

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the fundamental ideas of exploring the way of immigrants' people in constructing their social identity which is represented by the characters of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*. It consists of background of study, research problems, objective of study, significance of study, scope and limitation and definition of key terms.

1.1 Background of Study

Since it was firstly proposed by Tajfel (1978), the term of social identity is used as investigation approach of many scholars' research (Capozza, 2000: vii). By the time goes on, people will consider identity as a significant aspect in their life because other people view another from the way they talk and behave (Jenkins, 2008:1). Additionally, Ochs (1993:289) implied whether people will use verbal acts to construct their personal and social identity to show other people to which group they belong to. So far, a series of research have already been done to examine the concept of social identity construction in various focuses, such as: lesbian (Kitzinger, 1995), social media (Young, 2013), leadership (Hogg, 2001; Sinha, 2010), nationalism (Ross, 2012), ethnic violence (Fearon and Laitin, 2000), mimetic isomorphism (Mizruchi and Fein, 1999), entertainment (Trepte, 2006) and storytelling (Archakis and Tzanne, 2009). In almost all researches, social identity is used to analyze and

investigate group of people. Unfortunately, previous researchers used the concept of social identity to investigate only native people of a certain area. Unlike the previous researches mentioned, this present study is presented to fill the gap by investigating the way of immigrant people construct their social identity, which is reflected in a literary work. Further, it will also observe the effects of the immigrant people's ways toward their relationship with other people around them.

However, Ochs's investigation (1993) leads the core of my idea to conduct a research about immigrant people's struggle to construct the identity. He, ever once, investigated immigrant people that were described in essays published in The New York Time magazine. Nevertheless, Ochs did not explore detailed concept of immigrant to construct the social identity. He instead only explored general perspective about the relation of language acquisition and social identity related to immigrant people. Hence, my self-motivation to conduct this study is to follow Ochs's suggestion (1993:302) which is not taken yet by any scholars during this time. He suggested further research to explore more on (1) ways of immigrant people to construct and show the identity to the native people, and (2) how their ways of constructing social identity affect their relationship with their neighborhood or other people around their life.

In fact, the study of identities becomes an interesting field to be investigated, in the last few decades (Edwards, 2009:15). Yet, there is still limited research that takes literary work as the object of social identity

construction. However, Fatmawati (2015), an Indonesian researcher, conducted a study which took literary work as her data source of investigating personal identity. She analyzed the personal identity of Mikhail, a character in translated novel *The Zahir* by Paulo Coelho, which focused on only his label and stance. Following Fatmawati, this present study will also take literary work as the data source but it will focus on the social identity construction instead of personal identity construction. Again, this present study is showing a complement prospect concerning the study of social identity construction. Hence, this present study is aimed to complete any gap that exists in the study of constructing social identity, nowadays.

As the title suggests, this study will wholly analyze out-movement of immigrants to construct their identity. People will usually establish social movement by promoting their culture and changing other people's point of view toward themselves (Meyer, 2002:20). In addition, Ross (2012:100) seems to clarify and strengthen Mayer's statement that national identity focuses on cultural factors because culture is the actual way to show someone's social identity. Social identity theory focuses on intergroup behavior in case of social categories, include: intergroup social comparison, positive distinctiveness, stereotypes, discrimination, and intergroup relation (Hogg, 2001:188). In fact, the social identity construction theory has been dominated in the field of intergroup issues or conflicts (Capozza, 2000: vii). Many of intergroup conflicts focus on the

way of people to construct their self-prejudice and interpersonal interaction (Tajfel and Turner, 1979:33). In other words, intergroup has become the most leading topic to be discussed in the study of social identity construction. Overall, this present study will apply Tajfel and Turner's concepts of constructing social identity. They suggested three processes of constructing social identity, including: social categorization, social identification and social comparison (Tajfel and Turner, 1979:38-40).

