RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology of the study which includes the description of the research design, the data collection, the data analysis, and the example of data analysis.

3.1 Formulation of Problems

The present study examines the representation of 'being single' in 9GAG Internet memes. Therefore, the study is conducted to answer these following research questions:

1. How is 'being single' visually and verbally represented in the selected 9GAG memes?
2. What do the representations mean?

3.2 Research Design

The present study employs qualitative descriptive research design in conducting multimodal analysis on representation in selected Internet memes. This research design is applied to explain, describe, and interpret the visual and verbal representation of 'being single' in the memes. According to Sandelowski (2000), qualitative research design is used when researchers seek straight descriptions of phenomena to know the *who, what,* and *where* of events. Lambert and Lambert (2012) also argue that qualitative is a very useful research design when "researchers want to know, regarding events, who were involved, what was involved, and where did things take place (p. 256). In addition, qualitative research focuses on description and interpretation of the way people or groups of people have different ways of looking at reality (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2007). From these definitions, it can be inferred that qualitative descriptive research design is concerned with detailed interpretations and descriptions of a phenomena. Since the study focuses on description, explanation

and interpretation, qualitative descriptive research design is considered to be the most relevant research design to apply.

The qualitative descriptive research design in the present study is applied in conducting multimodal analysis. According to Hermawan (2013), multimodality provides a procedure to analyze a text which has multiple modes by using more than one analytical tool. Therefore, the multimodal analysis in the present study is applied to see how the multiple modes in Internet memes represent the issue of 'being single'.

3.3 Data Collection

The data used are internet memes from *9gag.com* with the topic of being single. This topic is chosen because it is very popular on the Internet, especially in social media. Nowadays, there are so many people who complain about their status of being single in social media such as *Twitter*, *Instagram*, *LINE*, etc., and this status of being single has also been used as a joke in memes. In *9gag.com*, there are hundreds of memes about being single created by the users. Seen from the amount of memes about being single uploaded on *9gag.com* and the number of likers of the memes, memes about being single are very popular among the *9GAG* users.

The memes used in this study are only those in the meme categories which consist of both image and caption. The reason why 9gag.com is chosen is because *9GAG* is known as one of the biggest and the most popular comedy websites, and it has been widely known by Internet users. The memes about 'being single' used in the study are only those which represent what being single means from men's perspective since memes about 'being single in *9GAG* are mostly viewed from men's perspective. It can be seen from the captions of the memes which are directed at women, and from the male participants used in the memes. There are 10 'being single' memes which consist of image and caption which are examined in the study. To comprehensively understand the visual and verbal modes in Internet memes, 10 memes are considered to be sufficient to reveal the representation of 'being single' in the memes. The 10 memes have different themes which represent 'being single' from men's perspective such as the effect of being single, the benefit of being single, the despair of being single, etc.

3.4 Data Analysis

To examine the Internet memes, the analysis is divided into two: visual and verbal analysis. The visual analysis is done by using visual grammar from Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) to analyze the visual modes of the memes. Meanwhile, the verbal analysis is done by adopting Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) proposed by Halliday (1994) to analyze the verbal modes.

In analyzing the visual modes using visual grammar, the data are analyzed to see the three meanings in images: representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning. The visual analysis using visual grammar is presented in the form of a table (see table 3.1). The first step of the analysis is describing the memes—what the memes present (e.g. the description of the object, the situation, etc.). The next step is to reveal the representational meaning of the memes by analyzing the vector (see section 2.2.1.1) of the represented participants in the memes. Then, to reveal the interactive meaning, some aspects such as gaze, size of frame, and perspective are analyzed. Lastly, the informational value, salience, and framing are examined to know the compositional meaning.

