

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY AND THE ELEMENTS OF SEMIOTIC

A. The History of Semiotic

Semiotic comes from Greek language, “*Semeion*” means sign. Sign is something which had represents other thing based on social convention. Term of *semeion* was derived from hipocratic or aspeladic within concerned on syptomatology and inferensial diagnostic. In the time, sign means something which has represented to other thing.¹ Semiotic is an analysis method to explore more about sign and everything which has relation with sign. So, semiotic is a science that discussed widely about objects, events and cultural.²

Term of semiotic was used by Germany philosopher, Lambert in the eighteenth century as synonym of logic.³ But term semiotic was first used in English by Henry Stubbes (1670) in very precise sense to denote the branch of medical science relating to interpretation of sign. John Locke (1690) used this term in the fourth book, chapter 21 An Easy Concerning Human Understanding.⁴

Semiotic is the branch of new science. Using sign and everything which has relating to sign had discussion seriously and systematically at 20th century. According to expert of modern semiotic said that beginning of modern semiotic comes from linguistic science which has popular figure namely Ferdinand De Saussure (1857-1913) as the father of modern linguistic. Because he limitation his thought only on linguistic, Saussure more popular as father of linguistic than semiotic.

¹ Alex Sobur, *Analisis Teks Media Suatu Pengantar untuk Analisis Wacana, Analisis Semiotik, Analisis Framing*, RosdaKarya, Bandung, 2002, p. 95

² File pdf Pemalsuan_Tanda_sebagai_Fenomena_Semiotika_Budaya.pdf downloaded on October 4th, 2013

³ Alex sobur, *Analisis Teks Media, Op. cit.*, p. 110

⁴ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/semiotics>, tagged on January 2007

Modern semiotic has two figures are Charles Sanders Peirce (1834-1914) and Ferdinand De Saussure (1857-1913). They have not recognize between other, according to Zoest, this is cause the difference thought especially on applying the result of figure between Saussure's and Peirce's follower. The difference is caused by the basic thought are Peirce is a philosopher and logic, while Saussure is an expert of general linguistic.⁵

At glance, both are contradiction in their basic thought. It is caused that they lived in the different place and never meet between each other. Saussure lived in Europe or called as continental semiotic and Peirce lived in America or called as American semiotic. The existence of the school of semiotic can be reduction based on binary opposition among signification versus communication, static versus dynamic, conventional versus progressive, dogmatic versus revolutionary, reproduction versus production, langue versus Parole, Theory versus Practice.⁶

But, rereading which had been by some semiotic expert to the both concepts especially Umberto Eco and Paul J Thibault showed that the exclusive difference and binary opposition did not like the previous opinion. Precisely, the deeply reading to Saussure and Peirce thought showed that both have not opposition, but fill up and comprehensive.

B. The Development of Semiotic

Semiotic had been being since 18th century, but the development is getting on 20th century. The development of semiotic divided into some period is ancient era, middle era, renaissance era, and modern era.⁷

In the ancient era was being some expert of semiotic, such as Plato (427-437 pre-Christian), Aristotle (384-322 pre-Christian), Stoic group (300-200 pre-Christian), and Epicurean group (300 pre-Christian until the middle era of Christian). According to Plato, semiotic is sign which has convention meaning in the certain society and as a not perfectly representation of idea.

⁵ Alex Sobur, *Analisis Teks Media op. cit.*, p. 110

⁶ Alex Sobur, *Semiotika Komunikasi*, Rosdakarya, Bandung, 2006, p. v

⁷ File pdf semiotik-dan-kajian-budaya.pdf downloaded on October 2nd, 2013

Whereas, according to Aristotle, semiotic is the written sign, such as expression symbol and sound symbol which has mental impression; it resembles of the really object.

In the middle era, the development of language philosophy directed to the second ways is focused on grammatical aspect as the basic of Latin language education and Latin language as the control of education. At the time, system of thought and education philosophy related to theology, so, philosophical analysis expressed by language analysis. The specific character of the time is the golden age of Christian philosopher; especially patristic and scholastic group. Education in the middle era was built based on 7 systems and has a liberal character. These are divided into 2 parts are trivium (belonging to grammar, logic, and rhetoric) and quadrivium such as arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music.