The focus of the study was Gogol's family in Jhuma Lahiri's *The Namesake*. Gogol's family, in the story, is described as immigrant who struggle to be granted among the native people of America. Gogol himself tries to construct his social identity as an Indian. In recent years, some researchers and scholars take Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* to be the focus of investigation in case of literature aspect, culture, identity and immigrant itself. Mangayarkarasi (2004) analyzed *The Namesake* novel in case of identity loss and cultural alienation. Besides, Paskarina (2008), an undergraduate student of Universitas Kristen Maranatha Bandung took this novel as her undergraduate thesis research. She focused on comparing the immigrant portrayal in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The namesake* and Mukherjee's *Jasmine*. In her research, she only analyzed the character of Ashima, Gogol's mother. Furthermore, Prof. Doody (2010) analyzed postmodernism aspect, post colonialism aspect and identity within the story. Then, it was continued by Assadnassab (2012), a master degree

student of Dalarna University who investigated this novel as his thesis which focused on the cultural identity aspect especially in term of displacement and freedom. In the following year, Sharma (2013) analyzed the identity crisis described in the novel. Then, Bran (2014) seemed to conduct investigation toward the novel in a different case. She analyzed the case of the author's point of view in representing her own life as an immigrant through the novel. Similar to the previous researches, this present study will also analyze the novel in case of immigrant and identity. Yet, it will no longer discuss the identity crisis or immigrant portrayal. It instead will focus on analyzing the ways of immigrant to construct the social identity and the effect toward the environment relationship.

From the explanation above, the finding of my study that explores the immigrant people's ways and its effect toward other people, will be considered as the complement of previous researches related to social identity theory. Hence, this study is important to conduct in order to widen the knowledge and information in case of social interaction. Thus, the writer hopes that this research will be useful for the readers so that they can understand how to interact with people outside the group based on who they are – their own culture, behavior and language.

1.2 Research Problems

The research problems are formulated as the following questions, namely:

1. What ways does Gogol's family use to construct their social identity?

2. How do the ways of Gogol's family constructing social identity affect their relationship with other people?

1.3 Objectives of Study

This study is presented to reach the following goals, they are:

1. To explore immigrant people's ways to construct the social identity which is reflected by Gogol's family in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*.
2. To explore any possible effects that occurs due to the ways of constructing the social identity toward relationship with surroundings people.

1.4 Significance of Study

This present study is made to give both theoretical and practical significances. Theoretically, this study is hoped to provide more and new information for language learners to improve their understanding about applied linguistics, especially in sociolinguistics which focus on social interaction, culture and social identity. Further, this study is practically hoped to give direction to language learners to conduct more specific and detail research about the field for the next study. Hence, this study is intended to fill the gap of previous researches so that they will have better enlightenment concerning the concept of social identity construction in social interaction.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

This research is conducted to identify the ways of immigrant to construct the identity related to which group they belong to. Social identity construction has close relation to human behavior and interaction (Tajfel and Turner, 1979:15). Hence, this study will only limit the discussion in term of how immigrants construct their social identity while interacting and of how their ways affect their interaction and relation with other people. Further, this study will only include three processes suggested by Tajfel and Turner (1979), those are: social categorization, social identification and social comparison. Unfortunately, the object taken will be in the form of writing which is assessed to provide less data in term of expression, real action and behavior visually. Yet, it may not be a big matter because the description of the story, either monologue or dialogues, will really help the researcher to infer the data.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

a. Interaction

Generally, interaction is sharing and exchanging information among people (Bull, 2008:232)

b. Social identity

Social identity is self-evaluative and self-knowledge concerning to which group of people they belong to (Hogg, 2001: 186).

c. Social categorization

This is the first concept of Tajfel in constructing social identity.

This concept means that people will categorize, classify themselves into groups based on the behavior (Tajfel and Turner, 1979:38).

d. Social comparison

After categorization, comparison of one other will definitely happen. This comparison happens because people search for good group so that they will have better life (Tajfel and Turner, 1979:40).

e. Social identification

The last concept refers to people's decision in case of identification, whether they keep on their group or move to another group (Tajfel and Turner, 1979:40).

f. Immigrant

Immigrant is people who move and live outside their homeland (Ochs, 1993:2)

g. *The Namesake*

It is a literary work written by Jhumpa Lahiri published in 2003. It tells about Indian family who live in America whose son is struggling to establish his identity as an Indian immigrant.

h. Gogol's family

Gogol's family is the immigrant characters in the novel. It is told that they keep their culture even though they have been many years living in USA.

