



Meaning within the Movie Posters of *Despicable Me* Movie Series: A Semiotic Analysis

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Abstract

This study aims to find out the behind meaning or messages of the semiotic signs that were found in the four movie posters of *Despicable Me*. The data of this study is downloaded from <https://id.pinterest.com>, an online application (that can be downloaded in the play store) that provide services for people to exploring, searching or sharing images. To discover the behind messages of the semiotic signs in the movie posters, this study uses the theory of meaning by Barthes (1977) and the theory of color meaning by Wierzbicka (1996) as a supporting theory. The method used to analyze the data on this research is the qualitative research method. In the end, the result of this study reveals, all the behind messages of the semiotic sign found in the four posters are represent the movie by giving more context about the story, the theme, and the character in the movie.

Keywords: *Semiotics Sign, Denotative Meaning, Connotative Meaning, Poster, Despicable Me.*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mencari makna tersembunyi dari tanda-tanda yang terdapat pada keempat poster film *Despicable Me*. Data pada penelitian ini di dapat dengan mengunduhnya dari aplikasi online Pinterest (aplikasi yang dapat di unduh melalui Play Store) yang menyediakan jasa bagi penggunanya untuk dapat mencari dan membagikan gambar atau foto. Untuk menemukan atau menganalisis makna tersembunyi dari tanda-tanda yang terdapat di keempat poster film, penelitian ini menggunakan teori makna oleh Barthes (1968) dan teori makna warna oleh Wierzbicka sebagai teori pendukung. Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam studi analisis ini adalah metode penelitian kualitatif. Hasil akhir dari penelitian ini mengungkapkan semua makna tersembunyi yang terdapat pada tanda-tanda di keempat poster film *Despicable Me* menggambarkan atau mewakili film dengan memberikan lebih banyak konteks tentang cerita, tema pada film, dan karakter-karakter yang ada di dalam film tersebut.

Kata kunci: Tanda Semiotika, Makna Denotasi, Makna Konotasi, Poster, *Despicable Me*

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes, people use a sign as a tool for communication to express their ideas or feelings. Since advertising uses a lot of signs in promoting, advertising is one example of a media form that people use to communicate verbally and visually. According to Dyer (in Hawan, 2018) Advertising is a media form used to persuade or

draw attention and give information about certain products or services to the audience. There are many kinds of advertising, such as television, radio, magazine or newspaper, and posters. A poster is the most of advertisement that's easily found in a public place. Since a poster basically contains a lot of words and pictures, media form advertisement like poster is commonly used by some film production company to introduce their product innovatively to people. Film and poster are two things that cannot be part away because the poster helping the films being known by people and has aimed to give slight information regarding the film. Since a poster is used as a medium to promote the film, the company might use many signs that have hidden messages to draw the movie on the poster. Thus, to discover the hidden meaning contain in the sign, analyzing the meaning of the sign in the poster is needed.

Semiotic is a theory or study of understanding how people used signs and symbolism in meaning-making. Saussure (in Chandler, 2007) believes a sign is being made up of a signifier and a signified because a linguistic sign is a relation of a concept (signified) and a sound of a pattern (signifiers). A sign is divided into a verbal sign (spoken or written) and a visual sign (face expression, gesture, color, setting, nature, etc.). In a sign, there are two different levels of meaning. The first level meaning is the actual or primary meaning of the sign that is named as a denotative meaning, and a connotative meaning is the second level meaning of the sign that used to describe the other meaning of the sign when it is associated with a variety of psychological aspects such as feeling, the emotion or beliefs of the user, and the values of the culture (Barthes, 1968).

In terms of analyzing the sign, there are some previous studies related to that topic analysis, the first studies were from an article from a journal about *Analysis of Signs and Meaning in Sariayu Hijab Haircare Advertisement* by Pramudita and friends (2017). In this study, the writers revealed the signs and meanings of Sariayu advertisements shown on the Instagram account of @sariyuhijab. The second latest related research was an article about *Semiotic Analysis of Gundala Movie Poster* by Persada (2019). In Persada's study, he only focused on analyzing the meaning of the visual sign in the Gundala movie poster. The third studies was from an article with the entitled *Verbal and Non-verbal Signs of Moana Movie Poster* by Dhananjaya, Wandia, and Maharani (2019). Dhananjaya and friends' study focused on identifying and analyzing the semiotic sign, also the meaning of the sign in the Moana movie poster by using qualitative research method and applying Saussure's theory of semiotics. Those previous study help to recognize the meaning from a sign of Movie poster. The different thing from this study and those studies is that this study analyzes the meaning that contained in the signs of the movie posters series entitled *Despicable Me 1, 2, and 3*

