

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background of the study, research problem, purpose of the study, scope and limitation of the study, significance of the study and previous related studies.

1.1 Background of the study

Language plays significant roles in our life as it has a range of functions. As a fundamental means of communication, it helps us to share and convey our ideas and thoughts as it also helps us to grasp knowledge and facts. Further, with language, we can share and express both our experience of our inner and outer world. As Halliday puts it, “we use language to make sense of our experience, and to carry out our interactions with other people” (2004:24). Language is realized in both written and spoken forms. It appears in all media such as television, films, novels, newspaper articles, radio script, poetry, documentaries and more. All of these, both written and spoken are called as discourses (Young and Fitzgerald, 2006:7).

Besides having a function in communication, language also has function of constructing meaning. As Stuart Hall stated that language is able to construct meanings as it operates as a representational system (1997:1). “We use signs and symbols – whether they are sounds, written words, electronically produced images, musical notes, even objects – to stand for or represent to other people our concepts, ideas and feelings” (Hall, 1997:1). Stuart Halls also concerns with how

media represents certain group of people, both superior and marginalized ones and it seems that the marginalized groups tend to be 'misrepresented' in media stories. Being in line with Hall, Fowler also suggests that representation appearing in media and any kind of discourse is a constructive practice. This leads to a conclusion that there is no events in media ever being reported in a neutral way. His statement is supported by previous studies which have proved that events are always interpreted by the writers before being represented in texts. Because of their ability to influence public opinion, media, particularly on newspaper reports have been the focus of many studies. Previous studies on newspaper reports using systemic functional linguistics have considered the relationships between linguistic choices and the representation of events.

For Muslims, media representations of Islam are likely represented as culturally incompatible "with the values, norms, and interests of western nations" (Said, 1997 cited in Byng 2007). Islam has been long described as a barbaric and conventional religion in the western nations. Edward Said's theory of Orientalism even clearly states that Islam has long been considered as "a static, monolithic, backward doctrine that both explains and determines Muslim behaviors" (Bullock, 2002: XVIII). Things are even getting worse after the 9/11 attacks, the series of attacks towards the United States in New York City and Washington D.C. regions on September 11, 2001. Al-Qaeda, the Islamist militant group, was strongly believed and accused as the doer of the attacks. Such attacks of terrorism brought the concept of civilized vs. uncivilized between the West and Islam to the nadir. *Hijab*, which is one of Muslim prominent identities, has attracted lots of attention ever since.

In many Muslim societies, *hijab* is one of important aspects for Muslim women as an identity that differs them from others (non-muslim women) and also as a symbol of modesty or a mark of piety. It is an Arabic word meaning ‘barrier’, ‘partition’, or ‘separation’ which was commonly applied to the Prophet Muhammad’s wives in the renaissance of Islam. In its Islamic use, *hijab* has a broader meaning including modesty and behavior for both Muslim men and women. However, over centuries, the interpretation of *hijab* has transformed and became an umbrella term that is identically synonymous with head-covering, veil or headscarf worn by Muslim women so as to cover women’s whole body and leave face and hand clear in public (Cyril, 1989:156). One type that is most commonly worn in the West is a square scarf covering the head and neck leaving the face clear (retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk>, April 10, 2012). In this study, the articles chosen are the articles which focus on reporting hijab and its various terms such as veil, headscarf, headcovering or jilbab, which refer to a piece of clothing that cover women’s body, particularly on head, neck and bosom area, yet leaves face and hand clear.

In Indonesia, *hijab* itself is more popular as *jilbab* from the word Qur’an uses the word *jalabib*, which means an outer garment, a long gown covering the whole body, or a cloak covering the neck and bosom. It is common to see women wearing *hijab* in every stratum of Indonesian society since the religion of Islam is the majority in the country. Nowadays, the amount of Indonesian women wearing *hijab* is also increasing. Women can wear *hijab* freely without having fears of being judged or seen oppressed. The freedom of wearing *hijab* also triggers many designers to compete in creating modern styles of *hijab* with various

unconventional models and attractive colors. This freedom also invites more women, including the youth, to wear *hijab* and allows them to express themselves in such decent covers. The increasing amount of Muslim women wearing *hijab* is also caused by a so-called perspective of piousness that *hijab* is loaded with. Yet, it is believed that piousness is not the only reason why they wear *hijab*.

In America, there are approximately eight million Muslims living throughout the States. Some of them are immigrants who seek a better life and want to live the ‘American Dream’. They mostly come from the Middle East, South East Asia, South Asia, Turkey and also Africa. Some others were born in the States (taken from a video, *Islam An American Faith* published by Discover Islam). These Muslims contribute in their society as judges, police officers, armies, doctors, teachers, and many more.

Though the religion of Islam and also Muslims have a long history and have been settling in America since the 12th century, most Americans who stand for the West still see Islam and everything related to it from the occidental point of view. Edward Said proposed that Muslims are considered the opposite of the West, subordinate and barbaric and the relation between the West and Islam is portrayed as good vs. bad or civilized vs. uncivilized, especially after the September 11 attacks. Such perspectives influence the way *hijab* is seen and represented in the society.

