



Verbal Sign on Coldplay's Song "Biutyful" (Semiotic Analysis)

Ni Ketut Novia Anggreni¹, Ida Ayu Mela Tustiawati²

English Study Program Faculty of Foreign Languages, Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar,
Jl. Kamboja No. 11 A Denpasar –Bali, 80233

Correspondence Email: novia.anggreni01@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze and interpret the meanings or messages conveyed by the semiotic indicators present in three specific scenes from Coldplay's "Beautiful" music video. Data for this analysis was obtained from Coldplay's official YouTube channel, ensuring authenticity and accuracy in the selection of the music video scenes. These verbal signs within the music video specifically numerals and taglines were evaluated using Roland Barthes' (1967) semiotic theory of denotative and connotative meanings. The data of this research were analysed by using descriptive qualitative method. This study focuses on the analysis of verbal signs, examining both their denotative and connotative meanings in the context of communication. The music video scenes contained three verbal signs. Ultimately, the findings of this research will shed light on the various layers of meaning embedded in the verbal signs of the music video. This includes understanding how these signs, when interpreted beyond their literal sense, contribute to the overall narrative and thematic depth of the video.

Keywords: *semiotic, music, video, Coldplay*

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis dan memahami makna atau pesan yang disampaikan oleh indikator semiotika yang hadir dalam tiga adegan dari video musik "Biutyful" milik Coldplay. Data analisis dari penelitian ini diperoleh dari saluran YouTube resmi Coldplay, memastikan keaslian dan akurasi dalam pemilihan adegan video musik. Tanda-tanda verbal dalam video musik dalam penelitian ini, khususnya angka dan tagline, dievaluasi menggunakan teori semiotika Roland Barthes (1967) mengenai makna denotatif dan konotatif. Data dari penelitian ini dianalisis menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Penelitian ini berfokus pada analisis tanda verbal, dengan mengeksplorasi baik makna denotatif maupun konotatif yang terkait dengan penggunaan bahasa dalam konteks komunikasi. Adegan-adegan video musik tersebut mengandung tiga tanda verbal. Temuan dari penelitian ini menjelaskan berbagai lapisan makna yang tertanam dalam tanda-tanda verbal video musik dari Coldplay. Ini termasuk memahami bagaimana tanda-tanda ini, jika mengkonversi di luar makna literalnya.

Kata kunci: *semiotika, musik, video, Coldplay*

Introduction

Sapir (1921:8), language is "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires through voluntarily produced symbols." Given that language is defined as "a system of signs that expresses ideas" and is analogous to writing, deaf-mute alphabets, symbolic rites, polite formulas, military signals, etc., Sapir's motivations may have been similar to those of Ferdinand de Saussure, a prominent proponent of science-driven language study (1966:16). , language is "a system of arbitrary vocal symbols that permit all people in a given culture or those who have learned the system to communicate or interact" according to H.G. Widdowson (1975:20. Semiotics is a philosophical theory that seeks to understand how humans use signs and symbols to interpret the outside world.

Semiotics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on signs and all things related to a sign system's meaning. Each sign has a unique meaning. It depends on the purposes and uses of those purposes, which could include human uses for verbal expression. Within the field of semiotics, signs are images, gestures, phrases, sounds, and things that convey a different meaning than their actual form (Sebeok, 2001: 4). Coldplay's "Biutyful" music video features a semiotic. A music video is a visual representation of a song's lyrics, complete with both spoken and nonverbal cues.

There are some prior studies on the topic analysis of the sign; the first studies came from a journal paper titled Meaning inside the Movie Posters of Despicable Me Movie Series: A Semiotic Analysis by Cahyani et al (2022). The purpose of the preceding study was to decipher the semiotic signals hidden within the four Despicable Me movie posters. This study's data was obtained using an internet application. Barthes' theory of meaning is applied in this study to uncover the hidden meanings contained in the semiotic signs found in the movie posters (1977). The second previous study was based on an essay by Dhananjaya, Wandia, and Maharani from 2019 titled Verbal and Non-verbal Signs of Moana Movie Poster. Using Saussure's semiotics theory and a qualitative study approach, Dhananjaya et al. were able to identify and analyze the semiotic sign and its meaning in the Moana movie poster. The third previous study is an essay from English Literature, Linguistics, and Translation Studies (2021) by Modok and Associates titled An Analysis of Verbal and Visual Sign Found on Grave of the Fireflies Posters. This study aims to analyze the meaning found in the Grave of the Fireflies poster, both in terms of words and images. The data was analyzed using Saussure's (1983) semiotic theory. The research's data were obtained via an online download. Three spoken signs and five visual signs were discovered in the Grave of the Fireflies poster, according to the research's results, which were obtained through the use of a descriptive qualitative analysis method. The fourth prior study is an article titled An Analysis of Verbal and Non-Verbal Signs in Nivea Nourishing Body Lotion Advertisements by Jayanti et al. from English Literature, Linguistics and Translation Studies (2021). The purpose of this previous study is to interpret the verbal and non-verbal signs present in Nivea Nourishing body lotion. Signs are frequently seen in advertising. The Nivea Nourishing body lotion advertisement on YouTube served as the data source for this study, which employed a qualitative data gathering methodology. The meaning of verbal and non-verbal signs in body lotion advertisements is examined using Barthes' (1977) theory of meaning and Saussure's (1983) semiotic theory in relation to this study problem. The outcome had nine nonverbal indications and five spoken signs. The majority of these signs in

advertising had both connotative and denotative meanings; the researcher found one denotative meaning and thirteen connotative meanings. The last previous study, a 2022 article by Arinata, Pratiwi, and Sulatra titled *An Analysis of Verbal and Non-Verbal Signs in Rexona Clinical Protections Advertisement* served as the source of the most recent study applying Barthes's theory with a qualitative research methodology. Wierbicka's color theory supports the denotative and connotative meanings; the writer recognized six verbal and six nonverbal cues in this advertisement. Drawing from previous research, it can be concluded that the "Rexona Clinical Protection" commercial employed attention-grabbing language to attract its target demographic. These earlier studies aid in deciphering the significance of a symbol from a music video. This study differs from the earlier studies in that it examines the significance of linguistic signs found in the signs of Coldplay's music video, "Beautiful."

