# CHAPTER I

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## 1.1. Background of the Study

Since a long time ago, people have been faced by the curiosity of knowledge. They always try to create as many new inventions as possible based on one main hope, that is the change into a better life for human beings. Now, in this modern era, there are various kinds of technologies offered to spoil human beings with all of their ease.

However, there is still one thing that cannot be changed. It is the need of communication. Basically, human beings are social creature that their life depends on the others. They cannot live alone, therefore, they need socialization in their life. In this case, communication as the main role in society is undeniable.

By communication, people can express what they feel and what they think of the others. According to McCombs and Becker (1979:5), communication can be defined as a process of involving some very complex human behaviors by both the sender and the receiver of the message. It means that communication enable people to have an interaction on both sides. Therefore, the sense of togetherness will emerge among them.

In order to support the need of communication in society, there are many kinds of media which are available. Some of them are newspapers and magazines as the mass media in society.

In these kinds of mass media, there is a certain column that contains some letters which are sent by the readers. Commonly, this kind of column can be categorized into two types. The first type contains the correspondence between the readers and the editorial staff, and the second type contains the correspondence among the readers themselves. Both of these two types are useful to make communication which may involve the readers and/or the editorial staffs, so that a magazine or newspaper will not be monotonous.

Based on this communication function, Whitaker et al.(2000:3) say that clarity in presenting the message is very important because audience members will misinterpret the message if they do not understand what is exactly being communicated by the sender. In this case, the writer of letters in mass media should write clearly in order to avoid misunderstanding from the readers. One tip that should be followed is the selection of specific language. Spencer Ray (1989:68) argued that:

> an age-old principle of communication is to choose the concrete over the abstract and the specific over the general. With both ideas and the words that express them, your communication will be most effective if you consistently deal in specific, concrete images. The more detailed support you have for a point, the more convicting it will be.

In other words, someone will have an effective communication with the others if he can explain his ideas more detail in specific language. Therefore, the readers should concern on this factor when they want to write a letter for mass media.

Vagueness, on the other hand, often emerges on some letters which are sent by the readers. Vagueness can be defined as lack of specification

(Kempson, 1977:124). This vagueness sometime makes readers difficult to understand the letters clearly.

Thus, this study tries to examine the vagueness which may emerge in those letters. In this case, the writer is interested in analyzing "Readers' Column" in *Jawa Pos* Newspaper.

This column contains some letters from the readers which are directed to the other readers for certain purposes, such as: to convey some information, criticism, complain, or opinions. In this case, not all the writers who wrote their letters obviously, so that other readers could not know exactly what they really meant. However, some vagueness which have been made whether intentionally or unintentionally will make some readers feel confuse in interpreting some certain languages used by the writer of letters in "Readers' Column".

The writer chooses "Readers' Column" in *Jawa Pos* Newspaper as the object of her study based on the consideration that *Jawa Pos* Newspaper is a well-known newspaper which is published in Surabaya. Furthermore, "Readers' Column" which is available on page 4 of *Jawa Pos* Newspaper, has become a good media of communication among the people from different status, role, race, and religion.

## 1.2. Statements of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, the major problems of this research are stated as follows :

1. Is there some vagueness which is relevant toward the context that emerges in some letters of "Readers' Column" in *Jawa Pos* Newspaper?

2. What types of vagueness appear on each letter of "Readers' Column " in *Jawa Pos* Newspaper ?

3. What types of vagueness most frequently emerge on "Reader's Column" in *Jawa Pos* Newspaper ?

## 1.3. Objective of the study

This study has some purposes which are stated as follows:

1. To find out some vagueness which is relevant toward the context that may emerge in some letters of "Readers' Column" in *Jawa Pos* Newspaper.

2. To identify the types of vagueness which appear on each letter of "Readers' Column" in *Jawa Pos* Newspaper

3. To compute the most frequently types of vagueness that usually emerge on "Readers' Column" in *Jawa Pos* Newspaper

## 1.4. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to be useful for the students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University who learn

vagueness as a part of the study of semantics. Moreover, the writer hopes that this study will give some contributions for the students of Widya Mandala Catholic University in general and also other people who want to make a good writing.

## 1.5. Scope and Limitation of the Study

Basically, the field of this study is semantics with a focus on the analysis of vagueness. In this case, the writer concerns on the types of vagueness which emerge in a word, phrase or even in a sentence.

Furthermore, the writer takes the "Readers' Column" in *Jawa Pos* Newspaper as the corpus of data. She limits it to the edition of 1-14 March 2001. The writer assumes that the two weeks edition of this newspaper is appropriate as the representative of *Jawa Pos* edition.

## 1.6. Theoretical Framework

This study is done within the framework of Semantics. In this case, the writer takes vagueness as the focus of her analysis. Since related with the object of the study, that is *Jawa Pos Newspaper*, the writer also includes the general theory of newspaper as the mass media. Moreover, the theory of writing is needed to support this research since the writer focuses her analysis on letters of "Readers' Column" in *Jawa Pos Newspaper*.

## 1.7. The Definition of Key Terms

There are some terms which are frequently used in this study. Then, the writer provides the definition of some terms in order to avoid misunderstanding from the readers. The definitions are as followed :

1. Semantics

   Semantics is the study of linguistic meaning (Katz, 1972:1). Furthermore, Graddol et al. (1994) also define semantics as the branch of linguistics that concerns with how meaning is expressed in language. Therefore, in this study, semantics is defined as a branch of linguistics focused on the study of meaning.

2. Vagueness

   Vagueness means lack of specification (Kempson, 1977:124). However, it also means a kind of doubtful meaning which pertains only to terms that have a decided sense but differ in degree (Beardsley, 1978:50). In this case, the writer prefer to use the first definition according to Kempson (1977:124) as the basic meaning of vagueness in this study.

3. Jawa Pos Daily Newspaper

   *Jawa Pos Daily Newspaper* is a national daily newspaper published in Surabaya.

4. Readers' Column

   "Readers' Column" is a special column in *Jawa Pos* Daily Newspaper printed on page 4 focusing on public opinion. It contains some letters from society written for some purposes such as: conveying information, criticism, complain,

or even giving opinion which are directed to the readers of Jawa Pos Daily Newspaper.

## 1.8. Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. The first one is introduction. It covers the background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, theoretical framework, definition of key terms, and also organization of the study. The second one contains about the review of related literature. Chapter three discusses the research method which consists of research design, instrument, procedure of collecting data, data analysis, and the subject. While in chapter four, there are data analysis and interpretation findings. Finally, the last chapter here is conclusion which covers summary and suggestion.