METHOD

In conducting this study, there are three movie posters that are used as the data source, some of the posters were taken from internet and <https://id.pinterest.com>, an online application for exploring inspiration that offers by

the provider to people for sharing or searching images. The first movie posters of Despicable Me released on July 2010, the second movie poster of Despicable Me 2 released on June 2013. The last, the first poster of Despicable Me 3 released on June 2017. The data were obtained by using the observation method and note-taking technique. In analyzing the data, the method that used by the writer in this study is the qualitative research method, and the analysis was presented by using the informal method. Since this study only focused on analyzing the messages of the sign that contains in the movie posters, there are two theories that are used by the writer to help solve the problem in this research study. The first theory is the theory of meaning by Barthes (1968), and the second theory is the theory of color by Wierzbicka (1996) as a supporting theory.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

The three movie posters of Despicable Me movie series contained verbal and visual signs which consist of words, phrases, or sentences, pictures, color, and shape. In this study, the discussion was focused on examining the meaning of the sign that was found in the movie posters of the Despicable Me movie series by using Roland Barthes’s (1968) theory of meaning. Barthes propose two meaning that belong to each sign, those are denotative; which means the real meaning that belongs to the sign, and connotative; which means the hidden meaning or the other meaning beside the real meaning from a sign.

Result

The three movie posters of the movie series entitled “Despicable Me” have verbal and visual signs. Those signs are described below:

Table 1. Verbal and Visual signs

| Movie titles | Verbal Signs | Visual signs |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Despicable Me 1 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DESPICABLE ME 2. STEVE CARELL 3. SUMMER 4. www.despicableme.me | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Figure of the Man Shadow 2. The Red Color of The Title 3. The Figure of the Minions 4. The Yellow Color of The Minions 5. The Blue Color of The Minions Clothes 6. The White Color of The Background |
| Despicable Me 2 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. THE SPY WHO LOVED HER 2. DESPICABLE ME 2 3. JUNE 2013 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The picture of Gru and Lucy 2. The Figure of Kevin and Bob 3. The Figure of The Guns 4. The Black Color of Gru’s Clothes 5. The Blue Color of Lucy Clothes 6. The White Color of The Background |
| Despicable Me 3 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Need a Break? 2. Illumination Present 3. DESPICABLE ME 3 4. JUNE 30 IN THEATRES AND REAL 3D 5. HOW TO ESCAPE PRISON | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The minion that's reading a book upside-down while sits in the toilet 2. The Cain Ball on The Minion Ankle 3. The White Background of The Poster |

Discussion

After classifying all the signs found in the three movie posters of Despicable Me, based on their categories. The result that was found is discussed descriptively down below.

The Analysis of Poster 1



Figure 1. Movie Poster of Despicable Me

In the first movie poster, there are found 4 verbal signs in the poster. The first verbal sign is **DESPICABLE ME**. Denotatively, this sign is indicated as the main title of the movie. Meanwhile connotatively, this verbal sign is referred to describe the main character's bad action in the movie because the main character in the movie is told as a professional thief who likes to steal unusual objects, that's why it can be said that sentence is used to describing the main character, characteristic in the movie. The other verbal signs are **STEVE CARELL**, **SUMMER**, and **www.despicable.me**. These signs have denotative meaning that are as the name of an actor, the certain time in a year, and a link address. But in this poster, those signs connotatively giving information about the movie, they are (1) a famous actor that is filling the voice of the main character in this animated movie, (2) this movie will be released in summer, and (3) the audience can have more information about this movie through the link address.

The first visual sign in the movie is **The Figure of the Man Shadow** that shown in the poster, this visual sign denotatively indicates the silhouette of the main character. This silhouette of Gru, connotatively is used by the creator to create the mysterious vibe of the main character as a mysterious thief in the movie. The second visual sign is **The Red Color of The Title**. In denotative meaning, this sign indicates the color of the title in the poster. The Red color is rich and warm, in general, the red color is a symbol of danger or warning. In history, the red color also had been associated with the Devil (Manning in Wierzbicka, 1996). If we connected with the previous brief explanation of the red color, it can be said the red color of the title in

connotative meaning is used by the creator as a supporting description of the main character. Since Gru, in this movie is a character that has a bad, mysterious, and annoying vibe character. Besides, this red color of the title can be also used as a warning to the audience. The creator might be want to warn the audience that, they are must prepare for this summertime because Despicable Me will be released in the cinema.

