

**THE SEMIOTICS ANALYSIS OF VISUAL AND VERBAL SIGNS IN COVID-19
POSTERS OF WHO SEARO FACEBOOK ACCOUNT**

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Abstract

This study aims to find out the visual and verbal signs and explain the message conveyed by COVID-19 posters from the Facebook account of World Health Organization South-East Asia Region (WHO SEARO). The research applied descriptive qualitative method because it involved descriptive sentences to explain the analysis. There are three theories used in this study. The first one is the theory of meaning by Barthes (1977) which consists of denotative meaning and connotative meaning. The second theory is the visual aspect and verbal aspect by Dyer (1986) and the last one is the theory of color terms by Wierzbicka (1998). The result of this study showed that data 1 had 6 visual signs and 5 verbal signs and data 2 consisted of 5 visual signs and 5 verbal signs. Besides visual and verbal signs, the posters also contained the denotative and connotative meanings. In analyzing the connotative meaning, it was also related to the analysis of color term. The message conveyed by the posters were the warning and the prevention to avoid COVID-19. The colors in the posters were used to strengthen the visual signs in conveying the message.

Keywords: *poster, semiotics, visual sign, verbal sign, COVID-19*

INTRODUCTION

The study of signs and how they are used is known as Semiotics or Semiology. Sign is the most important thing in Semiotics because where there is a sign, there is Semiotics. Since the entire human mind is composed of signs, Semiotics is the study of sign. Without signs, humans are unable to communicate with reality and signs go beyond simply being part of a language and communication system (Robingah, 2020). Juliantari (2014) stated that semiotic analysis can examine the advertisement's visual elements in addition to its written words. In numerous contexts throughout daily life, the theory of Semiotics can be used. One of those aspects is advertising. To indicate something, instead of saying the word, we can also show them by sign (Modok et al., 2021). According to Sagimin & Wisesa (2019), language is required as a tool in daily communication. People are able to communicate ideas, facts, or personal experiences as well as understand the signs and their meaning by using language. Sign is respect or capacity for something and every idea is a sign (Sena et al., 2016). According to Ardhiyanto & Son (2019), when a sign is interpreted, it represents something metaphorically. The connection between the sign and

the thing it represents can be expressed through the sign's form or color. The studies of social and cultural phenomena is the science of signs in Semiotics.

Zaimar (2017) stated that researchers can analyze every single sign in a film using Semiotics, which means we can also use Semiotics to analyze a poster. According to Suparno & Kusumoriny (2020), the ability to think creatively and build new meanings with other people is crucially influenced by this experience. Additionally, they contribute to the culture in which they acquire knowledge of the cultural setting. The objective of those circumstances is to communicate the meaning, message, form of the concept, idea, and theme of the environment, which are formed and communicated through contact using words as verbal symbols and pictures as nonverbal symbols. The interaction between the text and the image conveys to the reader the idea of the environment.

Saussure (1916) stated that a signifier and a signified are two important things that a sign should have. Psychological and conceptual element is the signified, whereas the signifier is the material or the sensory. The sign's meaning from Barthes' theory (1977) is connotation and denotation. Connotation is a twofold meaning born of cultural or personal experience, whereas denotation is the true meaning as defined by the dictionary. Besides the words in the sign, there is also color. According to Peeters & Wierzbicka (1998) color is not a universal human idea, but it is linked to sight, which is believed to be universal because color can only be determined by looking.

There are several studies related to Semiotics that have been conducted previously. Nugraha (2021) analyzed the social stigma of COVID-19 poster. The study was conducted to analyze the textual (linguistic sign) and visual materials (image sign) of the posters by examining their properties of denotative and connotative. This aims to capture both their direct meaning and the underlying assumption that may influence the audience's understanding of the messages about COVID-19-related stigma. The study conducted by Utami et al. (2022) helps the readers understand the meaning and the messages of the signs that contained in advertisement and also to avoid misunderstanding of the information conveyed to the readers in the product advertisement. The previous study by Jasmine (2020) finds the denotative and connotative meaning in film posters. In addition, the writer also finds myth that presents in all film posters from society's beliefs, such as supernatural things and power, which the society believes that supernatural things and power could occur around them.

The research gap from the previous studies can be seen from the focus of the study. The three previous studies focused on the verbal sign from the poster in parts of linguistic text and the visual sign in parts of imagery messages. Other than visual and verbal, the previous study also discusses the connotative and the denotative meaning. After connotative and denotative meanings were found, researchers found the myth that can be seen from the film poster and can be represented as beliefs that include the power and supernatural things. This current research used posters that informs the readers about the protective measure to avoid Corona virus and also the vaccination.

