

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background of the study**

The concept of children's literature emerged in the first half of the 20th century, and nowadays, children's literature has become accepted as an important tool to give the children lessons and life introduction happened around them from early ages. Children's literature can be defined as high-quality trade books varying from prose and poetry to fiction and nonfiction. It is made for children from birth to adolescence and is prepared according to the developmental characteristics of children in each age group (Şimşek & Yakar, 2014, p. 21). The value of children's literature for young children is both personal and academic. Some of the personal values of children's literature include giving joy to children, increasing their imagination and creativity, and enabling them the opportunity to live through others' experiences (Bayraktar, 2021, p. 342). Produced and written with children as their target audience, children's literature can be found in the form of short stories, picture books, legends, myths, and novel.

As part of children's literature, today's picture books are known for their particular use of logical imagery, usually followed with a small number of words to convey meaning. Traced back to its history, Ulrich Boner's "Der Edelstein" (1461) is often cited as the first example of a book with type and image printed together, whilst Comenius' Orbis "Sensualium Pictus (The Visible World)", published in Nuremberg in 1658, is seen as the first printed children's picture book, as this book conveys pictures designed for children to read. Since picture

books are frequently associated with children, their traditional purpose has been acknowledged as a stepping stone for children to learn, know, and be introduced to literature that conveys life lessons. However, in present days its aim has expanded including artistic or commercial purposes.

Many scholars agree that children's literature or children books are considered as one of the powerful tools in early social and cultural learning as they convey values and alternative perspectives (Baghban, 2007; Hansen-Krening, 1992; Morgan, 2009, as cited in Wee et al., 2018, p. 71). According to the same source, it is discovered that early experience of quality literature that focuses on multicultural topics enhances children's awareness and sensitivity about issues related to diversity. Nikolajeva (2014, pp. 16-19), in her book "Reading for Learning Cognitive approaches to children's literature", stated that the urgency of children's literature is to develop children's sense of awareness during their psychological growth. Children need books and other literature that can help them learn at an early age because they have limited real-life experience, limited encyclopedic knowledge, limited experience mediated by fiction, limited theory of mind and empathetic skills, limited system of beliefs and values, and limited linguistic skills they have less developed attention skills. In addition, they have not mastered figurative language, have not yet acquired a clear sense of self, they are solipsistic, and have a limited capacity for self-reflection. Therefore, as Nikolajeva continues, picture books and other forms of children's literature, particularly those that highlight multicultural characters and features, have the potential to help children develop positive attitudes toward themselves and others (Nikolajeva, 2014, pp. 16-19).

According to Koss (2015), children receive cultural messages, the values of the society in which they live, and information about the world through children's literature. Children interact with books about different countries, which allows them to recognize people who are culturally and socially different from themselves. A children's storybook serves as a map, showing them where they are and how they might explore different places. In other words, when children read a book containing another culture, they can raise their awareness about a particular cultural issue, for example, they can learn about discrimination depicted in a book even though they have never experienced it themselves (Kelli, 2018; Taylor, 2003). Harits and Chudy (2017), reinforcing this purpose saying Children's literature can serve as a mirror to children, reflecting back to them who they are while also clarifying their feelings, goals, and ideas. Children can also learn about other people's emotions, traditions, and experiences through them. Thus, realistic stories and novels inspire the children to relate with the characters while also assisting them in understanding how the characters deal with similar problems in their daily lives.

In cultural diversity issues, similarities between a character's cultural background and the child's background as a reader can boost self-esteem and minimize the impact of cultural bias and stereotypes in society. In a study conducted by Bowen and Schutt (2007), researchers from Kentucky University, found out that in the case of cultural adjustment for "being different" with the others, picture book supports children with comfort by showing that they are not the only ones experiencing certain situations. When children come across a book with characters in a similar situation to theirs, they gain control and find solutions to their own difficulties. Seeing people like them in literature boosts

the confidence and motivation of children from non-traditional families. Thus, children need and should have access to books that reflect their own culture, promote the process of defining themselves as a person, and understanding their evolving responsibilities within their families and communities (Bowen & Schutt, 2007, p. 4).

