since most major religions in Indonesia (especially Islam, which has specific prohibitions against women marrying non-Muslims) do not sanction interfaith marriage, these unions face significant legal hurdles.

Buck's *Letter from Peking* novel, describes conflicts in relationship between individuals of different cultures. The story happened in 1949 where there was a war between China and Japan. The main character in this story comes from different cultures, Elizabeth, is an American and her husband Gerald is a Chinese. They both married and lived in Peking until the war with Japan, then escaped to Chungking. She and her husband are very much in love, but Gerald, a Eurasian

(European-Asian), sent her and his son Rennie to America because the communist uprising in China made it dangerous for white people. He is half Chinese and chose to stay in his own country. Because of this event, Gerald rarely sends a letter to Elizabeth because communication with westerners is banned by the Communists. Because of this conflict it is very hard to make a relationship between American and Chinese.

Buck wants to introduce readers to Chinese culture, emphasizing its customs, traditions, and philosophical beliefs. She was born in Hillsboro, West Virginia. Taken to China as an infant (three months old), she grew up with fundamental Oriental influences, because her parents who are Presbyterian missionaries preferred to live among the natives rather than isolate themselves in missionary compounds. By her experience in China and America during her seventeen, she comparing Chinese and American cultures, she shows how their diversities intersect, even in intimate contexts. For example, the way family duties and romantic relationships are perceived can differ greatly across cultures, affecting how individuals approach love and commitment. Buck's narrative emphasizes the importance of empathy and understanding in navigating these cultural interactions, encouraging readers to look beyond superficial differences and appreciate the deeper values that shape human behavior.

Additionally, Buck delves into the emotional struggles of her characters as they confront their identities in relation to the differing cultural landscapes. Elizabeth's journey, marked by her experiences as an American woman married to a Chinese man, illustrates the personal challenges that arise from cultural dislocation. This exploration reveals the tensions that can arise from cultural clashes but also highlights the opportunities for connection and mutual respect. Elizabeth's efforts to embrace her husband's culture while grappling with her own identity reflect the broader theme of finding balance in a multicultural world.

Buck's depiction of characters like Gerald, who is deeply rooted in his Chinese heritage, further emphasizes the idea that cultural identity is multifaceted. Gerald's struggle to remain loyal to his family and his love for Elizabeth create a rich web of conflict and resolution. Through their interactions, Buck illustrates how love can transcend cultural boundaries while also revealing the difficulties inherent in such relationships. The emotional depth of these characters invites readers to empathize with their struggles, fostering a greater appreciation for the complexities of intercultural relationships.

Drawing on her own experiences bridging East and West, Buck reveals the complex realities of cross-cultural dynamics. Her childhood as an American who spent much of her life in China gives her insight into the intricacies involved in cultural exchange. She shows how individuals can learn from one another despite their differences, emphasizing that cultural understanding is not simply an academic pursuit but a vital component of human connection.

In this way, *Letter from Peking* not only tells a compelling story but also serves as a powerful commentary on the importance of cultural understanding in an increasingly globalized world. Buck's narrative encourages readers to reflect on their own cultural identities and consider how they relate to others in diverse societies.

At the end, Buck's work shows us the readers to engage with and appreciate the richness of diversity in an interconnected world. As we navigate our own cross-cultural interactions, her insights remind us that understanding and empathy are key to building bridges across cultures. By embracing these values, we can foster deeper connections and create a more harmonious global community. This exploration of cultural exchange is not only relevant in Buck's time, but also resonates deeply in today's world, where the blending of cultures continues to shape our collective human experience.

1.2 Research Question

The study is about the different values of relationship between Western and Eastern cultures in Buck's novel "*Letter from Peking*".

1. How do the characters represent the differing values of relationships between Western and Eastern cultures, as depicted in Buck's *Letter from Peking* ?
2. How do characters in *Letter from Peking* reconcile the cultural conflicts?

1.3 Research Objectives

The objective of this study is to explore how the contrasting values of relationships between Western and Eastern cultures are depicted in Buck's *Letter from Peking*. This study focuses on the characters' experiences, specifically how they manage cultural conflicts and the approaches they use to reconcile differing values within their relationships. By investigating these interactions, the research aspires to deepen the understanding of cross-cultural dynamics and the complexities of bridging cultural gaps.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The research on the differing values in relationships between Western and Eastern cultures in Buck's novel *Letter from Peking* holds significant importance. First, this research gives us a better understanding of cultural diversity by analyzing how different values affect interpersonal interactions. Second, through the characters in the novel, this research illustrates how cultural differences can be a source of conflict as well as an opportunity for growth and adaptation. Additionally, the findings of this research are relevant to contemporary issues such as migration and multiculturalism, which society increasingly faces today. By understanding the dynamics of cross-cultural relationships depicted by Buck, readers can be better prepared to face challenges in real-world intercultural interactions. Finally, this research also opens avenues for further

literary studies, encouraging other researchers to explore similar themes in other works. Thus, the importance of this research lies in its potential to enrich cultural dialogue and enhance awareness of the complexities of relationships between different cultures.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

In this study, the theory about relationships in western perspective and Eastern perspective point of view is used. These perspectives shape how individuals understand love, commitment, and family dynamics. The main theory is taken from Hofstede (2001) and Triandis (2001) who discuss about the features of Western society which promote individualism, while Eastern society tends to be more collectivist. The theory is reflected in the aspects of relationships, especially marriage as the most intimate relationship.

1.6 Definition of Key-terms

Based on the study, here are the key terms:

1. Values

Values, according to Spencer-Oatey & Franklin (2012), are directly linked to interaction and communication. Cultural values are deeply held assumptions about what is important and appropriate, influencing interactional norms and social expectations. According to Schwartz (2012), cultural values are shared conceptions of what is desirable that guide the ways societies regulate behavior, prioritize goals, justify social practices. In this study, culture refers to shared conceptions of what is desirable that guide the ways societies regulate behavior, prioritize goals, justify social practices in the Chinese culture and American culture.

2. Novel

According to Stanton (1965:44) which is translated by Fitriani R (2017, p.1), a novel is one of the genres of literary work which presents in a detail the enlargement of characters, or complicated social circumstances, or a relation between many personalities. In this study, the novel analyzed is *Letter from Peking* written by Pearl S. Buck.

3. Relationship

Relationship, according to Kendra Cherry (2024), is the way two or more people are connected, or the way they behave toward each other: A relationship is also a close romantic friendship between two people. In this study, it refers to relationship between Elizabeth MacLeod And Gerald MacLeod.

4. Culture

According to Kramsch (1998), culture refers to membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings. In this study, the culture analyzed is related to the Chinese or American culture.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this research proposal includes a detailed analysis of Eastern and Western cultural values presented in Buck's *Letter from Peking*, with a particular focus on the character of Elizabeth and her experiences. The study aims to highlight the complexities of cross-cultural relationships, examining how these interactions shape identity and behavior. In addition, the proposal will consider the historical and social context in which Buck wrote, providing insight into the cultural dynamics of the era. Key themes such as adaptation, identity, and cultural exchange will be explored through qualitative methodologies, including textual analysis and thematic coding.

However, there are several limitations to this study. The analysis is limited to a single text, which may not capture the full range of Eastern and Western cultural interactions. Furthermore, literary interpretation is inherently subjective, leading to diverse audiences among different readers. While this study attempts to uncover cultural values, it risks oversimplifying the complexities inherent in individual cultures. The historical context may also differ from current cultural dynamics, potentially affecting the relevance of the findings. Finally, by concentrating on a particular character, the study may overlook other important cultural perspectives present in the narrative.