

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Colonial discourse is not the first issue appeared in texts. Unavoidable, film which is included as a text, colonial discourse may work within animated children film. Since film as one of cultural production is usually associated with images, fantasies, or even stereotypes. Thus, it may produce the hidden messages through signs and practices instead of referring to existing cultures.

Bill Ashcroft, et al (2000, pp. 37-38) stated that colonial discourse is a system of statements that can be made about colonies and colonial peoples, about colonizing powers and about the relationship between these two. These statements are about the inferiority of the colonized. It is the imperial power which is used to reproduce itself in the colonial society and to advance the civilization of the colony through cultural and moral improvement. Based on the history, colonial discourse cannot be separated from imperialism and colonialism idea. It can be said that at that time, European was the strongest in financial and social matter to possess the others.

According to recent studies, discourse is used to describe the dynamic nature of representation, either graphic or texted, to create position, produce, constitute or shape worlds. In this sense, it means that Europeans can create the representation of 'other' as an object they want and create a world where they can

fulfill their dream through discourse (cited in Burnett 2002, p. 12). In addition, McClintock (1995, cited in Burnett 2002, p. 11) argued that 'self' appropriates the 'other' in order to satisfy desires. The 'other' is mute and does not contribute a voice while the 'self' that comes from Europeans has a life and a face. In this case, people who are different from the 'self' are considered as 'other' and inferior based on Europeans' parameter. This practice (cited in Lois Tyson 2006, p. 42) of judging all who are different is called *othering* which then divides the world between "us" (the "civilized") and "them" (the "others" or "savages"). The attitude of European culture as the standard to which all other cultures are negatively contrasted—is called *Eurocentrism* (ibid.).

Discourse cannot be separated from the representation. As suggested by Said (1978, p. 21), he insists that what a culture is commonly circulated by 'it is not "truth" but representations'. Thus, the way of representing the object is the important part to analyze. The representation, as Sandra Jovchelovitch said in her book (2007, p. 10), is a fundamental process of all human life in which she underlies the development of mind, self, societies and cultures. She adds that without the work of representation, there is no sense of reality for our human world because the human world is made of representation. In other words, we have knowledge about the world because of representation. Therefore, if the West constructed 'the other' through discourses, it means that there is no representation made outside by the West. For example, the representation of dragon as a Viking pet in *How to Train Your Dragon* brings to the term of interpretation. This

statement leads to an assumption that this text contains the issue of hidden colonial discourse.

Dragons in mythology, according to Owens (2004), are mythical creatures that appear in many different cultures and time periods. Dragons have been described as monsters, serpents, reptiles, or beasts. Dragon as a fictioned animal in myth can represent either a hero or a villain through child stories. Cressida Cowell (2010) explained there are two distinct cultural traditions of dragons: the European dragon, (of which Viking dragon is an example) which is derived from European folk traditions, and the Chinese dragon. Along this line, she adds that European dragons are more often winged, while Chinese dragons resemble large snakes. Based on this perspective, we can see dragons across two cultures, between the West and the East. Both of them have taken different myth about dragons.

As the main dragon in *How to Train Your Dragon*, Night Fury with its personal name Toothless is distinguished by its dark color and piercing yellow eyes, as well as its smaller size, heavy chest and short neck (Official descriptions of *How to Train Your Dragon 2010* cited in usatoday.com). Those characteristics distinguished Toothless from any dragons in this film. However, his appearance looks cute, loyal, and playful.

Some movies that also have a dragon are *Shrek* and *Dragon Hunter*. In *Shrek*, there is a female dragon typically fire-breathing, giant dragon, and red in color. However, different from Toothless, her appearance does not look cute or playful at all. She tends to attack everybody who tries to disturb her. The opposite

appearance has also been shown in *Dragon Hunter* movie in which the dragon is considered as an evil or a frightening dragon. The different representation of dragon in the movies listed above comes from different producers. Sandra Jovchelovitch (2007, p. 11) stated that representation is not a mirror of the world outside, but it involves a symbolic labor that springs out interrelation between self, other, the object-world, and such has a power to signify, to construct, and to create reality. It can be said that different producers produce different symbols.

The writer's central aim in this analysis is to criticize the idea of the hidden colonial discourse issue emerging in *How to Train Your Dragon* and to explain how the hidden colonial discourse is presented in this film. By providing the issues such as the physical and the mythological identity of the Dragon, the relation between the two main characters namely Hiccup and Toothless, Hiccup mastering Toothless, and pet-owner friendship as the hidden colonial discourses could open new opportunity for further analysis.