The third visual sign in the poster is *The Figure of the Minions* this visual sign denotatively indicates as the supporting character in the movie. The figure of the minions that appear on the poster, connotatively is used by the creator to show the role of the minion in the movie as Gru’s stooge in doing a crime. That is clearly seen in the poster since the minions are drawn lifted the sculpture of the movie title with Gru's silhouette in the middle of the title, proved Gru is the leader and they are Gru's stooge. The fourth visual sign is *The Yellow Color of The Minions*, in denotative meaning this sign indicates as the skin color of the minions. Yellow is a light color that is commonly associated with the sun, yellow is also often considered as the brightest and most energizing of warm colors. Sometimes it’s associated with happiness, sunshine, intellect, and hope. Connected with the definition of the yellow color by Wierzbicka (1996), this visual sign in connotative meaning is used by the creator to describing the Minions characteristic in the movie as the brightest, energizing, cheerful, and intellect character. Besides, maybe also because their favorite food is bananas that makes the creator color their skin yellow.

The fifth visual sign in the poster is *The Blue Color of The Minions Clothes*, this visual sign denotatively indicates as the color of minions clothes in the movie. Blue is the color mixed with yellow and green, a blue color commonly associated with relaxing, fresh, soft, and friendly. If we connected with that previous brief explanation, connotatively this sign is used as a supporting description of the Minions characteristic in the movie as friendly characters. The last visual sign in the poster is *The White Color of The Background* which denotatively indicates as the color of the poster background. White is a light color that is usually related to light, innocence, purity, and beginning. Since the background of the poster is colored white, in connotatively might be because the creator wants to make an imaginary or a description of, this is the first story of Gru with the Minions in the movie.

The Analysis of Poster 2

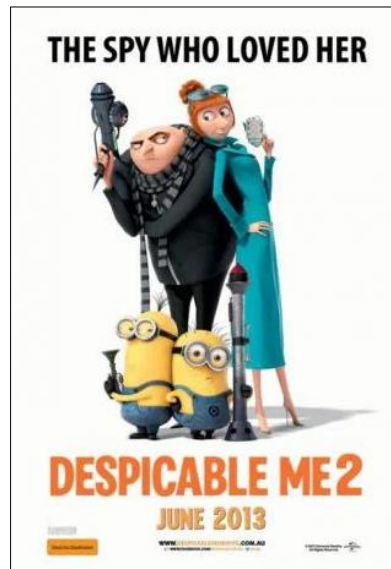


Figure 2. Movie Poster of Despicable Me 2

On the second poster, there are 3 verbal signs found in the poster. The first verbal sign is **THE SPY WHO LOVED HER** which denotatively indicates the second title or the tagline of the movie that is used to describing the story of the movie. Different from the first movie, this second movie tells the other side of Gru's life. Since in this movie, Gru is retired from the world of crime and suddenly recruited by the Anti-Villain League as a spy agent to capture the perpetrator of a spectacular heist, El Macho. In the mission to capture El Macho, unpredictably he is falling in love with his partner, agent Lucy Wilde. That's why this verbal sign connotatively is used to describing the story of the movie, and also the creator might be want to spoiler a little bit about the story for the audience to make them curious about the second movie of the Despicable Me.

The second verbal sign in the poster is **DESPICABLE ME 2** this verbal sign denotatively is the main title of the movie. In connotative meaning this sign indicates as the sequel of the first movie, because this movie still continuing to tell the story life of Gru that suddenly retired from the world of crime and wants to more focus on raising his three daughters that he adopted from an orphan in the first movie. The last verbal sign in the poster is **JUNE 2013**, in denotative meaning, this sign indicates as a month and a year. While in connotative meaning, this verbal sign indicates a piece of information provided by the creator to inform the audience about the movie will be released in the summertime in the theatres.

There are six visual signs found in the movie poster, the first visual sign is **The picture of Gru and Lucy** their figure in the poster denotatively indicates as the figure of the main characters in the movie. The picture of Gru and Lucy that drew in the poster connotatively is used to describing the story of the movie that tells Gru as a spy that falling in love with his partner Lucy. The second visual sign is **The Figure of Kevin and Bob**, their figure in denotative meaning indicates as the supporting

character in the movie. Also in connotative meaning, their figure in the poster is used to describing their role in the movie as Gru and Lucy assistant. Since in this second movie, only Kevin and Bob that helping Gru and Lucy doing their mission to spying El Macho that undercover his true identity by being a man that owned an Italian restaurant. The third visual sign in the poster is *The Figure of The Guns*, denotatively this visual sign is indicated as weapons. That connotatively used as an imagery of the weapons used by Gru, Lucy, Kevin, and Bob in the movie, when fighting with El Macho in the movie.

The next visual sign are *The Black Color of Gru’s Clothes* and *The Blue Color of Lucy Clothes*. Those two sign are denotatively indicates as the color of their clothes in the movie. While in connotative meaning, those two sign are used to describing; (1) the color of Gru’s clothes that colored with black by the creator is used to describing his characteristic as a mysterious spy. Since black color is often related to power, elegance, formality, and mystery. (2) Blue is a color that is commonly associated with relaxing, freshness, softness, and friendly. If we connected with that brief explanation, this sign is used as a supporting description of Lucy's characteristics in the movie as a friendly, gentle, and motherhood character.

