



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***ATTITUDES OF CHINESE MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
TOWARDS AGAPE LOVE IN SELECTED GERMAN FAIRY TALES***

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By

LEE SOO LI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,
Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts**

August 2015

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

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August 2015

Chair: Ang Lay Hoon, PhD

Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

Engaging with two selected Grimm's fairy tales (1812), *The Fisherman and His Wife* and *The Three Snake-Leaves*, the current study examined Chinese Malaysian university students' attitudes toward love by applying Love Attitudes Scale (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986). Love Attitudes Scale was developed according to Lee's (1973/1976) six basic love styles (Eros, Ludus, Storge, Mania, Pragma and Agape). With this love scale, only Agape subscale was used to investigate the Chinese Malaysian university students. The specific objectives of the study are: (a) to identify the love style in selected German fairy tales by using textual analysis; (b) to examine attitudes toward love among Chinese Malaysian university students; and (c) to gauge the love attitudes of Chinese Malaysian university students towards the characters depicted in selected Grimm's fairy tales. In this study, the results were discussed based on eight focal points: (a) the readiness to sacrifice for love; (b) the readiness to remain loyal to the lover; (c) the readiness to accept the lover's weakness; (d) the readiness to improve the lover; (e) the readiness to protect the lover; (f) the readiness to maintain the relationship; (g) the readiness to experience similar relationship; and (h) the similarity to current relationship in Malaysia. A questionnaire survey of forty-eight undergraduate and postgraduate students was conducted in a Malaysian public university. Participants were presented with the two selected German literary texts in English before filling up questionnaires consisting of fourteen items in each (for each selected fairy tale) with revised items (adapted from Love Attitudes Scale). The questionnaires focused on the assessment of participants' opinions about the depicted romantic relationship between men and women in the selected texts. Regarding the first objective, results of textual evidence indicated that *The Fisherman and His Wife* and *The Three Snake-Leaves* emphasize the love style of Agape. Regarding the second objective, the findings showed significant love attitudes of Chinese Malaysian university students: their mind seems to be agapic in dealing with romantic relationship. Regarding the third objective, the similarities of attitudes toward love were found between Chinese Malaysian university students and the characters depicted in selected Grimm's fairy tales. Similarly, the differences of attitudes toward romantic relationship were also found between Chinese Malaysian university students and the depicted characters. However, the number of similarities between Chinese Malaysian university students and the depicted characters (participants would act as the characters

did) is nearly equal with the number of differences between Chinese Malaysian university students and the depicted characters (participants would not act as the characters did) in relation to attitudes toward romantic relationship. In other words, both selected Grimm's fairy tales only received partial acceptance from Chinese Malaysian university students. The "agapic view of love" is suggested to be a construct uniquely defined within the culture of Chinese Malaysians. In sum, this study may not only suggest structures and practices of Chinese Malaysian's culture in terms of love attitudes, but also contribute to a better understanding of the German literature. This and similar studies help to understand the social values among different cultures as well as to avoid disappointment and misunderstanding in romantic relationship of mixed cultures.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sastera.

**SIKAP MAHASISWA CINA DI MALAYSIA TERHADAP CINTA AGAPE
DALAM CERITA DONGENG KANAK-KANAK JERMAN YANG TERPILIH**

Oleh

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Dengan dua cerita dongeng Grimm yang dipilih (*Pelayan dan Isterinya* dan *Tiga Helai Daun Ular*), kajian tersebut menggunakan Skala Sikap Cinta (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986) untuk menyiasat sikap cinta mahasiswa kaum Cina kewarganegara Malaysia. Skala yang digunakan mengikut berdasarkan Lee (1973/1976) enam gaya cinta asas, iaitu Eros, Ludus, Storge, Mania, Pragma dan Agape. Dengan skala cinta ini, hanya Agape digunakan untuk mengkaji mahasiswa kaum Cina yang muda di Malaysia. Objektif kajian ini mempunyai tiga lapisan: yang pertama adalah untuk mengenal pasti gaya cinta dalam cerita dongeng Jerman yang dipilih dengan penganalisisan teks; kedua adalah untuk menyiasat sikap cinta dalam kalangan mahasiswa kaum Cina kewarganegara Malaysia; dan ketiga adalah untuk menolok sikap cinta antara mahasiswa kaum Cina kewarganegara Malaysia dan watak-watak yang digambarkan dalam cerita dongeng Grimm yang dipilih. Dalam kajian ini, keputusan yang diperolehi adalah dibincangkan dari lapan perspektif: (a) kesediaan untuk berkorban demi cinta; (b) kesediaan untuk bersedia kepada kekasih; (c) kesediaan untuk menerima kelemahan kekasih; (d) kesediaan untuk meninggalkan kekasih; (e) kesediaan untuk melindungi kekasih; (f) kesediaan untuk mengekalkan hubungan dengan kekasih; (g) kesediaan untuk mengalami hubungan yang serupa seperti cerita dongeng Jerman yang dipilih; (h) persamaan hubungan antara kekasih di Malaysia. Tinjauan soal selidik melibatkan empat puluh lapan orang pelajar siswazah ijazah dan lepasan ijazah di sebuah univerti awam Malaysia. Para peserta telah ditunjukkan dua teks sastera Jerman yang dipilih dalam bahasa English sebelum mengisi dua soal selidik yang mempunyai sebanyak empat belas soalan dalam setiapnya (bagi setiap kisah dongeng yang dipilih) dengan soalan yang disemak semula daripada Skala Sikap Cinta. Soal selidik ini menilai pandangan para peserta tentang gambaran hubungan kekasih antara lelaki dan wanita dalam teks sastera Jerman yang dipilih. Dapatan kajian ini diperolehi daripada soalan tertutup (Skala Lickert) dan juga soalan terbuka (subjektif) bagi. Mengenai objective pertama, dapatan daripada bukti teks menunjukkan bahawa *Pelayan dan Isterinya* dan *Tiga Helai Daun Ular* menekankan Agape. Mengenai objektif kedua, penemuan menunjukkan sikap cinta mahasiswa kaum Cina kewarganegara Malaysia: mereka berfikiran secara Agape dalam menangani hubungan dengan kekasih. Mengenai objektif ketiga, persamaan sikap cinta didapati antara mahasiswa kaum Cina kewarganegara Malaysia dan watak-watak yang

