

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A.1 Research Background

Literature has grown quickly and widely as well during the latest centuries. In the past, when the word “literature” is mentioned, the people who heard it might be thinking about something that is just written in papers or in some case the writing is played in a theatre. Nowadays, that kind of perspective to literature must be very rare to be uttered by people. The development of technology has led us into a new work of literature, which we call as movie. Movie is one of real proof that literary work and technology have a strong relation. According to Robert Lado (1974) “video movie or motion picture is in theory at least the most powerful of visual aids; it combines pictures with movement, color and sound” (Lado, 1974:201). Having same concepts to drama, either directly or indirectly, movies are also believed as the next form of literary work. By combining written text and depicted character, movies are still considered as one of the most beloved literary work since the first time it was introduced until today.

Just like any other literary works, movies will also always being developed. Before the technology of drawing are invented, most movies were starred by real living things or inanimate objects such as human, animals or maybe some inanimate objects that are of course were controlled by human. As

the technology of drawing is developed, some movies started to be starred by animation object or things that we usually call cartoon.

According to English Oxford Dictionaries (Oxford Dictionary Press: 2016), cartoon is a film using animation techniques to photograph a sequence of drawings rather than real people or objects. It was firstly appeared in the early of nineteenth century as a drawing made on paper for fresco painting and also as a form of expression or communication for humor and political purpose until in these present days it is also used as an entertainment by applying a touch of video animation in it.

According to United States Copyright Office, cartoon or comic strip can be registered as a visual arts work or literary work, depending on the nature of the work and the way it is presented (2015). Just like any other literary work, the characters in animated cartoon are also given an identity and psychics since they are created to be displayed to human. The identity and psychological condition of the characters play a big role to the development of the story. Both elements show how every character has a different traits and behavior. This is how the author and the director should work together in the making of a cartoon. By combining the idea of the author in developing the story especially the characters and the ability of the director to present the story in animated version, a literary text could be developed in a new form, animated version.

Avatar: The Last Airbender is one of the most popular and watched animated cartoons. It is a story about the world where some people can manipulate the classical element with psychokinetic variants of the Chinese martial arts known as “bending”. There are four elements that could be learned and bended, those are water, air, fire, and earth. The civilization in the story is also divided into four nations, the Water Tribes, the Earth Kingdom, the Fire Nation, and the Air Nomads. In the story, the person that can bend one of those elements is called as “bender”. Normally, someone is only able to bend one element based on their nation, but that is an exception for the avatar. Avatar is the only person that is destined to be able to bend all the four elements. The avatar has a duty to maintain harmony among the four nations, and act as a mediator between humans and spirits. However, when the Avatar dies, their spirits are reincarnated into the next of the four nations in what known as the Avatar Cycle.

The story is focusing on the adventure of a twelve-year-old air bender named Aang who recent reincarnation of the previous Avatar in preventing a world war that was planned by the Fire Nation ruler named Sozin who also planned to expand his nation’s territory and influence. Carrying Avatar responsibilities made put a big conflict inside his mind. Aang was afraid and confused so he fled from his home which is the part where their adventure began. Under the threat of Sozin’s war, Aang was forced to learn the four elements as soon as possible. Fear, worry, courage and doubt are the feelings

that always haunt him over time and made a mind conflict inside him. The journey of Aang in reaching his full potential as an avatar is so interesting that made this animated cartoon are really enjoyably recommended.

The cartoon is also successful that it has got a lot of accomplishment. It was nominated for – and won – Annie Awards Genesis Awards, a Primetime Emmy Award and a Peabody Award. The cartoon is also listed in IMDb.com and get 9.2/10 rating stars. Not only in IMDb, it is also listed in TV.com and get 9/10 rating. Those numbers are given based on the public response who has watched the series. Not only that, the cartoon also produces several merchandises that become the proof of people enthusiasm toward it. The merchandises that have been produced based on the series includes action figures, a trading card game, three video games, stuffed animals distributed by Paramount Parks, and some LEGO sets. According to some media news, sooner Netflix will collaborate with Nickelodeon to make a live action series and air it on Netflix.

Besides its achievements, there are several reasons why *Avatar: the Last Airbender* is worth to be analyzed just like the characters journey, the displayed culture inside the stories or the elements that are being bended there. There is a research about the representation of race and ethnicity on the three Nicktoons programs: *Back at the Barnyard*, *The Last Airbender*, and *Tak and the Power of Juju*. The research was done by Nicole M. Lawrence in 2012. Lawrence saw the three programs as patterns of racial representation in the characters. The thesis

argues that the three programs construct analogies of African American, Asians, and native peoples. Lawrence put so much efforts in analyzing how cartoon Avatar: The Last Airbender offers the opportunity to examine a contemporary portrayal of Asian identity that furthers Western hegemony through ideologically charged construction of Eastern Cultures. The research was done by Lawrence above is very precise, since the cultures that is shown in Avatar: The Last Airbender cartoon are very thick and clear.