Renaissance era is nothing innovation about sign. This is caused that many research of semiotic is part of linguistic development in the previous time.

In modern era, there are two figures of semiotic are Charles Sanders Peirce ((1834-1914) and Ferdinand De Saussure (1857-1913). Both are different background. Peirce is a philosopher and Saussure is linguistic expert. This difference was being on applying concept. Also, there are two schools from this difference. The first group is following Peirce thought that did not take the basic thought from language science. The second group is following Saussure thought with language science as the basic thought.

Besides that, there is Muslim figure that focused his thought on semiotic; especially on language semiotic is Muhammad Arkoun. This is caused background his education focused on language and he has ability to some language. His observation to the language was supported by some discussion about language from philosopher, anthropologic, scientist, and western theologian. Therefore, Arkoun used the development more of science, even social, humanities, and science in the west. This science helped the

human to remapping of scientist work and human experience in the whole area.

From many social modern treasures in the west, his thought was influenced by some figures of France philosopher, such as Paul Ricour, Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Ferdinand De Saussure, Roland Barthes, etc.⁸ Arkoun combined some concept of each figures. So, it is found that the point of Arkoun though is rebuild religious thought openly without theological a priori deed to religious experience of the human with understanding language problem widely.

C. The schools of semiotic

In the development of modern semiotic have some figures within their concepts are:

1. Ferdinand De Saussure

According to Saussure, definition of semiotic in the Course in General Linguistics is a science that discussion about sign as the part of social life. Implicitly, these definitions said that semiotic depended on main rule or social code which obtained in the society, so, the sign can be understood. Whereas, according to Saussure, sign is uniting between two areas which cannot be separated are signifier and signified. Relation between signifier and signified namely signification. Saussure said that this relation emphasized to social convention in the society so can understand the signification of sign collectively.⁹

Signifier + signified = sign

Saussure was popular as the pioneer of Structuralism theory. Generally, structuralism is a philosophy that viewed the world as structure

⁸ Arkoun takes the mythology concept from Ricour and deconstruction concept from Derrida. While, semiotic was taken by Arkoun from Saussure and Barthes concept.

⁹ Tommy Cristomy dan Untung Yuwono, *Semiotika Budaya*, Pusat Penelitian Kemasyarakatan dan Budaya Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta, p. 88

reality. Saussure linguistic contribute to the structuralism philosophy greatly because Saussure linguistic introduced about the system. In the scientific field, term of “structure” and “structuralism” used in the different place. These terms was used in Math, logic, physic, biology, psychology, sociology, language, and humanities.¹⁰

The difference between Structuralism and Semiotic are Semiotic becomes one of the useful concepts in the work through structuralist, moreover in the past decennial. The basic is the sign interpretation namely conventionally; semiotics can replace and represent another thing. While, Structuralism, according to Davis E. Apter is the most interdisciplinary among other approaches. Structuralism itself was from linguistic, anthropology, philosophy and sociology.

According to Yasraf, at least there are six principles of Saussure thought concerning on semiotics theory:¹¹ the first, structural principle. Saussure sees the sign relation as structural relation, means the sign is viewed as a unity between signifier and signified. In this relation, the semiotics improved by Saussure usually is mentioned as structural semiotics. Then, the structural thought is mentioned as structuralism.

The second is the unity principle. A sign is the unity that cannot be separated between the signifier area (sound, writing, picture, object), and signified area (concept, idea, meaning) like two sides from a piece of paper which is impossible to be separated.

The third is conventional principle. The structural relation between the signifier and signified is so dependent on the convention, namely social convention about language (the sign and meaning) among language communities.

The fourth is synchronic principle namely the sign study as a constant system in the time context which is considered stable, and unchanged. The

¹⁰ Alex Sobur, *Analisis Teks Media., Op. cit.*, p. 103

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 43-46

structural semiotics ignores dynamic, change, and its language transformation in the society.¹²

The fifth is Representational principle. The structural of semiotics can be seen as a form of representation, in which a sign interpretation represents a reality, and become reference (its representation). A sign of flower, for example, represents something in the world of reality, until the relation between the sign and reality is more representative. And the sixth is continuity principle, namely the relation between the system of sign and the user socially. This principle works in the language and has continuity character and never change, till it is impossible to change radically on sign, code, and meaning except a little change.

