

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Language is based on a naming process, by which things get associated with a word or name (Ekayati). As human beings, meaning-makers, we make meaning through our creation and interpretation of signs. In this context, a sign refers to anything which stands for something else (Chandler 2). As Umberto Eco says, Semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign.

Sign also means an intersection or relationship of form and meaning, where form is something concrete, including writing, sound and gestures; while meaning is something mental or cognitive (<http://books.google.co.id>). Actually, “we live in a world of signs and we have no way of understanding anything except through signs” (Chandler 14) and to understand further about the sign itself, we study Semiotics.

Sign is the basic form of communication. Through sign, we can communicate our ideas and feelings. Sign, in this sense, can be found in the front cover of a book. Books include comics, novels, text books and dictionaries. Every book has a cover. The cover includes the front cover and the back cover, which

are very essential and crucial. By observing the front cover, people will have a foretaste of the general content of the book, whether it is interesting or not. The front cover of a book has some important information related to the novel. The front cover usually contains the title of the novel, the writer's name, the publisher's logo and, of course, some interesting pictures in various colours to support the other elements. As a result, the front cover of a novel must be not only interesting but also communicative. The front cover itself has to represent the content of the novel.

Elizabeth Malone, who studies sign language, says that every element in the cover of a novel is signs. They are categorised as signs because they help us to understand the very nature of human language (Malone). The cover is a sign that gives hints to the readers of the general idea of the book. Consequently, the readers will have a preview of what the book is about.

The problem arises when a publisher makes an inappropriate front cover or when the front cover does not smartly present the preview of the story of the novel. As a result, the prospective readers or those who want to purchase the books do not get the clues which are shown in the front cover.

The title of my thesis is Semiotic analysis of the front cover of women's fiction novels, while the topic is about Semiotics. Women's fiction novel is "a wide-ranging literary genre that includes various types of novels that generally appeal more to women than men" (www.findmeanauthor.com). Women's fiction novels include chick-lit, teen-lit, romantic fiction and metropop.

I choose this topic firstly because I am interested in semiotics as it is a study about sign, not only the sign in general but also the sign in terms of

linguistics. In fact, semiotics can be applied to the front cover of a novel to help the reader to get a better understanding on the novel. Secondly, *Kompas* newspaper asserts that women's novels such as teen-lit and chick-lit are very popular among women now. Most of them are even best-seller novels. In addition, "the genre has captured the spirit of the times among young women and its popularity reaches a wide audience" (www.findmeanauthor.com).

I choose to analyse the front cover of women's novels because nowadays, a lot of women have developed the habit of reading the books of this genre. They find that the theme of the story is very relevant to their condition (Litbang Kompas), besides, the characters in the novel mirror the society (www.findmeanauthor.com). I analyse the front covers of novels because people who want to buy a novel or read it will see whether the novel is interesting or not by looking at the front cover of the novel. On top of that, all of the covers of the books, including novels, which are displayed in the bookstore will show the front cover and not the back cover. That is why, the front cover of a novel is more important than the back one.

My topic belongs to Semiotics. I apply the theory by Charles Sanders Peirce, an American philosopher and some linguists or semioticians that have account for Semiotics.

In Semiotics, anything that 'stands for' something else is a sign. Signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects (Chandler 2). It is stated clearly that anything can be a sign and the front cover of a women's novel can also be considered a sign. It has a lot of elements of semiotics to help the reader understand the novel.

Finally, the significance of my topic is to show that the front cover of a novel plays an important role in representing or hinting at the content of the novel. I will also show that there are a number of Semiotic elements in the front cover which can help the reader to get a better understanding of the novel.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The statements of the problem that I will use to analyse the data are:

1. What are the Semiotic elements found in the front covers of the novels?
2. How does Semiotics applied in the front cover represent the content of the novels?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

These are the purpose of my thesis writing in order to answer the statement of the problem above:

1. To know what elements of semiotics are found in the front covers of the novels.
2. To show how semiotics applied in the front covers represents the content of the novels.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

First, I read The Basic Semiotics by Daniel Chandler and some other books which are related to Semiotics. I also search for Semiotic theories and browse the Internet to find some Semiotic journals. Then, I compile the theories

and use them as the theoretical framework to analyse the data. Second, I browse for the pictures of the front covers of women's fiction novels on the Internet and I also scan the front covers of the novels I borrow from the library. Next, I choose which ones of these covers that I will analyse in my thesis.

Finally, I analyse my data using the theory that I have found. Last but not least, I write the conclusion in order to fulfil the purpose of the thesis writing.

ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

My thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter One is Introduction and it consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research and Organisation of the Thesis. Chapter Two consists of the Semiotic theories that I use for my analysis. Chapter Three consists of the data and analysis. Chapter Four is Conclusion. I give some comments and personal opinions about the result of my analysis in this chapter. This thesis ends with an appendix and a bibliography, which lists the source of my theory and data.