

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Research

Suicide or 'suicidium' in Latin means the act of intentionally causing one's own death (Oxford, 2008; Stedman, 2006). It is also defined as a deliberate act of self-killing as one's purpose (Leenars, 2004). Actually, suicide results from an excess of positive definitions over negative definitions of itself (Stack, 2005). According to Blood, et al. (2001), Michel, et al. (2000) and Fekete, et al. (1998), positive definitions can include the sensational coverage, glorification of the deceased, focusing on the positive aspects of the victims and rationalization. Meanwhile, negative definitions of suicide include focusing on the victim's physical disfigurement and pain, stressing that suicide is wrong and discussing solutions or alternative to suicide such as counseling.

Every suicide is a tragedy and there are many suicide attempts for each death. The impact on families, friends and communities is devastating and far-reaching, even long after persons dear to them have taken their own lives (WHO, 2014). In general, suicide is the result of despair which often associated with mental disorder, depression, bipolar disorder, alcohol dependence and drug abuse (Hawton, 2009:373).

Hawton (2009) notes that suicide includes factors causing stress such as financial difficulties to other problems in interpersonal relationships. Then the methods performed in suicide attempts varies between countries, either by

hanging one's own self, drinking poison or using firearms and other dangerous acts that partly related to the availability of effective means.

In all over the world, approximately 0.5 to 1.4 percent of people die by suicide, about 12 per 100,000 persons per year (Värnik, 2012). Three quarters of suicides globally occur in the low and middle income countries (WHO, 2016). Rates of completed suicides are generally higher in men than in women, ranging from 1.5 times as much in the developing world to 3.5 times in the developed world (WHO, 2014). Suicide is generally most common among those over the age of 70; however, in certain countries those aged between 15 and 30 are at the highest risk (WHO, 2014).

Other study from national mortality file tapes which cover 21 states explores the relationship between occupation and suicide for 32 occupational groups (Stack, 2010). From 9,499 suicides and 134,386 deaths with all causes, there are 15 occupations with either significantly higher or lower risk than the rest of the working-age population. Stack (2010) points out that there are dentists, artists, machinists, auto mechanics and carpenters on higher risk while lower risk notes clerks, elementary school teachers and cooks.

Actually, a suicide case becomes shocking news because it belongs to criminal action. Especially, if the doer of case is one of influential person including famous public figures, artists, writers and others. In here, the treatment in investigating the case will be different and particular. The implication of their suicides is ironically viewed since they are notably a role model for public yet ends their life tragically. The simillar thing happen on one of American poet, novelist and short story writer

namely Sylvia Plath, who took her own life in 1963 by placing her head in the oven with the gas turned on (Feinmann, 1993).

Sylvia Plath was best known for her novel *The Bell Jar* (1963) and her poetry collection *The Colossus* (1960) and *Ariel* (1965). She was born on October 27, 1932 in Boston, Massachusetts and committed suicide on February 11, 1963 in London. During her life, she was a gifted and trouble poet, known for the confessional style for her work. Her interest in writing emerged at her early age and she started out by keeping a journal, then it becomes collection of Plath's correspondence between 1950 and 1963 which reveals the source of her inner turmoil entitled *Letters Home* (1975).

Related to her death, the investigation needs to be applied to reveal the factors behind. Observing and collecting information related to the suicide case are necessary to find out the death mystery. In Plath's case, she does not write a suicide letters like others public figures or artists usually do, but her poems do it naturally. These evidences can be as the tools to start identification of her suicide motive. The concentration on the wordings system of poem verses actually depicts the message of the writer.

Furthermore, the sequence changes of poems idea from time to time encodes the function of their occurrence as the representation of writer's urges before deciding suicide at the end. In other words, the investigation in term of linguistic used in Plath's poems can be one of ways to unveil the suicide unseen motive. This is due to linguistic patterns have their own power to uncover a criminal act.