digambarkan dalam cerita-cerita dongeng Grimm yang dipilih. Tambahan pula, perbezaan sikap cinta juga didapati antara mahasiswa kaum Cina kewarganegara Malaysia dan watak-watak. Namun, persamaan sikap cinta antara mahasiswa kaum Cina kewarganegara Malaysia dan watak-watak (peserta-peserta akan bertindak seperti watak-watak) adalah hampir sama dengan perbezaan sikap cinta antara mahasiswa kaum Cina kewarganegara Malaysia dan watak-watak (peserta-peserta tidak bertindak seperti watak-watak). Dalam erti kata lain, kedua-dua cerita dongeng Grimm yang dipilih hanya menerima sebahagian sambutan daripada mahasiswa kaum Cina kewarganegara Malaysia. Didapati pemikiran secara Agape dalam hubungan dengan kekasih adalah satu konstruk unik dalam budaya kaum Cina kewarganegara Malaysia. Kesimpulannya, kajian ini bukan sahaja mencadangkan struktur dan amalan budaya kaum Cina kewarganegara Malaysia dari segi sikap cinta, tetapi juga menyumbang kepada pemahaman yang lebih baik dalam sastera Jerman. Kajian tersebut dan kajian-kajian lain yang serupa mengelakkan kekecewaan dan salah faham dalam hubungan dengan kekasih antara budaya campuran.



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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on August, 2015 to conduct the final examination of Lee Soo Li on her thesis entitled “Attitudes of Chinese Malaysian University Students towards Agape Love in Selected German Fairy Tales” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Arts.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	i
ABSTRAK	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
APPROVAL	vi
DECLARATION	viii
LIST OF TABLES	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES	xv
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Relationship Practice of Chinese and German People	4
1.3 Statement of Problem	6
1.4 Objectives of the Study	8
1.5 Scope of the Study	9
1.6 Definition of Terms	9
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	11
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 Theoretical Framework of the Study	11
2.3 Link between Attitudes toward Love and Culture	13
2.3.1 Love	14
2.3.2 Culture	15
2.4 Attitudes toward Love with Literary Approach	16
2.5 Conclusive Summary	19
3 METHODOLOGY	21
3.1 Introduction	21
3.2 Conceptual Framework of the Study	21
3.3 Focal Points of the study	23
3.3.1 First focal point: The readiness to sacrifice for love	24
3.3.2 Second focal point: The readiness to remain loyal to the lover	24
3.3.3 Third focal point: The readiness to accept the lover's weakness	25
3.3.4 Fourth focal point: The readiness to improve the lover	25
3.3.5 Fifth focal point: The readiness to protect the lover	25
3.3.6 Sixth focal point: The readiness to maintain the relationship	25

	3.3.7	Seventh focal point: The readiness to experience similar relationship	25
	3.3.8	Eighth focal point: The similarity to current relationship in Malaysia	26
3.4		Participant Profile	26
3.5		Instruments	28
3.6		Data collection and analysis procedure	31
3.7		Conclusive Summary	33
4		RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	35
4.1		Introduction	35
4.2		Agape Love in Selected Fairy Tales	35
4.3		Attitudes toward Love among Chinese Malaysian university students	39
	4.3.1	The readiness to sacrifice for love	39
	4.3.2	The readiness to remain loyal to the lover	41
	4.3.3	The readiness to accept the lover's weakness	47
	4.3.4	The readiness to improve the lover	48
	4.3.5	The readiness to protect the lover	49
	4.3.6	The readiness to maintain the relationship	51
	4.3.7	The readiness to experience depicted relationship	53
	4.3.8	The similarity to current relationship in Malaysia	54
4.4		The Love Attitudes of Chinese Malaysian University Students towards the Characters Depicted in Selected Grimm's Fairy Tales	55
	4.4.1	Love attitude: Sacrifice for love	55
	4.4.2	Love attitude: Loyal to the lover	56
	4.4.3	Love attitude: Accept the lover's weakness	57
	4.4.4	Love attitude: Improve the lover	57
	4.4.5	Love attitude: Protect the lover	58
	4.4.6	Love attitude: Maintain the relationship	58
4.5		Conclusive Summary	59
5		CONCLUSION	61
5.1		Introduction	61
5.2		Significance of the Study	61
	5.2.1	Literature as an example to illustrate German culture	61
	5.2.2	Literary approach to understand attitudes toward love	62
	5.2.3	Insight into Chinese Malaysians' attitudes toward love	62
	5.2.4	Social Understanding of Love	62
5.3		Summary of the Study	63
5.4		Implications of the Study	64

