

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This is an introduction of this paper which explains the nature of the study. It begins with background of the study from which research question and aim of the study formulation are based. Furthermore, the method of investigations employed is also included in this chapter. There are a number of concepts related to the study to clarify the relation of the data analysis within certain scopes. This chapter ended with the organization of the paper as a general description of the research paper's outline.

1.1 Background

Nowadays, internet has developed into an effective and global media as a communication tool. Instant messaging, chat rooms, and personal Web sites increase its occurrence in cyber; making it a medium where people can keep in touch with others around the world and get information and entertained. One of the most crucial elements in cyber is images. The nature communication on the internet allows people to express their thoughts and feelings by using image that represents their mood or facial expression. It is called emoticon, which is often used for stressing the statement particularly in online communication and alerting the responder to the tone or mood of the statement makers.

Cyber emoticon which is widely used nowadays is *Kaskus* emoticon. *Kaskus*, along with its slogan—*the Largest Indonesian Community*, is an internet forum site which has grown to be one of the most popular websites in Indonesia

and has been considered as the largest Indonesian online community since its members reach over one million in April 2010. This online forum is a community contains many people with various background, different occupation, gender and age who share their idea and opinion in the site.

Noticed from the official website on <http://www.kaskus.us/>, *Kaskus* has two main forums on it; namely custom forum and trading forum. Each forum has its own sub-forums with its typical characteristic, from ordinary thing until the extraordinary one. The custom forum is divided into several sub-forums where the user—which is called “*kaskuser*”, shares everything. Based on observation in the field, the most popular forum is *CAS-CIS-CUS*. The *kaskusers* there can share anything, from the latest news and gossips even their problems. Since it had reached the highest rank for the most visited forum in *Kaskus* thus the study focused on *the Lounge* forum which is part of the *CAS-CIS-CUS* forum.

The Lounge is a forum which shares jokes, stories, news and information about everything. In *the Lounge*, the communication between *TS* (*Thread Starter*, the one who create the topic) and other users varies in many ways, from praising to insulting. Their communication is not only through language but also through images, in this case the typical emoticons that makes the forum interesting to be followed.

In *Kaskus*, the available emoticons are different from other forums. It has its own characteristics and the members of forum use it mostly as a language of communication. Today, *Kaskus* emoticons used not only in *Kaskus* forum but also in some blogs, and other instant messenger due to its simple installation. On the

other hand, many of them use *Kaskus* emoticon to show how proud they are of being Indonesian because *Kaskus* emoticon is originally made by Indonesian.

However, the using of *Kaskus* emoticon is a phenomenon that happens almost *every time* either in *Kaskus* or in other forums. It is believed that anything can be used as a language just like the *Kaskus* emoticons does in the forum. The employed emoticon means as a communication for interacting each other. Therefore it is called a visual communication. Broadly speaking, the communication takes place in two ways, verbal and non-verbal or with and without language. Thus the visual communication is including in the non-verbal communication because they do not use language. In this case, it is inferred that the emoticons is a language that takes form of images. It is considered that image is also a sign and can be interpreted as something else; hence *semiotics* or *semiology* is applied to explore the meaning behind things.

Thus the study undertaking is aimed at exploring the significance of *Kaskus* emoticons in *the Lounge* forum at *Kaskus, the Largest Indonesian Community*. It involved 28 emoticons taken from five threads selected in *the Lounge* forum and employed Roland Barthes' orders of signification to discover the meaning as well as functions of those emoticons.

1.2 Formulation of the Study

Based on the reasons that have been mentioned before, the study attempts to reveal the following question:

“What is the significance of *Kaskus* emoticons on *The Lounge* forum at *Kaskus, the Largest Indonesian Community* based on semiotic analysis?”

1.3 Aim of the Study

The study aimed at investigating the significance of *Kaskus* emoticons in *the Lounge* forum at *Kaskus, the Largest Indonesian Community* based on semiotic analysis.

1.4 Method of Investigation

This study was conducted using a descriptive qualitative method. The descriptive method is used to describe the phenomenon that happens as it is (Sutedi, 2009). Meanwhile, the qualitative study is designed to be consistent with the assumptions of a qualitative paradigm (Creswell, 1994).

