

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Statement and Significance of Problem

During the last 3-4 decades, the importance of the critical study of language to gain an understanding of society has been recognized. An understanding of the ideological practices which have determined a society's values is of increasing interest. [Stephens, 1992; 1] At the same time, children's literature has become an interesting source of study due to its numerous roles as educational, social and ideological instrument. Apart from being a source of entertainment and a tool for developing children's reading skills, it is important as the conveyor of world knowledge, ideas, values, and accepted behavior. [Puurtinen, 1998; 2] In addition, there is a strong belief that children's books are gender-stereotyped and biased in its portrayals of girls and women. The effects of sexism are most pernicious in the early stages of socialization, which are in the pre-schooling and primary schooling periods. In children's books, both female and male characters display blatant sex-stereotypes and behavior; furthermore, male characters are visually and verbally more prominent than female characters. [Pauwels, 1998; 20-23] The researcher is inspired to study the relation of ideologies and children's literature specifically in the aspect of gender ideology in Thai contemporary children's books. Eight Thai contemporary children's books written during the past 5 years have been selected for the study of gender ideologies. The similarities and differences of gender ideologies in contemporary children's books are studied through the analysis of the visual and verbal language used. The analysis of both visual and verbal language is one way of understanding how language discriminates against women and men.

## 1.2 The Objectives of Study

1. To find out the similarities and differences of the language used to portray gender ideologies in Thai contemporary children's books for boys and for girls.
2. To enhance the understanding of the significance and functions of language in creating gender ideologies in Thai contemporary children's books for boys and girls.
3. To study the problem of gender biases in Thai contemporary children's books through the visual and verbal language used.

## 1.3 Research Questions:

1. What gender ideologies are portrayed in Thai contemporary children's books for boys and for girls? Are they similar or different?
2. How are the gender ideologies constructed in Thai contemporary children's books?
3. In which ways do verbal and visual language contribute to gender biases in Thai contemporary children's books?

## 1.4 Theory:

**Discourse Theory** is a study of language in speech or in a piece of writing on a particular subject. A discourse itself is a string of sentences put together in a meaningful, coherent and effective way. In order to account for discourse, there are three aspects to analyze. [Cook,1989; 15]

### Literary Analysis

Exploring the structure and function of literary elements is a way to study literature. Some major components, for instance: point of view, character, plot, theme, setting, and focalization conventionally build discourse consistency. They are sometimes identified as the elements of literature. Each element has its own role but it frequently relates to and affects other components. The knowledge of each of these elements, individually and collectively, allows us to find coherent and purposeful meaning in the literature. Furthermore, gender ideologies can also be seen through these elements. [Nodelmen, 1996; 49]

### **Linguistic Analysis**

There are two ways to approach language: first is the *verbal analysis*, the formal links not only help us to understand how a sentence operates but also operate across sentences to explain how sentences are put together in a meaningful, coherent and effective way. In doing analysis on verbal language, word choices and sentence structures are considered. Second is the visual analysis. Studying the verbal language is not enough because the visual language can also convey messages in children's literature. The convention of color, the convention of point of view, leading, motion, and positioning which cooperate with the verbal will help us to have a better understanding of the meaning and purpose of the message.

### **Ideological Analysis**

Ideologies are sets of beliefs within society, for example, gender social beliefs, gender social values, and gender norms. Ideologies within a message reflect the conditions of each society because the ideologies are the commonly accepted beliefs in the society. The gender ideological analysis is conducted by looking into both the visual and verbal language to see how they portray and construct the gender ideologies.

In critical discourse analysis, it is believed that language reflects social ideologies and social conditions. That is, if we apply discourse analysis critically, we should be able to detect social issues such as gender ideologies through language use. Therefore, that is what the researcher aims to do in this research.

## **1.5 Scope of Study**

### **1.5.1 Framework**

The main purpose of the research is to compare the gender ideologies in Thai contemporary children's books. It is essential to set a framework with some definitions. Exploring the structure and function of literary elements is a way to study the literature. Six major literary components: point of view, character, plot, theme, setting, and focalization conventionally build discourse consistency. While doing gender ideological analysis the theories of gender typing, dealing with the idea that all societies have expectations for behaviors based on gender, are applied. The term gender typing will include the following components: stereotype, behavior, social relationship, activities and interests.[ Rider,1999; 82]

### 1.5.2 Methodology

The research is conducted as qualitative analysis having Thai contemporary children's books as the subject. Thai contemporary children's books are used to refer to Thai children's picture books, which have been written between 1998-2002. Six books received awards during the past five years. While two books are popular reading at Prince Royal's College in Chiang Mai.

Each book is categorized by the protagonist character. The books for boys are books which have male protagonist characters, human beings or animals. The maleness of the animals is seen through the visual and verbal language they use. The 4 selected books for boys are:

1. **Blooming Flowers** (ดอกไม้บาน)  
by Piangor
2. **The Little Lion** (เจ้าป่าตัวน้อย)  
by Rawee Nimmanakiert
3. **The Magic Book** (หนังสือวิเศษ)  
by Supaporn Sukprasert
4. **The Wonderful Present from Demon** (ของขวัญมหัศจรรย์จากภูต)  
by Pannida Pumiwat

The books for girls are ones which have female protagonists, human beings or animals. The femaleness of the animals is seen through the visual and verbal language they use. The 4 selected books for girls are:

1. **The Gift of Flower** (ดอกไม้ของขวัญ)  
by Kerek Yunpun
2. **Magic Toffee** (ลูกอมวิเศษ)  
by Thongkum Padungsuk
3. **Little Nid, Good and not stubborn!** (หนูนิด...เด็กดีไม่ดื้อรั้น)  
by Lampu Sanglop
4. **Pum Finds a Treasure** (ปุมเจอขุมทรัพย์)  
by Dr. Lamul Rattnakorn

### 1.5.3 Definitions

#### 1. Verbal Language

This refers to the written text in the children's books. Discourse analysis is used as the tool to study the verbal language, to illustrate how language is used in books for boys and for girls. Also, how Thai written words, for example, word choices, verb forms, and sentence structures construct the ideologies and their functions are considered at the level of verbal language analysis.

