CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a brief introduction of the study. It consists of background of the study from which statement of the problem and aims of the study are based. The chapter also presents significance of the study, methodology, clarification of terms, and the organization of the paper.

1.1   Background of the Study

Short Message Service (SMS) was transformed into a more sophisticated service called Instant Messaging (IM). This phenomenon was caused by the rapid development in short messaging service that enables people to insert images (visual texts) in a written text (verbal text). One of the most frequently used IM providers is LINE™. LINE is a smartphone application that allows its users to communicate with each other regionally and globally (LINE, 2014). LINE provides sets of images called stickers which depict actions or emotions of a character.

The image or the visual text is regarded to represent information such as emotions, gestures, and actions better than verbal text because not all information could be represented through verbal text. That is why LINE users use visual text along with verbal texts in their conversation. However, the use of visual texts in written conversation presents its own challenges. In relation to this, Barthes (1977) believed that words or verbal texts always serve as the main informational structure. In fact, he believed that the verbal text is the only one thing to consider when making meaning (Barthes, 1977, p. 38). Furthermore, he argued that "all image are polysemous, a 'floating chain' of signifieds" and linguistic message (verbal text) is one of the ways to fix the uncertainty of the meanings (p. 39). In other words, Barthes did not believe that images can convey meaning on their own without being accompanied by linguistic message or verbal text to guide interpretation towards the images.

In contrast to Barthes (1977), Goodman (1996) argued that as a result of technologies modern texts are not only becoming more visual but also

increasingly multimodal. This argument is supported by Bezemer and Kress (2009) which found that English textbooks have become more visual over decades. It shows that people need more than one semiotic mode to understand a text better. In fact, because verbal text has limitations in representing a phenomenon, it seems that authors will be able to make the text more understandable to the audience by inserting other modes such as visual, audio, spatial, etc. Moreover, a study by Teo (2004) demonstrated "the instability and, indeed, the fragility of texts as a unitary meaning-making system" (p. 210). Those studies suggest that in today's communication, visual text has the same level of information as verbal text. Understanding both visual and verbal text are necessary to interpret the message accurately. Relying only on one mode could lead to misinterpretation and the communication was not successfully conveying meanings.

There were several studies that analyze the interplay between visual and verbal text. For instance, Chen (2010) explored dialogic engagement in multimodal EFL textbooks in China. She found that visual text could relate the unrelated verbal text in a meaningful way. Moreover, visual and verbal text do not always conjoin but they could also contradict each other to make meaning. Then Bezemer and Kress (2009) studied English textbook design between 1930 until 2009. They found that English textbooks have become more visual. Their study suggested that English textbooks are no longer dominated by principles organization of writing but collaborations between writing and visual principles. There is Teo (2004) who analyzed ideological dissonances in three Singapore's national campaign posters. He found that there are ideological dissonances in three posters which are realized through both visual and verbal text. Meanwhile, Machen-Horarik (2004) studied the reflection of images and text panel in an art exhibition. She found that the images along with text panel created third semantic domain that contributed significantly in meaning-making process.

None of the previous studies above investigates the interplay between words and images in a conversations in which participants are communicating each other in real time. Those studies also did not analyze how multimodal texts are interpreted by the producers and the readers of the text. Therefore, this study

attempts to fill these gap by analyzing the interplay between texts and images in students' LINE group conversations and how the texts are interpreted by using multimodal analysis.

The present study aims to investigate what semiotic relations are constructed in the verbal-visual texts and how these relations affect the meaning-making processes in the conversations. The data for the study were taken from students' group conversations in LINE. This study is expected to enrich current literature on multimodal communication in written conversations especially those that happens in instant messaging services in Indonesian context.

1.2   Statement of the Problems

The problems for this study are formulated as follows.

1. What semiotic relations are constructed between the verbal-visual texts as evidenced in the conversations investigated?
2. How do these relations affect the meaning-making processes in the conversations?

1.3   Aims of the Study

Considering the research questions that are formulated above, the study aims to do the following:

1. To identify what semiotic relations constructed between the verbal-visual text in students LINE chat group conversations.
2. To investigate how these relations affect the meaning-making processes in the conversations.

1.4   Significance of The Study

This study offers significant insights to multimodal analysis by investigating LINE conversations incorporating both multimodal analysis and production and reception of multimodal text between participants.

1.5   Research Methodology

The present study employs a descriptive qualitative method to answer its research questions. Descriptive qualitative methodology describes the data in non-numerical form, such as in interviews, case studies, or participant observation (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Moreover, qualitative methodology is aimed at discovering how people are shaping, experiencing, and interpreting the social world (Sandelowski cited in Hammersley, 2013)

The data for this study were collected from one LINE group chat. The data were in the form of images called stickers. The stickers were divided into whether they were accompanied by verbal expression or not in the conversations. The data were collected by downloading the whole conversations for further selection. Three different topics were selected as the focus of the investigation.

Kress and van Leeuwen's reading images (1996, 2006) serves as the framework theory of the visual analysis. Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) transitivity system was also employed to analyze the verbal expression in the conversations. Finally, the data were analyzed using Martinec and Salway's (2005) system of image-text relations as a tool to examine the interplay between visual and verbal text. The analysis focused on the relative status of image and text and how they are related in terms of logico-semantic relations.

1.6   Clarification of Terms

- LINE is a smartphone application that allows its users to communicate each other regionally and globally (LINE, 2014).
- Mode is a socially shaped and culturally given resource for making meaning (Kress G. , 2009).
- Multimodal is the use of multiple semiotics mode to make meaning (Iedema, 2003).
- Verbal text is texts whose meanings are realized through linguistics codes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).
- Visual text is texts whose meanings are realized through paintings or photograph (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

1.7   Organization of The Paper

The paper of the present study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter presents the introduction of the study. It consists of background of the study, statement of the problem, aims of the study, significance of the study, methodology, clarification of terms and organization of the paper.

The second chapter reviews some theories and previous studies that serve as framework of the study. The third chapter contains the research methodology, discussing the steps and procedures of the study, the data sources for the study, and instrument of the analysis. The fourth chapter discusses results and findings of the study in relation to research question and theories related to it. The last chapter contains the interpretation toward the findings and results of the study in the form of conclusions and also suggestions for further research.