CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of Study

As an increasingly pervasive form of online communication with the ability to spread virally, Internet memes have the potential to transmit ideological content to a large number of people in a short time. It is an emerging form of discourse currently prevalent in online discussion forums, social media and general Internet culture. The term *"Meme"* itself is brought and introduced by zoologist Richard Dawkins. According to Dawkins (1976), the term "meme" is to describe a unit of cultural practice that spreads by imitation. Within Internet culture the term is commonly used to refer to phrases, videos, images, or a combination there of that are widely propagated by Internet users. This usage of the term has further evolved to refer to a specific type of Internet artifact consisting of a combination of images and text and generally understood as intending to be found humorous by viewers. This specific form of Internet artifact is known as an "image macro". Image macro memes consists of a single image (either photograph or illustration) with text superimposed such that the array of text and image is intended to trigger a humorous effect (Kyanka, 1999; Chandler, 2013). Typically, there are two lines of text, one at the top of the image serving as the set-up for a joke, and another at the bottom of the image serving as the punch line.

Internet memes which were popularized by the existence of cyberspace or cyber culture turns into a bias-inducing culture. In the topic of study, the researcher found that memes are more appropriate to be called stereotypical bias-inducing

culture. According to Cambridge dictionary, the word "stereotype" means a set of idea of what people think about someone or something, especially an idea that is wrong. When you add suffix *"-ical"* in the word stereotype, it becomes stereotypical (adjectives) which means a term of denial or disapproving. Memes is actually not a bias-conducing culture in the daily activities, but in politics and social, it can bias people. As the sole supporters of one candidate, they give out their voice in cyberspace through memes. Although the official voting can't be done directly from social media, the voting still can be "biased". When individual induces memes in another thought, he indirectly 'parasitizes' his brain, and turns the others into the medium of memes propagation (Putra & Triyono, 2016). Through social media, people create memes to voice out their creativity. The point was generally to make an object that can be turned into a humor by making catchphrase with punch line respectively.

In development of memes through years of human creativity, they apply them in a broader way. Prior to the election, the Memes Warfare or *The Great Meme War* is one of the events that happened behind the scene whereas most of people use their "memetic" knowledge to offer them believe, trends or even provoking the candidates. Although the event was somehow triggered by some anonymous people, the war was slightly contributed to the election and somehow invite some of the famous "soldiers" to the war such as *Mark Zuckerberg, Taylor Swift, Obama,* and many others. Some people who see memes as merely an entertainment and an anecdote purely out of seriousness to create absurd comment of serious politics are actually can't see the potential of its participation in political aspect. The way memes are circulating in the internet might not seem to

be hugely damaging at first, but considering the way that memes could communicate emotions, policy, or political thought, that changes. The Republican political consultant, Vincent Harris, stated that "These memes have a whole lot of resonance with voters, and they are very successful at branding the candidates, mostly in a negative way. And, they are virtually cost-free." He also noted that, "We are entering a post-pundit era, where people don't care so much what these "Higher-up" are saying. A lot more is being decided by the online chatter. Incidentally, according to *Know your meme* and *4chan* the case was relatable to the incidents of "The Great Meme War" in which ideologically favor Trump for about 10% of overall votes.

Furthermore, after understanding about memes, its ideology and how it participates in the cultural media, the researcher believes that by analyzing those memes, the researcher could understand the implication and the intentions. Therefore, the researcher wanted to analyze these memes related to Memes Warfare by employing Fairclough's (1989) framework.

1.2   Research Question

The problem of this research can be stated as follow:

How is the power communicated through written and visual representations in *The Great Meme War* memes?

1.3   Objective of the Research

To find out the power behind *The Great Meme War* memes that they can contribute politically and socially.

1.4   Scopes of the Research

This research scope study is the Critical Discourse Analysis and the Social Semiotics approach of the memes. It is limited to the memes used in The Great Meme War which occurred in Internet.

1.5   Uses of the Research

Theoretical Uses

This research hopefully can give knowledge about Critical Discourse Analysis to the other researchers and how to apply the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis as a tool in analyzing memes, also for the readers who want to know about the contributions of meme in society.

Practical Uses

This research hopefully can give an additional knowledge about how to use Critical Discourse Analysis as a tool to analyze memes. Moreover, this research could become the basis reference for students to discover the notion in applying Critical Discourse Analysis. Thus, this research will give some fundamental changes in how we approach and analyze memes, also to understand the implicative. Furthermore, this research will seek out the potential of Critical Discourse Analysis to the reader regarding its common knowledge and uses. Throughout all this, the value of it will be shown fundamentally from the aspect of text and image provided by the internet users.