Based on the introduction above, this study aims to find out the visual and verbal signs and explain the message conveyed by the COVID-19 posters on the Facebook account of the World Health Organization South-East Asia Region (WHO SEARO). The researchers obtained information from the World Health Organization Western Pacific Region's Facebook page, where they shared multiple photos of COVID-19. The researchers chose this data source because the researchers wanted to explain the meaning of the COVID-19 posters, as well as reminding

everyone that the COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet, and also the poster consists of a lot of verbal and visual signs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Saussure (1916), Semiology which he called as Semiotics is dealing with everything that could be interpreted as a sign. There are two important terms in Semiotics, they are signifier and signified. Barthes (1964) stated that a signifier is a sign that consists of a material signifier and another sign. A signifier is basically a relationship whose definition is not clear from the definition of a signified, generally indicating its nature. Whereas a thing of mental representation is called as signified. Signified is clearly associated with ideas, relationships, and objects of definition from the head. An analytic distinction of the two signified is a denotative signified and a connotative signified. Both of them included the meaning of denotation and connotation.

As stated by Barthes (1977), the denotative meaning is the image in terms of subject matter whereas the connotative meaning is the image that is supposed to represent outside of what is shown. Putting it simply, the denotative meaning is the real meaning meanwhile the connotative meaning is the implicit meaning. Every sign must have the visual sign and the verbal sign. The visual sign is a picture or gesture that can convey the meaning, which presented the product in forms of a company logo. Whereas a sign that is used to convey meaning using words is called as verbal sign. Verbal sign deals with any word and text (Chandler, 2000).

Halldin (1835) stated that a poster is a combination of words and images or just words, often with a clear graphic expression. According to Osler (2019), COVID-19 posters are used to tell people about the disease, usually consisting of the meaning of the disease, the prevention, and also the treatment for the disease. COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new coronavirus known as Sars-CoV-2, which was discovered in Wuhan, China, on 31 December 2019. The disease can cause acute respiratory syndrome, pneumonia, or even death. COVID-19 is spread from person to person via personal contact and droplets by coughing and sneezing.

METHOD

The qualitative descriptive method was used in this study. The qualitative descriptive method was conducted by explaining the meaning of the signs found on the COVID-19 posters from Facebook account. The data were taken from the Facebook account of the World Health Organization South-East Asia Region (WHO SEARO). There were 2 posters used in this study, the first one was posted in 2021 and the second one was posted in 2022. The first poster contained the protective measure to avoid corona virus and the second one was about the vaccination of COVID-19. Both posters contained important message in the pandemic situation. The researchers chose this data source because they would like to remind the readers that COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet. Posters from different years were chosen to obtain information on the situation of COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 and 2022.

When collecting the data, the researchers did several steps starting from browsing and downloading the posters on the WHO SEARO Facebook account as data source. After that, the researchers found out and identified the verbal and visual signs from the posters. The researchers analyzed and described the visual and verbal signs, denotation and connotation by using the theory of Barthes (1977), visual aspects and verbal aspects by Dyer (1986), and supported by using the theory of color term proposed by Wierzbicka (1998). The theories were used to analyze the data

since they were suitable to answer the research questions regarding the visual and verbal signs of the posters, including the connotative and denotative meaning.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION



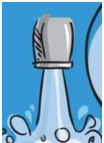
As this study aims to find out the sign and the meaning from the COVID-19 posters from the Facebook account of the World Health Organization South-East Asia Region (WHO SEARO), the researchers analyzed two posters from this account.

Data 1



Figure 1. COVID-19 Poster

Table 1. The Result of Visual Sign and Verbal Sign from Data 1

THE RESULT			
NO	VISUAL SIGN	NO	VERBAL SIGN
1.	 (The Washing Hands Picture)	1.	COVID-19 is still a threat in 2021
2.	 (The Soap Picture)	2.	We still need to: wash our hands or use hand gel
3.	 (The Water From The Tap Picture)	3.	World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean

4.



4. #COVID19
#Coronavirus

(Blue Color From Background)

5.



(White Color Written Text)

6.



(Yellow Color Written Text)






Based on the table above, for data 1 the researchers found several visual and verbal signs. The researchers found 6 visual signs: the washing hands, soap, water from the tap, blue color from the background, white color written text, and yellow color written text. For the verbal sign, the researchers found 4 verbal signs: COVID-19 is still a threat in 2021, we still need to: wash our hands or use hand gel, World Health Organization, Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, and #COVID19 #Coronavirus. This post was taken from the Facebook account of the World Health Organization South-East Asia Region (WHO SEARO), which was posted on 24 February 2021.