5.5	Limitations of the Study	64
5.6	Suggestions for Further Research	64
5.7	Concluding Remarks	65

REFERENCES	67
APPENDICES	77
BIODATA OF STUDENT	89
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS	90



LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page	
3.1	Demographic characteristics of participants	26
3.2	Background inventory of participants	27
3.3	Revised items based on the Agape subscale of Love Attitudes Scale	29
3.4	Data collection and data analysis for achieving each objective	32
3.5	Items for each focal point and the need of investigating Agape love attitude and experience	33
4.1	Textual evidences of Agape love in <i>The Fisherman and His Wife</i>	35
4.2	Textual evidences of Agape love In <i>The Three Snake-Leaves</i>	38
4.3	The readiness to sacrifice for love: Take risk for love	39
4.4	The readiness to sacrifice for love: Be buried alive for love	40
4.5	The readiness to remain loyal to the lover: Obey the lover	41
4.6	The readiness to remain loyal to the lover: Prioritize the lover's happiness	42
4.7	The readiness to remain loyal to the lover: Respect the lover	43
4.8	The readiness to remain loyal to the lover: Loyal to the lover when the lover fell in love with others	44
4.9	The readiness to remain loyal to the lover: Approach others or be approached by others	45
4.10	The readiness to accept the lover's weakness: Accept the lover's weakness	47
4.11	The readiness to improve the lover: Advise lover on attitudes or behaviours	48
4.12	The readiness to improve the lover: Stop the lover behaving irresponsibly	49
4.13	The readiness to protect the lover: Concern about the lover getting into trouble	50
4.14	The readiness to protect the lover: Protect the lover from danger	50
4.15	The readiness to maintain the relationship: Bury the lover alive	51
4.16	The readiness to maintain the relationship: Maintain the relationship without feeling of love	52
4.17	The readiness to experience the depicted relationship: Desire to experience the depicted love relationship	53
4.18	The similarity to current relationship in Malaysia: Compare the story of <i>The Fisherman and His Wife</i> with reality	54
4.19	The similarity to current relationship in Malaysia: Compare the story of <i>The Three Snake-Leaves</i> with	55

reality



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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
3.1	Conceptual Framework of the Study	21
3.2	The Procedure of the Study	32



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter embodies background to the study, relationship practice of Chinese and German people, statement of problem, objectives of the study, scope of the study and definition of terms. Love would initially be introduced to offer a basic understanding of this study.

1.1 Background to the Study

Love seems to be in terms of feelings about a particular person (Hattis, 1965, p. 22; Restivo, 1977, p. 234). Similarly, most people consider love as a feeling or an emotion instead of an attitude (Berscheid, 2010, p. 8; Lund, 1985, p. 3; Shaver & Hazan, 1988, p. 475). Sometimes love is, however, “more than a feeling” (Shaver & Hazan, 1988, p. 477). As Neto (2005) said, “In every part of the world, love is considered one of the most important feelings that human beings experience, and being in love leaves an indelible social and psychological mark” (p. 2). Apparently, love influences mental health (Neto, 2005, p. 2) because it makes people happy as well as unhappy. It offers strong positive emotion of attraction (Kokab & Ajmal, 2012, p. 43) and negative feeling (e.g. angst, anxiety, worry, frustration, jealousy, disappointment, etc) in a romantic relationship.

Based on Berscheid (2010) and Kolodny (2003), they opposed the idiom “love is blind” and argued that there are targets or reasons for love. “Love always has a target, and the targets of many types of love named were objects”, such as “love of money” (Berscheid, 2010, p. 7); reason for love is the lover’s personal attributes, for instance beauty, sense of humour, etc in the “quality theory” (Kolodny, 2003, p. 135). Although one’s characteristics are influential in choosing a partner, people also tend to look for a partner within their ethnic group (interracial relationship) (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 395–396). The interracial relationship gathers two individuals from diverse social, racial, or religious groups. It is likely to lead to the open social groups (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 397) and beneficial for future generations. “A sense of belonging” to different ethnic group could be developed within the younger generation when they are nurtured in a mixed culture family (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 401). In brief, interracial relationship reveals a “social acceptance” of different ethnic group and a decline in ethnic prejudice (Song, 2009, p. 333).

