Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 General Theory of Children's Literature

Definition and Usefulness of Children's Literature

The term "children's literature", is sometimes difficult to define because of its vague meaning. Generally, it includes all kinds of children's stories. A critic, FJ Harvey Darton, has defined children's literature as "printed works produced to give children spontaneous pleasure and not primarily to teach them, nor solely to make them good, nor to keep them profitably quiet." [Hunt, 1999:21]

Even though, society nowadays is rapidly changing, certain basic needs of children: the need for physical well being, the need to love and be loved, the need to belong, the need to achieve, the need for change, the need to know, and the need for beauty and order; seem to be common to most people and times. Directly or indirectly, books may help children to satisfy their needs. Books may help them build a concept of the society in which they live and their roles in that society. Books may help shape and sharpen their concepts about other people and relationships and can contribute to an understanding of themselves. Today's children, like today's adults, read for many reasons; to dream, to learn, to laugh, to enjoy the familiar and explore the unknown. They read for sheer pleasure and they absorb information from their reading. Those aspects of books that reflect developmental values are appropriate to the individual readers at the stages of their growth. [Arbuthnot and Sutherland, 1972: 3-16]

Children's Literature and Discourse

"Language is a part of society. Linguistic phenomena are social phenomena of special sort, and social phenomena are linguistic phenomena. Linguistic phenomena are social in the sense that whenever people speak, listen, write, or read, they do so in ways which are determined socially and have social effects. Social phenomena are linguistic, on the other hand, in the sense that the

language activity, which goes on in the social contexts is not merely a reflection or expression of social processes and practices, it is a part of those processes and practice."[Faircough, 1991; 22-3]

Above is the concept of discourse in critical analysis. The basic claim is language and societies reflect and shape each other. Children's literature, which is considered as a kind of communication, is also defined as a type of discourse. Doing discourse analysis of children's literature is a way to approach to the language in order to understand the relationship between language and society. Basically, the story comprises what certain characters do in a certain place at a certain time. Also, in the discourse study, the stories are composed of choices of vocabulary, syntax and order of presentation. [Stephens,1992; 17]

History of Western Children's Literature

In the several centuries before the invention of printing, children's literature had its beginning as unwritten folktales. The unwritten folktale was passed on by word of mouth and remained part of oral culture related to small audiences of unimportant people. [Arburthnot and Sutherland,1972; 82] Gradually, the folktales were largely realized by literary and educational establishments. They gathered the folktales together for printing. Children's literatures finally existed in Europe in 17th century. These early texts for children were produced in England by Puritans, a group of devout Christians. [Nodelman, 1996; 70] This kind of book was considered instructional. They produced books specifically aiming at directing young children to behave well. [Stephen1992; 71] This kind of book was meant to instruct and to edify principles of belief and conduct of the group; it was not meant to give delight to the children.

Children's books exist simply because they have to. There was no special literature for children until they were considered special enough to have a literature of their own. A scholar, Philipe Aries stated, "as equal members of that society, children acted as everyone else did; they needed no special literature because they weren't seen as having special needs or interest." [Nodelman,1996; 59]

History of Thai Children's Literature

Thai children's literature has a similar beginning as western literature. The oral folktale, myth, children's proverb and lullaby are the origins of children's books. Thai children's literature first appeared in Koi books (สมุดข่อย) during the years 1821-1887. Most of them are about religious and moral lessons, which were meant to instruct children, for example, Weaverbird (นกกระจาบ), Subintakumal (สุบินทกุมาร), and Sungthong (สังข์ทอง). However, there were not many books written for children. So adult literature was popular among children readers, such as Pra Apaimanee (พระอภัยมณี) and Khun Chang Khun Pan (ขุนช้างขุนแผน). [Kuhapinan: 2000, 15-18]

Suthornpu is praised as a great writer of children's literature, who has written various children's stories, for instance, Sawadiraksa (สวัสดิรักษา), Tawaijaofaaporn(ถวายเจ้าฟ้าอาภรณ์), and Tawaiowad Ballad (เพลงยาวถวายโอวาท).The printing children's books boomed in the reign of King Rama the 3rd when children's proverbs and some famous folktales were selected to print for sale by foreign presses. In addition, during the year 1887-1928, the Ministry of Education improved the standards of Thai children's books dramatically. Moreover, many public presses were interested in producing books for children. Thai children's books since then have developed and changed in content, style and form to become appropriate for children in this era. [Kuhapinan: 2000, 15-24]