The case of Plath's suicide can be investigated through linguistics phenomenon and seen through her several poems, especially in six of her confessional poems entitled "Full Fathom Five" (1958), "The Colossus" (1959), "I am Vertical" (1961), Ariel (1962), "Lady Lazarus" (1962) and her last poem before committing suicide "Edge" (1963). Different from other Plath's poems containing death idea, these six selected poems seems like having a clear connection one another, including the change of times and ideas. These poems have several similarities that fulfill certain criterias such as representing suicide motives, sequence changes of death ideas and containing lexical metaphora concepts.

All of Plath's selected poems manifest the sequence changes of death ideas or deliver different perspective of death. They are "Full Fathom Five" and "The Colossus" that show how death stands as an unacceptable thing. Then, "I am Vertical" points out death as an avoidable choice so that the speaker seems to being force in choosing death. Meanwhile, "Ariel" and "Lady Lazarus" promote death as a gate for a rebirth and "Edge" as an expression of the limitation of despair and everythings seem to come to the end. In other word, "Edge" delivers final solution to commit suicide based on the poet's idea.

The effort or way to examine suicide case language, including effort to find the suicidal motives is originally related to forensic linguistics. Olsson (2008:128) states that the type such as emergency calls, ransom demands, suicide letters, final death row statement, and confessions or denials belong to forensic linguistics. Besides, forensic linguistics is essentially an applied linguistics field involving the relationship between language, law, and crime.

Therefore, forensic linguistics is commonly referred to the study of legal texts language. As the material object of linguistics, language phenomenon and cases can be empowered into the realm of law, either in analysis and investigation level of crime or in courts process (Sawirman, et al., 2014:2). McMenamin (2001:67) describes forensic linguistics is a scientific study of linguistics that is applied to forensic purposes and contexts. In its study, the study of legal text languages include various types and forms of text analysis including analyzing linguistics documents of legal entities, personal wills and judgments. It also refers to sustain efforts in making the language of law can be more understood by people.

Nevertheless, if this research merely follows the basic rule of forensic linguistics, the result will not complete. Since the main concern is about the sequence changes of death ideas in Plath's selected poems, the most important part of the analysis must be related to linguistic phenomenon which show these changes. There are lexical metaphor used and poetic devices analysis. This research uses Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) which is developed by Michael Halliday especially on lexical metaphor concept. Then, there is poetic devices analysis proposed by L. G. Alexander to show the relation between the selected poems and the case of poet's suicide.

These patterns are used by suicidal person in order to display her feelings. Different from most of suicidal letters which have features that are expressed through direct statement, poems usually used indirect statement. Poems lean to utilize the power of poetic devices and its construction which mostly can be understood by comprehending the whole text and related context, including lexical metaphor which refers one thing to another.

Focusing on SFL, this approach considers language as a social semiotic system (Halliday, 2004). Halliday’s idea which is used in this research is focusing on metaphor in SFL, especially lexical metaphor. Lexical metaphor can arise with a variety of realizations that commonly state phenomena seen from two perspectives to understand the hidden message from the selected poems’ idea. There are several examples of lexical metaphor data that are analyzed by using linguistics term of Halliday (2004) as seen below.

1. Of your burial move me (“Full Fathom Five”, line 22)

burial – move : noun-verb concept

The comparison concept: inanimate object as human

Source	Target
Move means go in specified direction or manner; change position. Move is one of physical activities which can be done by human. It is including move thing from one place to another place or from one situation to another situation.	Burial is the ceremony at which someone’s body is buried. It relates to death and unconditional thing. The death of one person can cause a deep sadness of other person.

2. My hours are married to shadow (“The Colossus”, line 28)

hours – married: noun-verb concept

The comparison concept: inanimate object as human

Source	Target
Marry means join in marriage. Marry relates to one of humans experience in life. Humans are born, grown up, become youth and make a friend. They are becoming adult, falling in love and married. Then, they get older and die.	Hour is a period of time equal to a twenty-fourth part of a day and night and divided into 60 minutes. Hours include in certain thing which get in touch with people as similar as places, or people’s consideration to something which influential.