Historically, structuralism was promoted by Ferdinand De Saussure in general linguistic. His thought based on modern linguistic. This made him popular as the pioneer of linguistic. His thought focused on linguistic study. He is a figure of semiotic who has influenced other in the developing of semiotic with structuralism concept. Structuralism of Saussure was followed by other many figures, such as Chomsky with theory linguistic structure, Levi-Strauss with structure anthropology concept, Roland Barthes who was developed his thought with mythology concept, Jacques Lacan, Roman Jakobson, and Michael Foucault.¹³

Dichotomy concept of Saussure which had applied on the sign (signifier and signified) influenced the Europe semiotics scholar. There were 3 schools of semiotic that were declined from Saussure theory.¹⁴ Firstly, communication semiotic viewed the sign as part of communication process. Here, the signification of sign likes the understanding of communicator and communicant. In other word, communication semiotic showed only denotation

¹² There are two analysis models in the language analysis namely diachronic analysis and synchronic. Diachronic analysis is an analysis about language historical change, namely the language in the time dimension, development, and its change. Synchronic analysis is an analysis in which we take 'historical slice' and take the language structure only at a certain time, not in the context of its historical change. Tommy Christomy and Untung Yuwono, *Semiotika Budaya, op. cit.*, P. 88

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 104

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 82-83

meaning of sign. The follower of this school is Buysens, Prieto, and Mouvin. Secondly, connotation semiotic is focused on the connotative meaning of sign. The sign delivered to the communicant, but they received the sign different with communicator. The main figure is Roland Barthes. Thirdly, expansive semiotic with the figure is Julia Kristeva. Actually it is a school in connotation semiotics. In this semiotics, the sign interpretation was lost of its central place because changed by the interpretation of the meaning production. The dream of expansive semiotics is to chase total science and change philosophy. These schools developed in West Europe, especially in France. Whereas, in the East Europe focused their research on cultural.

2. Charles Sanders Peirce

If we well know Saussure with his dichotomy concept; the difference sign that is consist of signifier and signified, Peirce popular with trichotomy concept; sign seen as the sign which cannot be separated from object of its reference and the understanding of subject toward sign. The semiotic of Pierce, like Umberto Eco explains in *A Theory of Semiotics* is the trend to emphasize on the aspect of sign production more than sign system. The sign according to Pierce is the unity from *representamen*, object and *interpretant*. The basic principle is a sign has representative character. It is mean a sign as representation of something.

$$\text{Representament} + \text{object} + \text{Interpretant} = \text{Sign}$$

Representament is physically formed of sign. According to Peirce, something can be a representament through some ground. There are three possibilities between representament and ground is qualisign, signsign, and legisign. Qualisign is a phenomenon which potentially become a sign, but still

isolated from external factors. Sinsign is a phenomenon that related to external factor. Then, legisign is being sign based on convention.¹⁵

Interpretant is sign which is being on human's mind about object.¹⁶ Interpretant has important role in the interpretation between representament and object. So, sign not only representative character, but also interpretative.

Sign is something which stands to somebody for something in same respect or capacity. According to Peirce, sign is part of object and interpretant (understanding of subject to sign).¹⁷

In the Peirce view, sign always gets on unlimited semiosis. In the semiosis process, interpretant made the new representament and object so have the new interpretant.¹⁸ So, semiosis is signification process on three levels is index, icon, and symbol.

The thought of Peirce more influenced in United States, especially on psychology and psychoanalysis. While, in Europe the thought of Peirce influenced in Italy and German. In the west German being Max Bense and Elizabeth Walter as the follower of Peirce thought. Therefore, the school of German closer with pragmatic semiotic; it discussed about relation between sign and user in one part, and using sign in the social area in another part.¹⁹

Here, we have to know that the significant semiotics which is based on the Saussure's thought pay big attention on the sign as a system and structure, but it ignores the subject as the agent of change for language system, while Pierce emphasizes on 'sign production' socially and no final interpretation process (*semiosis*). It also sees that the subject as a part which cannot be separated from the signification process.²⁰

