CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Choosing the Subject

Everyone can communicate with each other, such as exchanging knowledge, and opinions, and expressing feelings with agreed signs, sounds, or gestures, all of which are called communication systems. This communication system based on combining words into sentences is called language. Language concerns all forms used as a means of communication, both in the form of verbal and non-verbal signs (Tseng, 2018). Verbal communication usually involves the use of words, phrases, and sentences in spoken or written language. Meanwhile, non-verbal communication involves facial expressions, and body language to communicate.

The study of language is called linguistics, generally defined as 'the science of language' or 'the scientific study of language (Gordon & Ladefoged, 2001). For researchers and literature enthusiasts, linguistics will provide deeper insight into understanding literary works, because the language that is the focus of linguistic studies is the foundation of the existence of literary works. Along with the evolution of language and linguistic studies, the field of modern linguistics emerged which was initiated by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 – 1913). This modern linguistics explores the essence and role of language as an aspect of human life and is based on linguistic concepts and theories (Ji, 1997). One of the linguistic theories put forward by Saussure is

the semiotic model, which is often used as a means of classifying types of signs that are only able to describe something if the recipient of the message has experienced its representation.

The concept of Saussure's semiotic theory was developed by a philosopher and literary critic named Roland Gérard Barthes (1915 – 1980). Barthes developed Saussure's structuralist concept of dichotomy more dynamically, where he put forward a new concept of signs which he called the concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth (Septiana, 2019). Denotation explains the relationship between signifier and signified in reality which produces explicit meaning, while connotation is a second hidden meaning system. These two concepts describe the interactions that occur when signs meet feelings or emotions. Furthermore, a myth is a form of message or speech that must be believed to be true but cannot be proven. According to Barthes (1972), myth in semiotics is not a concept but a way of giving meaning (Sobur, 2006).

Semiotics is a scientific discipline that explores culture, society, and natural phenomena as signs. Semiotic research approaches signs as something that exists in various forms, such as images, words, letters, gestures, phenomena, and actions (Koppa, 2010). According to Littlejohn (2009), semiotics aims to find out what meaning is contained in a sign or interpret that meaning so that we can find out how the communicator constructs the message (Kevinia et al., 2022). In the semiotic theory of structuralism, Saussure describes the language system as an entity that is considered together

by all language users, as if it had become a general agreement. In addition, analyzing semiotics will reveal the unconscious meanings of borderline intellectual functioning that are produced and then disseminated by culture. The spread through texts or transmission from this culture makes people assimilate these meanings and then apply them in daily social practices and behavior (Kwiatkowska-Ciotucha et al., 2022).

Nowadays, conveying culture to the public can be done easily, such as through movies. A movie is formed when there is a story that has a message to be conveyed to the public or audience. By conveying messages through moving images, colors, and sound, viewers can easily understand the contents of the movie. Therefore, movies have power and accessibility to many social segments which makes experts believe that movies can influence their audiences.

The Borderline Intellectual Function is often ignored or misrepresented in mainstream media. By showing the struggle of individuals with Borderline Intellectual Functioning, this movie counters society's perception of individuals with borderline intellectual function which have been underestimated. The *Miracle in Cell No.7* movie represents the cultural delivery of Borderline Intellectual Functioning. The movie became one of the highest-grossing South Korean films of all time, reaching more than 13 million moviegoers. Apart from that, *Miracle in Cell No.7* also won many awards, such as the Best Actor Award for Ryu Seung-ryong at the Blue Dragon Movie Awards, the Best Supporting Actor Award for Oh Kwang-rok

at the Grand Bell Movie Awards, and the Best Editing Award at the Awards. South Korean film. The success of *Miracle in Cell No. 7* led to its adaptation into a theatrical version which was staged in several countries, including China, Indonesia, and the Philippines (Harris, 2023).