Type of Children's Literature

Because childhood should be a time of exploring many kinds of books – poetry, folk tales, fables, myths, epics, fanciful tales, realistic stories, historical fiction, biography, animal stories, picture books and informational books, children should be encouraged to try books of many varieties and styles. Many children experience the pleasure of folktales in which challenge and achievement are the heart of the story. On the contrary, poetry extends children's imagination differently. The rhyme, rhythm and repetition can lead them to appreciate the beauty of language. Therefore, different kinds of children's literature have their own special characteristics and provide distinct pleasures. That is because each book contains different styles and gives different pleasures and lessons to the children. [Arbuthnot and Sutherland, 1972: 34-35]

Children's Picture Books

For the beginning readers, picture stories are enchanting. Perry Nodelmen expressed his idea about picture books that habitually, children like pictures and they need pictures. When children first pick up a book, they tend to look at the pictures before reading the words. In fact, most people automatically first look at any picture they happen to see. As historian E.H. Gombrich says, "The visual image is supreme in its capacity for arousal," [cited in Nodelman,1996: 215.] Children presumably need pictures in books because they find them easier to understand than words. In addition, they need pictorial information to guide them to understand the verbal information. Visual images are more concrete than verbal ones, and therefore children have a better chance of understanding them. Moreover, pictures have more communicative power than any number of words. [Nodelman, 1996: 216]

In general when we look at books, we are supposed to look the visual information. Additionally, when we look at pictures in picture books, we also think about how they relate to the verbal language and also to the pictures preceding and following them. Therefore, the strategies used to analyze picture books are different from the strategies used for understanding stories told only in words. [Nodelman,1996: 219] In other words, besides the verbal language that will help the reader to understand the picture books, the visual conventions, for example, color, shape, line, style, and dynamic should also be considered.

2.2 **The General Theory of Gender**

Sex and Gender

Traditionally, writers have used the term "gender" to refer to the grammatical categories. In recent years anthropologists have begun distinguishing the definition the terms gender and sex by deciding that though these two terms are frequently used interchangeably, they actually differ in important ways. Sex is a biological term; the sexual organs and genes determined who is male or female. In contrast, gender is a psychological and cultural term, referring to one's subjective feeling of maleness or femaleness. [Basow,1992; 2] Furthermore, gender is socially determined between the two sexes: the relationship between women and men and their social role in their society or community. [Money,1950]

The importance of the distinction between the terms sex and gender rests on the differences between biological and social aspects of being male or female. Frequently, people assume that the apparent behavioral and personality differences between males and females are the results of sex differences. However, apparent behavioral and personality differences between males and females exist because of social factors. As Rhoda Unger summarized, "In the new psychology of sex and gender, maleness and femaleness are viewed largely as a social construct …". [Basow,1992; 2-3]

Gender Theories

Being born a girl or a boy has implications that carry beyond the chromosomal, hormonal, and genital differences. In fact, they are not only different in biological determinants, but also roles, behaviors and values, which society expects of them as girls or boys. "Gender typing, is the process through which individuals acquire the roles, behaviors and values that society deems appropriate for their gender." [Ruble, Martin, 1998; 993] Theorists of gender typing attempt to provide universal explanations of how gender differences are developed. Some of these explanations are based on the forces of biology and genes, for example, Psychodynamic theory. This theory focuses on internal, psychic energy and proposes that behavior is motivated by unconscious forces over which people have little control. [Rider, 1999; 59-61] The most well known Psychodynamic theorist, Freud believes that development during the phallic stage is crucial to gender typing and later personality.

In 1977, Albert Bamdure explained that children learned appropriate behavior and values not by their own biological forces but environment ones. He explained his social-learning theory by explaining how environmental factors shape behavior, which is quite different from the theory of Freud. Children see gender-stereotypical models in the world around them, then they imitate these behaviors which are approved by society. [Rider, 1999; 64-67]

There still are many theories that attempt to explain how gender is constructed in human beings. For example, Kohlberg's Cognitive Development Theory states that children develop cognitive understanding of gender identity, which means the understanding that one is male or female, gender stability or knowledge that gender stays the same across time and gender consistency or the understanding that gender stays the same across situation before they will act in gender typical ways. [Rider, 1999; 70] Or Eagle's Social Role Theory that suggests that gender

differences among adults are maintained by the social roles that men and women in the society have when men and women occupy different positions and occupations in society, leading to gender-role expectations and gender typed skills and beliefs.