Data 2



Figure 2. COVID-19 Poster



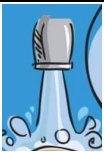


Table 2. The Result of Visual Sign and Verbal Sign from Data 2

THE RESULT			
NO	VISUAL SIGN	NO	VERBAL SIGN
1.	 <p>(The Vaccine Picture)</p>	1.	Take all COVID-19 vaccine doses recommended to you by your health authority, including a booster dose.
2.	 <p>(The Coronavirus Picture)</p>	2.	Being fully vaccinated will help your body develop and maintain protection against serious illness and death. It will also help reduce the likelihood of new variants emerging.
3.	 <p>(Pink Color From Background)</p>	3.	22/03/2022
4.	 <p>(Blue Color Written Text)</p>	4.	World Health Organization
5.	 <p>(White Color Written Text)</p>	5.	COVID-19 Vaccine Fact Series

Based on the table above, for data 2 the researchers found several visual and verbal signs. The researchers found 5 visual signs: vaccine picture, virus picture, pink color from the background, blue color written text, and white color written text. For the verbal sign, the researchers found 5 verbal signs: take all COVID-19 vaccine doses recommended to you by your health authority, including a booster dose, being fully vaccinated will help your body develop and maintain protection against serious illness and death. It will also help reduce the likelihood of new variants emerging, 22/03/2022, World Health Organization, COVID-19 Vaccine Fact Series. This post was taken from the Facebook account of World Health Organization South-East Asia Region (WHO SEARO), which was posted on 22 March 2022.

In the discussion, the researchers explained the visual sign and also the verbal sign based on Saussure's theory which is signified and signifier, another theory from Barthes (1977) which is the theory of denotative and connotative meaning, and supported by theory of color term by Wierzbicka (1998).

Table 3. Analysis of The Visual Sign from Data 1

THE VISUAL SIGN		
NO	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
1.	 (The Washing Hands Picture)	WASHING HANDS Someone washing their hands with water and soap.
2.	 (The Soap Picture)	LIQUID SOAP The soap for cleaning their hands from any bacteria.
3.	 (The Water From The Tap Picture)	WATER The water for cleaning their hand from any bacteria.
4.	 (Blue Color From Background)	BLUE COLOR FROM BACKGROUND Blue color is the color of peacefulness. WHO account's color is blue.
5.	 (White Color Written Text)	WHITE COLOR WRITTEN TEXT White color is a cleanliness color and also represented purity.

6.



(Yellow Color Written Text)

YELLOW COLOR WRITTEN TEXT

Yellow color is the energy color.

There are 6 visual signs that have already been found from the poster data 1. For the first visual sign is “**washing hands**”. The signifier is the picture that shows the hands are washing, the signified is washing hands with water and soap. This visual sign has denotative meaning as explained in Barthes’ theory (1977) which is washing their hands with soap and also water for cleaning the bacteria from Coronavirus.

The second visual sign is “**liquid soap**”. The signifier from this visual sign is the soap liquid picture and the signified is soap liquid. This visual sign also has denotative meaning from Barthes’ theory (1977) which is the real soap liquid for washing hands to avoid the bacteria from Coronavirus.

The third visual sign is “**water**”. The signifier from this visual sign is the water picture and the signified is water. Denotative meaning as explained by Barthes (1977) is represented by this sign which is the real water from the tap from washing hands.

The fourth visual sign is “**blue color background**”. The blue color picture is the signifier and blue color is the signified. The theory of meaning from Barthes (1977) which is denotative meaning and connotative meaning are represented by this visual sign. The denotative meaning can be seen from blue color was taken from the Facebook account that using blue has their color, for connotation can be seen from the meaning from blue color as related to the theory that explains in Wierzbicka’s theory (1998) which is blue color is seen as important color for mind and also body, blue color represented as the color from the sea and also the sky, blue color is the color for peacefulness and serenity. Based on the explanation from Wierzbicka (1998), can be seen that might be the account used the blue color because they want the reader can feel a sense of calm and serenity from the poster, so that the reader will not panic due to the pandemic situation.

The fifth visual sign is “**white color written text**”. The picture of the white color written text is the signifier whereas the white color written text is the signified. Connotative meaning by Barthes’ theory (1977) is represented by this visual sign which is the meaning of white color as explained in color term by Wierzbicka’s theory (1998). The meaning of the white color is the cleanliness color and also represented purity. The white color might be used because the account wanted to invite us to do a clean lifestyle during the pandemic, as the meaning of the white color is cleanliness.

