

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Humans are social beings. Socialization is part of every human being's everyday life. When I pay attention to the way people socialize, I agree that human social life is based on the production, use, and exchange of signs. When people gesture, talk, write, read, watch TV, listen to music, or look at a painting, they are actually engaged in a behavior that is based on signs. Ferdinand de Saussure, a nineteenth-century Swiss linguist, proposed a discipline to study this behavior which is known as Semiotics (Danesi 28).

In Semiotics, signs mediate reality for people by transmitting a message from one person or device to another through a physical link or media, including advertisements. Advertisements can show the ways in which a medium represents ideas and how these tend to become part of cultural phenomena, as suggested by Danesi (17). Goddard says, "Advertisements are clever puzzles." When we

analyze the elements of an advertisement separately, each element may seem to have no meaning. However, when all the elements are put together, they will create a picture which contains a message that actually has meaning. Most of us seldom pay much attention to advertisements and think that while they may work on some people, they do not work on us. Yet, product manufacturers would not invest in advertisements if they did not work. I choose advertisements as my data because I am interested in finding out how advertisers in the past advertised their products and attracted people to buy them. I also think that it is very interesting to find out the meaning of advertisements which consist of pictures and writing, and how the advertisement can work on people and convey reality to them.

From the many types of advertisements, I choose the advertisements of Kenwood Chef mixer and Agee Pyrex which were published between the 1940s and 1960s as my data because I am interested in finding out about the roles of men and women in the past and the expectation of the society on them at that time. The advertisers use men and women in their kitchenware advertisements. Therefore, we can see how the people are portrayed in their old advertisements, which can give information about domesticity in the past. It looks like the roles of men and women back then were not the same as they are today.

The title of this thesis is “Domesticity in the Western Society in the 1940s-1960s: A Semiotic Analysis of Kitchenware Advertisements.” Semiotic analysis is an analysis of the things that are considered signs, which, in an advertisement, can be anything. I choose to use the theories by Saussure for my analysis. In my analysis, I will consider the choice of colours, the images and their positions, and the texts, and analyze their meaning as a whole because “the meaning of particular

linguistic signs are not externally determined but derive from their place in the overall relational structure of language” (Strinati 83). In this thesis I will make a semiotic analysis of all the elements used to create an advertisement in order to acquire meaning and discover the concept used in the advertisement. Through this Semiotic analysis, I can examine how representation in the media reflects the system of everyday life, which, in my opinion, is very interesting.

I take the advertisements from the Internet because it is easy to access and I can easily find many types of advertisements there. In analyzing kitchenware advertisements using Semiotics, I expect to find out the social condition, especially the masculine and feminine domesticity in the western society at the time the advertisements were first published. It is said that advertisements can reflect and construct cultural values of the society at the time when the advertisements are published.

This topic is significant because from an analysis of the 1940s-1960s kitchenware advertisements, people can see how Semiotics can be used to analyze old advertisements and how it can give ideas about the roles of people at that time. In addition, this research is also expected to help students of the English Department to make a further research on a similar topic.

(700 words)

## **Statement of the Problem**

From the data I choose, the aspects to analyze are:

1. What are the signifiers and the signifieds used in the kitchenware advertisements?
2. How does a semiotic analysis show the signification of the advertisements?

## **Purpose of the Study**

Following the statement of the problem, the purposes of the study are:

1. to identify the signifiers and the signifieds used in the kitchenware advertisements.
2. to find out how semiotic analysis shows the signification of the advertisements.

## **Method of Research**

First of all, I looked for some interesting advertisements on the Internet and I decided to analyze vintage advertisements. Second, I studied Semiotics and advertising from some reference books and from the Internet. Then I analyzed the advertisements I had found using Semiotics. Finally, I wrote the research report.

## **Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter One is Introduction which consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the

theoretical framework of the study. Chapter Three contains the analysis of the data. In Chapter Four the conclusion of the discussion in Chapter Three is presented. At the end of this thesis, I provide Bibliography which contains the references used and Appendix which contains a copy of the advertisements used as the data.

