

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The media tends to create a sensation in society, for the media is one of the mass communication tools that are used to express opinions or criticism, or even change one's point of view on a current issue. However, mass media has to have the main functions such as entertaining, persuading, solidifying, changing, activating, ethicizing, and informing in order to keep their popularity and influence (DeVito 515).

Through the media, people can get any information which cannot be provided by the government for society, because the government commonly only informs society of their positive achievements. However, the government cannot control independent media. Therefore, it is possible that such media tends to give relevant or irrelevant information to people without being censored by the government.

Neither the text and the contexts of the information nor the visualization made by the media can be censored by the government. The media is free to create any visualization based on the current issues but the media has to be

responsible for the visualization and the context of the information for its truth. In addition, the media itself is regulated by the journalistic ethics in giving the information to society.

The topic of my study is *the irony in the police force of the Republic of Indonesia revealed in Tempo magazine covers*. Irony is “an event or a result that is the opposite of what might be expected” (“Irony,” def 2). The reason I chose to analyze the irony in the police force is because currently the force which is supposed to obey the law and order in Indonesia as well as be a role model for the Indonesian people, has some of its officers involved in cases like corruption or bribery. Moreover, the law in Indonesia is getting weaker, so that people cannot rely on the police force. Accordingly, people become more skeptical about its personnel and start to lose their belief in its protection.

In order to do my analysis, I chose *Tempo* to be the source of my data, namely, the editions of July 21-27 and of October 13-19, 2010, because *Tempo* always creates a different cover compared to other magazines. What makes it different is *Tempo* rarely uses photos for the cover but they create an illustration which is more like a drawing. Consequently, the illustrator has to draw a picture in detail so that it can give the exact information of an issue brought up by *Tempo*. Moreover, the picture has to be attractive so that people are interested to get the magazine. The choice of using the English edition is because I study English linguistics; thus, it helps me to analyze the data.

People may not realize that there are signs everywhere, even in a magazine cover like *Tempo*'s. These signs may have various meanings beyond them if people look at them in detail. Thus, if people understand the signs, a cover will

not be seen as a plain cover made just to amuse or to attract people but made to inform of something so important that people need to know about it.

In order to understand the signs, semiotics is the most suitable theory. This is because Semiotics is a study of signs or a study that is concerned with “everything that can be taken as a sign” (qtd. in Chandler 2). From semiotics it is learnt that “we live in a world of signs and we have no way of understanding anything except through signs and the codes into which they are organized” (14). The difference between signs and codes can be seen from the following example: The sign “OPEN” on a shop’s window is a sign and when the sign “OPEN” is visible on the door, it becomes a code for people so they can enter the shop.

Since Ferdinand de Saussure formed a theory of Semiotics, there have been many theories of semiotics. One of them is Roland Barthes’ theory. Barthes states that “myths were the dominant ideologies of time” (144).

There are three levels of Barthes’ signification system: the first order (denotative sign), the second order (connotative sign), each of which has its own signifier and signified (Cobley and Janz 51), and the third order (myth). Barthes explains that *signifiant* (the signifier) and *signifie* (the signified) form a sign which has a connotation used to explain cultural aspects. Then the connotation that has controlled the society turns into a myth, and this myth will turn into an ideology (Hoed vi). Ideology here means an idea, teaching or belief that people have (“ideology”, def. 1). Moreover, Barthes’ theory is used to analyze the materials of mythical speech, such as language, photography, painting, posters, rituals, objects, etc.

Considering that people's interpretations about something can be different; through this study, I hope people can gain more information from the magazine cover design just like what the media expects. Thus, they will be more critical in getting information from the signs given by the media and they will not just take an interpretation for granted.

833 words

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The problems to be solved in this study are stated in the following questions:

1. What are the denotative meanings of the signs found in the two covers of *Tempo*.
2. What are the connotative meanings of the signs?

1.3. Purpose of the Study

Based on the statements of the problem, the purposes of this study are formulated as follows:

1. to show the denotative meanings of the signs found in the two covers of *Tempo*.
2. to show the connotative meanings of the signs.

1.4. Method of Research

After learning the theories related to semiotics, I collected some data. I gathered the data from the July 21-27 and October 13-19 editions in 2010 of *Tempo*, a weekly news magazine. Afterwards, I used the semiotic theory to analyze the data. I defined the denotative signification and then explained the connotative signification. After that, I found a concept of irony through the connotative signification. Finally, I wrote my research reports in the thesis.

1.5. Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter One is Introduction, which includes Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the presentation of the theory that is applied in writing the thesis. Chapter Three contains the data analysis. Chapter Four contains the conclusion of this study. There are also Bibliography and Appendix at the end of this study, the latter contains the scanned copies of the two *Tempo* covers which are used as my data.