For twenty centuries, different conceptions of love were “derived from fictional and non-fictional literature” (Lee, 1977, p. 173). As Rubin (1970) said, “[Love] has occupied a preeminent position in the art and literature of every age, and it is presumably experienced, at least occasionally, by the vast majority of people” (p. 265). Love had been the major theme of literature, such as fairy tales (Tonn, 2008, p. 10) since the beginning of nineteenth century (Borscheid, 1986, p. 159) which is the same period of time in which the collection of German fairy tales—*Children’s and Household Tales* was produced (Kerosky, 1994, p. 2). It is found that German fairy tales often highlights emotional experience, especially romantic love (e.g. in the story of *Cinderella*, several times after the prince met Cinderella, he looked for her and married her in the end). Many of them are love stories with discrepancies of themes, and reflected in various expressions. It is common that the female characters develop the romantic relationship and get married with the beloved one. The obvious messages

carried by the fairy tales are self-sacrifice, satisfaction gained through marriage, etc (Tonn, 2008, p. 12-13). Fairy tales are considered to “provide early tutelage in the central romance narrative in which Prince Charming rescues a damsel in distress (poisoned princess, unloved stepdaughter) and the two live happily ever after” (Wood, 2001, p. 242). Perhaps “[i]t is not inappropriate in these troublous times to dwell at some length on the work which was put forth in the fateful years of 1812 to 1815, when German was in fighting for her national existence” (Crane, 1917, p. 579-580). Still, the immortal romance (“penned by a very noble soldier”) was considered as “the attainment of peace” after the end of war (Crane, 1917, p. 580).

Among the fairy tales produced by different countries, German fairy tales, which were especially collected by Brothers Grimm during nineteenth century, still remain the popularity up to present day. The sources of fairy tales, particularly classical Grimm tales are widely found in the world as the short stories had been translated to more than 160 languages (Michaelis-Vultorius, 2011, p. 1). “Fairy tales continue to enchant young and old, rich and poor, literate and illiterate” (Kerosky, 1994, p. 70). The stories still enjoy popularity after two centuries from the first publication of KHM (Michaelis-Vultorius, 2011, p. 1). All these are coming to light not only in the western world, but also the eastern countries. “For hundreds of years, stories and fairy tales have played an important role in Western and Eastern cultures” (Klenke, 2002, p. 18). The book of *Children's and Household tales* also has good reception in other Asian countries, especially Japan, Korea and China after translations of the book had been published (Michaelis-Vultorius, 2011, p. 2–3). It is believed that human wisdom, moral value and popularity of German fairy tales are the main reasons for Walt Disney to produce films with the stories. Therefore people (e.g. Malaysians) become familiar to Grimm's fairy tales when they exposed to the book (*Children's and Household tales*) and movies (by Walt Disney).

The collection of Grimm's fairy tales is probably recognised as the best-known written literature of folk stories worldwide (Michaelis-Vultorius, 2011, p. 1). At the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was first published by a couple of brothers, i.e. Jacob Ludwig Karl Grimm (1785-1863) and Wilhelm Karl Grimm (1786-1859) (Kerosky, 1994, p. 11; Michaelis-Vultorius, 2011, p. 1). Two fairy tales of Brothers Grimm, *The Fisherman and His Wife* and *The Three Snake-Leaves*, are surprisingly discovered unusual compared with other Grimm's fairy tales. Male characters appear to have positive attributes (e.g. moderate, commitment, loyalty, protectiveness, honesty, etc), whereas female characters possess negative qualities (e.g. greediness, selfishness, cruelty, wickedness, unfaithfulness, etc) in the aforementioned tales. Another reason that makes these two fairy tales distinctive is, “happily ever after” is missing at the end of the stories.

The actual story should be understood before explaining further. Therefore, summaries of both stories are provided. The story of *The Fisherman and His Wife* unfolds as follows: Long time ago, a fisherman and his wife lived in a miserable hovel near the sea. One day, when the fisherman was fishing, he caught a big flounder who was actually an enchanted prince. The flounder begged to stay alive, and the fisherman kindly released it and went home without asking for anything in return. However, his greedy wife heard the story and she ordered him to go back and asked a small cottage from it. He returned to the sea, made a rhyme to call the flounder, and it granted the request. Unfortunately, the wife was out of gratitude to the fisherman and made too many demands (i.e., a castle, becoming the king, becoming the emperor, becoming the

pope and even wishing to become the God) on the flounder. The fisherman knew that it was wrong, yet he could not turn it down. Although the flounder always granted the wishes, the sea grew increasingly stormy every time the fisherman visited the flounder. The wife eventually went too far. The flounder took back everything that was granted and told the fisherman to go home. In the end, the fisherman and his wife were again living in their dirty hovel.