Gender and Language

Another theory, concernning gender, is Feminist Perspective. In order to have a better understanding of the Feminist Perspective, it is necessary to have a basic knowledge of feminism. Feminism is a social movement of this century aimed at eliminating gender discrimination and gaining equal treatment of women. By believing language projects gender biases, analyzing language will illustrate how women are discriminated against in society. Since the 1970s, feminism has made an impact on the study of language in a variety of ways. For example, sociolinguistic studies of people's language in effect mainly examined men's linguistic behavior. Feminist linguists pointed out that the linguistic behavior of the male speaker established male linguistic behavior as the norm, whereas the study of woman's language was considered of interest only in terms of illustrating differences and deviations from the norm of behavior. [Pauwel, 1998; xiv-xvi] Feminist Perspective theory argues that gender is a social construction. This means that it is not inherent to individuals but is created through interaction. Because gender is a social construction, gender roles are learnt through the process of socialization, pressuring, rewarding, punishing, ignoring, and anticipating, that push the child toward evoking acceptable responses. [Rider, 1999; 80-81]

Socializing Agents

Children get their earliest examples of what male or female means from their parents. Parents are socializing agents that influence their children's understanding of gender both directly and indirectly. Parents construct a gender environment of their preconceived idea of gender. [Rider, 1999; 126-129] Historically, parents, school, and religion have been major sources of socialization but from the 20th century onward, media is a powerful tool of socialization, shaping and reinforcing both the positive and negative attitudes of children.

Media and Gender

According to Wood (1994; 135), the media interact with individual and societal images of gender in three key ways.

    1. The images we see portrayed by the media reflect our cultural understanding of gender.

    2. At a more individual level, media images reflect societal views of what typical males and female should be like.

    3. Media are gatekeeper of information and images.

From Wood's analysis, the media reveals three consistent ideas which is firstly that women are underrepresented in the media. Secondly, both men and women are represented stereotypically. Thirdly, relationships between men and women are also represented in a stereotypic fashion even in the children's TV programs.

Children's programs on Saturday morning are sexist. Calvert and Lee (1997) discovered that there are three to four times as many male characters as female ones. Even educational programs have imbalanced numbers of males and females, for example, the main character Barney, purple dinosaur, is male, whereas the secondary characters on this show are female. In addition, the males and females on children's programs are portrayed as quite distinct from one another. The boys are active and integrally involved in the story, whereas the girls are passive bystanders. (Thomson & Zerbinos, 1997) Girls are more likely than boys to get into a situation from which they need to be rescued. Male characters are the most likely to do the rescuing. [Rider, 1999; 145]

As with children's television, children's literature there is two to three male central characters for every female character. Kortenhaus and Demarest (1993) analyzed 150 children's Western picture books and concluded that boys were characterized far more often as instrumental and independent while girls were made to look passive and dependent. Girls were cast in a nurturing role far more often than boys. [Rider, 1999; 149]

2.3 **The General Theory of Ideologies**

The Definitions of Ideologies

The idea of ideology began in the 18th century in France. The ideologies are usually defined as a political or social system of ideas, values or prescriptions of groups or other collectivities, and have the function of organizing or legitimizing the actions of the group. Psychologically, ideologies are taken as a kind of system of ideas and belong to the symbolic field of thoughts and beliefs, called *cognition*. In terms of cognition, ideologies also mean ideas, values, consciousness, common sense, knowledge, truth, and identity. Moreover, ideologies relate to *society* and often correlate with group's interests. They may be used to legitimize or oppose power and dominance. In addition, the concept of discourse is associated with ideologies, in such a way that discourse reveals the way ideologies are expressed and reproduced in society. In conclusion, the relationships between cognition, society and discourse are used in the theory of ideology. [Dijk, 1998; 2-6]

Ideologies and Children's Literature

The different kinds of literature have various functions in and of themselves, but one that most of them share is as a purveyor of ideology. That is because messages in the literature have the potential to reflect and reinforce the beliefs of each society. Interest in ideologies in children's books arises from a belief that children's literary texts are culturally formative and of massive importance educationally, intellectually, and socially. They reflect society as it wishes to be, as it wishes to be seen. The idea that children's books exist because it has to is the adults' assumption on how children are not mature and vulnerable. Moreover, they have less knowledge than adults do so they need to be taught. Adults believe these ideas and act in ways that help to make children behave properly. Therefore, adults write for children to reorder and fit with the adult's world. [Nodelman,1996;72] In other words, these ideas operate as part of society's ideology. Then, ideology is always a matter of politics; that is it relates to the ways in which people get and maintain power over each other. The way we think about childhood has political implications. Adults' understanding of children tends to be sieved through adult perspectives. What we believe about how we must control or protect children defines the power in relation to ourselves as adults. [Nodelman,1996;72-74]

As Knowles and Malmkjæe point out, the adult and child relationship is one of power, as portrayed in the literature for children. Critical linguistics explores the ways in which ideologies are coded in linguistic expression. Language, such as, lexical and syntactic choices made by a writer to describe events, characters and their relationships, can help create and maintain beliefs, values and relations of power. [Knowles and Malmkjæe, 1992; 65-67] Peter Hollindale [1992] has produced many interesting papers from the point of view of the operation of ideology in children's literature. He has shared the notable idea of three levels of ideology in children's books. The first level is 'intended surface ideology' or in other words, ideology that appears overtly or explicitly in the text, disclosing the writer's social, political and moral belief. The second level is 'passive ideology', which is implicitly present in the text. Although this level of ideology will take sophisticated analysis to demonstrate its presence, it is probably powerful in effect, since it consists of values taken for granted by the society that produces and consumes the texts, including children. The third level is 'inherent within language.' Waller [1989] stated that 'when a text is written, ideology works to make something more natural to write; when a text is read, it works…to force language into conveying only those meanings reinforced by dominant forces of the society.' [Stephen,1992; 9-12]