In terms of the verbal analysis, SFL is used to analyze the verbal modes of the memes to explore the ideational meaning of the memes, to understand the memes and to see how 'being single' is represented in the memes (see table 3.2). Since ideational meaning is concerned with clauses as representation, each caption of the memes is analyzed by using transitivity system which includes participants, process, and circumstances. In this study, transitivity is used to analyze the captions within the memes. The captions which are analyzed verbally are divided into two parts: top and bottom caption. The top caption is the description which describes the situation, while the bottom caption is the punch line containing humorous message which serves to complement the top caption. To sum up, the overview of what are analyzed in the data is presented in figure 3.1 below.
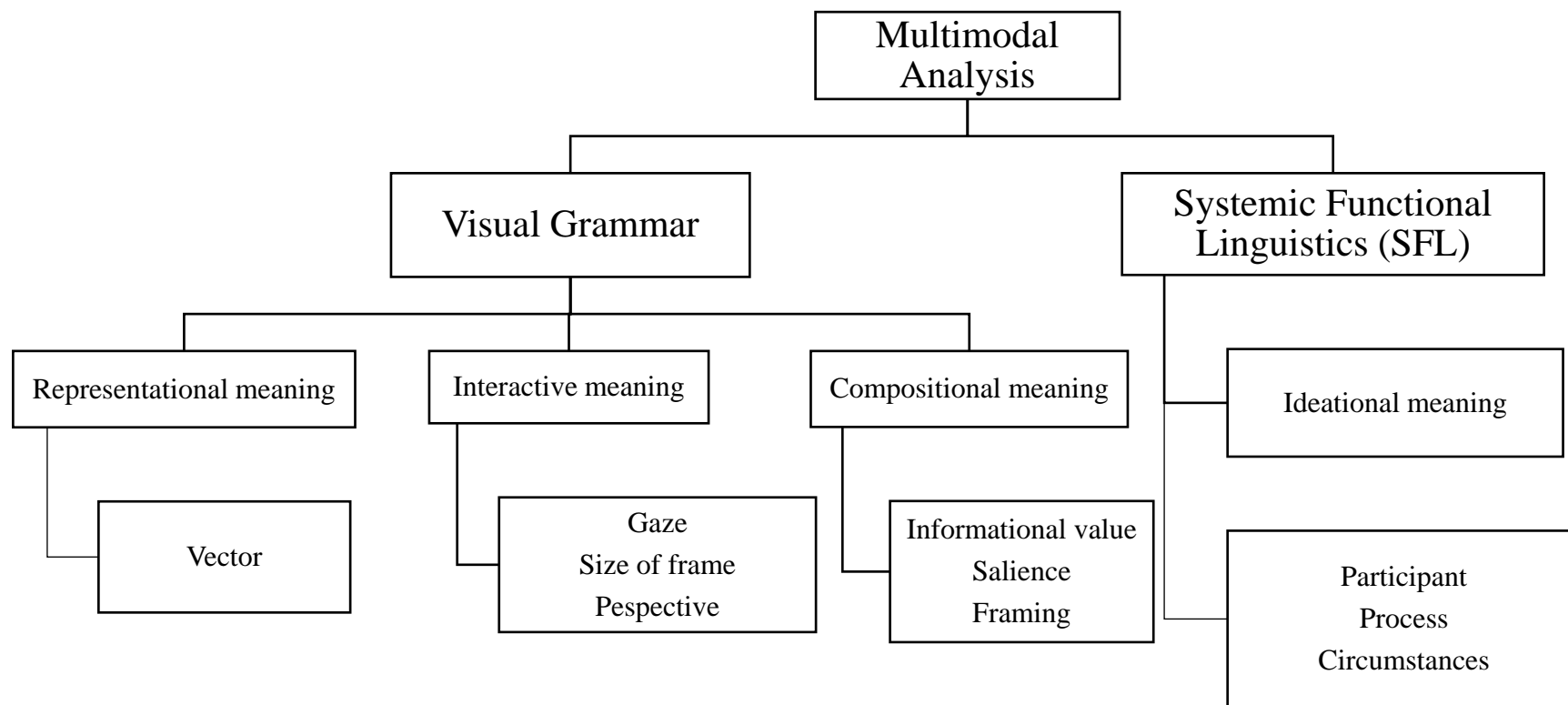
Figure 3.1 The overview of data analysis

3.5 Sample of Data Analysis

<u>Visual Analysis</u>

Table 3.1 Sample of visual analysis

(Source: *9gag.com*)

Description: This meme presents a bear as the participant. In the picture, the bear is depicted as holding on a wood.