The writer will start by outlining the story briefly to assume the main issue of the hidden colonial discourse. According to Ida (2011, p. 92), story is chronological order of all events presented and inferred by the text (what the physical means). *How to Train Your Dragon* is set in the Viking age. The Viking age (cited in Michael Gibson's book 1976, p. 6) lasted from 790 to 1100 AD. According to Kathleen N. Daly, (cited in Norse Mythology A to Z, third edition 2010, p.115-116) Vikings are Scandinavian people or people of the Inlets. They came from Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, who raided the coasts and inlets of Europe and the British Isles from the ninth to the 12th centuries. Based on the

history cited in Kathleen N. Daly's book (2010, p.1), Norse went to another isle to colonize the land. In this sense, Scandinavian brought the stories into their myth and culture after conquering the land. Scandinavian people believed in gods and goddesses, as well as villains such as demons, dragons, and other monsters; giants and dwarfs; and supernatural forces (ibid, p.2). Then, their myth is known as Norse mythology (ibid, p.3).

In the story, Hiccup is a teenage Viking who lives with his tribe in an island of Berk. Berk has been continuously raided by dragons of all different species, prompting a war between them and the tribe. In order to be considered a true Viking, Hiccup must be able to kill dragon, but he cannot. However, while other Vikings were fighting with dragon using their strategies, Hiccup tried with his own way to hit a dragon. Finally, he succeeded bringing down a dragon that nobody believed it was Night Fury, the legendary dragon.

Night Fury is one of dragon species in *How to Train Your Dragon* before he was named 'Toothless' by Hiccup. One day, Hiccup first encountered Toothless, he decided not to kill him and let him free. After that, Hiccup came for the second time to conduct an observation. In his observation, Hiccup found that Toothless lost one of his tails and cannot reach food. In this part of the way how Hiccup came, recorded, and learned from his dragon, it recalled the popular words *Veni Vidi Vici* (I came, I saw, I conquered) by Julius Caesar. It resulted in a good relationship between Hiccup and Toothless so that he won the Dragon Training. Additionally, there are so many species of dragon in this film, but only Toothless which has black color. It is such special species because of its dark color. Firstly,

the relationship between Hiccup and Toothless was a relationship between a dragon fighter and an enemy, but now it changed into a pet and its owner.

When Toothless could not fly, he needs human's help to take him out to fly. Hiccup finally designed a prosthetic tail to help Toothless fly. After that, Toothless became very loyal and docile to his master and he even protected Hiccup. However, Hiccup helped Toothless here not without a reason. The writer assumed that it is just a justification to subjugate his dragon because he tried to domesticate wild animal for being his pet. Moreover, dragon is not a domestic animal; it is a mythical creature which is different from a dog that can be his pet in the real world. This domestication process has similar way with subjugation practice over 'the other'. As a result, dragons become Viking's pet to make them flies which is revealed at the end of the story. These statements remind back to colonial history. When the colonizers came to the land of colonized people, they inculcated colonizer values, culture, or physical appearance and characterized colonized people based on colonizer's thinking by binary opposition. They thought that colonized people who are different from them and less powerful than them need some help because of their weaknesses. However, it was exactly not a reason, but to deserve power.

By creating their powerful image clearly toward the less powerful, they made the less powerful to be perceived as weak. Perry Nodelman (2008, p. 67) stated that "since the powerful define their strength in relation to the less powerful group's weakness, the less powerful must remain eternally and unavoidably weak so that the strong may continue to be perceived by themselves and others as strong

enough to deserve power.” Here, he added that “power is to work to teach that which is other, opposite, and inferior to learn better, to stop to be other, to become more like you.”

Furthermore, since Toothless is a dragon, it takes into depth understanding and several assumptions. The writer assumes that dragon as an animal is a form of symbolization. When the colonizers came to the land which were oddly different from ‘self’, they saw ‘the other’ as non-human. It is suggested by Said (cited by Tyson 2006, p. 420) that the colonizer saw themselves as human or ‘what a human being should be’ while ‘the other’ was considered less than fully human.

In addition, the dark color that Toothless has, for instance, made him looks different from other dragons in this film. It has a significant change from its original book entitled *How to Train Your Dragon* created by Cressida Cowell. In the book, Toothless has green color. In addition, he is a tiny dragon which is classified as common or garden dragon. In this sense, it is only Toothless which is presented as black color in the film. Toothless changing portrayal from small green dragon into big black dragon, these changes have an impact on Toothless to the position opposite to Hiccup. It seems appear in the film that Toothless who lost one of his tails makes him weak. The writer assumed that the portrayal of Toothless in that way to confirm his weaknesses. It makes Toothless as less powerful being. While it is different from Hiccup who considered as weak in the film, he represents himself as powerful by helping, controlling, and having authority over Toothless.