#### 2. Visual language

This refers to visual conventions which do not include the written words. The study of visual language such as lines, color and composition are used. The similarities and differences in the use of visual language help to compare how gender ideologies are constructed in books for boys and for girls.

#### 3. Gender Ideologies

This refers to the ideologies or sets of beliefs concerning gender which are normally accepted in society as the characteristics or stereotypes of gender. For example, men are assumed to be superior, strong and independent while women are assumed to be inferior, weak, and dependent. Gender ideologies normally appear in all kinds of literature, including children's books. Gender ideologies are interesting to study in children's books because the ideologies in these kinds of books will effectively illustrate social beliefs towards gender.

#### 4. Gender Typing

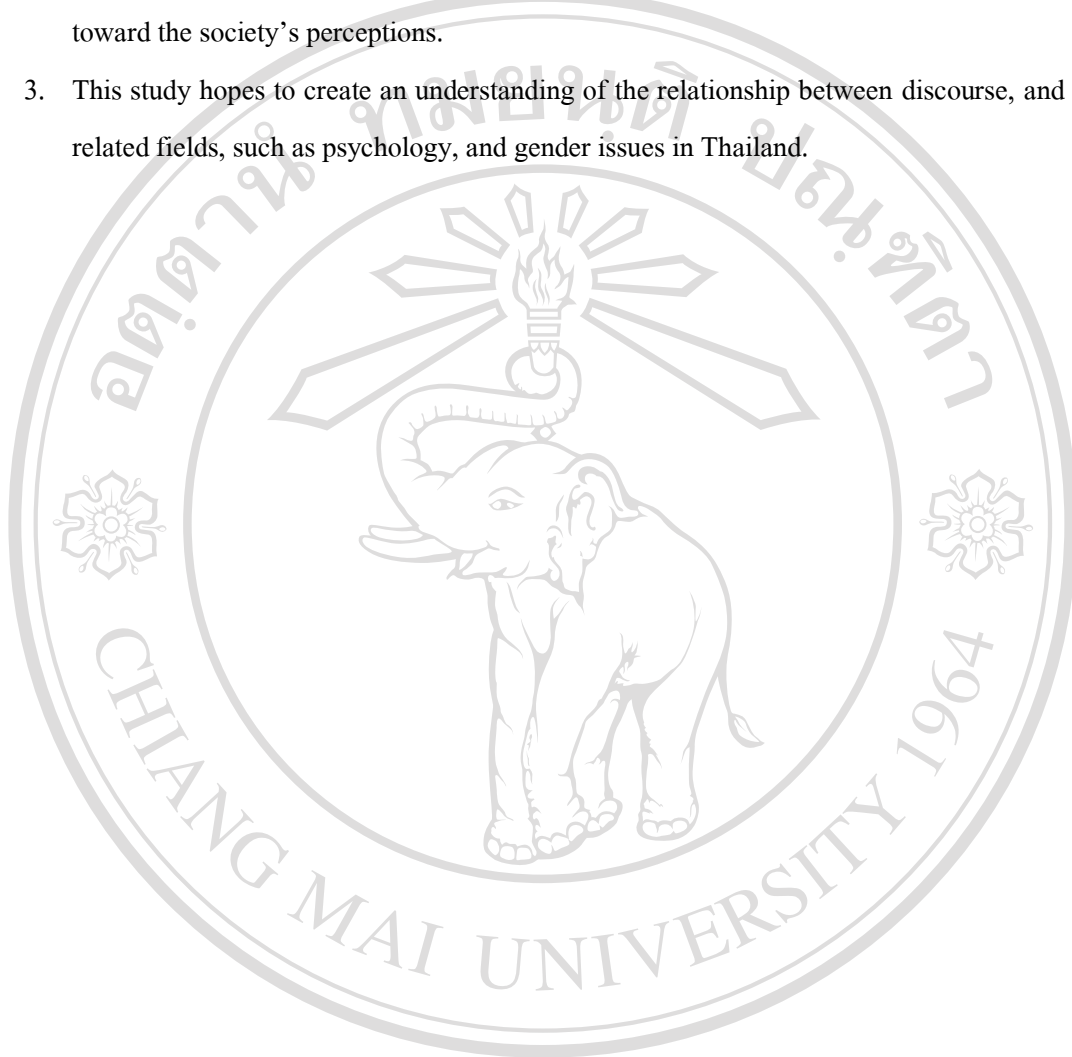
This is the process through which individuals acquire the roles, behaviors and values that society deems appropriate for their gender. Theorists of gender typing attempt to provide universal explanations of how gender differences are developed.

#### 5. Gender Bias

This is a social phenomenon in which men and women are treated differently. Feminists give the definition of gender bias as separation of gender in a way, which prefers one gender, most often men, than the other.

### 1.6 Educational Advantages

1. This study hopes to create an understanding of the significant function of ideologies in Thai children's books.
2. This study hopes to create an understanding of the influences of verbal and visual language toward the society's perceptions.
3. This study hopes to create an understanding of the relationship between discourse, and other related fields, such as psychology, and gender issues in Thailand.



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