CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

II.1. Review of Related Theories

This study tries to analyze the virtual interaction among virtual identities within cyberspace. Virtual interaction is an interaction that emerges in virtual world, cyberspace, which is different with interaction or communication in corporeal world. The way of communication is indefinite since it across the time and space boundaries. Meanwhile, virtual identities are reproduced when making a virtual communication because the persons who communicate each other are not clear. They could be anyone or no one. Everytime they log in internet, they build new identities which are unreal. In this study, the writer uses the theories from the field of hyperreality which is proposed by Jean Baudrillard and theory of identity particularly virtual identity.

II.1.1. Theory of Hyperreality

The concept most fundamental to hyperreality is the simulation and the simulacrum. The simulation is characterized by a blending of reality and representation, where there is no clear indication of where the former stops and the later begins. The simulacrum is often defined as a copy with no original.

In postmodern culture, the society has become so dependent on models and maps that lose all contacts with the real world that precedes the map. Reality itself has begun merely to imitate the model, which now precedes and determines the real world. Baudrillard argues, as quoted by Doug Mann, that in a postmodern culture

dominated by TV, films, news media, and the Internet, the whole idea of a true or a false copy of something has been destroyed: all we have now are *simulations* of reality, which aren't any more or less real than the reality they simulate. We take maps of reality like television, film, etc. as more real than our actual lives - these simulacra (hyperreal copies) precede our lives. (Retrieved November 17, 2007, from webpages.ursinus.edu/rrichter/baudrillardone.html)

The process of simulation procedes a condition in which reality has been replaced by simulacra. It is called hyperreal – a situation in which the distinction between the real and the imaginary implodes. Another basic characteristic of the hyperreal is the dislocation of object materiality and concrete spatial relations.

Simulation, insofar is opposed to representation. Representation starts from the principle that the sign and the real are equivalent. In contrast, simulation starts from the utopia of this principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as reversion and death sentence of every reference. Whereas representation tries to absorb simulation by interpreting it as false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation as itself a simulacrum (Retrieved November 17, 2007, from http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Baudrillard/Baudrillard_Simulacra.html).

Baudrillard maps the transformation from representation to simulacrum in four 'successive phases of the image':

1. It is the reflection of a basic reality. The image is a good appearance: the representation is of the order of sacrament. This is exemplified by gothic

paintings depict the birth of Jesus as the true son of God, replete with signs of his divinity.

2. It masks and perverts a basic reality. The image is an evil appearance: of the order of malefice. For example, Baroque paintings of an impossibly beautiful Jesus ascending to the heavens like Superman, with the Madonna watching with a blissful look on her face.

3. It masks the absence of a basic reality. The image plays at being an appearance: it is of the order of sorcery. For instance, a framed reproduction of a Renaissance painting of the Madonna hung over one's bed, right beside a velvet image of Elvis.

4. It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum. The image is no longer in the order of appearance at all, but of simulation like a virtual reality female talking head reads news headlines to us over the Internet. Is she real or fake? The question has lost its meaning - there is no original to compare her to.

II.1.2. Theory of Identity

Traditionally, identity has been regarded as a singular, unique entity. According to Alford (in Whitebrook, 2001: 6), the concept of individual identity represents the convergence of the psychological development of the self with the

social position of the individual. Identity is expressed in language through speaking and writing. We understand our lives as story or history. Likewise, identity requires the telling of stories both by and about the self (Whitebrook, 2001: 22).

In the physical world there is an inherent unity to the self, for the body provides a compelling definition of identity. The norm is: one body, one identity. In contrast, in the cyberspace, it is difficult to be sure of the identity. The identity is can easily redoubled and reconstructed. People can pretend to be somebody else, with another name, another age, another race and another gender. They can construct an identity by creating their own digital narrative. The status of a human identity becomes challenged by the substitution through technical devices. On the other hand, cyberspace enables us to view ourselves and think about identity in a different and new way. One of the most important factors in the construction of online identities is the level of dissociation and integration. Online communication facilitates the enhancement, dissociation and integration of the multiple aspects of one's identity.

II.2. Theoritical Framework

The semiotics terminology in hyperreality that proposed by Baudrillard and the theory of sign relation that proposed by Barthes are used in this study to observe the signs found in objects of the study.

II.2.1. Hypersemiotics

Hypersemiotics is a study about production of sign that across reality and roles in forming hyperreality world (Piliang, 2003: 49). This hyperreal world is created by using *hyper-signs* and *hyper-signification* in reality discription so that the distinction between reality/non reality, sign/reality is imploded. Hyper-signs are signs which across the principle boundary, and normal function as communication and information instrument. In other word, a sign could become hyper-sign when it loses contact with the reality which is represented.

Baudrillard explains (in Piliang, 2003: 53) hyper-sign requires packaging, fetishism, surprise, provocation, and eye catching as commodity logic itself. The sign packaging and the media are sometimes more interesting than its meaning. People will be driven to the ecstasy of the sign and the media itself through technology of simulation and imagology and then forget the meaning and value. Marshall McLuhan says it as 'the medium is the message' (in Piliang, 2003: 54). Moreover, Baudrillard explains it as the concept of implosion (in Grace, 2000: 97). Signifier/signified becomes sign; reality/appearance becomes simulation; cause/effect becomes information, not in a revolutionary transformation but through a collapse that goes unnoticed. The implosion emerges in the interval of the reality and its mediated presentation.