This film becomes a way of learning for children or even adults and also becomes a form of consumption that can take into account. According to Lai Nam Chen (1981, pp. 8-9), this form is an important one in cross-cultural understanding because the obvious visual appeal of picture books could be directed toward stimulating interest in the geography and cultures of other lands. On the other hand, it is potential to take the assumption that the writer's fiction has the hidden purposes to produce the representation to understand the world.

Because of those issues in *How to Train Your Dragon*, the writer is interested to take deeper analysis. In this issue, the writer will use the theory of colonial discourses as tools of analysis in doing this research. In analyzing the film, the writer will use narrative and non-narrative aspects as supporting data for this analysis and use textual analysis. In textual analysis, Ida (2011, p. 90) stated that it is used to see the theme or thematic elements as the representation or another issues in the film.

1.2 The Statement of the Problems

The writer concerns on the analysis of 'The Other' as seen in the film in order to discover the following questions:

1. What are the hidden colonial discourses found in *How to Train Your Dragon*?
2. How are the hidden colonial discourses presented in *How to Train Your Dragon*?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are intended to answer the questions, as they have been mentioned in the statement of the problems by using the chosen theories as the tool to analyze. The objectives of the study are:

1. To discover the hidden colonial values in *How to Train Your Dragon*
2. To explain how the hidden colonial discourses are presented in *How to Train Your Dragon*

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study adds the knowledge about colonialism and the construction of identities that hopefully can be meaningful to everyone who appreciates the differences among discourses. This study is going to explain and analyze the hidden colonial discourse in the movie. This knowledge will bring advantage to those who like animation movies and it may provide further information for parents in guiding their children. In addition, hopefully, this knowledge will give awareness to those who like movies for not 'taking for granted' everything that comes to us.

1.5 Theoretical Background

Colonial discourse is often referred to colonialist thinking. Colonialist thinking was based on the colonizer's assumption of their superiority, which is contrasted to indigenous people who were the original inhabitant of the land that

they invaded (cited in Lois Tyson, 2006, pp. 419-420). The colonizers believed and saw themselves as the superior and the center of the world which was civilized. Therefore, the colonized were defined as savage and inferior. This attitude is called as *Eurocentrism*.

The writer of the study deals with the theory concerning colonial discourses by Edward Said. In the process of analysis the writer used Said's definition of Orientalism in order to discover the hidden issue colonial discourses in *How to Train Your Dragon*. Edward Said (1978) presented in his book, Orientalism is a term associated with Western representation of the Orient. Said (1978, p. 3) stated that 'the West was able to manage or even produce structure thinking of the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively'. Since the set of images, texts, and ideas constructed by Western understanding, Said (1978, pp. 36-47) explained that it creates binary opposition of the East and the West between inside/outside, civilized/primitive, us/them, strong/weak, good/bad, superior/inferior, culture/nature. This kind of thinking, he also argues that it is also created to deserve power which involves mastery or domination.

1.6 Method of the Study

According to Creswell (2007, p. 37), qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquired into the meaning individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem. In this case, he adds that the final report includes a

complex description and interpretation of the problem. Because of these reasons, the writer will choose qualitative method as the appropriate study of film analysis to inquire the research problem in *How to Train Your Dragon*. The methods the writer plan to use will provide the data needed to answer the research questions.

Furthermore, since the primary source of data is a film, the writer will use some of capturing scenes that contain the hidden issue colonial discourses. It is followed by transcribing dialogues. For the secondary source, the writer will find the authors' comments about their film project through the official websites, movie news, or online transcript of interview, for instances. Moreover, in order to complete this study, several books related to the topic cannot be separated in doing this analysis. Furthermore, the writer will use textual analysis to see the hidden colonial discourse issue in this film. *How to Train Your Dragon* is chosen because it conveys the hidden issue of colonial discourses which are portrayed by Toothless as a Black dragon and White Hiccup as a Viking.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Colonial discourse: A system of knowledge and belief which involves the colonizer, the colonies and the colonized, colonizing powers and about colonial relationship. (Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin 2000, p. 37)

- Representation:** To represent, using signs to the process and the products meaningfully. (Ziauddin Sardar and Borin Van Loon 1998, p. 13)
- Binary opposition:** The distinction between “the Orient” and “the Occident” in which “the Orient” defined as uncivilized and nature and so oppose to “the Occident” defined as civilized and culture. (Said 1978, p. 2)
- Eurocentricism:** The attitude of the colonizers that they believed themselves as superior, the center of the world which was civilized. Meanwhile, the colonized were defined as savage and inferior. (Tyson 2006, p. 420)

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW