

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Nicholas Sparks is one of the best seller authors in New York City. He has published many novels that become bestsellers. All Nicholas Sparks' published novels were bestsellers in the New York Times. The books were sold out about more than one hundred fifty million copies in the world. In the United States, *The Notebook* was sold out about seventy-five million novels. The books had fifty translation versions from different languages. The data was taken from the author's official website, nicholasspark.com. Nicholas Sparks' novel succeeds to attracts readers' attention. He writes his novels with great details that made readers can imagine every event in the novel as if the readers were in the novel (Roifah, 2014:70).

Not only readers' attention but Spark's works also attracted by movie producers. It makes many of his novels turned into films adaptation. One of Nicholas Sparks' novel that popular in book and film version is *The Notebook*. Based on the rating in seventeen.com, *The Notebook* (2004)'s position was in the first rank from others Nicholas Sparks' film adaptation, followed by *A Walk to Remember* (2002), thirdly, *Dear John* (2010), fourthly, *The Lucky one* (2012), fifthly, *The Last Song* (2010), sixthly, *The Best of Me* (2014), seventhly, *The*

Longest Ride (2015), and the last position was Safe Heaven (2013). The booming of the film adaptation made readers who haven't read the book interested to buy the novel because they are curious about the version of the book.

One of Nicholas Sparks' novels, entitled *The Notebook*, was a bestseller for more than a year. Nicholas Sparks' first published novel, is about a long-lasting relationship inspired by a true story. The novel is famous in America because the story is full of love and sadness. Nicholas Sparks' famous novel *The Notebook* told an eternal affection between a romantic couple that touched the readers' hearts (Joy, 2019:74). All America loves *The Notebook*. The novel got positive responses from readers, as stated by BookPage in Sparks (1996:5), the type of story that attracts emotions and made readers cry in any situation. Another review from Copley News Service in Sparks (1996:4), indeed, only told, made the readers cry, it a romantic story, and it is an unforgettable story. Many reviews agree that *The Notebook* is a touching story. It makes this book becomes popular. *The Notebook* is one romance novel. Romance is one of the genres that become woman favorites. Romantics novels can talk to women about love and life, and by reading romance novels, women can feel the love that they did not experience in their lives or find their true love from the novel's story (Roifah, 2014:70).

The notebook novel by a famous author Nicholas Sparks was about a romantic couple who struggle to be together, although many problems came to their life. The affection shared by a young inseparable couple named Noah and Allison. Noah Calhoun was a countryman, and Allison Nelson was a middle-class woman. They came from a different family status. Noah's father worked in a lumberyard. In contrast, Allison and her parents were considered wealthy families. Their romantic

story began when Allison went to New Bern to enjoy her summer holidays. Finn and Sarah introduced Allison to a county boy named Noah. Allison and Noah started to spend days together visiting certain places in New Bern. Then, they were falling in love with each other. They fight for their love even though Allison's parents disapprove of them being together. Allison was forced to leave Noah. Since then, they lost contact. After separated for 14 years, Allison went back to New Ben for telling Noah that she was getting married to Lon. However, after they reunited again, they feel the love that had never been forgotten toward each other. Their love became stronger. There are many obstacles to Noah and Allison's relationships, but their love last forever. Eventually, the Doctor diagnosed Allison with Alzheimer's. She forgot about everything. Noah never gave up on her. He read Allison The Notebook, and it brought a miracle to Allie, where she could remember Noah again. The story between Allison and Noah succeeds in making readers cried. It means that the author of the novel manages to influence readers' feelings.

Authors have aims in writing their novels. Those are to amuse, persuade, and to give information to readers. Authors send their message to readers through their works. The messages can be motivated, inspiring that will influence readers' life. The authors write a novel in a particular theme that aims to show their idea about something (Jayanti, 2013:2). An example of the ideology that the writers reveal in their novels is an ideology of feminism. The Notebook novel contained traits of rich liberal feminism. This novel tells about an older man who respects her wife suffering from Alzheimer's disease. The novel published in October 1996. The Novel was released when the feminism movement is rife in society. Women's actions, such as feminism, occurred in many places, including Indonesia. It

happened in the history between the nineteenth and twentieth century, such as spearheaded by Raden Ajeng Kartini (Lubis, 2006:75). Women are one of the things that men did not want to have or to be seen because in patriarchal, women are weak, and men are strong. Women are sensitive, and men are sensible. Women are passive, and men are active, etc. (Gamble, 2001: vii). The purpose of women's movements is to achieve gender equality between men and women. Noah Calhoun and Allison Nelson are the main characters in the famous novel *The Notebook*. Allison Nelson, as the main female character, is described as an inspiring woman who fights for her dreams. Meanwhile, Noah Calhoun, as the main male character, is characterized as a devoted man that respects Allison as a woman. Allison and Noah's traits are connected to feminism because the novel took place during 1946 when the feminism movement developed rapidly.

Feminism topic is frequently discussed in society because it is about the significance of gender equality. Feminism is a movement that has the purpose of creating, defining, and achieving all rights that equal to men in culture, political, economic, private, and social to women. Equality to get opportunities in education and the working field (Suaidi et al., 2016). Sudarni (2017) stated the words feminism meaning a woman who struggles for women's rights. It derived from a femme. Liberal feminists focused on individual freedom. In liberal feminism, liberty for a woman emphasis on women's equality to men (Puspitasari, 2016). Liberal feminism aims to make women be able to decide the choice for the future. Such as made women equal to men, cooperating, and being independent. (Suaidi et al., 2016). As stated by Tong (2009), As seen by liberal feminists, it is not a proper way to discriminate against women. Many opportunities should be given to women.

Therefore, they could do things as men do in public. The topic of feminism is important to study because it is about gender equality. There must be no difference between women and men to do what they want in life. Bett Friedan stated that feminists should stop trying to become and do everything because a woman can be housewife and workers as well. A woman can be a wife and mother. If the woman did not have a career, it would limit their growth (Tong, 2009:38). If feminism wants to be something alive and developing, it must be started by recreating a wheel that means to find not only new issues but a new language (Walters, 2005:141).

The researches about *The Notebook* by Nicholas Sparks have been conducted by Roifah (2014), Mandasari, Yusuf & Rafis (2017), and Yuliana, Raflis, & Djonnaidi (2017). Roifah (2014) analyzed the popular novels' effect on readers, especially women using the psychoanalysis approach. Mandasari, Yusuf, Raflis (2017) focused on finding out the struggle of love in one of Nicholas Sparks' novel entitled *The Notebook*. Yuliana, Raflis, & Djonnaidi (2017) analyzed the influence of the social impact of society in North Carolina to the main characters in the famous novel *The Notebook* by a success author Nicholas Sparks. Researches above are relevant to the present research. It is because there are similarities to the object being analyzed. *The Notebook* by a famous author Nicholas Sparks was chosen to be analyzed. However, based on the studies above, research about the main characters of *The Notebook* is rarely conducted using feminism approach. Feminism does not necessarily aspire by women but men as well. It has a relation to the theory of gender. It concerned with the development of self that implied the theory when someone thinks, perceives, acts, and speaks which not culturally specific of women but men as well (Disch, 2008). In this research, the main characters, namely, Allison

Nelson and Noah Calhoun, have been chosen to be analyzed using feminist theory by Tong (2009) because they are the main characters that dominate the story and always appear in every chapter of the novel. The main character frequently influenced the flow of the story in the novel.

The researcher analyzes the novel because the novel is famous and best seller in many countries. It proved that the novel has been known and discussed by many readers. Moreover, the main female character of the novel inspired many readers because of her strength to fight for dreams. Meanwhile, the main male character is inspiring the reader as a loving man that respects Allison as a woman. This topic is essential to be analyzed because the researcher will get a better understanding of the novel and improve critical thinking and writing skills by analyzing the novel. The readers will get new information that can widen their minds about literature and liberal feminism. Reading about feminism analysis showed the history when women's movements were started, which giving an essential place to begin understanding gender and feminism (Hart, 2006:42). Therefore, based on the background above, the researcher will analyze the main characters by identifying the traits that represent liberal feminists in the bestseller novel *The Notebook* by a success author Nicholas Sparks.

1.2 Problem Identification

Issues about feminism and gender equality were commonly discussed in the literature. In Indonesia, there was a hero named Raden Ajeng Kartini. She was considered as feminist. Because she fought for opportunities to be given to women, such as their rights in education, she was inspired by society because of her forward

movement. Therefore, women in Indonesia got the same right as men in education, economics, and politics field. Nowadays, women get almost the same opportunity as men. Women can get higher education. Women can go to work and get the same salary as men. Moreover, women also can be a leader, for instance, the fifth president of Indonesia named Megawati Soekarno Putri.

However, gender equality issues still exist in society, no matter how the government makes programs to eliminate it. The report of Global Gender Gap 2015 that was released by the World Economic Forum (WEF) displayed of Indonesian position for the survey of 145 countries, Indonesian rank was 92, far behind Philipian, which located in 9 places. Gender equality in Indonesian is large enough, and the score was 0,6813 (Murthi et al., 2017:7). In the feminist perspective, the position of men and woman are equal. Therefore, many novels about feminism are written to educate readers about the importance of gender equality. In the bestseller novel *The Notebook*, Noah Calhoun and Allison Nelson are considered as feminists. They knew how to fight for themselves. Moreover, they respect and support each other. Following the problems above, the researcher analyzed the traits of Allison Nelson and Noah Calhoun as liberal feminists in the famous novel *The Notebook* by a success author Nicholas Sparks.

1.3 Research Questions

This research focuses on the problem of what traits of Noah Calhoun and Allison Nelson in the famous novel Nicholas Sparks' *The Notebook* that represented a liberal feminist. The research problem can be stated as follows:

- a. What are the general traits of a liberal feminist in *The Notebook* by Nicholas Sparks?

1.4 Research Objective

Based on the research problems above, the researcher formulated the research objective as follows:

- b. To identify the general traits of a liberal feminist in *The Notebook* by Nicholas Sparks.

1.5 Research Significance

The purpose of research significance is to describe the traits of Noah Calhoun and Allison Nelson in the bestseller novel *The Notebook* by Nicholas Sparks as liberal feminists, and how it contributes theoretically and practically. Moreover, the research findings are beneficial to inform the reader about the novel. Furthermore, it shared the relation of the novel in the real-life. The importance of this study will be divided into two groups, namely, theoretical significance and practical significance.

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

The research result is significant to contribute to sharing knowledge related to gender equality through analyzing the main characters of the famous novel *The Notebook* by a success author Nicholas Sparks. Research theoretical significances are divided into two parts, namely: critical analysis and literature learning.

a. Critical Analysis

A critical analysis is used to analyse books, essays, novels, and movies. In analyzing the objects, the researchers break down the novel into some parts and study them. A critical analysis is used to get a deeper understanding of the object being analyzed. The researcher shares their ideas or arguments about the object that they analyze. Knowledge of critical analysis assists researchers to assess the presented literature and their works in ways best as possible (Micallef, 2015:107). The researcher can improve their critical reading and critical writing skill by doing critical analysis. The researcher analyses the main characters critically to find the traits that represent a liberal feminist.

b. Literature Learning

Literary work has many benefits for readers. By reading literary work, readers more understand about the topic that they learn. They will get ideas, and they can improve their reading skills. It can inspire the readers in any possible way. Literary work assists readers in developing their knowledge related to literature. Besides, Novel is beneficial in the education field. Novels are one of the learning media that beneficial to use in teaching English for Foreign Language. Reading Novel can develop students' necessary skills in English, such as reading skills. It also can enrich students' vocabulary mastery. The novel is beneficial in language learning because it is not only described but lighten up human life. The use of a novel as a medium in language learning has seven

benefits in the education field (Hişmanoğlu, 2005:63). Novels have several advantages in teaching or learning English. Firstly, by reading novels, readers can develop their knowledge about culture from different people. Novels can be beneficial as real media in learning that can motivate students. Novels can be used to explore students' creativity because novels imitate real-life situations. By reading the novel, students can improve the way they process information critically. It makes students learn more than what has written in the novel. Last, it opened the way to students in learning the culture of the target language. Novels have benefits not only to entertain readers, but it also develops their skills in learning English.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

The research result has practical significance. There are four parts of practical significance, namely: English as Foreign Language students, English as Foreign Language teachers, parents, and women in society.

a. English as a Foreign Language students

The research result has significance for EFL students who interest in literature. The readers will get new information about feminism and liberal feminist. Literature is discussed in the education field because it has benefits to students. By learning literature, students can learn the history and culture. Students explore and interpret politics, social, historical, and literacy contexts from work produced by the author.

Students develop a better understanding of the text while exploring the background of the culture by interpreting several cultures and ideologies that related to them (Soomro et al., 2017:66). Using literature in the EFL class made students believe in using language more confidently. Shortly, literature can be an important way to develop students' habits in reading to their academic, intellectual, linguistics, and cultural (Soomro et al., 2017:66).

b. English as a Foreign Language Teacher

The research result has beneficial in giving a contribution to EFL teachers. It can be used for teachers who teach a foreign language. The teacher can teach their students using novels as media. Novels cover two elements, social and cultural elements (MC Murram, 2010:27). It means that novel not only for entertaining to read, but it has social and cultural aspects. Therefore, students can learn the social and cultures such as feminism in the area where the novel is written. Widdowson (1975:81) In teaching English for foreign language, literature is beneficial as media that can increase student's skills in learning English. Bobkima & Domiguez (2014) stated that literature could be used by the teacher as a method to teach students grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, they can master grammar and enrich their vocabulary. Teaching literature can help students in developing their attitudes to be better by implementing an idea and concept that given by the author through literary works (Soomro et al., 2017:66).

c. Parents

This research is essential to parents for information that discussed feminism and gender equality. Children learned from their parents. Parents have a vital role in children's behavior. Literature such as novels, short stories, and children's books can be used as media for children to learn about gender equality. As stated by Regev in Baratz and Hazeira (2012:33), children's literature is frequently assumed as one of the learning media in educating and training young readers. Book is a way for children to learn through the message that contains in the books. They can learn about the importance of gender equality, such as respecting others by not discriminating against them based on their gender. Parents also learned to treat their children equally and raise them properly without differentiating them based on their gender.

d. Woman in Society

This research is important and useful for women in society, especially for women who like reading novels. Through reading, it can change their mindset about being a woman. It can encourage and motivate them as a woman. They can do what they want because they have the right to do it. Then, they can share what they have read to others. The information that the reader got from the research is essential to know by society. By sharing the data, the topic will be familiar with the community. Hopefully, it will make a woman in society to be more confident in speaking their minds. Improving woman status and

opposing sex discrimination in the whole field is the primary goal of liberal feminism (Tong, 2019:36).

1.6 Research Scope

The research discusses liberal feminism. Therefore, there are scope and limitations of the research. The research scope only focuses on analyzing the traits of the main characters as liberal feminists in the bestseller novel *The Notebook* (1996) by a famous author Nicholas Sparks. The researcher analyzes all sentences in *The Notebook* related to liberal feminism of main characters by focusing on the interactions of the main character with herself or other characters, the other character's thoughts or speech about the main character, and through the narration from the author about the main character.

1.7 Key Terms Definition

1.7.1 Conceptual Definition

- a. Traits are usually described as a description of persons in constant patterns of behaviors, thoughts, and emotions McCrae & Costa in Leduc et al. (2015:3).
- b. Main Characters are the characters that have a significant role in the novel (Lapandja et al., 2016:3).
- c. Liberal feminism is a woman's movement to end discrimination against women because they are not treated fairly (Tong, 2009:2). A liberal feminist is a woman who can do what they want in life, even

though not all women can do what men do. Liberal feminism is the freedom of women Tong, (2009).

1.7.2 Operational Definition

- a. Traits are a description of the main characters based on their thought, feeling, and behavior.
- b. The main characters are the character in the novel that influenced the flow of the story in the novel. The main characters, which dominate and appear a lot in the novel, have an important role in the story.
- c. Liberal Feminist is gender equality between man and woman. The traits of liberal feminist women are a combination of masculine and feminine traits.

