

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

We use language every day to communicate with others. For some of us, we are not aware of the importance of language in our daily life. Language has meaning to us and it is really important for our communication. The explanations below will prove how important language is. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, the definitions of language are "1) system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people of particular country, 2) a way of expressing ideas and feelings using movements, symbols, and sound" (Hornby, 752). From the definition above we can conclude that language is the most significant thing for us to communicate as we can deliver our feelings and thoughts using language. Chandler supports this idea when he says "language is...the most powerful communication system by far" (Chandler 9). As communication grows, language can be represented through any media. The media that I would like to analyze in this thesis is an album cover. An album cover is included as the language used by the artists to convey their music or their feelings.

Generally, an album cover contains the band's or artist's name and the title of the music album. Another important thing in an album cover is the picture. The picture can have some important roles. First, it may be used by the artist to show his/her identity. For example, the artist may use his/her portrait. Second, it can show the identity of the music. When we see an album cover with girly stuff and hearts, the first thing that comes to our mind may be that this album contains love songs. An album cover can be used to determine what kind of music in it because we usually connect the picture on the album cover and the music in it. Third, an album cover sometimes is used by an artist to convey their feelings or their message to the fans. For example, the album cover may use a bloody picture or something dark, which shows us the gloomy feeling or broken heart, or we might say the picture wants to tell us about the broken hearted feeling.

As I have observed in some music stores and websites, I find that rock music, moreover rock alternative (the sub-genre of rock), has different kinds of album covers if we compare them with other genres, for example, pop, R n' B, or jazz. The latter usually use the artists' portraits on their album covers, for the purpose that the fans will easily remember them. On the other hand, alternative rock genre has its different style to make the fans remember them. Almost all the alternative rock album covers use peculiar pictures. For example, on The Used's second album, in a normal life, it will be strange to tie a heart on a tree. I believe that by using a peculiar picture on an alternative rock album cover, the alternative rock fans may remember the music and the band or the artist.

The peculiar picture on an alternative rock album cover obviously has a meaning. The artist wants to present his/her ideas or feelings through it. He/she wants to give us a message. Sometimes, the artist does not present the feelings or the message explicitly through the pictures of the album cover.

As a result, the fans appreciate it only as a good artwork. They are not aware of what the artist wants to convey. Seeing a phenomenon like this, I would like to analyze the rock album covers by using semiotics. By doing the analysis, I hope that the readers will understand the importance of an album cover as a media used to convey the concept of the music or the message which the artist or the band wants to send. I believe this can be beneficial to make people aware that an album cover contains a message. I hope this can give an idea to readers that everything in our daily life is a sign and can stand for something else when analyzed semiotically.

In this thesis I am going to analyze The Used's second album cover. I choose this band, The Used, for it is one of the most popular bands in alternative rock genre. The Used's album cover that I choose to analyze is the cover of The Used's best album (www.last.fm).

An album cover is considered a linguistic sign because it stands for the message from the artist. An album cover is the 'signifier' because it holds up the artist or band's music aspirations. The title of the album, name of the band, and pictures on the album cover can also be considered to be signs as "... signs take the form of words, images ..." (Chandler 2).

I would like to use the semiotics theory to analyze the rock album cover. Semiotics is "...the study of sign..." (Chandler 1) and "...concerned with meaning-making representation..." (Chandler 2) The semiotics applied is the structural semiotics, which was first formulated by the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure. Beside I also use Kress and van Leeuwen's *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* as the supporting theory of my analysis.

Words: 855

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In this thesis I would like to analyse the following problems:

1. What are the linguistic signs represented in The Used's album cover?
2. What do the linguistic signs signify?

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In this thesis I intend:

1. to show what linguistic signs are represented in The Used's album cover.
2. to show what the linguistic signs signify.

1.4 METHOD OF RESEARCH

I began the research by searching for the theories of semiotics in the library. Next, I searched and selected some rock album covers. Then, I gained some more information in the Internet to support my analysis. I analyzed the rock album cover using semiotics theory. At last, I wrote my research report.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is the Introduction, which contains the 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, which consists of the elaboration of the semiotics theory that will be used to analyze the data. Next,

Chapter Three contains my analysis of the rock album covers. The conclusion and my personal opinion will be included in Chapter Four. This thesis ends with the Bibliography and Appendix.