

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Background of the Research

The phenomenon of language used in the discourse of hoax of Covid-19 starts to cause conflicts of racism and hatred as the impacts of discourse in the society, especially in Indonesia. Starting from word, phrase, clause and sentence, the language elements that make up this hoax discourse often cause anxiety among readers. According to Mastel Survey (2019), the hoax epidemic has become an Indonesian problem that can, among other things, created divisions, disturb the harmony of society, brought about political instability, and caused security disturbances that may potentially hamper national development.

Since the Covid-19 case was first discovered in November 2019 in China, fake news, which is here referred to as hoax, related to the Covid-19 has attracted people attention in various media platforms, especially on the Internet and social media along with the Internet usage continues to increase (*Statista*: 2019). Thus, the hoax discourse on Covid-19 is found attacking various objects.

This hoax attacks China, Chinese people, and people of Chinese descendent. It attacks Indonesia, people in a governmental position, attacks products and businesses, attacks community organization and religion, and attacks other nations and individuals. This research shows the hoax of Covid-19 attacks by analyzing the hoax clause by using Halliday's Transitivity system. Then, the

discourse movements are analyzed by using the BREAK theory proposed by Sawirman (2014).

Hoax is also translated as fake news. Walsh (2007), in her book entitled "Sins against Science: The Scientific Media Hoaxes of Poe, Twain, and Others", explains that the term of hoax or fake news is an English term that has existed since the industrial era. It is estimated that it first appeared in 1808. The origin of hoax term is believed to have existed for hundreds of years before, namely, *hocus* from the spell *hocus pocus*. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, a hoax is an act intended to make somebody believe something that is not true, especially something unpleasant. Thus, hoax is information that contains untruth. Since the development of communication technology today, and more easily anyone spreads the news, hoax also disperses rapidly.

Halliday & Matthiessen (2014: 1) and Halliday & Hasan (1976) explain that when people speak or write, they produce text, and text is what listeners and readers engage with and interpret. The term 'text' refers to any instance of language, in any medium, that makes sense to someone who knows the word; we can characterize text as language functioning in context. Language is, in the first instance, a resource for making meaning, thus the text is a process of making meaning in context. In conclusion, based on the above definition of text and hoax, text on hoax can alter meaning that contain a negative context.

Furthermore, Olsson (2008: 1) argues that if a text is somehow implicated in a legal or criminal context, then it is a forensic text. Then, hoax can be glossed as a text that brings legal or criminal context, which is also

strengthened by Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 19 of 2016 article 45A paragraph (1) which reads:

“Setiap Orang yang dengan sengaja dan tanpa hak menyebarkan berita bohong dan menyesatkan yang mengakibatkan kerugian konsumen dalam Transaksi Elektronik sebagaimana dimaksud dalam Pasal 28 ayat (1) dipidana dengan pidana penjara paling lama 6 (enam) tahun dan/atau denda paling banyak Rp1.000.000.000,00 (satu miliar rupiah).”

'Any person who intentionally and without the right to spread false and misleading news that results in consumer losses in Electronic Transactions as referred to in Article 28 paragraph (1) shall be liable to a maximum imprisonment of 6 (six) years and/or a maximum fine of Rp 1,000,000,000.00 (one billion rupiahs).'

(Translated by the writer)

An example of hoax can be seen from the clause which is retrieved from *Menkominfo* hoax report from www.kominfo.go.id posted on April 18th, 2020.

“China menuding Indonesia sebagai Sumber Virus Corona”
'China accuses Indonesia as the source of the Coronavirus'

In this clause, two nations are involved, China and Indonesia. This hoax uses the verbal group “*menuding*” ‘accuses’ which have a negative context. The verbal group “*menuding*” is usually used for charging someone with an offense or crime. This clause can potentially provoke the hatred to “China” because China has accused Indonesia as the Coronavirus source. The noun “*China*” is combined with the verb “*menuding*” to create the hatred of China.