The thought of two figures of this semiotics was invited the response, critics, and protest from many figures, moreover the thought of Saussure's semiotics. Saussure's semiotics was considered as static, dogmatic, and

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 120

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 121

¹⁷ Alex Sobur, *Analisis Teks Media, Op. cit.*, p. 115

¹⁸ Tommy Cristomy dan Untung Yuwono, *Semiotika Budaya, Op. cit.*, p. 56

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 84

²⁰ Alex Sobur, *Semiotika Komunikasi, Op. cit.*, p. vi and xii

mechanistic,²¹ till be considered as weakness. ‘Saussure’s structural semiotics approach seemingly succeeded to criticize the positivistic sciences. But, if semiotics stops there it will become the new positivistic science which is satisfied with taxonomy, classification, and search the structure and system from the examined object.²² The structural semiotics was also considered too leaning on the unchanged structure and system, then till closes the human roles as subjects who have the potency of creativity and productivity to change the language.²³ Then, the structuralism approach (structural semiotics) has potency to deliver text analysis creations demanded a singular meaning. A text only can be uncovered by a kind of meaning. The reason is there is an established system behind the signs on the text.²⁴

The protest of the experts addressed to Saussure makes Saussure’s argument about theory of semiotics which is built by him seems weak, even wrong. Saussure’s semiotics was regarded not to be able to anticipate the sign improvement in the contemporary era, like today until it is necessary for re-observation toward structural semiotics approach in understanding the problem in the modern society.²⁵

The Saussure critics find the ideal figure on the thought of Pierce’s semiotics. They understands Pierce semiotics as the opposite of structural semiotics. For Pierce, the sign is always in the changeable process without stop. It is unlimited *semiosis*, namely the creation process of unlimited *interpretant* connecting structure in the production chain and sign reproduction in which the sign gets its life place to grow and improve.²⁶ The Pierce’s opinion was agreed by a lot of Saussure’s critics. This group regard that the signified which is the core of structure always moves forever. Then, the core is nothing and there is no definite nature source. All will go to the

²¹ *Ibid*, p. x

²² ST. Sunardi, *Semiotika Negativa*, Kanal, Yogyakarta, 2002, p. 31

²³ Alex Sobur, *Semiotika Komunikasi*, *Op. cit.*, p. x

²⁴ The meaning according to Saussure is arranged and determined by the circle of language community. One word has certain meaning because there is social convention.

²⁵ Tommy Christomy and Untung Yuwono, *Op. cit.*, p. 172-173

²⁶ Alex Sobur, *Semiotika Komunikasi*, *Op. cit.*, p. xii-xiii

unlimited signified game, because the signifier has no definite relation with the signified. The relation between signifier and signified is arbiter.

According to Eco, however sign is the original basis from the process of *semiosis*. Then, there is no opposition between the *semiosis* authorship (and interpretation activity) of Pierce; and sign stuffiness of Saussure.²⁷ From here, we can see that Eco's view is analogously with Thibault's view seeing the characteristics of Saussure and Pierce which are dynamic, progressive, and transformative. Thus, it means that significance semiotics and communication semiotics are two semiotics process which fill and influence each another in reciprocal, and cannot be separated just like as the autonomous domain²⁸

According to Barthes, the signified always has many meanings. There is no intern relation between the concepts showed by the sound referring to it. Then, there is no definite signified for the signifier. The signifier is *polisemy*, has double meanings and the signified can move continuously from the signifier,²⁹ whereas Jacques Derrida, a post-structural philosopher and the pioneer of *deconstructionalism* mentions that all texts have the fundamental ambiguity which is a cause from the language natural itself. The meaning for him is not only the meaning of word, not only signs convinced by a lot of people, but how the people interpret those.