Hijab becomes important to be studied in this research because it is considered the most enigmatic Islamic identity for both Americans and American Muslims compared to any other Islamic symbols (Hasan, 2004:35). *Hijab* is also considered against the values of liberty and equation for women which have been

foremost issues among the Americans and most western nations. For example, one of the most popular views of *hijab* seen by most pop culture mentions that *hijab* represents a symbol of subjugation towards Muslim women given by superior Muslim men (Bullock, 2002:XV). Surprisingly, though *hijab* has been seen as a symbol of subjugation, Muslim women who eventually keep wearing *hijab*, especially those who live in western nations, consider *hijab* as an empowerment for them as it affirms their agency and protects them from the lustful gaze of men (Byng, 2007).

The transitivity analysis, which is concerned with the transmission of ‘ideas’, is considered to fall within the area of ideational metafunction of language. It is chosen to be the main tool of revealing the representation of *hijab* because it enables the analysis of the experiential function of people’s perception of the world through the way they use language. As Halliday puts it, “language enables human beings to build a mental picture of reality, to make sense of what goes on around them and inside them” (1994: 106). This tool is also chosen because it is “an essential tool in the analysis of representation, which has already proved extremely illuminating in critical linguistics” (Fowler, 1991:70). It has a role in showing how a writer or a speaker encodes in language their mental picture of reality. With such function of language, the transitivity analysis is used to be able to reveal the representation of *hijab* in the New York Times newspaper.

The New York Times newspaper is chosen to be the corpus of the study because of two reasons. First, the New York Times newspaper is considered as one of prominent newspapers among U.S newspapers as it places the third largest newspaper among the top 100 U.S newspapers ranked by circulation. (retrieved

from <http://www.burrellesluce.com> on Thursday, January 12th 2012). It is also considered as one of influencing media which represents the voice of most Americans and especially the New Yorkers as the shocking tragedy of 9/11 took place in New York, The United States of America. Since this study only focuses on the representations of *hijab* that appear in textual level, this will be investigated through the transitivity system of ideational metafunction of M.A.K Halliday and concerned with three aspects of the clause: processes, participants and circumstances.

1.2 Research Problem

This study is to scrutinize: how is *hijab* represented in The New York Times newspaper?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to investigate the representation of *hijab* in the articles published by the New York Times newspaper.

1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study

In this thesis, the analysis focuses on the clauses in which *hijab* and its variation such as *head scarf*, *veil*, *jilbab* or *head covering* appear, either as participant or circumstance in the articles published by the New York Times newspaper from January 2009 – March 2012.

1.5 Significances of the Study

The result of this study is to enrich the writer and readers' knowledge and understanding of representation in media, especially the representation of hijab, which has nowadays been a sensitive and interesting issue in media, particularly on newspaper reports. Further, this study is also expected to be useful for the readers who are interested in studying transitivity analysis which can help them to master English and also apply it to investigate social issues appearing in any discourses even better. This study also aims to offer input and suggestion of thesis theme for students of the English Department of State University of Jakarta.

1.6 Previous Related Studies

There are many scholars who have conducted researches in revealing ideologies or representations in media using SFL before. Some of them also combined it with Critical Discourse Analysis, in order to get a deeper analysis towards certain issues in media. One of them was Rianne Kartikasari Subijanto from the University of Indonesia. In 2004, she conducted a research on the representation of Islam in the Time magazine. She compared how Islam is represented before and after the 9/11 using the SFL theory combined with Norman Fairclough's theory of CDA. She wanted to see how Islam in general is represented in western media as Islam has long been posited as the orient and the west as the occident. Matu and Lubbe (2007) also investigated the relation of language use and ideology in the editorials of three Kenyan newspapers by using ideological square of CDA. The findings suggest that linguistic choices in transitivity system play a fundamental role in revealing ideologies and stances of

the three Kenyan newspapers towards certain political issues brought up in the research.

There are also researchers who only focus on the SFL, especially the Transitivity system, as the base of their researches. For example, Nozomi Liao (2012) conducted a cross-cultural transitivity analysis towards newspaper reporting from three different countries (US, Australia and Japan). Here, she wanted to investigate the stances of each country over the whaling issue using transitivity analysis. Participants and processes in each clause were examined and the results suggested that transitivity analysis is a powerful tool to reveal their ideology and stance over the issue. T. Thyrhaya Zein, a lecturer in University of Sumatera Utara, also conducted a a transitivity analysis towards the representation of human and their relationship dimension with nature in Malay folklore. She discovered that the Malay people especially Melayu Serdang people tend to 'do' and 'contemplate' in their interactions with nature. In 2007, Lanchukorn Sriwimon also conducted a research titled *A Transitivity Analysis of the Representation of Thai Muslims in Bangkok Post*. The study aimed to investigate the language used in news articles that represent Muslims in Thailand. Transitivity analysis framework was used to conduct the study. The results of the study revealed that Muslim teachers, Thai Muslim students, and ponoh schools were portrayed as being involved in violent actions. It was also suggested that the newspaper might present a negative stereotype of Thai Muslims.