

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of the Study

There are over 300 ethnic groups in Indonesia, and each of these groups has its own distinct language and culture. Where, language is used as a sign, a code, or a communication sound system which is agreed by a certain group of society, individually or collectively to convey a message, aim, or meaning of things. By using language, people can identify every aspect of life easily.

On the other hand, culture also has many signs that can be found around us. But sometimes, we don't know that signs have implicit meaning when they are explored. So, we have to know the signs in every aspect of language. Anything can be a sign as long as someone interprets it as 'signifying' something -referring to or 'standing for' something other than itself. We interpret things as signs largely unconsciously by relating them to familiar systems of conventions (Chandler, 2007: 13).

In addition, the meaning of signs is not a trivial case. Therefore, semiotics as one of the branches of linguistics which specifically learns about signs need to be explored and analyzed. Eco states in Chandler (2007: 2) that semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign. Semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as 'sign' in everyday speech, but of anything

which 'stands for' something else. In a semiotics sense, sign take the form of words, images, sounds, gesture and object. A culture can also be studied through semiotics approach because culture consists of many signs such as symbols images, words, texts, etc.

Sign can be understood correctly and equally in need of the same concept, so that there is misunderstanding and misinterpretation. But in fact, sign was not always understood correctly and equally in society. Everyone has their own interpretation of the meaning and of course a variety of reason behind it. In the street for example, there is a traffic light which has colors as a sign of the traffic. In advertisement, there is a picture of the thing which advertised by a group of people as a sign of the image of the thing. There are many signs in this world which have every single meaning. Sign also presented in many events or ceremonies. The study about sign is semiotics.

Furthermore, there are two important theories dealing with sign. First is Saussure's theory which focuses on linguisticsigns (such as words). Saussure in Chandler (2007: 14) defines a sign as being composed of a 'signifier' (signifiant) and a 'signified' (signifie). The second is Peirce's theory which classifies a sign into three types: icons, indexes, and symbols. An icon is a sign that is made to resemble, simulate, or reproduce its referent in some way. An index is a sign that refers to something or someone in terms of its existence or location in time or space, or in relation to something or someone else. A symbol is a sign that stands for its referent in an arbitrary, conventional way (Sebeok, 2001: 10-11).

A Sign can be found in a tradition. One offamous ethnic groups in Indonesia that believes in traditions is Malay. Malay is divided into some ethnics, such as Riau Malay, North Sumatera Malay, Jambi Malay, Bengkulu Malay, Tamiang Malay, Palembang Malay, Sambas Malay, Bangka-Belitung Malay, Pontianak Malay, and etc. But Malay ethnic groups that live in North Sumatra are Langkat Malay, Deli Malay, Serdang Malay, Tanjungbalai Malay and Labuhan Batu Malay (Mutiara, 2017: 1).

In this study, the researcher wants to introduce Malay ethnics in Tanjungbalai. One of Malay traditions in Tanjungbalai is *tepung tawar* that normally can be found in wedding ceremony. *Tepung tawar* is one of Malay traditions which still carried out in Malay societies, especially in Kelurahan Keramat Kubah. *Tepung tawar* contains of some materials, such as: *balai*, rice, flower, water, meat, *bertih*, etc.

Tepung tawar means to eliminate or remove any diseases, as a symbol of happiness, to ask the audience's blessing, present happiness, and to avoid the bridegroom and family from dangers. The name of *tepung tawar* was taken by the one of the materials participated in the combination of *tepung tawar*, namely the form of rice flour that is mixed with water. The procedure of doing *tepung tawar* are by taking a little bit turmeric rice, white rice, and *bertih*, then sprinkled over the head, to the right and left shoulder of the bridegroom (Amri, 2016: 21).

But unfortunately, nowadays Malay People in Tanjungbalai such as old generation, adult, and students as young generation do not know well about *tepung tawar*. They only know that *tepung tawar* is one of Malay traditions and in

what occasion it is conducted. When the researcher asked the student who live in Tanjungbalai about the kinds of sign and the meaning of *tepung tawar* that used in wedding ceremony, they were confused to explain it. *Bertih* for instance, as one of sign in *tepung tawar*, *bertih* includes a symbol. *Bertih* is fried unhusked rice, it symbolizes the growth that refer to the bridegroom. When they have children and then their children grow to be adult and will follow their parents' culture

In this case, *tepung tawar* itself is actually not only conducted in wedding ceremony, but also in *khitanan*, birth of a baby, gratitude for having a new house, and for criminal case. As Erdianto states in his Journal (2015) entitled *Procession of Tepung tawar as an Alternative Solution for Criminal Case in Malay Custom Law of Riau*. The aim of his study was to explain the practice of *tepung tawar* procession as local wisdom in Indonesian Malay society and how it is applied in the criminal case of dispute resolution.

Based on the explanation above, this study will be focused on the object of sign: icon, index, and symbol by Peirce's theory. The preliminary data of this study will be based on the video of *tepung tawar* offer ceremony from Tanjungbalai Malay.

B. The Problems of the Study

Based on the background above, the problems of the study are formulated as the following:

1. What meanings are displayed on the *tepung tawar* offer in Tanjungbalai Malay?

2. How are the meanings realized in the *tepung tawar* offer in Tanjungbalai Malay?
3. Why are the meanings realized in the *tepung tawar* offer in Tanjungbalai Malay as they are?

C. The Objectives of the Study

Concerning with the problems above, this research is intended to achieve some objectives:

1. To find out the meanings displayed on the *tepung tawar* offer in Tanjungbalai Malay.
2. To elaborate how the meanings realized in the *tepung tawar* offer in Tanjungbalai Malay.
3. To explain the reasons why the meanings realized in the *tepung tawar* offer in Tanjungbalai Malay as they are.

D. The Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is semiotics, especially will be focused on the object of signs by Peirce: icon, index, and symbol. This study specifically investigates the meaning, the realization, and the reason for realizing the *tepung tawar* offer. In order to limit the research, this study only focuses on the *tepung tawar* offer in Tanjungbalai Malay wedding ceremony.

E. The Significances of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to be useful for:

1. For the readers to enrich their knowledge about semiotics' theory, especially about semiotic interpretation of the *tepung tawar* offer in Malay wedding ceremony.
2. For English literature students to gain their interest in studying semiotic about Malay culture.
3. For Malay people in Tanjungbalai, expected as a study that will make them comprehend about semiotic interpretation of *tepung tawar* offer in wedding ceremony.
4. For the next researcher, who would like to conduct the research with similar case as an additional reference especially about semiotic interpretation in wedding ceremony..