Previous studies regarding the representation of special individuals with their uniqueness in the media have mainly focused on identifying and criticizing negative stereotypes and misrepresentations. Researchers frequently highlight how the media perpetuates stigmatizing views and reinforces societal biases against individuals with borderline intellectual functioning. However, there is a significant gap in examining how positive images can reshape societal attitudes and contribute to more inclusive perceptions of borderline intellectual functioning. This research attempts to fill this gap by analyzing the semiotic elements in the *Miracle in Cell No. 7* movie and explores how the movie's depiction of borderline intellectual functioning counters existing stereotypes and fosters deeper understanding and empathy among its viewers.

B. Problem Formulation

This research discusses the main character in the *Miracle in Cell No.7* movie as an individual have a borderline intellectual function. In general, many people misunderstand this attitude. This research is proposed to seek answers to the following research questions based on Roland Barthes' theory.

1. What is the denotation, connotation, and myth meaning of the main character in the *Miracle in Cell No.7* movie?

2. How is the representation of the intellectual function and adaptive behavior of the main character with borderline intellectual functioning in the *Miracle in Cell No.7* movie?

C. Objectives of the Study

The general aim of this research is to show a depiction of individuals who have a borderline intellectual function as represented in the *Miracle in Cell No.7* movie. The specific objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To find out the denotation, connotation, and myth meaning of the main character in the *Miracle in Cell No.7* movie.

2. To analyze the representation of the intellectual function and adaptive behavior of the main character with borderline intellectual functioning in the *Miracle in Cell No.7* movie.

D. Scope of the Study

This research focuses on the theoretical framework of Barthes (1968) as applied to the *Miracle in Cell No. 7* movie. Within Barthes' framework, the researcher utilizes three types of signs: denotation, connotation, and myth. In addition, this research examines the intellectual function and adaptive behavior possessed by individuals with borderline intellectual function as depicted in the main character of the *Miracle in Cell No.7* movie.

E. Review of the Related Studies

There are several studies that have been carried out using semiotic analysis methods. These studies have helped researchers to understand how previous researchers conducted various research on movies using various different research topics, resulting in different research results. The first research entitled *A Semiotic Analysis of Aladdin Movie by Using Roland Barthes Theory* by Putri, Inayah, and Wageyono in 2022 (Putri et al., 2022). This research aims to determine the type and meaning of semiotics in the *Aladdin* movie using Roland Barthes' theory and uses descriptive qualitative method. Then, the data source is *Aladdin* movie, while the data taken from scenes and script of *Aladdin* movie. The results of this research state that Barthes type of semiotics can be used to explain the semiotic meaning contained in the Aladdin movie. The type of Semiotics by Roland Barthes in this movie also has different implications in describing something according to the reference words or phrases used in the movie scene.

The second research is *A Semiotics Analysis of Forget Me Not a Movie Directed by Kei Horie Using Roland Barthes' Theory* by Nauli & Halomoan (2021). This research aims to analyze the movie *Forget Me Not* using Barthes' theory which explains the results of research on the signs in the movie and applies qualitative methods in conducting this research. The data source in this research is the *Forget Me Not* movie which was taken from the YouTube platform. Then, the author uses scenes in the *Forget Me Not* movie as data for

this research, as are scenes that show visual material, sound, situations, and so on. The author obtained the verbal and non-verbal signs that appeared in the movie and used them as data in this research. The author of this research found denotation meaning and connotation meaning in objects as signs used by Azusa and Takashi in the *Forget Me Not movie* and the author wants to convey this meaning to readers through (Barthes, 1972) theory.

The third research entitled *Analysis of Denotation, Connotation, and Myth in The Gentlemen Movie* by Wulandari (2020). This research aims to find signs in *The Gentlemen* movie and uses a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the data obtained in this research. The data source in this research is taken from *The Gentlemen* movie. Researcher watched the movie to get accurate data. After the data was collected, the researcher began to analyze each data in the form of conversations and images using Barthes (1968) semiotic theory. Signs of frontal language indicate that The Gentlemen is a movie full of action and violence. It is concluded that every word or utterance that is frontal and harsh has more than one function. From each of the functions of harsh or frontal words, it is known that the use of harsh or frontal words by mafia figures is when they are making threats to commit acts of violence.