Roland Barthes also explains that the sign is determined by the implicit and explicit main role from the convention of cultural community members, or social role. Due to that, system sign can also carry the message and encoded meaning which the people understand that code can read. For him, the reading is not to search but to postpone the meaning, not to search the structure but to structuralize, not to consume but to produce text. The reading, in short is not to search the certainty engaged by structure, but uncertainty when the power of text 'explodes' to search sign and structure itself.³⁰

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. xiii

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. xiii

²⁹ Ali Romdhoni, *Analisis Semiotika Terhadap piagam Madina*, (a thesis), IAIN Walisongo Semarang, p. 43

³⁰ ST. Sunardi, *Op. cit.*, P. 36-37

According to Hirsch, the meaning given by the reader is the meaning (significance) given toward text, while the meaning meant by the writer is ‘the meaning’. So, the meaning given by the reader must not be same with the meaning meant by the author/ the writer. The meaning meant by the author is permanent, while the meaning given by the reader is changeable.³¹ Whereas Derrida, with theory of his deconstruction, wants to free manuscript, text, from the legitimate singular meaning which is maybe constructed by the certain hegemonic culture. He is strongly declares that there are many ways to read and understand the text.³²

What are missing from the thought of structural semiotics improved by Saussure are possibilities to modernity, creativity, and productivity in the language. Saussure’s interest on structure and system has closed the door for combination and language game. The consequence is structural semiotics only can face with the conventional and legitimate signs.³³

Based on the both opinions above, other scholars interest to explore more about these thoughts in depth. They are Paul J. Thibault and Umberto Eco. Two figures did not see the opposition between them.

Thibault and Eco argue that Saussure’s Semiotics is not static, dogmatic, anti mechanistic, anti- change, improvement and transformation. In this case, Thibault proves in *Rereading Saussure: The dynamics of Sign in Social Life*. He read in depth on Saussure’s opus and drew a knot that Saussure surely is not anti –change, as the critics accuse.³⁴ Thibaoult writes. ‘There is strong enough flexibility character on Saussure’s language philosophy observing that structure and language system can change accordance with social improvement and the milieu. Spite of that, the change is not arbitrariness and anarchies.

³¹ Rachmat Djoko Prodopo, *Kritik Sastra Modern*, Gama Media, Yogyakarta, 2002, P. 40-41 in Ali Romdhoni, *Analisis Semiotika Terhadap piagam Madina*, (a thesis), IAIN Walisongo Semarang, P. 44

³² Noeng Muhadjir, *Metodology Penelitian Kualitatif*, Rake Sarasin, Yogyakarta, 1996, p. 166

³³ Tommy Christomy and Untung Yuwono, *Op. cit.*, p. 17

³⁴ Alex Sobur, *Semiotika Komunikasi*, *Op. cit.*, P. x

The language system (*langue*) in the view of Saussure is the condition must be in the every using of sign concretely (*parole*). Every user language will refer to that language system. But, in the using process if that language, it is opened for a first point change in system. The relation between *langue* and *parole* is not a static relation and unchanged, but in the opposite, it is exactly a basis from language dynamic character. Still according to Saussure as Thibault says *langue* is social product. It means that it is manufactured continuously in the using practice by community, in which the basic principle of *langue* is protected but all at once it is changed evolutionary. But the change that Saussure means is not arbitrariness and anarchies without roles. That change is based on social dialectical principle itself, in which the process of thesis and synthesis works as a way to the direction of enrichment, perfection and language complicity continuously.

The view of Saussure about the dynamic and the change dialectic as Thibault explains clearly rejects the justification that Saussure through his semiotics shackles the subject as the language user by hegemony of structure. As Pierce, Saussure admits that *parole* is a space for the taking place of the change. But he did not only focus himself on that space, but on the language system (*langue*) which is a pre-condition from *parole*. It means that Saussure admits not only the significance aspect of semiotics, but also its communication aspect. But he do not enters too depth intensely as Pierce does.³⁵

Umberto Eco as the mediator for Significance semiotics of Saussure and Communication semiotics of Pierce sees that it has been big wrong in seeing the model of significance semiotics and communication semiotics as binary opposition relation.

According to Eco, sign system (*langue*) and the process of unlimited sign interpretation (*semiosis*) cannot be seen in the frame of binary opposition. There is a wrong understanding that seemingly the people cannot unite between 'doctrine of sign' and '*semiosis*' as unlimited interpretation process.

³⁵ Alex Sobur, *Semiotika Komunikasi, Op. cit.*, P. xii

Here, the people seemingly must choose between theory of significance and theory of *semiosis*. The necessity to choose between two theories is the big wrong in semiotics which makes that seemingly Saussure and Pierce are two groups of war who cannot be resolved peacefully.