3. Compared with me, a tree is immortal (“I am Vertical”, line 8)

tree – me: noun-noun concept

The comparison concept: plant as human

Source	Target
Human is relating to or characteristic of humankind. Human has several characteristics, one of them relates to no man is immortal. But, in the real life, people sometimes forget their absolute condition as their life should be forever.	Tree is a woody perennial plant. As similar as human, no matter what, tree will be wilted one day although there are species which sometimes called as immortal flowers.

4. And I Am the arrow (“Ariel”, line 26-27)

I – arrow: noun-noun concept

The comparison concept: human as inanimate object

Source	Target
Arrow is a weapon consisting of a thin, straight stick with a sharp point, designed to be shot from a bow. The aim of arrow is hitting the target. In order to make its function maximal, all parts must be appropriated. The larger the diameter of the bows, head arrow and wings, the greater the resulting damage.	Human is relating to or characteristic of humankind. Human must consider many thing before doing certain action, including the good and the right. But every measure must give certain impact, whether it is positive of negative.

5. And like the cat, I have nine times to die (“Lady Lazarus”, line 21)

I – cat: noun-noun concept

The comparison concept: human as animal

Source	Target
Cat is small domesticated carnivorous mammal with soft fur, a short snout and retractable claws. Cat often called as animal with nine souls. It is due to unique ability that makes it can fall without injury. It happens due to cat has a balance and regulatory system in its body so it does not die easily.	Human is relating to or characteristic of humankind. Human is not eternal and he will die one day. But, death relates to fate so that it does not happen just at the moment.

6. The woman is perfected, her dead (“Edge”, line 1-2)

dead – perfected: noun-adjective concept

The comparison concept: death as human’s characteristic

Source	Target
Perfect means having all the required or desirable elements, qualities or characteristics. It is one of the adjectives that refer and use to human.	Dead means no longer alive. It is something unconditionally. Human can experience it in bad or good way. Being dead in a good condition, after finishing all tasks and doing good things during alive can be called as perfect death.

By seeing lexical metaphor used in every selected poem, it is known that the character of something can be attached to something else based on poet’s point of view. The used of lexical metaphors are merely some part of the flare up or emotional explosion of the writer. She prefers those clauses, the undirect one to speak about death rather than direct emotion.

In order to understand death idea on the samples, it is not enough by examining poems through lexical metaphor used only, it needs to see the whole



context including lexical meaning and death context. Definitely, there is something hidden behind the construction of all selected poems, which leads to its function in representing the motive of writer's suicidal action.

Besides, the analysis of poetic devices used proposed by L.G. Alexander in his book entitled *Poetry and Prose Appreciation for Overseas Student* (1963) is also needed as a blade to dig out the mystery hidden behind the construction of the poems. There are consist of three devices namely structural devices, sense devices and sound devices which are analysed in order to find the meaning and the representation of the main ideas of the poems.

Moreover they are expected to show the sequence changes of death ideas lexical in the selected poems as the depiction of poet's depression evidence before committing suicide. It is including the used of contrast as one of structural devices in poetic devices analysis. The selected poems show different ideas from one poem to another to distinguish the idea of death and life.

As important as the use of lexical metaphor and poetic devices analysis, this research also governs another concept as constraint to social perspective namely suicide theory by Durkheim (1897). It is used in strengthening the death ideas on poems which have correlation to Plath's own motive before committing suicide, The theory aims to justify the context of situation of text and see suicide types. The theory is expected to give contribution to comprehend how Plath expressed her idea of death sequentially from unaccept death to commit suicide. Hence, the concealed reasons of suicide in term of forensic perspective will be accomplished.