Representational meaning: In this meme, there is only one represented participant which is a bear. The *conceptual process* involved in this meme is *symbolic process*. Furthermore, the process is *symbolic suggestive* since there is only one participant seen in the mem which is considered as the *Carrier*. In this meme, the *Carrier* represents itself as someone who feels sad for being single.

Interactive meaning: This meme is considered as *offer* image since the bear does not look directly at the viewer. Since there is no contact made by the bear to the viewers, in this memes the viewers are only placed as an observer. The image of the bear is taken in *close-up* shot which shows the head and shoulder of the bear. The *close-up* shot indicates the *close personal distance*. It shows the intimate relation between the bear and the viewer. Furthermore,

there is no power involved in the meme since the bear is presented at *eye level angle*.

Compositional meaning: In terms of information value, the bear is placed on the right side of the meme. Thus, the bear is considered as *new* which means that it is the key information of the image and the viewer must pay attention to it. It views as something that is not yet know by the viewer. Furthermore, the bear as the only participant is made salient which is realized by the size and the sharpness of focus of the bear itself.

Verbal Analysis

Captions:

When a friend of mine gets a new girlfriend, I check her photos. (Description)

And if she is not hot, I feel less bad for being single. (The punch line)

Table 3. 2 Sample of verbal analysis

Whenever	a friend of mine	gets	a new girlfriend
Circumstance	Actor	Material	Goal

I	cCheck	her photos
Actor	Material	Goal

and	if	she	is not	hot
		Carrier	Attributive	Attribute

I	feel	less bad	for	being single
Senser	Mental: affect	Phenomenon		

This meme shows a single man's feeling when he sees his friend's girlfriend. Here, the man is represented by the bear as the only represented participant in the meme. Visually, the representation of being single in this meme is represented through the bear itself as the Carrier who establishes the meaning of being single.

43

In relation to the viewers, this meme is an 'offer' since the bear does not make eye contact with the viewers. The viewers in this meme is only placed as observers to see how the bear feels about being single. The viewers are invited to presumably communicate with the way the bear feels. By showing the viewers its sad facial expression in close up with eye level angle, the viewers may be invited to involve with the bear and know how he feels without any power difference. Compositionally, since the bear is presented as the only participant, he becomes the most important part in this meme. It is supported by the position of the bear on the right side of the meme with its big size and sharp focus. Therefore, he is considered as the key information who plays important role in representing someone who is single.

The verbal text "When a friend of mine gets a new girlfriend, I check her photos" is the description captions of the meme. The verbal analysis of the captions shows that it contains Material Process conveying the situation of the meme. The Material Process contributes to the humorous message that will be conveyed in the bottom caption by showing the action done by someone who is single when he knew his friend got a new girlfriend (*gets* a new girlfriend, *check* her photos). In the punch line, the processes seen in the captions "And if she is not hot, I feel less bad for being single" are Relational and Mental Processes. The caption "and if she is not hot" is relational, at which it contains Attributive Process which is aimed to assign quality to his friend's girlfriend. In the next caption "I feel less bad for being single", it uses the process of perception in Mental Process 'feel' in attempt to show how the single man feels about being single. In addition, the Mental Process in that clause uses a negative adjective 'less bad' which indicates that the man does feel bad about being single. To support this idea, the bear's sad facial expression which is seen from his corners of lips down, his eyes look downward, and his upper eyelids drop, describe the feeling of being sad or unhappy (Ekman, 2003). To conclude, from the analysis of the meme, it can be seen that 'being single' is represented as saddening.