

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the design of the study. It describes the methodological aspects of the study. It starts with a description of the research method followed by the stages of research procedure. The research procedures consist of the data collection and data analysis. Finally, the example of data presentation is presented.

#### 3.1 Research Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach framed in Barthes' (1991) orders of signification theory to achieve the aims of the study. This study aims to analyze the meanings and the ideological representations of the use of memes on the Internet.

The descriptive method was used because this study attempts to describe the existing phenomena (Picciano, 1991) in which the linguistic phenomena of memes on the Internet were described in this study. Meanwhile, this study used the qualitative method because this study aims to reveal the social settings (Berg, 2001) which contain the ideological values behind Internet memes. Moreover, this study uses Barthes' orders of signification theory, which consist of the first order of signification

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(denotation), second order of signification (connotation), and third order of signification (myth) to analyze the Americanization myths in the Internet memes.

This study applies three levels of comprehensions by Maxwell (1996): description, interpretation, and theory. Description was applied in this study to discover the denotative meanings in Internet memes. Those Internet memes are the phenomena which were discovered in this study. Description was used for observing those phenomena (Alwasilah, 2002). Meanwhile, interpretation was used to discover the connotative meanings of Internet memes. The Internet memes were considered to be the related phenomena which were discovered using interpretation (Alwasilah, 2002). Lastly, This study also applied theory of the orders of significations proposed by Roland Barthes (1991) and the US's values and assumptions theory by Althen and Bennett (2011) to discover how the myths of Americanization in the Internet memes are explained.

Framed in those three levels, this semiotic-based study is interpretative. It does not use hypothesis. The questions match the purpose of this study which aims to investigate the myths of Americanization in Internet memes in 9GAG.

The semiotics theory of Barthes' orders of signification was used as a tool for dissecting the Americanization myths in the Internet memes on 9GAG. The first analysis was focused on describing the elements of the first orders of signification (denotation) in each selected Internet meme. The second orders of signification

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(connotation) elaborated the local and global meaning of the Internet memes. The myths of Americanization were then discovered from how the connotation is naturalized.

### **3.2 Research Procedure**

This study investigates the Americanization myths in Internet Memes in 9GAG comedy website. This study was conducted to explore the semiotic meanings of Internet memes on 9GAG comedy website. It includes a brief observation on the Internet memes on 9GAG. It also requires information such as what is “memes”, 9GAG, and semiotics. To obtain the information, library research through relevant source such as articles from the Internet and books was employed.

#### **3.2.1 Data Collection**

Ten Internet memes were purposively selected as data source of this study. Those Internet memes were selected because they were suitable and relevant to the problems and the aims of this study. The selected Internet memes were those that appear in the “Hot page” of 9GAG comedy website. Thus, the data in this study were popular Internet memes in 9GAG.

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Comedy website 9GAG is one of the websites that uses Internet memes to share ideas among the members. In 9GAG, the members can upload “gags”, Internet memes which are usually in the form of comical images. The members are also able to vote for the images under the section called “Vote”. The “Vote” page allows users to like, dislike, or comment on a gag. When the gag gets enough positive votes, then it appears on the “Hot page”. On the “Hot page”, members can like the post or comment; the gag will no longer be able to be disliked.

There were some reasons in the selection process of the data. Firstly, the selected Internet memes were taken from the 9GAG’s “Hot page” which means the selected Internet memes have already gained many votes from the 9GAG members. That fact also shows that the selected Internet memes were already viewed by many members of the comedy website 9GAG. Secondly, the selected Internet memes were used many times by the members of 9GAG. It is believed that the ideologies of those memes had spread widely through those selected Internet memes. Since the number of Internet memes on 9GAG is too plentiful, it was difficult to analyze all the Internet memes there.

The data consisted of Internet memes available in 9GAG comedy website which can be accessed in <http://9GAG.com/>. Ten Internet memes were purposively selected out of hundreds other Internet memes in 9GAG.

The following techniques were employed to collect the data.

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- a. Selecting the Internet memes as the *primary data* are used many times by the members of 9GAG. There was ten Internet memes selected from 9GAG comedy website. They were selected from the “Hot page” of 9GAG where the popular Internet memes appeared. The selected Internet memes are presented in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1**

*Description of Internet Memes*

| <b>Internet Memes</b>      | <b>Caption</b>                     |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Barack Obama               | Not bad                            |
| Yao Ming                   | Bitch please                       |
| Admiral Ackbar             | It's a trap!                       |
| McKayla Not Impressed      | -                                  |
| Shut up and take my money! | Shut up and take my money!         |
| Success Kid                | -                                  |
| Bad Luck Brian             | “I'm on a boat!”; Titanic          |
| Barney Stinson             | True Story                         |
| Zeddie Little              | Runs marathon and wins... my heart |
| Ned Stark                  | Brace yourself... winter is coming |

- b. Library research

This study also employed relevant theories and some results of previous studies related to this study.