The sixth or the last visual sign is “**yellow color written text**”. The picture from the poster that has written as yellow color is the signifier whereas the yellow color is signified. This visual sign has connotative meaning from Barthes’ theory (1977) which is related to the theory of color term by Wierzbicka (1998). Yellow is the color representing daylight and also yellow is known as the energy color. One of the meanings of yellow color is energy, the account might be used yellow color to give the reader much more energy during the pandemic.

Table 4. Analysis of The Verbal Sign from Data 1

THE VERBAL SIGN		
NO	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
1.	COVID-19 is still a threat in 2021	The warning from the poster.
2.	We still need to: wash our hands or use hand gel	The prevention to avoid Coronavirus.
3.	World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean	The account's name that uploads the COVID-19 poster.
4.	#COVID19 #Coronavirus	The name of the virus.


Based on the table above, 4 verbal signs already found from the poster data 1. For the first verbal sign is **“COVID-19 is still a threat in 2021”**. The written text COVID-19 is still a threat in 2021 is the signifier whereas the signified from this verbal sign is the warning from the poster. This verbal sign has denotative meaning that is explained by Barthes (1977) in theory of meaning, this text said that the COVID-19 is still a threat in 2021 and the text is represented the real meaning which is this virus still can be a threat for us after two years which is from 2019 until 2021.

The second verbal sign is **“We still need to: wash our hands or use hand gel”**. The signifier from this verbal sign is we still need to: wash our hands or use hand gel whereas the signified from this verbal is the prevention to avoid Coronavirus. Barthes' theory (1977) explained about denotative meaning which is the real meaning of the sign. The poster invites us to wash our hand or use hand gel to avoid the virus and this action is one of the preventions from Coronavirus.




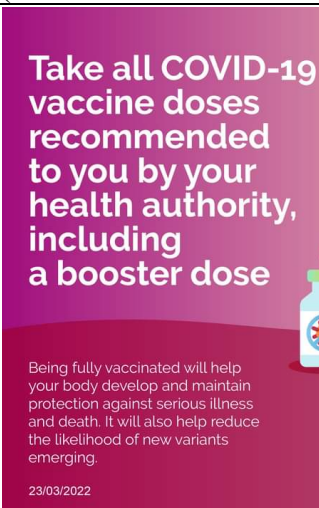
The third verbal sign is **“World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean”**. The signifier from the sign is World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean whereas the signified is the account's name that uploaded the COVID-19 poster. The denotative meaning of Barthes' theory (1977) is represented by this verbal sign, which is the meaning from World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean is the account's name.

The fourth verbal sign is **“#COVID19 #Coronavirus”**. The signifier from this sign is #COVID19 #Coronavirus whereas the signified from COVID-19 or Coronavirus is the name of the virus. Denotative meaning is represented by this verbal sign as explained in Barthes' theory (1977) which is the real meaning. COVID-19 or Coronavirus is the real meaning of the virus.

Table 5. Analysis of The Visual Sign from Data 2

THE VISUAL SIGN		
NO	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
1.		COVID-19 VACCINE 3 Doses from COVID-19 vaccine.

(The Vaccine Picture)

2.	 (The Coronavirus Picture)	COVID-19 WITH BLOCK SIGN Anti-Corona Virus
3.	 (Pink Color from Background)	PINK COLOR FROM BACKGROUND Pink color is a love color.
4.	 (Blue Color Written Text)	BLUE COLOR WRITTEN TEXT Blue color is the color for peacefulness. WHO account's color is blue.
5.	 (White Color Written Text)	WHITE COLOR WRITTEN TEXT White color represented purity color and also the cleanliness color.

Based on the table, the researchers already found 5 visual signs from the poster data 2. For the first visual sign is **“COVID-19 Vaccine”**. The signifier from the poster is the bottle vaccine picture and the signified is COVID-19 vaccine. As Barthes (1977) explained in the theory of meaning this visual sign has denotative meaning, because the picture has the real meaning which is the vaccine for Coronavirus.

The second visual sign is **“COVID-19 with Block Sign”**. The picture of Coronavirus with the block sign is the signifier whereas the Coronavirus with the block sign is the signified. This visual sign has denotative meaning by Barthes’ theory (1977) which is the real meaning that is the bottle contains of something to avoid Coronavirus.

The third visual sign is **“Pink Color from Background”**. The pink color picture is the signifier and the signified is the pink color. Pink color has connotative meaning as explained by Barthes’ (1977) which is pink color is the color for love and romance from Wierzbicka (1998) in the theory of color. The account use of pink color might be because they want to share the sense of love during the pandemic, so that the reader can feel loved and can avoid the depressive symptoms.

