### **CHAPTER I**

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the fundamental idea for studying Mikhail's personal identity construction in Paulo Coelho's *the Zahir*. It presents the background of the study, statement of the problems, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, and definition of key terms.

# 1.1 Background of the Study

According to Fearon (1999), the concept of identity is originally used by German psychologist Erik Erikson in 1950s. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) define identity as the social positioning of self and other. Today, identity is studied in a variety of fields including sociology, anthropology, linguistics, education, and literature. Joseph notes the important studies focusing on linguistic aspects of identity appeared in early 1980s such as Gumperz's important collection on language and social identity in 1982 (as cited in Edwards, 2009).

In recent years, numerous studies in identity construction have been done by some scholars in various genres. Among the examples are analyzing cross-cultural communication (Habib, 2008), female magazine (Crema, 2009), request e-mail (Ho, 2010), women focus group discussion (Mango, 2010), television program (Sharif, 2012), document education (Alméciga, 2013), and a story in the English translation of holy Quran (Idiagbon, 2014). In Indonesia, there are only two studies of identity construction. First, it is

conducted by Prihantoro (2014). He examines the use of pronoun in a blog posting to address in-group identity. Second, it is conducted by Syahrial (2014). He investigates the identity of place through narrative. Hence, the recent studies have neglected a literary work, moreover, a novel. In addition, most of the researchers are interested in studying social identity rather than personal identity. Thus, the writer intends to take this neglected genre by studying personal identity construction in a novel.

In this research, the subject of study is Mikhail. He is a minor character in novel the Zahir written by Paulo Coelho. He is chosen because of three reasons. First, he has a significant role in the story. His meeting with Esther, a wife of character I, considerably influences the plot development. Mikhail has a great contribution in Esther's decision to leave her husband and to stay far away in Mikhail's village which leads the conflict begins. Later, he regularly meets character I and brings him to find his wife. Second, he is a stigmatized person. He is given a derogatory label "epilepsy" by his society and experiences the discrimination. Galinsky et al. (2003) have found three kinds of responses to combat derogatory label. Two of them are with labeling by self (re-label and re-appropriation). It allows Mikhail to use one of the strategies considering the story in the novel that he successfully copes with the bad views from others. The writer assumes there will be one label or more used by Mikhail to combat the derogatory label as well as to identify himself among his society. Third, he has a powerful speech. In Paris, he becomes a moderator and storyteller in a weekly performance in a restaurant. His speeches can attract the audience. By telling his history to others people in Paris, he manages to found his own community and becomes their spiritual leader. There will be a something special in his speech. Therefore, he should take one stance or more to construct his personal identity in talk-in-interaction.

The study examines how Mikhail constructs his identity in social interaction through his language use. The writer applies Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) emergence principle as a mechanism for analysis identity. The principle generalizes that identity is a product of social interaction. Identity may linguistically index through labels, implicatures, stances, styles, and entire languages and varieties. However, the writer limits the study on label and stance regarding the basic assumption on Mikhail's personal identity construction as explained before.

The limitation is not merely become the weakness of the study, yet it gives the writer great opportunities to deeply analyze the label and stance. Therefore, the study examines not only the labels attached to Mikhail given by self but also the labels given by others. By analyzing the labels given by self, the writer uncovers Mikhail's personal identity construction. However, by analyzing both labels given by self and others, it provides the contrastive views between Mikhail and others toward him and the correlation between both kinds of labels in constructing his personal identity. On the other hand, the study also examines all kinds of stance took by Mikhail in talk-in-interaction.

Based on the explanation above, the writer intends to study Mikhail's personal identity construction through the use of label and stancetaking using Discourse Analysis by applying Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) emergence principle supported by some theories of label (e.g. Galinsky et al., 2003) and stance (e.g. Du Bois, 2007).

#### 1.2 Statement of the Problems

Referring to the background of the study, the research questions are formulated to identify the language used by Mikhail to construct his personal identity in social interaction as follow:

- 1. What labels are used by self (Mikhail) and by others (his society) to identify him?
- 2. What stances does Mikhail take in his talk-in-interaction?

## 1.3 Objective of the Study

The study is to investigate Mikhail's personal identity construction through his language use. Specifically, the study tries to fulfill the following objectives:

- 1. To determine labels used by Mikhail and his society to identify him.
- 2. To discover stances took by Mikhail in his talk-in-interaction.

## 1.4 Significance of the Study

The present study is purposed for giving both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, the study may be useful in the development of sociolinguistics study which the focus of the study is personal identity

construction in terms of the use of label and stancetaking. The writer hopes the findings especially the functions of labels, the lexical features in affective and epistemic positioning stances, and the ways to take alignment and disalignment will be useful for further research.

Practically, the result may help the readers of *the Zahir* to understand more about Mikhail's character and personality and other's view toward him. It is also expected to deliver some evidences that personal identity determines our existence in society. Personal identity construction can influence every single person's position in his/her society. It also can be used to alter derogatory label on stigmatized person. Finally, some topics also remind us about Islamic values.

### 1.5 Scope and Limitation

The study is conducted to determine Mikhail's personal identity construction. The data source is novel *the Zahir* written by Paulo Coelho. Meanwhile, the subject of the study is a minor character Mikhail. The writer examines Mikhail's entire speeches in his conversation in the novel without any exceptional interlocutor. The writer only applies indexicality principle, one of five principles proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) for analyzing identity. It is applied as a mechanism for analyzing identity through language use. Based on indexicality principle, the linguistic devices that index identity construction include labels, implicatures, stances, styles, and entire languages and varieties. The writer limits the linguistic devices on label and stance. The

limitation is intended to make the researcher only focus on linguistic unit and language use in analyzing Mikhail's personal identity construction.

## 1.6 Definition of Key Terms

- a. **Personal identity** is some characteristics and social position belonging to a particular person which make that person different from other people.
- b. **Construction** is a process or way in which Mikhail's personal identity constructed.
- c. **Mikhail** is a minor character in *the Zahir* novel. He was a twenty-five years old immigrant from Kazakhstan.
- d. Paulo Coelho is an author of *the Zahir* novel. He was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1947. He is a popular Brazilian lyricist and novelist. He has become one of the most widely read and loved authors in the world. He is the recipient of numerous international awards, amongst them the Crystal Award by the World Economic Forum. His *The Alchemist* and *Eleven Minutes* have been sold more than 190 million books worldwide. His novels have been translated into 80 languages.
- e. **The Zahir** is an English translation novel from original Portuguese *O Zahir* which was published in 2005. It was translated by Margaret Jull Costa. The English translation was published by Harper Perennial in 2006.