

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction of this paper which discusses the general information of this study. It includes the background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, scope of the study, research methods, clarification of the terms, and organization of the paper.

### 1.1 Background

Reading comics is often related to a childish activity because people generally start reading comics when they are children. Since comics use images in sequences and words to communicate information, this requires less effort to read. Thus, children feel easier to engage in the story and make comics as their reading for pleasure. Comics also help children practicing making-meaning from material printed on the page and interpreting the symbols from the sequences in the story.

As people grow up and mature enough, the process of reading comics is not ended by only understanding the arrangement and storyline of images and words. In fact, according to Berger (2008), the reader should be aware of what visual (images) and verbal (words) signs mean. Images are collection of signs and symbols, and each sign has meaning; in any image, there are many different levels of meaning and interaction between meaning. Therefore, reading comics requires both “aesthetic perceptions and intellectual skills” (Eisner, 1985: 8). The meaning of comics can be understood by looking at the interplay between the visual elements of comics and linguistic ones or sometimes known as “the marriage of text and image” (Berger, 2008: 195). The visual elements are represented in the pictures of the comics whereas the verbal elements are represented in the framing of written language such as in the narrative commentaries and the speech balloons (Noth, 1990). Saraceni (2003) states that the image-text relation in comics does not just mirror one another, it is the

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collaboration of the verbal and visual elements which provide the reader with fundamental elements for interpretation.

Previous studies on comics often focus on the visual text analysis, for example Magnussen's (2006) and Abbott and Forceville's (2011) studies. Magnussen (2006) used semiotics framework to analyze the representation of the dictatorship in Argentine after the democratic transition in 1983 in Argentine comic series entitled *Buscavidas* which was published in 1981-1982. The representation of dictatorship is portrayed as a bleak and inhumane action which clarifies the distinction between the repressors and the victims. Meanwhile, Abbot and Forceville (2011) discussed the visual representation of emotion in manga (Japanese comics) *Azumanga Daioh* which is indicated by the loss of hands. The analysis shows that body parts can be indicators of characters' expressions, regardless of the facial expressions. Both of this research focuses mainly on the facial expression, gestures and background.

In contrast, the verbal analysis deals with the sentences and clauses in the comics' texts, such as in speech balloons and narrative commentaries. Pausacker (2003) analyzed the verbal text of the character of the tragic-comical fictional episodes and accompanying cartoons *Ah..Tenane..* from Solopos newspaper using cultural studies approach. He also analyzed the accompanying cartoon as the illustration of the description of the episodes. The result revealed that the cartoons depict the riot of political events in 1998 and send their critic to this situation through the characters of Jon Koplo, Tom Gembus and Lady Cempluk.

Most comics are attributed to the term "comical" because the early comic strips were humorous in nature (Saraceni, 2003). In fact, the term "comical" can mislead the readers because there are many comic strips that are not humorous such as Dick Tracy, Little Orphan Annie, Buck Rogers and Tarzan (Berger, 2008: 192). However, in accordance to its development, not only humorous, comics also can be media to criticize and be ideological. In American context, the comics that contain political criticism are "Doonesbury" by Garry Trudeau (cited in Doherty, 2011)

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which criticizes the American government; “Calvin & Hobbes” by Bill Waterson (cited in Gopalakrishnan, 2007) which criticizes American culture; and “Dilbert” by Scott Adams (cited in Doherty, 2011) which criticizes economic and social ideals in society. In Indonesian context, comics like “Panji Koming” by Dwi Koendoro, “Sukribo” by Faisal Ismail, “Timun” by Libra (Rachmat Riyadi) are the examples of comics that contain criticism. These comics criticize Indonesian government from its social and political issues. The latest comic book written by Benny, the ex-duo with Benny & Mice, entitled “Tiga Manula Jalan-Jalan ke Singapura (Three Senior Citizens Go to Singapore)” also contains criticism to the social issues of Indonesian, especially its people.

The multi semiotic resources of comics which consist of visual texts and verbal texts make comics can be considered as multimodal texts or texts where meanings are realized through more than one semiotic code (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). As stated by Noth (1990: 472), comics are “a mass medium in which several semiotic codes are transformed in genre-specific ways, such as visual communication, nonverbal communication, language, narrativity, and hence text semiotics”. Thus, comics are rich resources for the meaning-making.

As mentioned before, the previous studies on comics tend to focus on monomodal approaches either is visual or verbal elements. Nevertheless, as well as to comics studies, critical studies to cartoon - a closely similar art form with comics -, mostly deal with visual elements (e.g. Refaie, 2003; Wekesa, 2012). To date, there are only few studies which analyze both the visual (image) and verbal (text) elements in comics or cartoons (e.g. Helsby, 1996; Lemke, 1997; Savitri, 2006; Bounegru & Forceville, 2011; Ni, 2011; Embong & Hassan, 2013). Therefore, this present study tries to investigate the visual and verbal representation of Indonesian tourists’ characteristics in an Indonesian comic book entitled “Tiga Manula Jalan-Jalan Ke Singapura” (Jakarta: KPG, 2012) by Benny Rachmadi, the ex-duo in Benny and Mice cartoons. In addition, the multimodal analysis can be a counter balance to monomodal

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approaches which focus on a semiotic mode to meaning making, such as those which consider only language when talking about the interpretation of texts and practices, or those which consider visual meaning largely in isolation from material manifestation (Iedema, 2003).