Sometimes a good literary work is the one that has so many things and uniqueness inside that is worth to be analyzed. The other research about the cartoon is the article which was written by Dr. Carol Panetta in 2016 which is entitled *Avatar the Last Airbender: A psychoanalytic Review Or How a Kids' Show Can Teach Analysis*. The article was posted in Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis. Dr. Carol Panetta wrote how the relationship between the antagonist, the young and impetuous Prince Zuko, and his uncle, the staid but clever Iroh contains the primary lessons of psychoanalysis. He describes how the arrogances of Prince Zuko in acting and viewing his uncle behavior could turn into someone that is totally different. The development of Prince Zuko psychological condition is the main topic of this article.

Being interested on the journey of Aang in meeting his true potential as an Avatar, and also amazed of its achievements and some researches about the cartoon that have been done put the researcher to do an analysis on the

Avatar: The Last Airbender animated cartoon. This research will feature a theory of human motivation in order to discuss how Aang as a main character reaches his true potential as a true avatar. Being a true avatar is the biggest desire that Aang has. There are two things that motivate Aang to reach his true potential as an avatar. First is because he is destined to be the next avatar, the second is because he wanted to stop the brutality of Fire Lord Ozai and bring harmonies onto the four nations. The top stage of an organism in reaching its true potential is called a self-actualization stage.

Self-actualization stage is a final part of theory of human motivation in reaching one's goals. As it is written in a book by A.H. Maslow (1954) entitled *A Theory of Human Motivation* which said that self-actualization refers to the desire for self-fulfillment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially at (Maslow, 1954:47). This peak psychological step belongs to theory of needs, which inside its discussion, as Dr Naveen K quoted Abraham Maslow statement inside his book entitled *Motivation and Personality*, basically human have 4 hierarchy of need before one reaches the self-actualization step (Naveen, 2012). Those hierarchy steps are physiological step, security step, love and belonging step, and then self-esteem step. In *Avatar: the Last Airbender* cartoon, the main character, Aang, faced many things that refer to those hierarchy steps. During the process in reaching his true potential, Aang continuously develops himself. It is kind of someone who walks on stairs. Make friends, meet new teachers, new enemies, stronger person and any others things

that motivate him to be a true Avatar. Those steps led him became a truly who he was, one of the full potential of him, a true Avatar. In this research, the theory of human motivation will be applied in order to match some psychological steps of human in meeting his desire with Aang journey in meeting his faith and desire as a true Avatar.

A.1.1 Problems of the Research

As it is explained in the background of the research, this research will focus to answer this following question:

How is the development of Aang's characterization in reaching his goal as a true Avatar?

A.1.2 Objective of the Research

Based on the problem of the research, the research objective is described to find out the development of Aang psychological condition in reaching his goal as a true Avatar

A.1.3 Significance of the Research

After reviewing Avatar: The Last Airbender, the researcher expects this research could be useful both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research is expected to be useful for students in literature studies especially to those who studies literature using self-actualization study. Practically, the researcher expects this research could be useful also in introducing theory of human motivation within its implementation to students as one of the

alternatives in understanding literary works. Then, this research is also expected to contribute in adding knowledge about literary works, especially about the animated cartoon so the students will be motivated to do researches on the literary works especially animated cartoon created by Bryan Konietzko and Michael Dante DiMartino (the creator of Avatar:the Last Airbender).

A.1.4 Limitation of the Research

In regards to the problems, the research will focus only in finding out the development of Aang psychological condition in reaching his goal as a true Avatar.

A.1.5 Organization of the Research

This research is arranged into five chapters:

The first chapter consists of background of the research, problem statements of the research, objectives of the research, significances of the research, limitation of the research, and organization of the research.

In the second chapter, there will be a discussion about the theoretical framework which explains the definition of theory of human motivation, hierarchy of needs and the review of related researches.

The third chapter will state about the research method, which include; the type of the research, data and source of data, method of collecting data, technique of collecting data and method of analyzing data.

In the fourth chapter of the research, the research will cover about the data description data analysis and the discussion about the development of Aang psychological condition in reaching his goal as a true Avatar.

The last chapter will be the conclusion and suggestions. It will summarize all works that has been done in this research.