Hoax on Covid-19 against China emerges massively since the Covid-19 case was first discovered in November 2019¹ in China. Covid-19 is caused by a new virus called SARS-CoV-2², which is a type of Coronavirus. SARS-CoV-2 first infected one of Wuhan residents in China. Since then, the virus has spread so quickly that the Chinese government had decided to lockdown Wuhan on January 23, 2020³. The news shocked the world. All international media, including Indonesian, reported it massively. Hoax on Covid-19 is widespread and even more frightening than Covid-19 itself. One of the hoax impacts is provoking racism against China.

Racism is the unfair treatment of people who belong to a different race; violent behavior towards them (Oxford Learner's Dictionary). Also, racism is the belief that some races of people are better than others. Racism can be determined by negative sentiment, utterance to other ethnic groups. As ever appeared in western countries, those are the discursive reproduction of ethnic prejudice and racism within the dominant white group and the forms of everyday racism in talk between majority and minority members (e.g. slur, impoliteness, unfounded accusations) (Essed, 1991).

Racism-based attacks and discrimination against Chinese ethnic have increased throughout the world since the discovery of the novel Coronavirus in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. This anti-Chinese sentiment is progressively

¹ Reported by health.detik.com. *Dugaan Kasus Pertama Virus Corona di China Terdeteksi pada November 2019*. Downloaded on July 8, 202.

² Reported by kompas.com. *Mengenal Hubungan SARS-CoV-2 dan Covid-19 Kaitannya Virus Corona, Berikut Penjelasannya...* Downloaded on July 8, 2020.

³ Reported by news.detik.com. *Cerita dan Pelajarandari "Lockdown" Wuhan*. Downloaded on July 8, 2020.

dangerous because it is worsened by the hoax discourse that has increasingly marginalized this ethnic group. According to Himawan (2020), anti-Chinese violence has occurred in Indonesia for decades, starting from the anti-China riots in May 1998. Chinese Indonesian people were victims of rape, murder, and their houses and shops were burned. In Indonesia, people of Chinese descent control the Indonesian economy. Some of them are very rich even though they are only about 2% of the Indonesian population. It has been more than two decades since the incident occurred, but discrimination and hatred against Chinese ethnic still exists today. The Covid-19 pandemic in Wuhan, China, has become new ammunition to attack the Chinese in Indonesia again.

The fake news could deceive all generations who use the internet on their phones. Not only the millennial generations are known as digital natives, but also, the previous generations are sometimes fooled by the false information that has been designed in such a way because it utilizes sophisticated tricks and easily wins the trust of hoax recipients. The hoax that benefits the Covid-19 pandemic were quickly delivered to the readers. They could enter via instant messengers (e.g., Whatsapp, Line, or Facebook messenger, etc.), social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) or some internet blogs.

There are 633 hoax reports on the coronavirus issue found by *Kemenkominfo* (Ministry of Communication and Information) released on May 2, 2020. The hoaxes are in the form of videos, pictures (photos), and written texts. This hoax can also seel people toward the fact about this pandemic. This hoax is also found to provoke racism issue against China, the nation where this virus case

firstly appeared. As reported by Tirto.id⁴, negative sentiment against Chinese ethnic disperses internationally. Several Vietnamese restaurants stuck the sign of "No Chinese" beyond their restaurants. In Japan, hashtag *#ChineseDon'tComeToJapan* had become a trending topic on Twitter. This research focuses on the hoax report related to racism against China in Indonesia during Covid-19 Pandemic.

Therefore, there are at least four reasons why this research is conducted. First, the hoax of Covid-19 is a crime that uses written language to commit the deception. Thus, the linguistic analysis is needed to reveal the way how hoax language is presented. Second, hoax during the Covid-19 Pandemic will contribute harmful impacts to a country, especially Indonesia. Third, the hoax on Covid-19 is a real threat that worsens the problematic situation. Indonesia's government has determined that the hoax is a crime. People who spread will be punished with a maximum fine of 1 billion as stated in Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 19 of 2016 article 45A paragraph (1). Lastly, with the rampant spread of this hoax, people need to be educated in countering the hoax discourse so that harmony and peace amongst ethnic groups can be realized in Indonesia.

