

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Background of the Study**

Recently, the case of cross-cultural interaction quickly increased since people from different culture meet one another. Such encounters become more frequent in a world where the forces of trade, migration, the media, and travel, are pushing people and governments to confront and accommodate ethnic diversity (Smith and Bond:163).

We acknowledge that cultures throughout the world are heterogeneous. Each culture has its own particular system, including the attitudes, values, ideals, and beliefs. We also acknowledge that an individual is greatly influenced by the culture in which he lives. Thus, adaptation and change may occur on the people who live in or travel among several different cultures. Many questions arise dealing with this particular interaction that occurs across cultural lines. People are curious about in what ways people from different cultures behave differently and how these differences have an impact on their communication process. In short, they want to know what would happen if cross cultural contact is taken place, which means different set of behaviour patterns and values face another different one.

When an individual interacts with another individual from different culture, their difference tends to be salient. Thus, cultural change and adaptation may take place. In doing so, awareness and sensitivity towards his partner's cultural heritage is essentially needed, otherwise cultural conflict may occur as a result of misinterpretation/misunderstanding.

One of the authors who is best known for her reputation in bringing the case of cross-cultural interaction is Pearl S. Buck. Mostly in her works Buck evokes a deep humanity and understanding between East and West. It deals much with the fact that during her life she is involved with American and Chinese culture.

Pearl Sydenstricker Buck is an American novelist. She is an American by birth and later by residence. Most of her childhood and young womanhood are taken place in China. She was born on June 26, 1892, 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. Buck was early attuned to the customs, household activities, and family life of the Chinese. She lived there except at seventeen that she studied in United States. After graduation she was back to China. Her first novel is East Wind, West Wind (1930). In the novel, she evidently provides her mastery over the Chinese material she treats. The following novel is The Good Earth (1931). It is a moving description of the struggle of a Chinese

peasant and his wife for land and security. It won the Pulitzer prize in 1932. In 1938 she was awarded the Nobel prize for literature, the third American to receive it and the first woman. The citation of the Nobel Committee read: For rich and generous epic description of Chinese peasant life and masterpieces of biography ( Magill: 339).

Buck's personal commitment towards East and West is also evidenced in her lifelong devotion to social ideals. She worked tirelessly for human rights, racial equality, and understanding between East and West (Litz: 132) Her works mostly depict both East and West cultures including the adjustment undergone by people involved.

One of her novels that deals with intercultural background and contact of people from disparate culture is Letter from Peking (1957). It is a poignant love story that takes American and Chinese as the cultural background. Buck writes it with accurately describing foreign customs and problems within.

The story of Letter from Peking upholds the case of cross-cultural understanding. Within Buck presents the assembly of American and Chinese culture. It is exactly presented in Gerald and Elizabeth's adjustment. Eliz, an American girl, is the one who creates the adjustment for she falls in love with Gerald, a half Chinese man. She manages all efforts to make him to be hers. Later after their marriage, Eliz follows Gerald to Peking for Gerald is more Chinese than American. There, she attempts to comprehend Gerald's Chinese culture and make it to be her

also. As the story grows, readers will find out that the conflicts in cross-cultural interaction is so complicated. It is not easy to manage the diversity. Gerald is lack of this ability. Indeed, it deals with his wounded experience of being rejected of his Chinese blood by his father. It stands to be an obstacle on their adjustment. Later, readers will observe that obstacles in cross-cultural interaction not only come from both Gerald and Eliz, they also come from the outer part of them. In this story, it occurs by the entering of the communist to Peking. It leads to their separation. Later, they have to face the reality that there is no hope of being united again.

From this novel, Buck wants the readers to get acquainted especially with Chinese culture. Within she describes the customs, beliefs and values of the Chinese. Furthermore, Buck puts Chinese culture together with American culture to show readers how the diversity may contact, even in long and highly intimacy. Thus, there are many factors to be learned in order to make it. Buck wants readers are aware of it. Her experiences in getting involved with East and West, makes her attempt to show readers the reality about it. Therefore, Letter from Peking is interesting to be analysed.