Adapted from Arum (2013)

The story of *The Three Snake-Leaves* unfolds as follows: A poor young man proved his extraordinary bravery in battle. The king of the land awarded him by proclaiming him the most powerful man in the kingdom. Meanwhile, the king had a daughter. The young man was attracted to her and wished to marry her. However, the princess had long ago made a wish that she would take no man as her husband unless the man promised to be buried alive with her if she died first. The young man agreed and they got married immediately. After a period of bliss, the princess was ill and passed away. The young man was buried along with his wife in a large tomb. While the young man was waiting for his death, he noticed a snake crawling toward his wife. He took out his sword and cut it into pieces. Soon after another snake emerged carrying three leaves in its mouth. The snake placed the three leaves over the freshly cut snake and the leaves immediately mended the wounds and brought the dead snake back to life. The young man sat in amazement, then he picked up the leaves and placed them over his wife's mouth and eyes. She immediately sprung back to life as well. Two of them were let out of the tomb. The people rejoiced at the miracle and the young man gave the three leaves to one of his servants. Unfortunately, something had changed in the princess, for she had lost all of the love she once had for her husband. The young man later requested for a voyage to visit his old father. At the sea the princess murdered him with the help of a captain and threw his body overboard. The young man's servant witnessed it all. He took a small boat, retrieved the young man's body, and put the leaves over his eyes and mouth. After the young man was brought back to life, two of them hurried back to the kingdom. They found the king and told him his daughter's wickedness. When the princess returned to the land, she and the captain were put to death.

Adapted from Wiki (n.d.)

The term of fairy tale, fairy story, folk tale, wonder tale, household tale, myth, or legend, which can be used interchangeably (Kerosky, 1994, p. 15), is a fictional story. It has the power to provoke the emotions and resonate with children or even kidult—an adult who still have youthful mind. Plenty of typical figures like either wicked or kind character (not ambivalent or nothing in between) (Blackway, 1986, p. 12), fairies, witches, queens, princesses, princes, talking animal, dragons, ogres, goblins, elves, trolls, dwarves, giants, mermaids, gnomes, and imaginary beings or lands are involved in fairy tales. The stories are usually strongly influenced by oral traditions which begin with “Once upon a time...” “Many, many years ago...” “There was once a princess...” (Baruch, 2008, p. 18; Blackway, 1986, p. 11) and end with “they lived happily ever after” (Baruch, 2008, p. 18).

“Fairy tale is a genre that is a familiar, timeless and a universal conduit of folk-knowledge” (Monin & Monin, 2005, p. 512). In the last thousand centuries, fairy tales had been developed with the passing of generations (Baruch, 2008, p. 15). In the stories, they offer myriad traditional beliefs, humanities, cultures, academia, moral lessons, guidance, enchantments, nature’s phenomena, love themes and entertainment (Kerosky, 1994, p. 1). For example, the Frog King or Iron Henry, Snow White, Sleep

Beauty or the Rose Princess, Rapunzel, Cinderella, etc. Marvellous and magical things always happen to characters in the stories; a world of magic and imaginary are formed. Therefore these stories are far from reality and hard to convince people to believe.

Fairy tale, a fictional literature is not only considered as “a traditional and universally familiar narrative genre”, but may also be a “invaluable sources of folk-knowledge” which “have ideological impact” (Monin & Monin, 2005, p. 511–515). The new ideals started to have an effect on the people through the vehicles of literary texts (p. 159-160). In other words, “[f]airy tales have inspired humankind for centuries” (Kerosky, 1994, p. 1); the human wisdom and enchanting quality of fairy tales were acknowledged. In fact, they are relevant not only to individuals, but also to the society (Blackway, 1986, p. 10). For example, *Beauty and the Beast*. A prince became a horrible beast when he judged an enchantress too harshly, and he was placed in a castle all alone. Fortunately, meeting an innocent beauty, Bella was a turning point in his life. She found out the person who the beast really is and surprisingly fell in love with him, despite his rudeness and hideous appearance. This famous fairy tale involves the moral value “do not judge the book by its cover”.

In the western context, a large number of researchers have studied attitudes toward love or German fairy tales, but the combination of these two subjects is not among them. As the love is a prolonged issue in an individual’s life (when attraction between two persons of opposite sex begins), studying attitudes toward love in deeper sense (using literary approach with Grimm’s fairy tales) and higher validity (applying Love Attitudes Scale developed by Hendrick and Hendrick, 1986) becomes crucial.

1.2 Relationship Practice of Chinese and German People

Cultures diverge from each other. Similarly, cultural differences are shown between Chinese and German people. Perhaps the differences lie on the unique and distinctive perspective and keep the gap between them. The Chinese culture would be first introduced, followed by the German culture with respect to traditional values and relationship practice.

“Traditional Chinese culture is one of the comprehensive and profound cultures in the world” (Wang, 2012, p. 212). Throughout Chinese history, “traditional Chinese culture is described as a complex product of three different and often contradictory value systems” (Faure & Fang, 2008, p. 196) or “philosophical systems” (Wang, 2012, p. 213), i.e. Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. Father of Taoism, Lao Tzu (604BC–531BC) mentioned in his book, Taoism refers to “something undefined and complete, coming into existence before Heaven and Earth” (Lao as cited in Wang, 2012, p. 216). In fact, Taoism stresses natural force that unites all things in the universe (Wang, 2012, p. 224). Another philosophical system, Confucianism was developed from the ideas of Confucius. Confucianism approaches differently (compared to Taoism) in regard to the standards of human behaviour (Wang, 2012, p. 228). During the Han Dynasty (206BC-220AD), the third philosophical system, Buddhism was originated from India and gradually developed in China; it integrated into Chinese culture (Liang, 2012, p. 751). Buddhist thought that “karmic harmony” has an impact on the universe and life (Liang, 2012, p. 753). As Liang (2012) commented that everything is created because of the existence of karma.