The basis of this research is the linguistic features that appear in the Covid-19 hoax discourse. These linguistic features are analyzed using the Componential Analysis by Nida (1975) and the transitivity system proposed by Halliday (1994). Hoax discourse of Covid-19 uses verbal groups that provoke the hatred to China (Indonesian Chinese, Chinese immigrant, Chinese businesses, and

⁴Reported by Tirto.id. Gelombang Diskriminasi dan Rasisme yang Muncul Akibat Hoaks Corona. Downloaded on July 10, 2020.

Chinese government), the hatred to Indonesian government, the hatred to celebrity's personal figure, the hatred to the medical practitioners, the hatred to political figures and the hatred to Muslim community and organization. To analyze the movement of the discourse, we involve the BREAK theory introduced by Sawirman (2014). BREAK is an abbreviation for *Basis* (Basis), *Relasi* (Relation), *Ekulibrium* (Equilibrium), *Aktualisasi* (Actualization), and *Keberlanjutan* (Continuity) of discourse. BREAK continues this study of how this discourse plays on misleading information. Lastly, the theory of Discourse and Racism by Dijk (2004) also supports this analysis.

Equilibrium discourse is another reason for choosing this study. The presence of equilibrium discourse in this study is to counter the spread of hoax discourse. BREAK offers a comprehensive frame for dissecting each discourse linguistically on discourse base features. This theory compares and traces the power of each discourse on the equilibrium features of the discourse by relating it to the relevant context. Not only reaching the point of comparison, this theory also provides a place to evaluate each discourse concerning the factual level. After going through these stages, solutions will also be provided so that the objectivity of the analysis is maintained.

1.2. The Scope of the Research

The limitation of this research is that the data focused on the hoax discourse of Covid-19. The data are taken based on hoax reports on the coronavirus issue found by *Kemenkominfo* (Ministry of Communication and

Information) released on May 2, 2020. All reports related to China are included in the data. The hoax reports are grouped as primary discourse. Besides, to compare the movement, the researcher needs secondary discourse, taken from the website *turnbackhoax.id*.

The researcher limits the research on the hoax discourse in the form of written text. Krishnamurthy (2003) argues that written documents have a significant impact because they can be read and re-read by the consumer, shared with friends and colleagues, photocopied or faxed, and once they are archived, acquire permanency and public accessibility. Besides, the survey of Mastel in 2017 and 2019 shows that the hoax discourse in the form of text stood in the highest percentage of other forms of Hoax received by people. Moreover, the written text is more convenient to disperse than other forms, and it contains more complex language features.

1.3. The Identification of the Problem

Regarding the research objective, Litosseliti (2010: 10) stated that "a set of research questions should be formulated in ways that allow the identification and investigation of further issues that are merely doing the research can bring to light". Therefore, the analysis presented in this research was gradually guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the linguistic feature of the movement of divergence and convergence of Covid-19 hoax discourse in Indonesia?

2. How is the movement of divergence and convergence of Covid-19 hoax discourse in Indonesia?
3. How is the equilibrium of the movement of divergence and convergence of Covid-19 hoax discourse in Indonesia?
4. What is the Continuity and Solution, which can be found from the movement of divergence and convergence of Covid-19 hoax discourse in Indonesia?

These research questions can guide the researcher in analyzing the data to observe the movement of divergence and convergence of Covid-19 hoax discourse in Indonesia comprehensively. Also, these research questions help to present the analysis in chronological order.

1.4. The Objective of the Research

To ensure this research gains relevant and useful insights for the linguistic field, the objective of the study plays an essential role in determining what this research wants to find out. To understand the aims of this research comprehensively, five objectives below show the goal achieved in this research:

1. To describe the language features of the movement of divergence and convergence of Covid-19 hoax discourse in Indonesia.
2. To analyze the movement of divergence and convergence of Covid-19 hoax discourse in Indonesia.
3. To explain the equilibrium of the movement of divergence and convergence of Covid-19 hoax discourse in Indonesia.

