

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Identity is a reflection of being who or what a person is. Although this may seem simple in everyday life, identity is significant to clarify and strengthen one's position in a social context (Stella Ting-Toomey, 2012). An identity pinned on a person contains a particular meaning and is inherent in both adults and children.

It is widely known that children's literature has played a significant role in developing children's sense of identity. In a recent professional development webinar conducted by *Studiesweekly.com*, Dr. Noelle Carter, a chief curriculum architect, said that the books students read become a part of their identity by reflecting human experience to us and making it as self-affirmation. Therefore, we can agree that literature is an imitation of reality in society. The theory has been stated by Greil Marcus and Werner Sollers (2009) in one of their works that literary means "not only what is written but what is voiced, what is expressed, what is invented, in whatever form". It means that even though many types of literature are based on the author's imagination, it cannot be separated from observations, experiences, and lessons about his life and the lives of humans or other living things in the real world. Those things are then manifested by the author in the world of fiction.

Among the many types of literary works, short story is the most popular with children. Charles R. Duke (1974) states that short story has the most valuable feature, which allows students to deal in-depth, with a wide range of elements in literature. Short story is also effectively used to teach values to children, especially after the era of digitalization. Until the beginning of the 2000s, Muslim children had a tradition of studying the religion in their local mosque. However, after the rise of technology, people started to find a way to teach values easily and practically. One of the alternative options is the availability of Muslim children's visual literature.

In Indonesia, visual literature takes the form of popular books and Islamic comics. Both teach practical religious values using colorful images, which make the children interested in the learning process. The notion has been stated by Umut Azak (2013) in one of his works that these books are presented to be a solution for parents who want to teach Islam in a more modern way.

Based on the phenomenon explained beforehand, there has been a previous study conducted by Verena Eberhardt (2018), focused on the representation of culture and religion and revealed the constructions of identities children's literature using contemporary German-language children's books as the research object. The finding showed that the narrations analyzed tend to specify differences through cultural and religious characteristics; instead of dissolving those categories, the narrations strengthen them. It also stated the importance of literature in the mediation of knowledge, self-concepts, interpersonal perceptions, and normative paradigms. Differ from the

previous one, this study proposes to examine the extent to which the picture book have depicted the cultural identity in Indonesia with an emphasis on religious aspects using the theory of identity by Stuart Hall and the context of post-Islamism theory.

## **1.2 Research Question**

Based on the background explained previously, there are two questions presented in this research. Those are mentioned as follows:

- 1) How is the narrative aspect of the bilingual picture book portrayed the religious cultural identity?
- 2) How is the visual aspect of the bilingual picture book portrayed the religious cultural identity?

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

This research aims at two different questions as follows:

- 1) To find out how the religious cultural identity is implied in the narrative aspect of the bilingual picture book.
- 2) To find out how the religious cultural identity is implied in the visual aspect of the bilingual picture book.

## **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on bilingual picture book for children. Using the theory of identity by Stuart Hall (1990), this study aims to reveal what cultural identity is implied in the texts. It also adopts the theory of post-islamism (Asef Bayat, 1996) to emphasize the religious aspect, considering Indonesia as a

Muslim majority country. The researcher hopes that the next researcher can explore other perspectives considering that many things have not been included in this study.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Literature has functioned as the foundation of humanity's cultures, beliefs, and traditions. It serves as a reflection of reality, a product of art, and a window to an ideology (Anzar Ahmed, 2017). Literary works present many capture applications of life generally around people in society. Especially in a novel, it contains a plot, setting, and characters that capture some things real in life.

However, children's picture book contains many imaginative things and a lot of moral values based on the story. It represents the imagination of young children rather than grown-ups. Thus, through this study, it is hoped that parents and teachers will choose good storybooks to help children develop their sense of identity and promote a positive sense of diversity with the exciting storyline for children. With a unique insight that comes from books, they can understand what a character thinks and feels, which helps them develop empathy for the character, regardless of their background.

Other than that, this study is also suitable for people from all groups. With this study, the readers can also increase their knowledge by learning the attempt to impart religious cultural values to children with the touch of modernity. The researcher hopes this study is also expected to be beneficial for

further study and enrich the literary works, especially for future researchers. This study can be used as a reference for those who want to analyze and explore another topic from the picture book. Many other things can be examined in the book. In addition, this novel can be used for teachers to teach reading in a classroom