Additionally, the qualitative paradigm plays a crucial role as borderline and point of view as well as beliefs in which the methods within—in this case; the qualitative method. The data sources employed in the qualitative study is well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts. The researcher can also preserve chronological flow to obtain a fruitful explanation. A good qualitative data are likely to lead to serendipitous findings and to new integration; they help researchers to get beyond initial conceptions and to generate or revise conceptual frameworks (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Therefore, this method is the best method for this study to analyze the significance of *Kaskus* emoticon based on semiotic analysis.

The data collection was the *Kaskus* emoticons which appeared in *the Lounge* forum at *Kaskus, the Largest Indonesian Community*. The study was focused on *the Lounge* forum because it had reached the highest rank for the most visited forum in the site. Since not all emoticons were used in *the Lounge* forum at *Kaskus*, there were 28 *Kaskus* emoticons employed in this study which were discovered from five threads that were taken based on the context which has frequently brought in the forum.

At last, the data were gathered and analyzed using semiotics theory to investigate the significance of the emoticon. The employed theory was Roland Barthes' theory called orders of signification which consists of first order signification, second order signification and myth to discover the meaning behind the emoticons. Later, the first order signification described elements of the selected emoticons. Shifted to second order signification, the selected emoticons elaborated connotation attached to it. Last, myth then was discovered from how the connotation is naturalized. Thus, these would be the sequence of the methodology of the study.

1.5 Clarification of Related Terms

- Semiotics can be simply described as a study of sign. Umberto Eco (Eco, 1976: 7) states “semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign”. It involves the study not only of what we refer to as ‘sign’ in

everyday speech, but of anything which 'stands for' something else (as cited in Chandler, 2002).

- Roland Barthes' *semiology* is usually used to analyze the significance of the sign by using the proposed method of *orders of signification*. It consists of *denotation*, *connotation* and *myth*. Denotation is the "literal or obvious meaning" or the "*first-order of signification*". Connotation refers to "*second order of signification*", additional cultural meanings that are also found from the image or text. For Barthes, myth is a second order in semiotic system which is built on the principle of connotation. It is a way of coding the meaning and social value (which essentially arbitrary or connotative) as something natural.
- *Kaskus, the Largest Indonesian Community* is an online forum site in Indonesia which has been considered as the largest Indonesian online community since its members reach over one million in April 2010. It is established in 1999 by three Indonesian students in the United States. The forum consist people from different background, occupation, gender and age.
- *The Lounge Forum* is a sub-forum at *Kaskus, the Largest Indonesian Community*. It is a sub-forum of *Cas-Cis-Cus* forum where the users can share information, latest news and gossips or just sharing stories. It is known from a survey the researcher has conducted that *The Lounge Forum* is the most visited sub-forum in *Cas-Cis-Cus* (the most crowded forum in *Kaskus* where contains *The Lounge* as the sub-forum of it).

- Emoticon, based on Wikipedia, is a textual expression representing the face of a writer's mood or facial expression. Emoticons are often used for stressing the statement particularly in online communication in order to alert the responder to the tone or mood of the statement makers. Emoticon derives from two separate words which are *emotion* and *icon*. Emotion refers to tendency for having special feeling when it is faced with particular object in an environment (James in Wedge, 1995 cited in Sobur, 2003). Whereas icons are signs whose signifier bears a close resemblance to the thing they refer to. According to Pierce, icons are the only means of directly communicating an idea.

1.6 Organization of the Paper

The paper is divided into five chapters as follows:

Chapter I **Introduction**, this chapter explains about the background of the study, formulation of the problems, aims of the study, method of investigation, clarification of the related terms and organization of the paper.

Chapter II **Theoretical Framework** contains about some theory relates to the study. Since it is a research with a semiotic analysis, then it focuses with the theory of semiotics as a basic theory, and theory of communication and visual communication, media communication and also some explanation about the previous research.

Chapter III **Research Method** explains about the method used in the study, stages of the research, data collection and data analysis.

Chapter IV **Findings and Discussions** contains the analysis of the data obtained in this study, together with some *Kaskus* emoticons collected and its interpretation based on the semiotic analysis employing Barthes' orders of signification.

Chapter V **Conclusions and Suggestions** for the next study, explain about the conclusion of the analysis done and suggestion for the next study.

