

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

According to Greenhoot et al. (2014), children's literature is generally picture books or books in which images complement or dominate the text. The presence of illustrations in the story helps to draw children's attention to the story. The illustrations can also facilitate their understanding and retention of what is being read (Greenhoot et al., 2014). Greenhoot et al. (2014) analysis of story-reading interactions between illustrated and non-illustrated books revealed that pictures promote more interactive storytelling and parent-child interaction, both of which are linked to improved literacy results. Additionally, children in the illustrated condition remembered more tale episodes in the initial memory interview than those in the non-illustrated condition. Levin and Mayer (2012) also add that pictures play a role in improving attention and understanding or organization of the material, or provide cues about important information in the text to stay activated, all of which can promote the formation of stronger, more elaborate and more organized memory traces.

Picture books have been known as a learning tool for children. Picture books may also teach children about the values of one's cultural group (Wege et al., 2014; Suprawati et al., 2014). Picture books are important sources for children to understand new terms or information. It

displays the lives of humans and how humans are experiencing the world. But in conveying the stories, picture books not only use humans as the characters, but also uses animals, foods, even geometry concepts (Waxman et al., 2014; Heath et al., 2014; Flevaris & Schiffs, 2014) as the characters to appeal to children in understanding the stories.

As earlier mentioned, picture books use a variety of characters in the stories. Humans and animals become the characters that often appear in picture books, especially in folktales. Usually in folktales, animals are also given human's traits. Consequently, DeMello (2012, p. 306) stated that in folktales picture books animals are personified as humans. This type of picture book presents interactions between humans, animals, and nature. Accordingly, many environmental issues are hidden in it.

In order to unveil those hidden environmental issues, ecocriticism becomes a suitable foundation in exploring a folktales picture book. Glotfelty (as cited in Garrard, 2014, p. 426) defined "ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment". The ecocriticism intends to trace environmental notions and representations whenever they emerge in order to better understand a debate that appears to take place, often partially hidden, in a variety of cultural contexts. Ecocriticism attempts to widen the definition of the globe to include the entire ecosphere. In other words, this theory seeks to view the human-environment link in literary works through the lens of an eco-perspective. In theory, ecocriticism not only deals with environmental issues but also

deals with politics, feminism, queer life, and ethics. It developed throughout history and was influenced by many scientists.

Ecocriticism also considers the differences between space and place. According to James and Morel (2018), ecocritics frequently draw attention to particular places and nonplaces to consider how diverse ethical ties to settings endure, which might influence a strand of narrative ethics in these studies. This is especially important because many ecocritics have looked at how authors with in-depth expertise may write (James & Morel, 2018). Walking is one of these, along with other movement patterns, but narrative itself also raises issues with how diegetic levels interact to transmit spatial information (James & Morel, 2018). This realization helps to complicate debates of narrative spatialization and setting, as several writers to this special issue demonstrate (James & Morel, 2018).

In this study, the writer chose a folktale picture book which consists of eleven stories depicting the moral conflicts of animals, humans, and the interaction of humans and animals. The picture book titled *Balinese Children's Favorite Stories*. *Balinese Children's Favorite Stories* is a picture book which was retold by an ornithologist named Victor Mason. The picture book mainly discusses good versus evil themes to teach the target readers, i.e., 6 to 10 year old children. It features “simple” illustration, in a sense that it merely provides pictures which support the narrative text for the children to easily understand the story.

As the title suggests, *Balinese Children's Favorite Stories*, the contents of this picture book are a collection of folktales that have been passed down from generation to generation to children in Bali. Thus, this picture book is rich in Balinese culture. Balinese culture is deeply rooted in the Balinese people. All of those cultures, i.e., culture of *Menyama Braya*, Balinese dance, traditional houses, traditional attire, regional musical instruments, cultural practices, and specific crafts are still alive and well in Bali's various regions (Redianis et al., 2019). Balinese culture, customs, and cultural traditions are generally passed down from generation to generation. According to Putra (2012), "basic assumptions, value, and concept" are culture. Royani & Agustina (2017) added that all ideas and human efforts that become habits of the local community and are passed down to the next generation are referred to as culture.

Culture does certainly play a substantial part in developing moral behavior, which extends to social conventions as well (Bentahila et al., 2021). Some of Balinese cultures that are adopted by locals are Tri Hita Kirana, Tumpek Uduh, Tumpek Kandang, Tattwan Asi, Eling, and Swadharma. Those Balinese culture terms will be further discussed in the next chapter.

This study discusses how moral values of Balinese culture are represented in *Balinese Children's Favorite Stories* through the use of animal and human characters. In order to understand that, the writer uses ecocriticism as a foundation to better understand the use of the animal and

nature setting of the stories. The writer classifies the stories into two groups, the first group is the stories with animal characters while the second group is the stories with human characters. In conducting the study, five stages of narrative will be used to examine the words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs in the text (written text). While social semiotics will be used to help the writer to get more understanding of the visual text. Thus, the study adopts a qualitative method and descriptive analytical interpretative study approach.