The Chinese values and ideologies have also been documented in literature (e.g. poems, lyrics, plays, novels, etc) (Cho & Cross, 1995). It indicates that literary texts recorded traditional cultures and values from the past. With “a combination of passion, strong commitment, and endurance through hardship”, a love style, Agape was expressed in the tales during Tang dynasty (618AD-907AD) (Cho & Cross, 1995). In Tang dynasty, *The Winding-River Pond* displays a pretty and famous courtesan, Li Wa contributes all her money to a young scholar, Chang An and helps him to pass a state examination, so that he gets a prestigious position in the government (Cho & Cross, 1995). Li Wa portrays an Agape lover, a common love style among Yuan playwrights (Cho & Cross, 1995). Chinese literature represents traditional approaches to romantic relationship as the classical teachings which shape modern Chinese attitudes (Cho & Cross, 1995).

Over the past few hundred years, nonetheless, changes has been taking place in love attitudes as exemplified in the growth of divorce rate of China (Higgins, Zheng, Liu, & Sun, 2002, p. 77). In the past, marriage was arranged by the parents which appeared to be a “family business” based on the “social hierarchy” (Higgins et al., 2002, p. 75). Chinese favour no longer the arranged marriage. They start to choose the idea of love match by comparison with arranged marriage (Higgins et al., 2002, p. 76; Xu & Whyte, 1990, p. 720) after the development of Western philosophy in regards to “the important of the individual” (Higgins et al., 2002, p. 76). Although the societies are gradually becoming a more “homogeneous” world, Chinese traditional culture remains solemn and influential for most Chinese people during the “transformation process” (Higgins et al., 2002, p. 77).

Modern society differs from the past societies in terms of romantic relationship (Borscheid, 1986, p. 157). In the eighteenth century, Germany had been through the Age of Enlightenment (Johnson, 2014, p. 251). However, the Age of Romanticism (emphasised feelings, imagination and wild natural beauty from the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century) became the turning point in love (Borscheid, 1986, p. 158). “[E]motional or physical love prevailed as the foundation for marriage and the notion of the ‘love-match,’ stressing the unit of love and marriage, became the new ideal to follow” (Borscheid, 1986, p. 158).

In the period of pre-Romantic, the marriage of German people relied on their economic and social status; it was always similar standard between the couple (Borscheid, 1986, p. 160). Borscheid (1986) explained that German people aimed to marry wealthier men or women (p. 160). “Nobody wanted to marry below standard because that would have entailed more work, more poverty, and a shorter life-span. Since nobody wished to go down the scale, nobody went up either” (p. 160). Therefore one was said to be foolish and unrealistic when the person valued more on love and inner qualities (Borscheid, 1986, p. 159). To them, love is less likely able to fill an empty stomach (Borscheid, 1986, p. 159).

Throughout the period of post-Romantic, the choice of mate selection reverted to the former traditional criteria because romantic ideas had virtually no impact on it (Borscheid, 1986, p. 161-165). “If the partners believed they could get along with each other, the subject immediately came up of financial assets and future inheritance...” (Borscheid, 1986, p. 165). The financial standard was crucial, so that love could develop without constraints (Borscheid, 1986, p. 168). In this regard, money was a primary concern, followed by the characteristics of the partner; finally love came as an

afterthought (Borscheid, 1986, p. 168). The materialistic way of thinking and behaviour is quite obvious in Germany back then.

After the Age of Romanticism, Germany underwent the Restoration period. “one did not marry *for* love, even if toward the end of the century one did marry more often *with* love” in nineteenth-century Germany (Borscheid, 1986, p. 168). As Borscheid (1986) said, “[T]he marriage concept was indeed freed of its elements of romantic extravagance” (p. 159). Nonetheless, love became the foundation of a romantic relationship as the concept of love-match (p. 159).

In sum, the similar development of culture is revealed in Chinese (from arranged marriage to love match) and German people (from the Age of Enlightenment, followed by the Age of Romanticism, to the Age of Restoration) in terms of romantic relationship. Both populations finally accepted the idea of love match in which love becomes the foundation of marriage. However, Chinese hold stronger traditional values (stress the characteristics of the partner), whereas German people emphasise the feeling of love. A conclusion could be drawn from here is Chinese and German people still have different culture in relation to romantic relationship.

