

CHAPTER I

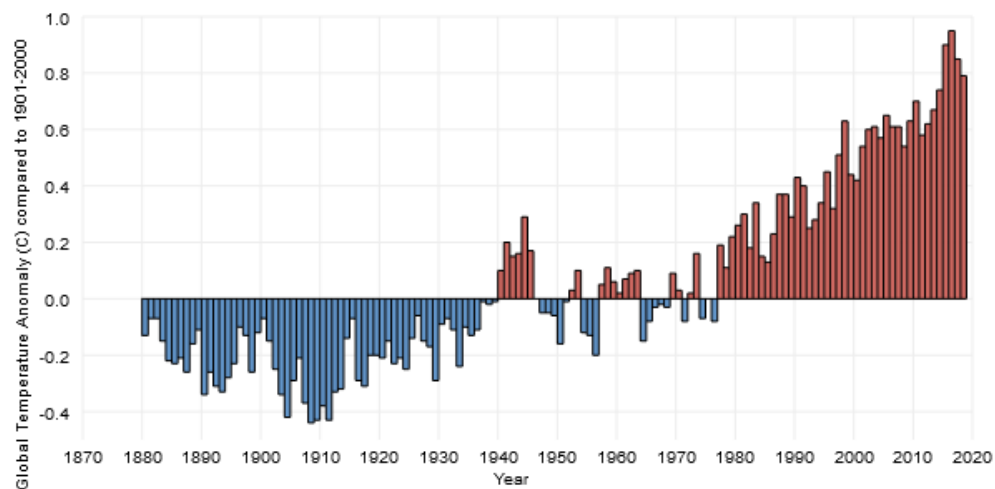
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problem

Ever since United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) established on 1992 and the multilateral environmental agreement was signed by 165 countries, climate activists around the world start to come to the surface and voicing their opinion (United Nations Climate Change, n.d.). In 2000s, several organizations focused on the climate issues established, such as 350.org and Energy Action Coalition.

In September 2019, climate activists around the world pressuring the government to act on climate issues. CNN World (2019) reporting that climate activists around the globe unite together to strike on Friday, 20 September 2019. In one week, The Guardian (2019) reporting that more than six million people had joined the strike voicing their opinion across the countries, such as Australia, Brazil, Ukraine, Kenya, Germany, Pakistan, and many more (Taylor, Watts, & Bartlett, 2019). The messages are varying in each country, in New Zealand protesters demanding the public to look after the Earth. In Colombia, activists demand immediate change towards decarbonisation, while in Brazil people demand to change the system to benefit the climate. This global strike happened due to the growing awareness and frustrations of the climate crisis.

According to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, global temperature rises at the average rate 0.07°C (0.13°F) per decade since 1880, however since 1981, the average rate of increase to 0.17°C (0.31°F) per decade, more than twice as great, and this year the Earth reach the warmest global temperature in recorded history (Kennedy, 2018; Lindsey & Dahlman, 2019) (Picture 1.1). Scientists suspecting the main culprit of the global temperature anomalies is the industrial revolution era, which become the major contributor of carbon dioxide emission and other greenhouse gases to the atmosphere (Hawkins, 2017). The increase rate of climate change resulting in climate-related disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and extreme weather temperature.



Picture 1.1 Global temperature trends since 1880
Source: climate.gov

In 2017, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) make an analysis report on economic lost and disasters from 1998 to 2017. It examines the effect of disasters on economic losses and human lives. The report

said that 77% of the total disasters that happened in the past 40 years are climate-related disasters, due to the climate change. Climate change has a big role in increasing the severity and frequency of extreme weather events, 91% of all disasters were attributed to heatwaves, drought, floods, storms, and other extreme weather events (Wahlén, 2018).

All these natural disasters had been causing economic lost in a lot of country because it affects the both market sectors and non-market sectors. Market sectors such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism, business and financial market, and infrastructure. Non-market sectors such as human health and productivity, ecosystems, freshwater resources (Bice & Bralower n.d.; Cho, 2019).

The increasing rate of climate change happened because factories and industries become the major contributor of pollutions to three components of the natural environment. *First*, air pollution. Industrial became a major contributor in emitting air pollution, because of the smoke and gas emissions generated by fossil fuels (Folk, 2018). All the gases that is emitted by the factories trapping the heat from the Sun within the Earth atmosphere that causing the increase in global temperature (National Geographic, 2015).