The fourth research entitled *Analysis of Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory in the Indonesian Version of the Movie Miracle in Cell No.7* by Kevinia et al. (2022). This research aims to analyze the meaning of body movements conveyed by Mr. Dodo as a way to express himself using Roland

Barthes' Semiotic Theory. The method in this research used is descriptive qualitative research with an interpretive paradigm. The data source for this article is the Indonesian version of the *Miracle in Cell No.7* movie. The data used is in the form of screen capture of seven scenes depicting the expressions and body movements of people with disabilities. In conclusion, it can be understood that every human being has their own way of expressing themselves, even Pak Dodo's method can be said to be unique. Apart from that, people can also understand so that self-judgment does not occur.

What these four studies have in common with this research is that they use Roland Barthes' semiotic theory analysis method which is categorized as a qualitative method. Apart from that, the data source used both uses movies and the data also consists of screen capture and words in several scenes related to the discussion. Meanwhile, the difference lies in the movie topic studied. The first research focuses on words and meaning in the *Aladdin* movie, the second research focuses on the meaning of objects used by two characters in the *Forget Me Not* movie, the third research focuses on frontal language in *The Gentlemen* movie which is full of action and violence, the fourth research analyzes the meaning of body movements conveyed by Mr. Dodo as a way to express himself, while this research focuses on depicting the main character has borderline intellectual function in the *Miracle in Cell No.7* movie.

F. Method of Research

In this research, researcher categorize it into a descriptive qualitative method, because the research data is in the form of screen captures showing scenes and words originating from the dialogue of the *Miracle in Cell No.7* movie. According to Creswell (2010), a qualitative approach is a method used to form knowledge statements based on constructive perspectives, such as meaning that comes from personal experience, social values, and history. The aim is to develop a particular theory or pattern of knowledge. It can also be based on a participatory perspective which includes an orientation towards politics, issues, collaboration, change, or a combination of both.

1. Data and Source of Data

The source of data for this research is the *Miracle in Cell No. 7* movie, directed by Lee Hwan-kyung and distributed by Next Entertainment World in 2013 (Avd, 2023). The data consists of several screen captures from six scenes in the movie, including images and dialogues relevant to the context of this research.

2. Technique of Collecting Data

In this research, data was collected using observation methods and writing techniques. As Sudaryanto (2015) says, the method of observing is by observing language use. In collecting data, researchers carried out several activities, including the following:

a. The researcher watched the *Miracle in Cell No.7* movie.

b. The researcher identified data through dialogue and actions related to good behavior carried out by main character in the *Miracle in Cell No. 7* movie.

c. The researcher classified data obtained from the *Miracle in Cell No. 7* movie, sort through dialogue and actions of characters, then write down the data so that it makes it easier for researchers to analyze data that is closely related to the topic being discussed.

d. The researcher chose parts of scenes in the *Miracle in Cell No. 7* movie that relate to the intellectual function and adaptive behavior of the main character.

3. **Technique of Analyzing Data**

According to Moleong (2007), qualitative analysis is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behavior. The data analysis technique in this research was carried out by depiction of borderline intellectual functioning in the *Miracle in Cell No. 7* movie by using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, namely by referring to meaning systems, such as denotation, connotation, and myth.

According to Sudaryanto (2015), data analysis is the researcher's action in directly dealing with the problems in the data. This research is categorized as a qualitative method and the researcher as an instrument uses observation methods, documented to collect data, and referential methods to analyze data. The four steps are as follows:

a. The researcher grouped data in figures related to the depiction of the borderline intellectual function possessed by the main character in the *Miracle in Cell No.7* movie.

b. The researcher organized the data by selecting relevant data and classifying and interpreting it based on the concept of Roland Barthes' theory, namely denotation, connotation, and myth.

c. The researcher made the interrelation between data description and theory to derive findings aligned with the research objectives, (1) to find out the denotation, connotation, and myth meaning of the main character in the *Miracle in Cell No.7* movie, (2) to analyze the representation of the intellectual function and adaptive behavior of the main character with borderline intellectual functioning in the *Miracle in Cell No.7* movie.

d. The researcher drew a conclusion based on the analysis.