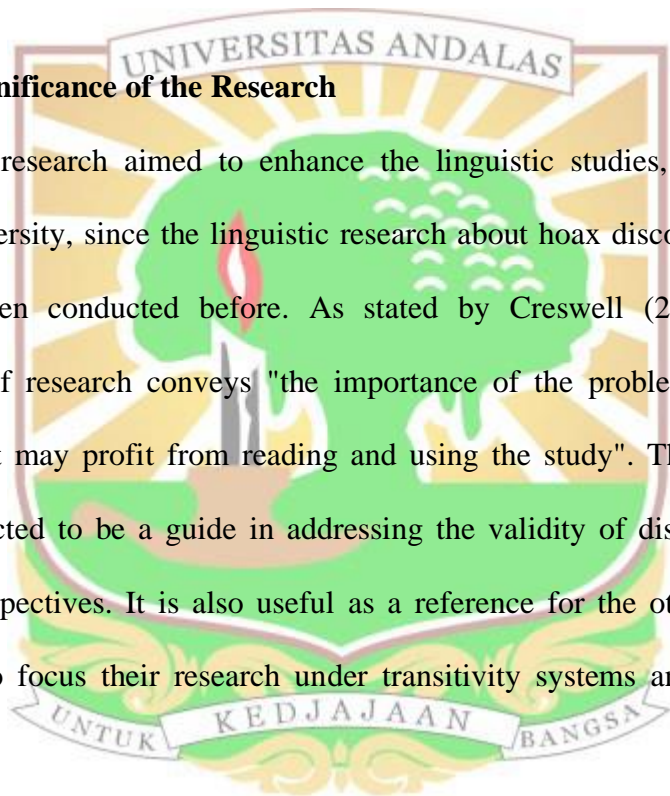
4. To decide the Continuity and Solution which can be found from the movement of divergence and convergence of Covid-19 hoax discourse in Indonesia.

Researching without setting objectives is like going on a journey without knowing the destination or how to get there. Therefore, having clear goals can set the research on a path to achieving the main aim and help the researcher to gain useful insight and findings. The objectives show a clear direction for this research.

1.5. The Significance of the Research

This research aimed to enhance the linguistic studies, particularly in Andalas University, since the linguistic research about hoax discourse on racism has never been conducted before. As stated by Creswell (2010: 296), the significance of research conveys "the importance of the problem for different audiences that may profit from reading and using the study". The result of the study is expected to be a guide in addressing the validity of discourse through linguistic perspectives. It is also useful as a reference for the other researchers who intend to focus their research under transitivity systems and the BREAK Theory.

Thus, this analysis gives a practical contribution to expanding the knowledge in detecting hoax through language. It would then also help the government educate the public to be objective in dealing with the hoax, so they are not triggered by the political effects of the hoax and maintain harmony between in a country.



1.6. The Definition of the Key Term

In presenting the research, there are several key terms. These definitions below help the readers to understand the terms used in this research.

Discourse : the use of language in speech and writing in order to produce meaning; language that is studied, usually in order to see how the different parts of a text are connected

Hoax : an act intended to make somebody believe something that is not true, especially something unpleasant

Coronavirus : a type of virus that can cause pneumonia and other diseases in humans and animals

Covid-19 : the acronym of Coronavirus disease in 2019. The disease firstly appeared in 2019.

Racism : the unfair treatment of people who belong to a different race; violent behavior towards them; the belief that some races of people are better than other irrational racism

BREAK : the abbreviation of *Basis* (Base), *Relasi* (Relation), *Equilibrium* (Equilibrium), *Aktualisasi* (Actualization), and *Keberlanjutan* (Continuity). The abbreviation comes from Indonesian.