According to Garcia (2018), immigrating to a new country is always followed by issues of adaptation and the finding process for a new identity. In this regard, children are more likely than adults to go through a longer period of cultural adjustment and exploration of identity. Immigrant children grow up “exploring the relationship between acculturation and identity” (Schwartz & Montgomery, 2006 as cited in Garcia, 2018, p.3). As Garcia continues, most people find themselves living with two identities or believing that one culture is superior to the other. The assimilation of American culture is arguably unique because of the idea that the United States is “the land of the free,” and the countless opportunities offered to the people living there regardless of their background. When immigrants arrive in the United States with this perspective, they are often disillusioned by the country's acceptance of newcomers. In recent academic debate, researchers discovered that some children follow the straight-line assimilation model (Waters 1990; Alba and Nee 1997), indicating that more immigrant children are losing their parent's culture and becoming increasingly impacted by the new culture (Garcia, 2018, p. 3).

Yoon's series of picture book consist of three books written by the same author, Helen Recorvits which aimed for children aged 6 to 12 years old as their target audience. The trilogy consist of *My Name is Yoon* (2003), *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten* (2006) and *Yoon and the Jade Bracelet* (2008). These books

are having one particular main character named Yoon, a Korean girl who moved to the United States with her family. Three of the books depicts Yoon's cultural adjustment process followed by her identity development as well as an immigrant child. As an immigrant, she has to adjust into her new cultural environment and not only find, but also learn to accept her new identity. As the main character of the whole story, this trilogy feature Yoon which faces several stages of cultural identity development before she finally got her self-acceptance as a Korean-American.

In descriptive qualitative method, the study examines the representation of stages of cultural identity development experienced by immigrant children which is being represented by Yoon's character. Previously, a study conducted by Marwina (2020), talked about how identity development is sociologically constructed while at the same time the main character in the picture book adjusts with her new cultural environment. Therefore, the novelty of this research emphasizes on how the cultural identity development can be seen through a variety of the books' elements including its visual and written aspects.

The cultural identity development which is being represented by Yoon will be analyzed through Sue & Sue's Racial/Cultural Identity Development Model (R/CIDM) (1993) which divides the phases into 5 status consist of conformity, dissonance, resistance and immersion, introspection, integrative awareness. Furthermore, the series of picture book will also examined through Kress and Leeuwen's social semiotic approach focused on its visual representation while Todorov's narrative structure will be utilized to examine its written texts. Hunt's theory of space and place will also be utilized in attempt to support the visual interpretation according to the illustration of the book while



the animal imagery appeared on the book will be analyzed through ecopsychological approach to support the analysis of cultural identity process experienced by the female main character.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

According to the description in the background of the study, the research questions are formulated as follow:

1. How is the cultural identity of the main female character represented in the visual text?
2. How is the cultural identity of the main female character represented in the written text?
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 books represent the cultural identity issue?

## **1.3 Objective of The Study**

The objective of the study is aimed to investigate the cultural identity issue experienced by the immigrant children as represented in the series of My Name is Yoon (2003), Yoon and The Christmas Mitten (2006), and Yoon and The Jade Bracelet (2008).

## **1.4 Scope of The Study**

The scope of this study is specified to a series of picture book written by Helen Recorvits which consist of My Name is Yoon (2003), Yoon and The

Christmas Mitten (2006), and Yoon and The Jade Bracelet (2008). The series of picture book refers to the focus on visual representation of cultural adjustment process experienced by an immigrant child.

### **1.5 Significance of The Study**

The study is expected to contribute in English literature studies particularly in children's literature and the cultural issues appeared on children picture books. It is also expected that the study will give contribution for future studies related to multiculturalism and immigrant issues.

Particularly for children as the audience of the book, the results of this study are expected to provide an overview of how children's picture books have an influence on the psychological reactions of children as readers. Through the representation of characters, settings, situations, and other elements, children's picture books reflect real-life experiences and problems which help them to acknowledge the things they are going through in their lives.