II.2.2. Typology of Hyper-Sign

According to Baudrillard (qtd in Piliang, 2003: 55-59), the concept and typology of hyper-sign could be explained as below;

The typology of hyper-sign:

- ***Recycled sign*** is a sign that has been used to express the past events, now it is used again to express the present events. Sign in past was plugged out from its origin context of time and space, then recontextualisationed in new time-space context for certain purposes.

Sign [A] in context time-space [A] used to express context of time-space [B]

Example: Taking pictures from Tsunami disaster in Aceh (2004) to represent the flood in East Java (2008) for news purpose.

- ***Artificial sign*** is a sign which is manipulated by technology (digital, computer graphic, simulation), that has no reference in reality. These signs are very dependent to technology capability in producing imagology. It builds artificial realities that only exist in digital reality – the medium is the message.

Sign [A] used to express itself reality [A]

Example: Artificial pictures on TV represents artificial reality such as picture of advertisement that shows a human who half male and half female.

- ***Superlative sign*** is a sign that expressed in a model of *hyper-signification* especially through modulation effect that far bigger than what in its reality. It such a reality intensification, increasing effect, extremity meaning. There is a multiplicity effect on a sign that results hyperbolism or superlative. Baudrillard recognizes this sign as a pure hyper-sign.

Sign [A'''] is used to express the reality which is not more than [A]

Example: Hollywood science-fiction movies.

II.2.2. Relation of signs

According to Barthes, the aim of semiological research is to reconstitute the functioning of the systems of signification rather than language in accordance with the process typical of any structuralist activity, which is to build a simulacrum of the objects under observation (qtd in Sunardi, 2004: 37). In semiotics analysis, the role of signs relation is very essential since the duty is to reconstruct the relation system that is invisible.

There are three relation of signs; *symbolic, paradigmatic, and syntagmatic.* The relation that is used in this study is the second relation; *paradigmatic* relation. Barthes argues the paradigmatis consciousness is a formal imagination; it sees the signifier linked, as if in profile, to several virtual signifiers which is close to and distinct from, in a time (qtd in Sunardi, 2004: 54). Paradigmatic relation is external relation that refers to relation of a sign with other signs in one class or system.

Paradigmatic relation functions to integrate several sub-system into an entire system. Paradigmatic consciousness needed to give meaning to objects or arrange objects into an intellegible union so that it becomes a sign.

II.3. Review of Related Studies

In this study, the writer takes three studies that she conciders closely related to her study.

❖ The first study is *Profiles as Conversation: Networked Identity Performance on Friendster* conducted by Danah Boyd and Jeffrey Heer (2003). In their study, they examine communication aspects of profile within the friendster service. They use two methodologies: ethnography and visualization. The ethnography component consists of a 9-month participant-observation during 2003, including interviews, qualitative surveys and focus groups with over 200 friendster early adopters. The communication aspects in physical are bodies (audiences), conversation, and other elements of context, but in digital environtment, the audiences are unknown.

Conversation within friendster occurs through profiles. Profile could be a conversation since it shares information and ideas among the members. A profile represents individual embodiment and interpreted as conversational anchors like clothing. Initiating conversation in friendster is done by using some features in profile that considered as an offer to make a friend or anything else such as 'add as friend', 'send message', 'invite to group', and

'add comment'. Besides, the photograph can also lead the conversation by attracting anyone who sees it. In conclusion, the friendster profile builds digital body, a social creation, an initiator of conversation, and medium for ongoing conversation in multiple modalities. It proves that though the audience is invisible and unknown, the conversation is possible to emerge within digital culture.

❖ The second is a study conducted by Satiti Ingastin (2006) entitled *Nesta's Appearance Viewed from Hyperreality in Hopkins' Mates, Dates, and Sequin Smiles*. The study analyzes the appearance of the main characther of the story in novel, Nesta. Nesta becomes inferior, she thinks that her appearance is imperfect because wearing braces. She can not attract boys' attention and can not become an actress since she looks horrible. Nesta's inferiority caused by perception of good look is basically the factor shape self-confidence and social status in society is determined by outer look.

The concept of hyperreality regarding appearance shaped through movies, soap operas, and teenage magazines which Nesta often watches. The medias have made simulation and simulacrum about the requirement to be an actress, potential girlfriend, and getting high social status. And Nesta tries to imitate the maps created by the media to achieve ideal life; has perfect appearance. Finally, Satiti concludes that Nesta's self-confidence is formed by the concept of hyperreality regarding appearance.

❖ The last study is conducted by Kathryn Everly entitled *Textual Violence and the Hyperreal in De todo lo visible y lo invisible by Lucía Etxebarria*. Everly uses the theory proposed by Barthes, the death of the author, and Baudrillarian hyperreality to analyze the manipulation of traditional narrative structure in Etxebarria's novel. She shows how Etxebarria created a textual hyperreality through ruptures, incisions, and breaks in the textual space of the novel. She found that in *De todo lo visible y lo invisible*, the author explores violence thematically and structurally. The author creates reality layers within the novel and creates a meta-textual commentary highlighting the narrative constructed.

This study deals with those studies in hyperreality and Friendster. However, there are significant differences. This study analyzes the hyperreal identity which is definitely virtual in Friendster profile by semiotically interpreting the signs found there.