## **B. Statement of the Problem**

This analysis is conducted based on the background of the study above. The writer tries to analyse the adjustment in cross-cultural interaction undergone by Gerald and Elizabeth. More or less it depicts the

assembly of Gerald's Chinese culture and Eliz's American culture. For they are united in a marriage, their disparate cultures are more salient. Thus, it is useful to gather information about each cultural background. Indeed, they will be able to run their adjustment as their wish. Accordingly, to conduct the analysis, the writer formulates the matters as follows:

1. What is Gerald and Elizabeth's cultural background?
2. How does Gerald adjust to Elizabeth's American culture?
3. How does Elizabeth adjust to Gerald's Chinese culture ?

### **C. Objective of the Study**

The analysis concerns on the adjustment across cultural lines that occurs in Gerald and Elizabeth. Their different cultural background is potential to produce problems during their adjustment. Thus, it is essential to understand each's cultural background first before trying to comprehend how they act in tolerating and managing the stress during their adjustment. Accordingly, in order to guide the analysis and to gain the answers of the problems, the objective of the study are:

1. To find out Gerald and Elizabeth's cultural background.
2. To comprehend Gerald's adjustment towards Elizabeth.
3. To comprehend Elizabeth's adjustment towards Gerald.

## **D. Significance of the Study**

Hopefully this analysis will give understanding on the study of literary work especially that deals with culture. The readers are hoped to be able to enrich their knowledge about understanding between East and West, especially Chinese and American culture. They are hoped to be aware of how the diversity is able to produce problems. Thus, they are thoughtful about the adjustment in cross-cultural interaction.

At last, readers are expected to be able to respect and make adjustment since they get knowledge about it. And since literary work is an imitation of real life, the analysis is also hoped to give profound knowledge about human being.

## **E. Limitation of the Study**

In this study, the analysis concentrates on the adjustment done by Gerald and Elizabeth, about how they adjust to each other and how their diversity influences in their adjustment.

The analysis is not only focused on the characters, but also their cultural background. Indeed, it deals with the cultural setting of the novel. Including the values, ideals and beliefs. It is aimed to get a description of how Gerald and Eliz's cultural heritage shapes and influences their traits deals with the adjustment done by them.

## F. Theoretical Background

Literary work is an imitation of the nature. Indeed, the phenomenon of cross-cultural interaction as reflected in the story Letter from Peking is often met in the real world. Buck presents the story as she has experienced and seen how cultures meet and how people involved try to do adjustment. Therefore, the writer uses *mimetic theory*. Accordingly the writer applies the intrinsic elements. They are the *setting*, for the story represents the assembly of Chinese and American culture as reflected in Gerald and Elizabeth's adjustment. Thus, it is essential to appreciate the setting to reveal the culture; *character* of Elizabeth and Gerald MacLeod as the doer of the adjustment, and *plot* of the story since it is important in understanding the development of the adjustment.

Accordingly, the writer uses *cross-cultural psychological approach* to explain the complexity of the adjustment. It can be understood clearly by applying the concept of cross-cultural interaction. The *cultural approach* is also applied because it will help in identifying Gerald's Chinese culture and Elizabeth's American culture.

## G. Method of the Study

This thesis is purely based on *Library Research*. It is a process of finding information that are useful in helping the writer to direct the research. The writer collects data and information from various books, articles, encyclopaedias, and all kinds of related materials. This is also

what the writer does concerning materials and data for the literary theories and approaches (Komaruddin: 18).

And regarding to the object of the study, *Descriptive Analysis Method* that is the descriptive explanation to depict the problems through the dialogues, events and actions is assumed to be appropriate . The application of this method is based on the work itself and supported by the information about the work (18).

## **H. Definition of Key Terms**

**Culture:** The deposit of knowledge, experiences, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, timing, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possession acquired by a large group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving (Samovar and Porte: 19).

**Cross cultural interaction:** Reciprocal action between or among people of different cultures.

**Adjustment:** An adjusting or being adjusted (to change so as to fit, conform, make suitable, etc.)

(Webster's New World Dictionary, 1988)



**CHAPTER II**  
**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**