The fourth visual sign is **“Blue Color Written text”**. The signifier of this sign is the picture with blue color written text which is the signified is the blue color written text. Denotative and connotative meaning by Barthes’ theory (1977) applied in this visual sign as related to the theory of color term by Wierzbicka (1998). For the denotative meaning, blue is the color from the WHO’s Facebook account whereas the connotative as explained by Wierzbicka (1998), the blue color is the color of the sea and the sky, blue color is the color of peacefulness and also serenity. As the other meaning from blue color is peacefulness, it can be seen that might be the account wanted the reader always feel peace during this pandemic so they will not feel anxiety because afraid of the Coronavirus.

The fifth visual sign is **“White Color Written Text”**. The picture with white color written text is the signifier and the signified is the white color written text. This visual sign has connotative meaning from Barthes’ theory (1977) which is related to the color term by Wierzbicka’s theory (1998), white color is the purity color and also the cleanliness color. The white color also often associated with happiness, which might be the reason the account used white color to share the happy vibes to the reader so they can feel happier even though the pandemic is still not done yet.

Table 6. Analysis of The Verbal Sign from Data 2

THE VISUAL SIGN		
NO	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
1.	Take all COVID-19 vaccine doses recommended to you by your health authority, including a booster dose.	The prevention to avoid Coronavirus.
2.	Being fully vaccinated will help your body develop and maintain protection against serious illness and death. It will also help reduce the likelihood of new variants emerging.	The warning from the poster.
3.	22/03/2022	The date from the data 2 is posted.
4.	World Health Organization	The account’s name that uploads the COVID-19 poster.
5.	COVID-19 Vaccine Fact Series	The theme from the poster.

There are 5 verbal signs have already been found from the poster data 2. For the first verbal sign is **“take all COVID-19 vaccine doses recommended to you by your health authority, including a booster dose”**. The signifier is the text and the signified is the prevention to avoid Coronavirus. This verbal sign has denotative meaning as explained in Barthes’ theory (1977), which is the real meaning, the poster explained the prevention to avoid Coronavirus by taking the vaccine dose that is recommended based on your health including the booster dose.

The second verbal sign is **“being fully vaccinated will help your body develop and maintain protection against serious illness and death. It will also help reduce the likelihood of new variants emerging”**. The text is the signifier whereas the warning from the poster is the signified. The denotative meaning by Barthes’ theory (1977) also applied in this visual sign, the poster is warning us about avoiding the virus by getting a fully vaccination that will help your body as the maintain protection and also body developed to against serious illness and death.

The third verbal sign is **“22/03/2022”**. The signifier is 22/03/2022 and the signified is the date from the data 2 is posted. The denotative meaning from Barthes’ theory (1977) is represented

by this verbal sign which is the real meaning of the number is a date. Based on the date from the verbal sign it can be seen that the COVID-19 pandemic still exists up on this date which is on 22 March 2022.

The fourth verbal sign is “**World Health Organization**”. The written text of World Health Organization is the signifier whereas the signified is the name from the Facebook account. This visual sign has a denotative meaning also by Barthes’ theory (1977), World Health Organization is the real meaning. World Health Organization often shortened to WHO is the agency of United Nations that is described as the guardian of global public health, the main purpose of WHO is the highest health that human beings can attain, for all. In order for everyone, everywhere to achieve the highest level of health, WHO unites governments, partners, and people to promote health, keep the world safe, and assist the vulnerable.

The fifth verbal sign is “**COVID-19 Vaccine Fact Series**”. The signifier is the written text which is COVID-19 Vaccine Fact Series and the signified is the theme from the poster. Denotative meaning by Barthes’ (1977) is represented this visual sign as the meaning of denotative is the real meaning which is COVID-19 Vaccine Fact Series means the series from the fact that tell us about the vaccine of COVID-19 is the theme from this poster.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data already analyzed from COVID-19 Posters posted by the Facebook account World Health Organization South-East Asia Region (WHO SEARO), it was found that the posters consist of verbal and visual signs. Data 1 had 6 visual signs and 5 verbal signs. Data 2 consisted of 5 verbal signs and also 5 visual signs. The visual sign was taken from the picture on the posters, whereas the verbal sign was taken from the text that was written on the posters. Other than visual and verbal signs, the researchers analyzed the posters with the denotative meaning, which was the real meaning, and the connotative meaning, which was the implicit meaning. The message conveyed by the posters were the warning and the prevention to avoid COVID-19. The colors in the posters were used to support the visual signs in conveying the message. This research is limited to the analysis of visual and verbal sign in COVID-19 posters found in WHO SEARO Facebook account. Therefore, the researchers would like to suggest the readers to conduct further studies about Semiotics analysis in other social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter to provide new insights in the field of study.

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