Second, industrial also contribute in soil contaminants. Soil get polluted when there is a presence of toxic chemicals (pollutants or contaminants) at high level that it poses human health risk. Usually soils get contaminated in urban areas and industrial sites (Soil Science Society of America n.d.). Examples for

soil polluting activities are agricultural activities such as diffusion of pesticides and the overused fertilizer; mining activities and transportation activities also releasing the toxic substances to the ground (Environmental Pollution Center n.d.).

Third, industries had been polluting water or marine severely. Before London Convention, the first international agreements for marine environment protection from human activities, was conducted in 1972, a lot of industries in United States of America practicing ocean dumping. Ocean dumping activities means that the industries used ocean as a place for the industrial wastes disposal, such as contaminated materials, chemical and radioactive wastes, sewage, and trash. This practice had been severely contaminating the ocean with harmful pollutants and disturbing the marine ecosystem (United States Environmental Protection Agency n.d.). After London Convention in 1972, United States Congress enacted the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA) to reduce ocean dumping activities.

United Nations held The Ocean Conference in New York on June 2017, also reporting that the marine environment polluted by the plastics litter that become marine debris; nitrogen leaks that came from agricultural activities; and oil spills (The Ocean Conference United Nations, 2017). All those ocean pollutions had been killing up to 1 million seabirds, around 100,000 sea mammals, marine turtles, and countless fish, according to the United Nations (UN) Factsheet in The Ocean Conference 2017.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) an international organization, stated that world's freshwater stock is easily polluted by human sewage and had been dried up in some places, due to the climate change. WWF predicts that by 2025 two-thirds of the world population might be facing freshwater shortage and the ecosystems will also experience more suffering (World Wildfire Fund n.d.). These facts showing how water/marine pollution become a critical global issue and it is already at the alarming state.

A lot of countries already aware and concerned with this issue, including United States of America, European Union, China, and Australia. These countries had been conducting regional and international conventions to discuss about the water/marine pollution issue, for instance, International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage (CLC) in Brussels on 1969, 1976, 1984, and 1992 attended by 135 states, Basel Convention in Switzerland on 1989 was attended by 186 states, International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, and Response and Co-operation (OPRC) in London on 1990 attended by 112 states (Sanchez, Langué, McCarthy, 2019; International Maritime Organization, 2019; Basel Convention, 2011).

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) also takes part by becoming the global custodian on clean water and sanitation aspect. UNEP is in charge on increasing people's awareness towards environmental issue and measuring and reporting water quality all around the world (UN Environment Programme n.d.).

Some private business also takes part in conserving the earth. For examples, two supermarket giants in Australia, Woolworths and Coles, join together to support the plastic bag ban by switching plastic bag with reusable cloth bags (Keck, 2019). Their acts responsible for the 80% of single-use plastic bag reduction throughout Australia (Sitzer, 2018). Another private non-profit organization in Canada purchasing and protecting the 7,900 hectares of rainforest in South Selkirk Mountains, where it is a habitat for 40 species that are at risk of extinction (The Canadian Press, 2019; Nature Conservancy Canada, 2019).

Not only countries, international organizations, and private institutions that take part in decreasing water/marine pollution mission, but the motion picture industry also supporting this mission. A lot of documentary films discussing our marine environment pollution and water pollution issues. The film industry did not just spread this awareness from documentary films but also from the Hollywood or blockbuster movie. When we are talking about blockbuster movies, we know that for the past decade, the trend of a superhero movie is at its peak. On 2018, there are 10 superhero movies released from various studios, according to a statistic in finder.com (Dix-Kessler, 2018). Currently, there two giant motion picture studios that produce superhero movies: Marvel and DC Films. On 2018, DC Films released one of their superhero movie titled *Aquaman*, which basically tell the background story of the character *Aquaman*.