In Thailand, though there are not a lot of research studies on ideologies in children's books, recently an article was written, studying ideologies and power relating in Thai children's literature by Sorani Wongbiasaj, Hataya Chantaramankorn, and Satanan Piengboonta. The study attempts to explain how children's literature is a conveyor of ideologies, which has the potential to reflect the political problems in the country. The story, The Lesson of the Animals (บทเรียนของฝูงสัตว์) is analyzed. The findings illustrated that the story was written at a time when there were political, economic and social conflicts. The given lessons frame the perception for the child audiences that maintaining security in the country is important. [Wongbiasaj, Chantaramankorn, and Piengboonta, 2004]

Gender Ideologies

Gender ideologies are another social system of beliefs, ideas, values or prescriptions of groups and other collectivities, concerning gender. Obviously, in the society, women are characterized as passive, dependent and emotional, in contrast to men, who are considered aggressive, active and instrumental. [Weitzman, 1975; 105] Society continues to reinforce

behaviors that are traditionally gender typed. Boys are encouraged to be active and loud, and are not rewarded for playing with dolls and make up. On the contrary, girls receive approval for playing with dolls not for wrestling or playing roughly with other children. Children's behaviors are shaped into what society believes is appropriate for them as boys and girls. [Rider,1999; 65]

Gender Ideologies and Children's Literature

Surprisingly, texts and resource materials for children were among the first to be subject to analysis. That is because there is a strong belief that the effects of gender bias were most harmful in the early stages of socialization, which is in the pre-schooling and primary schooling periods. The children's books were formed to be sex-stereotyped and biased in their portrayal of girls and women. Both female and male characters displayed highly sex-stereotyped and behavior, furthermore, male characters were visually and verbally more prominent. [Pauwel, 1998; 21-23]

In 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. That is because women and men are classified into different stereotypes as they want to fulfill the different social roles. However, Rider said that "gender tying is a multidimensional concept and requires a multidimensional explanation." The term gender typing will include the following components: stereotype, behavior, social relationship, activities and interest. [Rider, 1999; 82]

Gender stereotypes are beliefs, which tends to be universally shared within a society and are learnt as part of the process of growing up in that society. Not only are many of the stereotypes not true for the group as a whole because they are over simplifications, but they also are unlikely to be true for any specific member of the group. For example, girls are dependent but now plenty of girls are not dependent. [Basow,1992; 3] There are many examples of using gender ideological analysis to understand the gender bias in children's books by looking at the gender-stereotype of characters and behavior in the story. For example, in Potter's The Tale of Peter Rabbit, Peter's sister acts according to the conventional assumptions about femininity and passively obeys her mother, while Peter fulfills traditional stereotypes of male behavior by defying his mother, striking out on his own, and seeking adventure. [Nodelman,1996; 117-119]

The examination by Freebody and Baker is a good example to explain gender stereotypes. From 163 reading books in English, the ratio of the word "boy (s)" to the word 'girl (s)'is 3:2. Also, they have investigated the adjectives associated with boys and girls, which can confirm gender stereotyping, and found:

> *…there are a number of adjectives applied uniquely to either boys or girls. Boys, but never girls, are describing as: new, sad, kind, brave, tiny, naughty. Girls on the other hand are exclusive attached to the following adjectives young, dancing, and pretty.* [Pauwel, 1998; 21]

Similarly, Allen et al [1993] do the analysis which shows that children's literature stereotypes both males and females, although the stereotypes of males tend to be negative and those of females tend to be positive. The descriptions of storybook characters suggests that males are powerful, get to do the fun, exciting, adventurous things, whereas female characters are weak, stand by, and watch or do boring mundane things. Jett-Simpson & Masland [1993] stated that if something good happens to a male character, it is because he did something to achieve a good outcome. If something good happens to the female character, it is because she was helped by others. [Rider, 1999; 149]

In Thailand, there is no serious gender ideological research on children's literature, but there are still have some related studies. For example, Watcharin Banaakeit (1985) has conducted research on the theme of ethical concepts in children's books which has received awards in National Book Week from 1972-1984. From the study, the way to show gratitude to parents by helping parents do chores is divided by gender. Girls help their parents by cleaning the house and washing the dishes, while boys water the plant, do gardening and wash the car.

The review of children's literature, gender and ideologies theories are used as the basis of the book analysis in the next chapter.