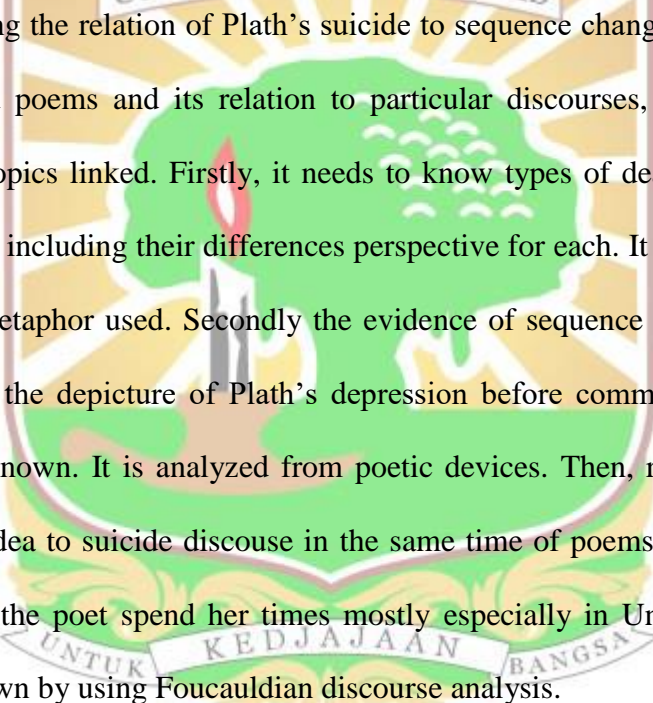
On the other side, Plath's selected poems which are stand as her own death evidence are identified on general or public annihilation since its language practice is a part of discourse on something. Discourse itself is a term used by various disciplines, ranging from politics, sociology, linguistic, psychology, communication and so forth. In linguistic study, discourse analysis is a reaction of formal linguistic form that pays more attention to the unit of words, phrases or sentences without seeing the interrelationship between the elements.

According to Foucault, people must cease once and for all to describe the power effects in negative terms. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth and actually the individual and knowledge that may gained of him belong to this production (Foucault, 1991:194). So that this research deals with works by examining related discourses that affect the texts by using the idea of French philosopher named Michel Foucault who writes a book entitled *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of A Prison* (1991) about power central regimes to individual construction in nineteenth century. His concept relates to discourse that study the role in preserving power, language never seems to present reality as it is, but it constructs reality, including Plath's selected poems which construct reality of her suicide by language used.

Referring to all description above and because there is no researchers who attempt to combine and relate all the concepts used as one, so it decides to find out Plath's representation of sequence changes of death idea in her selected poems namely "Full Fathom Five", "The Colossus", "I am Vertical", "Ariel", "Lady Lazarus" and "Edge". It is including the relation between sequence changes of death ideas in poems and Plath's own suicide. The research is done throughout the

analysis of lexical metaphor used and poetic devices which lead specific motivation of Plath to commit suicide. Then there is poems' relation to other discourses on death which emerged at the same time in having a role in preserving the power. Therefore, this research is entitled "Lexical Metaphor Used in Sylvia Plath's Selected Poems as a Depiction of Sequence Changes of Death Ideas and Its Relation to Poet's Suicide".

## 1.2 Scope of the Research



In discussing the relation of Plath's suicide to sequence change of death ideas in her selected poems and its relation to particular discourses, there are some particular subtopics linked. Firstly, it needs to know types of death ideas on the selected poems including their differences perspective for each. It can be analyzed from lexical metaphor used. Secondly the evidence of sequence change of those death ideas as the depiction of Plath's depression before committing suicide is needed to be known. It is analyzed from poetic devices. Then, relation between Plath's death idea to suicide discouse in the same time of poems are written and same place of the poet spend her times mostly especially in United States also need to be known by using Foucauldian discourse analysis.

