

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains four topics related to the first chapter. They are background of the study, problems of the study, objectives of the study, and the definitions of key terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

As social creatures people need to communicate with one another in their society. Therefore, language is important in life because language is used as a tool of communication in order to understand each other. By means of language, people can express their thought, imagination, feeling and creativity verbally or nonverbally. By using verbal and nonverbal language, people can communicate to each other. Sebeok (cited in Cobley, 2001, p. 14) says that the expression 'by verbal means' is equivalent to that of 'by means of speech', or 'by means of script', or 'by means of a sign language' (e.g., for use in a deaf group). In other words, communication does not only use verbal language but also non verbal language. One of the examples of non verbal language is a sign.

A sign is a tool of communication used by society to interact to each other so that society needs to understand a system in order to not misunderstand the interpretation. In social life, a sign is used to improve the importance of what is symbolized. There are many kinds of a sign in social life depending on its culture and people such as the gesture, the traffic light etc. People need to know the importance of sign study. A sign is one important thing to understand. This is in

accordance with Chandler saying “Saussure referred to language (his model being speech) as ‘the most important’ of all of the systems of signs” (2007, p.5). It means that language is the most important thing of signs. Signs should be understood correctly and equally in the need of the same concept. However, the sign is not always understood correctly and equally among the society. Every person has his own meaning and interpretation of signs regarding the background of each person.

Society always asks the meaning of a sign such as traffic signs, signs of an event or other signs. Dealing with this, the science that discusses the signs is called semiotics (the study of signs). Semiotics covers all the signs so that people assume that semiotics includes only visual signs (visual sign). According to Chandler, “One of the broadest definitions is that of Umberto Eco, who states that ‘semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign’. Semiotics involves the study not only of what is referred to as ‘signs’ in everyday speech, but of anything which ‘stands for’ something else” (2007, p. 2). In other words, Semiotics is a study focusing on everything that is called signs.

In order to build interpretation toward signs, the writer uses some theories to analyze the data which can be analyzed by using semiotic study. The first theory is used to analyze the sign which is the basic elements in describing and interpreting signs. The signs can be in the form of symbol, icon, index which represent words, images, gesture, or objects. Peirce (cited in Chandler 2007, p. 3) states: “Semiotics was the formal doctrine of signs which was closely related to logic.” Peirce is famous for his triadic concept on semiotics. The triadic concepts are

representamen, interpretant and semiotics objects. Moreover, from the relation between representamen and semiotics object there are three kinds of signs, namely icon, index and symbol. Floyd in Cobley, (2001, p. 31) explains that an icon is a sign that interrelates with its semiotics object by virtue of some resemblance or similarity with it, such as a map and the territory it maps, photo and the real object of photo. An index is a sign that interrelates with its semiotics object through some actual or physical connection or in simpler way index is cause-effect, such as the smoke is index of fire or cloud as index of rain. Then the last is symbol, a sign that shows the relation between signified and signifier, and the relation between it, is arbitrary or social convention. The second is analyzing the codes. The codes are important in order to make signs sense. According to Chandler (2007, p. 245), codes are procedural system of related conventions for correlating signifiers and signifieds in certain doamins. Codes help the writer to analyze the signs in order to make a good interpretation and meaning.

This thesis is concerned with system of signs, symbol, icon, and index and to find out the interpretation and codes of semiotic sign which appears on chapter covers of graphic novel *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* by Art Spiegelman by using Peirce concept. According to Abel (n.d), a graphic novel is a book made up of comics content which has a few defining characteristics. Chapter covers can convey the message of the story of graphic novel.

The reason why the writer takes semiotic analysis on chapter covers on graphic novel *Maus: "A survivor's Tale"* by Art Spiegelman (1991) because the covers contain a lot of signs which consist of words and pictures. Those signs are

related with the message of the story and meaning of the graphic novel. *Maus* is one of the first graphic novels that receive academic attention in the English-speaking countries. In 1992 it became the first graphic novel to win a Pulitzer Prize. These are the reasons why the writer conducts a study entitled “**The Semiotic Signs on Chapter Covers in the Graphic Novel *Maus*: A Survivor’s Tale by Art Spiegelman**”.

There are some significance in this study. The purposes are generally to help and give more information to students and other people. First, this study is expected to give contribution to the linguistics students of Faculty of Cultural Studies who develop their knowledge especially, in Semiotics. Besides, the study is also expected to be reference to the student who wants to conduct the similar topic to that of this study in the future. The last, the writer wishes this study can give information to many students and people to enrich their knowledge about signs.

1.2 Problems of the Study

Based on the background of the study, this study investigates these following problems:

1. What signs which consist of symbol, icon, and index are on chapter covers of the graphic novel *Maus*?
2. What kinds of codes are used in interpreting the meaning of signs of the chapter cover in the graphic novel *Maus*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem of the study, the objectives of study can be described as follows:

1. To know the signs which consist of symbol, icon and index on chapter covers of the graphic novel *Maus*.
2. To find kinds of codes used in interpreting the meaning of signs of the chapter cover in the graphic novel *Maus*.

1.4 Definition of the Key Terms

1. **Sign** : anything stands for something else (Chandler, 2007).
2. **Symbol** : is a mode in which the signifier does not resemble the signified but which is fundamentally arbitrary or purely conventional so that the relationship must be learnt (Chandler, 2007, p. 36).
3. **Icon** : a mode in which the signifier is perceived as resembling or imitating the signified (recognizably looking, sounding, feeling, tasting or smelling like it) being similar in possessing some of its qualities (Chandler, 2007, p. 36).
4. **Index** : is a mode in which the signifier is not arbitrary but is directly connected in some way (physically or causally) to the signified this link can be observed or inferred (Chandler, 2007, p. 37).
5. **Code** : Procedural system of related conventions for organizing signs into meaningful system which correlate signifiers and signifieds (Chandler, 2007, p. 245).

6. A **graphic novel** : a book made up of comics content which has a few defining characteristics. (Abel, n.d).

7. **Maus** : Comic written by Art Spigelman, *A Survivor's Tale*.