Aquaman film is able to portray the harsh reality that is happening in our environment. This superhero film managed to bring up the critical environmental

issue that is happening in our society, the marine pollution issue, in a more entertaining way. Seeing the rising trend in people's awareness regarding this issue, *Aquaman* took the opportunity to promote marine pollution awareness campaign, even though it is delivered by the antagonist character in the movie, King Orm. This paper will discuss this campaign in more details and how *Aquaman* film communicating it throughout the film.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

As already mentioned before, the issue of how alarming our planet's condition had already raise public's concern. Government, organizations, and some private business trying to spread the awareness to the public, using mass media, to create some actions to responding to these issues. One of mass media tools that able to distribute messages to the mass is film. Film as a mass medium has two functions, to entertain and to educate the people (McQuail, 2005). People got entertained when they are watching the film, but at the same time they also learn new things and expanding their knowledge and understanding, because the film sending a lot of information, ideas, and paradigm to its viewers.

Knowing these advantages, motion picture industry put an effort to spread the awareness about our environment to the public. Film is a suitable tool for spreading awareness about the environment condition, because the idea of environmental awareness is simple and easy to understand. Motion picture industry had been spreading environmental awareness in various type of film.

For example, National Geographic, Discovery Channel, and Animal Planet have their own channel that playing the documentary films about our earth, animals, and human's live.

Hollywood also had been showcasing some films that has environmental awareness messages. One of the most notable movie that spreading environmental awareness is "*Erin Brockovich*" released in 2000. *Erin Brockovich* film based on true story of a woman who fought against the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, an energy corporation that responsible in the water contamination in her local community.

Another successful blockbuster movie that speak about environmental awareness is *Avatar*. *Avatar* wants to tell the audience to stop damaging the environment, especially the corporates (The Telegraph, 2009). James Cameron said that this film shows how human supposed to be wise in using the resources that the earth has or else the balance will be disturbed.

The most recent movies that promote environmental awareness is *Aquaman* (2018). Directed by James Wan, this film telling a story of the conflict between brothers, one who lived in the land, Arthur (*Aquaman*), and the other who lived in the sea, King Orm. King Orm is the power-hungry antagonist character who wants to become the *Ocean Master* and conquering the land. He holds a grudge with the surface-dwellers because they had been polluting the ocean. *Aquaman* movie using the marine pollution issue to strengthen and shape the background of the antagonist character, and making the character relatable with the audience.

Even though the environmental message carried by the antagonist character, it become a critical idea to execute the whole plot of the film and making it more intense. The rising trend of superheroes films and public's concern towards our planet, become a great timing for the *Aquaman* movie to release.

With this background, this thesis going to discuss about how *Aquaman* movie portraying marine pollution issue throughout the film using discourse analysis as the theory and research method. Researcher will analyze the dialogue and visuals from several movie scenes that highlighting the marine pollution issue.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background and the identification of the problem that has been explained above, the researcher came up with a research question:
How is the discourse of marine pollution issue being portrayed in the movie "*Aquaman*"?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the communication process in delivering the marine pollution awareness in the movie "*Aquaman*" using discourse analysis method.

1.5 Significance of the Study

1.5.1 Academic Purpose

As for the academic purpose, this study is useful for the development of research in the communication field especially environmental communication. This research is also discussing the power of mass communication and mass media, and how it is used as a tool to create social awareness that can be used as a reference for the further research in the similar topics.

1.5.2 Practical Purpose

From this study, the researcher hopes that this research able to give some information and raise awareness to the reader about the current environmental issue. This research can also become a source of information for the movie producer that wants to produce other films that bring up the current environmental issue.

1.5.3 Social Purpose

In social terms, this research gives information and guidelines for the organizations or government that wants to create a campaign through a film, whether it is a social campaign or environmental campaign.

1.6 Organization of the Study

This research consists of six chapters which can be elaborate as below:

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Chapter one is the Introduction which consists of background, identification of the problem, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study and the organization of the study.

CHAPTER II: RESEARCH OBJECT

Chapter two will elaborating the object of the study, the *Aquaman* film. In this chapter, there will be more detail information about the origin of *Aquaman* character, descriptions about the key characters in the film and the synopsis of the film.

CHAPTER III: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter three will consist of the explanation of the theories and the concepts that are used in the making of this research.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter four will be explaining the details of the methodology of this study. This research uses qualitative approach and discourse analysis as the research method.

CHAPTER V: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter five will showing the results of the findings and detail analysis of the information and data that are acquired during the data collection process.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Chapter six is the final chapter that will stating the final conclusion of the research and giving the suggestion for the future research that has similar topic.