1.3 Statement of Problem

Interracial partnering (i.e. dating, cohabitation and marriage), a romantic relationship of two lovers from diverse cultures (e.g. Chinese and German) becomes more common over time in most of the multi-ethnic countries (e.g. Western) (Song, 2009, p. 332). Nonetheless, Carol (2013) suggested that a more accommodating country, Germany was less positive about interracial relationship (p. 78). Furthermore, the interracial relationship is said to be associated with divorce (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 397). A variety of determinants have an effect on choosing a partner within the similar ethnic group, for examples “language, levels of human capital, modernization, and a host of other characteristics” (Chiswick & Houseworth, 2011, p. 153). Resistance to having a close friendly relationship exists between ethnic groups. With conservative values, people are likely to keep another ethnic group at a distance (Huijnk, Verkuyten, & Coenders, 2010, p. 392). Although the ethnic, religious and racial boundaries are displayed weaker, especially among the young generation (Song, 2009, p. 332), the boundaries still remain in society (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 417).

On the other hand, the young people face difficulty in dealing the new challenges in their adult journeys through life. Kok (2014) said that “late adolescents and emerging adulthood” have to experience the social changes (p. 1035). Apart from attending universities or colleges for pursuing higher education and opportunities, they explore the “career, love relationship and other possible life directions” (p. 1035). Adults aged between 31 and 59 (Erikson, 1963) refer to fully-grown person, or the person who are considered to be legally responsible for their action. However, young adults aged between 18 and 30 (Erikson, 1963) seem too old to be children, and they are also too young to be adults (Nilsen & Donelson, 2001, p. 1).

Over the years, the suicidal behaviour is increasingly rampant in the young (Habil, Ganesvaran, & Agnes, 1992, p. 5). The growth of suicide becomes alarming, especially the young generation in Malaysia (Kok & Goh, 2011, p. 32; Tam, Lee, Har, & Chan, 2011, p. 30). As Kok and Goh (2011) further reported—that the suicide rate among Malaysian youths is shocking (p. 32). The average case of suicide is 60 each month and

2 each day (p. 32). Among Malaysian ethnic groups, national statistics reported that “the Chinese had the highest number of suicides at 48%” within three years (2007 to 2010) (Sipalan, 2012); another data from Hospital Psychiatrist from the Ministry of Health suggested that the highest suicidal rate was reflected by Chinese (52%) (Muzammil, 2014); “The suicide attempt of Chinese race was found with an increased risk of eight times that of other ethnic groups” (Chan, Maniam, & Shamsul, 2011, p. 286). The suicide rate of Chinese is increasing over years, and Chinese race became the highest rate of suicide attempt (Chan et al., 2011, p. 283). Therefore extra attention is needed to address the suicide problem of the Chinese from Malaysia.

Among the factors of suicide attempt within young Chinese Malaysians, love is one of them. In other words, romantic relationship (from dating to marriage) could be one of the distractions during emerging adulthood that influences one’s mental health (Dush, 2005, p. 608), particularly young adult. As Reis and Aron (2008) said, “That is, problems in love and love relationships are a significant source of suicides, homicides, and both major and minor emotional disorders, such as anxiety and depression” (p. 83). Attitude and behaviour of young Chinese people from Malaysia have been changing gradually when confronting with love issue. Few reports revealed that Chinese Malaysian young adults committed suicide because of romantic relationship. For example, A youth, Andy Yeap plunged to his death in Kuala Lumpur due to his relationship problem (“Facebook Puppy,” 2014). As the newspaper The Star reported that he met a girl on Facebook for six months. Unfortunately, the girl decided to break up with him and he refused. Another young adult, Steven Ko Yiu Hing also plunged to his death due to relationship matter in Penang. It is believed that he was miserable in a love triangle and made up his mind to give up the relationship with a girl, who was once an ex-girlfriend of his friend (Teh & Yeoh, 2012). The death of two aforementioned young adults (Andy Yeap and Steven Ko Yiu Hing) is a unfortunate and extremely regrettable incident.

Perhaps the observant and perceptive experts, educators, or family members should be responsible for the similar incident. As Kok and Goh (2011) claimed, “Parents, educators, researchers, and of course the adults in our society, might feel a responsibility prevent this loss of life” (p. 32). However, it is not predictable if young people remain silent about the thought of suicide. The adults can never always be there for them. Therefore knowing the reasons behind these negative attitudes becomes critical to provide essential preliminary insight into understanding one of the factors, attitude toward love that influences their behaviours.

An indirect way (e.g. literary approach) is suggested to access the original unconscious emotional parts of young adults. In this case, working with fairy tales or the use of fairy tales matches the goal to understand the attitude owing to the fact that “fairy tales permit a person an essential exposure to his personal unconscious” (Blackway, 1986, p. 18). Contemporary young adults embark on a new romantic relationship like the princes and princesses in fairy tales (Kerosky, 1994, p. 70) which are considered as tales of “human journey” (Järv, 2010, p. 281). As Klenke (2002) asserted, “Stories are harbingers of challenges and crises that call for our attention. They are conveyors of problems that beg solutions; they are vehicles for gaining insights into relationships, making decisions, implementing policies, and overcoming problems of morale and injustice” (p. 18). Therefore stories serve as a “moral compass” to distinguish right from wrong and “barometer” for change (p. 18).