According to Eco, however sign is the original basis from the process of *semiosis*. Then, there is no opposition between the *semiosis* authorship (and interpretation activity) of Pierce; and sign stuffiness of Saussure.³⁶ From here, we can see that Eco's view is analogously with Thibault's view seeing the characteristics of Saussure and Pierce which are dynamic, progressive, and transformative. Thus, it means that significance semiotics and communication semiotics are two semiotics process which fill and influence each another in reciprocal, and cannot be separated just like as the autonomous domain.³⁷

D. The Basic Elements of Semiotic

Using semiotic method in the research must be based on understanding about the basic elements of semiotic comprehensively.³⁸ The basic elements of semiotic are:

1. Sign

Actually, the main focus of semiotic approach is sign. According to John Fiske, there is being three areas of semiotic study are³⁹ first, the sign itself. This consists of the study of different varieties of signs, of the different ways they have of conveying meaning, and of the way they relate to the people who use them. Second, for signs are human constructs and can only be understood in terms of the uses people put them to. The codes or systems into which signs are organized. This study covers the ways that a variety of codes have developed in order to meet the needs of a society or culture. Third, the culture within which these codes and signs operate.

³⁶ *Ibid*, P. xiii

³⁷ *Ibid*, P. xiii

³⁸ Tommy Christomy and Untung Yuwono, *Op. cit.*, p.90

³⁹ Alex Sobur, *Analisis Teks Media*, *Op. cit.*, p. 94

Observation of sign in a message made we know about the expression of emotion and cognition of the message content from the communicator, even denotative, connotative, and mythology.⁴⁰ Without knowledge about sign, the researcher will difficult to understand about it.

2. Sign action

Sign action consist of 2 kinds are paradigmatic and syntagmatic. Paradigmatic is vocabulary that is being on dictionary. Syntagmatic is manner to choose and combine the sign based on certain rule or code so has expression. Code is rules about combined sign to communicate the message with other.⁴¹

3. Sign level

Relation between signifier and signified did not made naturally, but it is being convention. So, signifier opened to some meaning of signified. According to Barthes, staggered system divided into two categories is denotation and connotation.

Denotation is relation that is used in the first staggered in the signifier process directly or description about signified. Denotation is sign which has signified in the high level convention. Connotation is signifier relation which has implicit and uncertain meaning (received some possibilities meaning from interpreter). This signification built the meaning in the second staggered implicitly namely connotative meaning.

Besides that, Roland Barthes also saw the deeply meaning, but more conventional. It is the signification which has relation to myth. According to Barthes, myth is codification of the meaning and social values as a scientific thing.⁴²

Sign → denotation → connotation (code) → myth
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⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 122

⁴¹ Tommy Cristomy dan Untung Yuwono, *Op. cit.*, p. 91

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 94

4. Sign interaction

There is interrelation form which has divided into two kinds is metaphor and metonymy. Metaphor is a model of sign interaction which contained a sign of system and has function to explain the meaning of other system. Metaphor was used in the some product design and visual communication. Metonymy is sign interaction which associated the sign with other that contained part relation of whole.⁴³

E. Semiotic Analysis In This Research

Semiotic was used in some researches and has some models of analysis based on character and object.⁴⁴ Therefore, the researcher will use specific analysis with semiotic method must determine the model of semiotic which will use and considering that many varieties and branched of semiotic.

According to Charles Sanders Peirce, sign can be identified by view the relation to the referent. The manner is understanding relation among sign, referent, and interpretant. These relations belonging to unlimited process which has stopped in the one meaning, but the signification still continuing based the interpretant knowledge. This process namely semiosis process.⁴⁵ The sign after got the firstness signification, it is continuing with secondness signification from the first interpretant. Because of the concept of interpretant will become the new sign potentially. Then, the new sign has the new referent and interpretant again.

Semiosis is signification meaning in the thirdness staggered is index, icon, and symbol. Index is relation between signifier and signified from resemblance. Icon is relation between signifier and signified from causality relation. Symbol is relation between signifier and signified based on social convection.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 95

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 99

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 148