A number of studies have explored multimodality in very diverse genres, such as advertising (e.g. Horsbol, 2006; O 'Halloran, 2008), news journalistic (e.g. Economou, 2006), pedagogical use (e.g. Jewitt, 2002; Chen, 2010; Connors, 2013), poster (e.g. Teo, 2004), and picture book (e.g. Guijarro & Sanz, 2008; Guijaro, 2010, 2011; Serafini, 2010, 2012; Young & Serafini, 2013). In terms of multimodal analysis, Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar theory and Halliday's SFL theory have been used to critically investigate the visual and verbal communication in texts. Therefore, this study uses the theory of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) on visual grammar in order to investigate the images in the comic book. On the other hand, the verbal texts will be investigated by using Halliday's (2004) transitivity theory in order to know the representational meaning of the texts.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

This study is conducted to answer these following research questions:

1. How are Indonesian tourists' characteristics represented in the investigated comic book?
2. What does the representation signify?

## **1.3 Aims of the Study**

Based on the research questions above, the present study aims to:

1. Investigate the representation of Indonesian tourists' characteristics in the comic book investigated.
2. Examine what the representation signifies.

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## **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This study is limited to only investigate the representation of Indonesian tourists' characteristics in an Indonesian comic book entitled "Tiga Manula Jalan-Jalan Ke Singapura" visually and verbally. Besides, this study is also aimed to reveal the signification of the representation of Indonesian tourists' characteristics as evidenced in the comic investigated.

## **1.5 Research Methods**

### **1.5.1 Research Design**

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method as the research design in order to describe, interpret, and analyze the visual and verbal representation of Indonesian in an Indonesian comic book. According to Denzin & Lincoln (1994), qualitative method is a multimethod research that uses an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. To add more, qualitative method permits the researcher to explore the subject of the research in a deeper and more detail analysis than quantitative method (Jones, 1997).

Since this study focuses on the visual and verbal texts, qualitative method is appropriate because it mostly deals with data in forms of words –description, accounts, opinions, feelings, etc.- rather than on number (Walliman, 2011). Here, the Halliday's transitivity system is applied as a tool to analyze the verbal text. On the other hand, Kress and Leeuwen's visual grammar is applied to analyze the visual text.

### **1.5.2 Data collections**

The data are in the form of pictures and verbal texts taken from Benny Rachmadi's comic book entitled "Tiga Manula Jalan-Jalan ke Singapura" (Jakarta: KPG, 2012). In this present study, the data are selected by critically selecting clauses and images on the comic pages investigated related to

representation of Indonesians' characteristics as the tourists when they travel to Singapore.

### **1.5.3 Data Analysis**

In analyzing the data, the study uses two-step procedure. Firstly, the visual texts in the comic book "Tiga Manula Jalan-Jalan Ke Singapura" (Jakarta: KPG, 2012) are analyzed based on Kress & Leeuwen's (2006) theory of visual grammar. Secondly, transitivity analysis as proposed by Halliday (2004) is used to analyze the verbal texts. The result of the data analysis serves as the base to make meaning of the representation.

### **1.6 Clarification of the Terms**

In order to avoid misunderstanding and misconception, there are some terms that should be clarified. They are run as follows:

- Comics  
Comics are "the juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce the aesthetic response in the viewer" (McCloud, 1993: 9).
- Representation  
Representation is something which stands for or in place of something else or semioticians called as sign (Chandler, 2002).
- Visual text  
Visual text is "a text whose meanings are realized through paintings or photographs" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 15)
- Verbal text  
Verbal text is "a text whose meanings are realized through linguistic code, such as by means of speech, script and sign language (e.g., for use in deaf group)" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 14, Copley, 2001).

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- Indonesian Tourists

Indonesians are related to the characteristics of Indonesia, its people, or its languages (Collinsdictionary.com, 2013). Whilst, tourists refers to people who visit a place for pleasure, usually when they are on holiday (Collinsdictionary.com, 2013). In this study, Indonesian tourists refers to Indonesian people who tour to Singapore as represented by the characters in the investigated comic book, such as Liem, Sanip, Waluyo and some people who are considered as Indonesians based on the information on the verbal texts.

## **1.7 Organization of the Paper**

The paper of the study will be organized into five chapters as follows:

### **CHAPTER I: Introduction**

This chapter covers the introductory part of this study. It consists of background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, scope of the study, clarification of key terms, and organization of the paper.

### **CHAPTER II: Literature Review**

This chapter deals with theoretical review which provides which is relevant to the present study. This chapter provides the explanation and some important concepts of visual grammar, transitivity, representation and comic theory. Some previous studies are also illustrated in this chapter.

### **CHAPTER III: Research Methodology**

This chapter focuses on the methods of how to analyze the data provided. It contains the research methodology that discussing the steps and procedures of the study, including data collection and data analysis in conducting the study.

### **CHAPTER IV: Findings and Discussions**

This chapter contains the research findings and discussion. In this part, the result of the study will be presented.

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## **CHAPTER V: Conclusions and Suggestions**

This last chapter consists of the interpretation of the result of the research in a form of conclusions related to the study and suggestions for further study.

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