Although most of German narratives, especially Grimm's fairy tales correlate to romantic relationship, the central themes of two selected stories (*The Fisherman and His Wife* and *The Three Snake-Leaves*) consist of similar self-sacrifice and suicide acts like an Agape lover. Agape is ranked as the most affirming love style with the significant correlations and healthy indicators, such as “life regard, self-rated spirituality, self-esteem, ego strength, and self-rated lovingness” (Prasinos & Tittler, 1984, p. 105). Nonetheless, it was less investigated in earlier studies because it is not primary interest. The Agape love style appears to have potential risk to life associated with the characteristics (i.e. selflessness and self-sacrifice). The lover might take the sense of responsibility too seriously in a romantic relationship, particularly the young ones who are still innocent to think sensibly. In current research, the data are crucial to understand the love attitude of target group (Chinese Malaysian university students). A detailed and valid interpretation of love phenomena (Lee's six basic love styles in 1977) as well as the love scale (Love Attitudes Scale developed by Hendrick and Hendrick in 1986) were applied to find out how exactly the young people perceive love. The findings of this study might be taken as a precaution.

Attitude toward love has not been studied extensively through literary approach. Most studies have only examined attitudes toward love, such as the study by Dion and Dion (1996) on cultural perspectives on romantic love; Hatfield and Sprecher (1986) on love in romantic relationship; Jackson, Chen, Guo and Gao (2006) on conceptions of love among couples from the people's republic of China and United States; Landis and O'Shea (2000) on cross-cultural aspects of romantic love; and Sprecher and Toro-Morn (2002) on the beliefs of men and women about love and romantic relationships. On the other hand, some other studies have only focused Grimm's fairy tales. For instance, the study by Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz (2003) on feminine beauty ideal; Cedeno (2010) on moral authority; Lipson (2001) on political, social and moral agendas; Louie (2012) on gender representations; Michaelis-Vultorius (2011) on reception; and Taylor and Rebel (1981) on hessian peasant women. Thus far, it was found that only a study was conducted to investigate the interpersonal relationship with literary texts, which is the study by Wood (2001) on attitudes toward violent romantic relationship among heterosexual women.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This study examined Chinese Malaysian university students' attitudes toward love, particularly Agape love, engaging with two selected German fairy tales of Brothers Grimm (*The Fisherman and His Wife* and *The Three Snake-Leaves*) by adapting and revising Love Attitudes Scale of Hendrick and Hendrick (1986). These fairy tales are used as a starting point to analyse the love attitudes of Chinese Malaysian university students. The specific objectives of the study are:

- (a) to identify the love style in selected German fairy tales by using textual analysis—whether it is Agape love;
- (b) to examine attitudes toward love among Chinese Malaysian university students—whether they think as Agape lover in romantic relationship; and
- (c) to gauge the love attitudes of Chinese Malaysian university students towards the characters depicted in selected Grimm's fairy tales—whether they concur (agree or have the same opinion) with the view and behaviour of the characters.

In regard to the objectives, three research questions could be answered in this study:

- (a) How is love demonstrated in the two selected German fairy tales?

- (b) What are the attitudes of Chinese Malaysian university students in terms of romantic relationship between men and women?
- (c) How do Chinese Malaysian university students interpret the thought and action of the characters in the two selected Grimm's fairy tales?

In the past, the Chinese are said rather rational and realistic than the Europeans who are known to be romantic in relationship (Jackson, Chen, Guo, & Gao, 2006). Therefore the intent of this study was to measure the love attitudes of Chinese from Malaysia using literary approach.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study investigated attitudes toward love in romantic relationship by using a survey questionnaire to obtain honest opinions and feelings from Chinese Malaysian university students, but individual or group interviews were not conducted. Only the data related to love attitudes would be considered in the current report; Agape love is the only love style focussed in the study. Chinese Malaysian university students are the main participant in current study owing to a lack of existing knowledge about pertinent topic (attitudes toward love) within Chinese populations. In addition to this, similar ethnic groups with different geographical and historical background would have different attitudes toward love. Within the scope of the study, this could only be done for the Chinese ethnic in Malaysia. Furthermore, few variables (age, gender, place of birth, relationship experience and relationship status) exist in current study, but they were allowed to vary, except relationship status. Based on the suitability and relevance, only two German fairy tales of Brothers Grimm (*The Fisherman and His Wife* and *The Three Snake-Leaves*) were selected in this study.

1.6 Definition of Terms

In order to avoid confusion or misunderstanding, definition of each term (used in current study) would be explained with its denotation. The terms are Agape, attitude, Chinese Malaysian, romantic and romantic relationship.

Agape: Agape refers to a spiritual love style with the characteristics of selflessness, self-sacrifice and a sense of responsibility without expecting reciprocity.

Attitude: Attitude refers to the expression or response that consists of evaluation and judgment in dealing a certain situation.

Chinese Malaysian: Chinese Malaysian refers to the citizen of Chinese descent living in Malaysia.

Romantic: The term romantic refers to a strong feeling of love which is impractical and unrealistic in a close relationship between men and women.

Love / Romantic relationship: Love or romantic relationship refers to the way in which two heterosexual lovers feel about each other and behave towards each other.

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