The last visual sign in the poster is *The White Color of The Background*, the white color of the background in the poster denotatively indicates as a supporting description of the story in the movie. White is usually related to light, innocence, purity, and the beginning. Thus in connotative meaning, the white color that used by the creator as the background color of the poster, to emphasize the concept of the beginning of Gru's new life in this second movie. Since in this movie, Gru is told has a totally different life, if we compare it with the first movie. In the first movie, he is told as a character that has an evil personality, a mysterious professional thief that likes stealing an unusual object. While in this second movie of Despicable Me 2, he becomes a totally different character. Started from Gru that suddenly retires from the world of crime, becoming a father, has a job as an agent in the AVL office, and also there's a love story between Gru and Lucy in this movie becomes the biggest change of Gru's story life.

The Analysis of Poster 3



Figure 3. Movie Poster of Despicable Me 3

On the movie poster of Despicable Me 3, there were found five verbal signs. The first verbal sign *Need a Break?* denotatively indicates the movie tagline in the poster. This verbal sign is categorized as an interrogative sentence, which in connotative meaning is used by the creator to describing how the Minions questioning Gru's decision that want to retire from doing something bad. It also indicates as a reflection of how the Minions are disappointed with Gru's decision. The second verbal sign is *Illumination Present*, which in denotative meaning indicates the name of the company production. This verbal sign, in connotative meaning is used to inform the audience that this movie was made and presented by the company for the audience, especially for the audience that really loves the Despicable Me series movies. The third verbal sign in the poster is *DESPICABLE ME 3*, this sign denotatively indicates as the main titled of the movie. That in connotative meaning is used to inform the audience, this movie is the prequel of the movie series of Despicable Me. Because this movie brings us back to the flashback life of Gru before their parents get divorced and he separated from his twin brother Dru.

The fourth verbal sign in the poster is *JUNE 30 IN THEATRES AND REAL 3D*, denotatively this verbal sign indicates as piece of information for the audience. That in connotative meaning as an information about the time-released and the quality of the movie in the cinema. This verbal sign is also used by the creator and the company to persuade the audience to watch the Despicable Me 3 movie at the cinema. Because they provide the good quality of the movie that makes you can feel the experiences watches the movie in the 3D modes, which makes all characters in the movie as if it's pop-off in front of your eyes. The last verbal sign in the poster is *HOW TO ESCAPE PRISON* the title of the upside-down book that was read by the minion. That verbal sign denotatively indicates a title of a book. This verbal sign connotatively is used as a metaphor of how the Minions condition when they hear Gru's decision to retire from the world of crime. The minions feel they are in prison,

the prison of boredom, there is no more exciting villainy activity that they can do with their boss.

For the visual sign in the poster, there were found 3 visual signs. The first visual sign is *the minion that's reading a book upside-down while sits in the toilet*. This visual sign in denotative meaning indicates the minion is the supporting character in the movie. Since this movie poster is more highlights the minion perspective of how they are disappointed with Gru's decision in the movie, connotatively this visual sign is used to describing how they are trying to kill the boredom situation that they are facing in the movie. The second visual sign in the poster is *The Cain Ball on The Minion Ankle*, this visual sign in denotative meaning indicates as a physical restraint device applied to prisoners. This visual sign in connotative meaning is used by the creator as a supporting description of how depressed Minion's situation in the movie, as they feel like their abandoned by GRU.

The last visual sign is *The White Background of The Poster*, in denotative meaning this sign indicates as the color of the poster background. Since white color is a color that commonly associated with light, innocence, purity, and the beginning. This visual sign connotatively is used to describing the new situation the minions facing in the movie, which they must accept that their Boss is not doing a crime activity anymore, and prefer to become a father and worked as an agent spy with his wife, Lucy. This feels like a new beginning for them, without villainy, but more never-ending boredom that makes them listless. Since the Minions is a creature that will feel happy and motivated when they can help or dedicated their life to serves someone who's evil. It can help shape their days and assign meaning to their lives.

CONCLUSION

From the four movie poster of the Despicable Me movies series, it is found that the verbal and visual signs of this movie have denotative meaning and connotative meaning. The denotative meaning expresses the real meaning of the words or the objects in the posters. At the same time, those signs have connotative meaning. It reveals the hidden meaning from the signs. Such as the theme, the story, the visualization of the characters in the posters is used by the creator and the company to give slight information regarding the characters in the movie. The connotative meaning is more able to convey the hidden messages regarding the movie to the audience.

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