Several studies about picture books have been conducted by other researchers and varied in objects and fields. The first study is *Meaning-making from wordless (or nearly wordless) picturebooks: what educational research expects and what readers have to say* by Evelyn Arizpe in 2013. This study aims to encourage a more interdisciplinary understanding of meaning-making by emphasizing observations on children's literature research and reader response research. This research overview showed the potential of wordless picture books for understanding how readers create meaning and developing their ability to create meaning becomes apparent.

In line with Arizpe's study, *Wordless picture books boost preschoolers' language production during shared reading* by Leydi Johana Chaparro-Moreno, Florencia Reali, and Carolina Maldonado-Carreño in 2017 found that the use of wordless picture books in shared reading had a positive effect on children's comprehension of words and vocabulary diversity. By using wordless picture books, teachers showed higher levels

of instructive assistance, and children produced greater word tokens, word kinds, and speech. The focus is on the effect of book type, which in this study is storybooks with words and wordless picture books, on preschoolers' spontaneous language production. However, this study focuses more on its shared reading practice.

Another study congruent to Arizpe (2013) and Chaparro-Moreno et al. (2017) is Lina Iordanaki in 2020, who also conducted a study about wordless picture books titled *Older Children's Responses to Wordless Picturebooks: Making Connections*. The finding indicates that older children readers interpret wordless picture books by drawing on their general knowledge, cultures, and their personal experiences. Lina also stated that reading wordless picture books could lead to interesting discussions.

Meanwhile the cultural study about picture books was conducted in 2017 by Xi Chen. In *Representing cultures through language and image: a multimodal approach to translations of the Chinese classic Mulan*, Xi Chen examined various verbal and visual translations of Mulan in picture books. The study uses the theory of multimodal discourse analysis and Jakobson's concept of intersemiotic translation as the theoretical basis of the discussion and analysis. It concluded that through verbal translation and visual adaptation, Mulan had culturally transformed from a legendary Chinese heroine to a hybrid Americanized tomboy.

Furthermore, Goga & Pujol-Valls had discussed an ecocritical engagement using picture books in 2020. Their study titled *Ecocritical Engagement with Picturebook through Literature Conversations about Beatrice Alegmane's On a Magical Do-Nothing Day* discusses the necessity for students and instructors to learn how to interact ecocritically using children's literature in order to encourage and enhance their future students' sustainability competencies. They examined how Norwegian and Catalan teachers and students articulate and negotiate their thoughts regarding Italian-French picture books within teacher-researcher-designed Ecocritical Literary Conversations (ELC). The data, which included recorded and transcription student notes and group conversations, was analyzed using content analytic techniques, with a focus on discovering signs of dialogic and ecocritical competencies. Although the students did n't use any ecocritical terms in their discussions, we discovered that literary conversation, when organized in accordance with the educational ideas of dialogic, ecocritical thinking, and instructional literature, was an effective instrument for these students to interact critically and negotiate regarding the portrayal of environment and ecological awareness in the chosen picture books.

The prior research mentioned above looked into reader response in reading wordless picture books, children's language comprehension, representation of culture, and ecocritical engagement in picture books. Those studies mostly focused on the outcomes of reading picture books.

Meanwhile this study will focus on the representation of Balinese moral values in a picture book. In this study, the writer chose *Balinese Children's Favorite Stories* which consists of six Balinese stories as a corpus. The corpus includes the written texts and visual texts of the picture book.

## 1.2 Research Question

The writer formulates the following research question based on the background research above:

1. How are moral values of Balinese culture represented in the visual text of *Balinese Children's Favorite Stories*?
2. How are moral values of Balinese culture represented in the written text of *Balinese Children's Favorite Stories*?
3. How much scope is the visual representation in line with the written text and vice versa?
4. How does the setting of place and space in the *Balinese Children's Favorite Stories* represent Balinese moral values?

## 1.3 Purpose of the Study

Based on the research questions above, the purposes of this study are to investigate the moral values of Balinese culture represented by animal characters and human characters in visual and written text of *Balinese Children's Favorite Stories*, to see whether the visual and written text of *Balinese Children's Favorite Stories* are conflicted or not, and to describe the setting of place and space in *Balinese Children's Favorite Stories* represent Balinese moral values.



#### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on the visual and written texts of *Balinese Children's Favorite Stories* and the pictures in it. This picture book was selected due to the existence of both animal and human characters in the stories. Since the selected children's picture book is a collection of Balinese folktales, it will be more in depth talking about Balinese culture itself.

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

This study is talking about a picture book which presented animal and human characters in conveying human's experiences. Studies about picture books revolve around picture books as a learning tool for children to understand the meaning of language and enhance their vocabulary. This study is expected to give a contribution to the cultural picture books studies. Furthermore, the writer hopes this study could be a useful reference for other researchers who conduct research under the field of cultural studies.