Data in this research are written language and especially focuses on six selected poems which have clear connection one another, manifest death perspective in different ways, represent sequence changes of death ideas and contain lexical metaphor concept. The poems are taken from its compilation in *The Collected Poems* (1981) by Sylvia Plath edited by Ted Hughes. The reseacher focuses on sequence change of death ideas in poems to seek out poet's depression

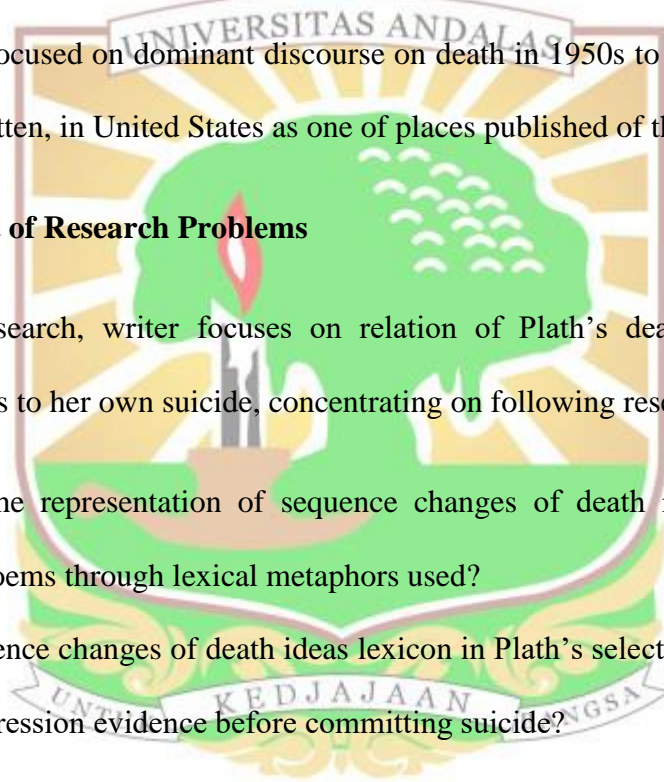
evidence before committing suicide. So that the researcher firstly finds out the different ideas of death, then separates the different one and unites the same.

Every phrase and clause in every poems' line will be interpreted by lexical metaphor used, poetic devices or their construction and their meaning lexically, grammatically and based on whole context. Then, the writer looks for other suicide discourses on particular time and place to prove that the death discourse is really standing out and aims to preserve the power of public alienation. As the limitation, it focused on dominant discourse on death in 1950s to 1960s when the poems are written, in United States as one of places published of the poems.

### **1.3 Statement of Research Problems**

In this research, writer focuses on relation of Plath's death idea on her selected poems to her own suicide, concentrating on following research questions.

1. What is the representation of sequence changes of death ideas in Plath's selected poems through lexical metaphors used?
2. How sequence changes of death ideas lexicon in Plath's selected poems depict poet's depression evidence before committing suicide?
3. What is the relation between lexical changes of death ideas in Plath's selected poems and suicide discourse in United States in having a role in preserving alienation power?



## 1.4 Objectives of the Research

The purposes of this research are elaborated as follows:

1. to identify the representation of sequence change of death ideas in Plath's selected poems through lexical metaphors used;
2. to explain the sequence change of death ideas lexicon in Plath's selected poems as the depiction of poet's depression evidence before committing suicide; and
3. to find out the relation between lexical changes of death ideas in Plath's selected poems and suicide discourse in United States in having a role in preserving alienation power.

## 1.5 Significance of the Research

This research actually is intended to enrich the development of linguistics, since there is not many researchers who discuss about the relation between language and law especially language of suicide. This idea actually includes in the study of forensic linguistics which finds out language evidence to reveal criminal action, one of them is suicidal case. Moreover it connects literature and linguistics knowledge in the analysis because this reseach conducts forensic linguistics study in poems' language used which consist of lexical metaphor used, poetic devices and its relation to other suicide discourses. The writer really hopes that this research gives some contributions.

The contribution of this research is distinguished into two. Firstly, it relates to practical contributions which aims to help the reader understand more about

forensic linguistics implementation on suicide language, the readers are able to recognize implementation of forensic linguistics in language style of poems, it gives contribution to other researchers who are interested in analyzing forensic linguistics on literatures' language, its relation to related discourse and as a reference to community for having more attention to language used of people in trouble. It is in order to avoid criminal case of suicide. Secondly, as the theoretical contribution, the research provides a solution in forensic linguistics study, discourse analysis and language used especially lexical metaphor in implementing the approaches the ways to know the motive of doing criminal action