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### **3.2.2 Data Analysis**

Data analysis consists of three concurrent flows of activities, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Miles & Huberman, 1996). They further explain that data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data. Data display facilitates the understanding of what is happening and what to do further on the understanding. Finally, the conclusion drawing or verification can take place after the first two activities.

Semiotic theory was used to analyze the Americanization myths in the Internet memes on 9GAG. Each collected Internet meme was analyzed using Barthes' (1991) orders of signification theory which consisted of three levels of signification. The analysis was focused on the elements of the first orders of signification in the Internet memes, also the elaborations of the local and global meaning of the second orders of signification. The myths were discovered from how the connotation is naturalized.

The data were analyzed and interpreted based on the Barthes' orders of signification. The analysis was focused on the elements of the first orders of signification in the Internet memes, also the elaborations of the local and global meaning of the second orders of signification. The myths were examined from how the connotation is naturalized, meaning that this study discovered how the myths of

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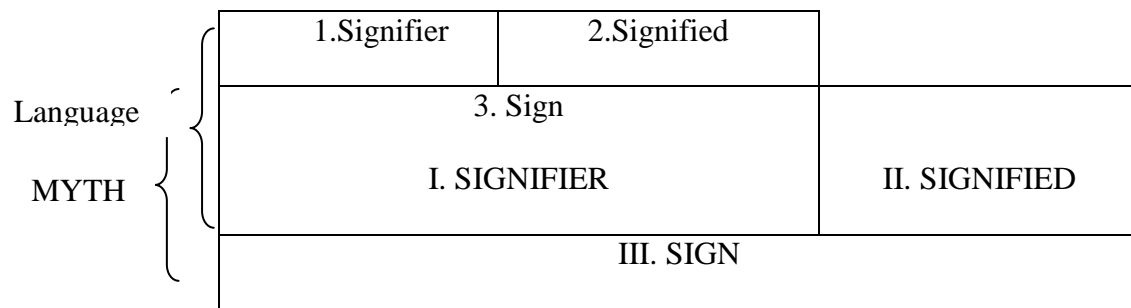
Americanization are represented in the Internet memes. This study also investigated how the memes attempt to spread its ideological or hegemonic Americanization ideas. The classification of the first, second, and third orders of signification is described into a tabel based on the Barthes' theory of signification as follows:



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The myths then were examined by using the USA's values and assumptions which are proposed by Althen and Bennett (2011) to see how these memes represent Americanization.


### 3.2.3 Data Presentation

In this part, this study provides the presentation of data analysis using Barthes' *orders of signification* (1991) theory to Internet memes taken from comedy website 9GAG. The data presentation of the analysis of Internet memes are indicated in the table 3.2.



**Table 3.2**

*Example of the data presentation of the analysis of Internet meme*

| Iconic Signification  | First Order of Signification  | Second Order of Signification  | Third Order of Signification    |
|---|---|--|---------------------------------|
|  | <p><b>Verbal:</b><br/> <i>Not</i>: used to give the next word or group of words a negative meaning.<br/> <i>Bad</i>: unpleasant.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Visual:</b> An icon of president Obama looks showing his nearly impressed expression through facial mime. He is wearing a suit with a bow tie.</p> | <p><i>Not bad</i> is an informal expression used to show acceptance of something good</p> <hr/> <p>President Obama is not showing his formal expression. The suit and the bow tie that president Obama wears shows that he is a very important person who should show formal manner.</p> | <p>The myth of informality.</p> |

In the first order of signification, the *Barack Obama* Internet meme portrays the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, wearing suit and a bow tie. He also shows his pleased emotion through facial mime. There is also verbal descriptions in the Internet meme; “Not Bad”. The “Not” means to give the next word or group of words a negative meaning. Meanwhile, “Bad” means unpleasant.

In the second order of signification, in the connotative meaning, the President of the United States of America represents honor of the USA. The bow tie and suit that he is wearing represent formality and the royal impression for him. However, the ‘not bad’ is one of the expressions which is used to show acceptance of something in

an informal manner. The expression that he shows indicates that he does not always behave like a royal member who should always convey formal expressions.

Those second orders of signification have naturalized the myth of informality in the USA. The President of United States who shows an informal manner in the Internet memes has shown that USA is a place where the informality of the people exists.

This Internet meme also shows that the U.S. Americans generally admire someone in a higher position who acts “down to earth” and not exaggerates his high profile. It is in line with the assumption proposed by Althen and Bennett (2011) and it is represented by the Internet meme shows the President of United States of America who wears a formal suit and bow tie did not show a formal manner by showing his informal expression. It shows that even the man in the highest position in the USA can do what he wants to do without caring about formal manners while he is wearing a formal suit, and so do the people in the USA.

The next chapter presents the result of the analysis with the interpretation of the data based on the Barthes’ (1991) *orders of signification*. It also includes the discussion of the relation between the myths and the USA’s values and assumptions proposed by Althen and Bennett (2011).

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