Since music video transmitted significance behind each scene through the qualities, background, face expressions, and objects used, these types of things are interesting to evaluate. The study of semiotic phenomena is an intriguing topic. This study investigates signs as symbols for objects, events, circumstances, emotions, and states in a variety of cultural contexts. As a result, the writer used Barthes' (1968) theory of meaning to help address the difficulty in this research study, which limited the study to analyzing the messages of the signs in the Coldplay music video.

Method

In analyzing the data, this research used qualitative research methods, and the analysis was presented by using the informal method. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (1993:23), a descriptive approach is one that is used to describe, analyze, and classify anything using tools such as surveys, interviews, questionnaires, and tests. The data was taken from music video entitled *Beautiful* by Coldplay. "Beautiful" is a song from Coldplay's ninth studio album, *Music of the Spheres*. Coldplay invented the Weirdos, a fictive alien puppet band, for the premise of the song "Beautiful", the eighth track of their ninth studio album, *Music of the Spheres*.

In qualitative research, each data point is contextualized. The researcher collected the data in the following steps: First, view and listen to the video "Beautiful" by Coldplay on their Official YouTube channel <https://youtu.be/raHLFg6bkNI?si=UAASTDi-tPYr1Qz->. The second phase is identifying semiotic utterances within the music video. This task required the researcher to look closely at both visual and auditory elements, recognizing symbols, signs, and verbal cues that contribute to the overall message of the piece. Third the researcher took detailed notes and captured screenshots of each identified semiotic element. This step was essential for creating a visual and textual record of the findings, ensuring that no critical details were overlooked. The final step involved a comprehensive examination of the semiotic utterances identified in "Beautiful." The researcher employed a classification technique to organize the compiled data into three distinct categories: signs, verbal signs, and meanings (both connotative and denotative).

Result and Discussion

Based on the result the researcher found 3 verbal signs as well as the significance of denotation and connotation in the Coldplay song video for "Biutyful." Three verbal cues from three scenes were discovered by the researcher from three scene from music video.

The data as follows:

Table 1. The outcome of the verbal and visual cues in the Coldplay music video for "Biutyful"

No	Scene	Verbal	Meaning	
			Denotative	Connotative
1	0:20 Sec	Humans Only sign	Human Only Sign	The Weirdos
2	0: 43 Sec	0, 1, 0 numbers	0, 1, 0 numbers	Evaluation
3	0: 54 Sec	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Busking, Humans Only sign 2. Sign drumming is prohibited 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Busking, Humans Only sign 2. Sign drumming is prohibited 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An orders 2. Prohibitions

After classifying all the signs found in the three scenes from Coldplay's Music Video. The classification of verbal signs in Coldplay's music video reveals their clear denotative meanings, which are further enhanced by contextual relevance, visual interplay, and audience engagement. This multifaceted approach not only deepens the thematic richness of the video but also fosters a stronger emotional connection between the audience and the narrative, illustrating the power of language and imagery in conveying profound messages.



Picture 1. One of the scenes from Coldplay's biutyful music video

As could be seen from the captured scene above, one verbal sign was found. The sign read as “Human Only”. From a denotative perspective, this sign clearly indicates that there are specific limitations regarding who and what is permitted to enter the designated space. In this instance, the sign explicitly states that entry is restricted to humans only, conveying a straightforward and literal message about the exclusivity of the environment. This limitation implies a deliberate choice to prioritize human presence and interaction, suggesting that the activities or experiences within this space are inherently tied to human qualities—such as emotion, creativity, and social connection. By restricting entry to humans, the sign also raises questions about the nature of the activities taking place within that space. It implies that the interactions, performances, or expressions expected there are uniquely human experiences that may not be replicable by non-human entities. This could foster a sense of community among those who can enter, reinforcing the idea that the space is designed for human engagement and artistry. Moreover, the explicit nature of the sign serves to clarify the boundaries of the space, highlighting an underlying theme of exclusivity. This can prompt viewers to reflect on the broader implications of such limitations in society who is included and who is excluded in various contexts, whether in art, culture, or community interactions.

From a connotative perspective, the verbal sign serves a more nuanced purpose by implicitly targeting "Weirdos," or fantastical creatures invented within the context of the video. By specifying that only humans are allowed entry, the sign suggests a deliberate exclusion of these non-human entities, which may symbolize unconventionality, diversity, or alternative forms of expression. This exclusion can be seen as a commentary on societal norms that often marginalize those who do not fit traditional molds of acceptability, reinforcing the idea that certain spaces are reserved for "mainstream" human experiences. This scene exemplifies how signs are not merely passive markers but are intentionally crafted by individuals according to predetermined conventions. The creator of the sign has made a conscious choice to convey a specific message, reflecting societal attitudes towards conformity and acceptance. In doing so, the sign communicates not just a rule, but also a deeper cultural commentary about who belongs in public spaces and the implicit biases that govern these boundaries. Furthermore, this intentionality behind the sign's creation underscores the power of semiotics how signs are imbued with meaning and how they can shape perceptions and behaviours. The exclusion of "Weirdos" suggests a tension between the conventional and the unconventional, prompting viewers to reflect on their own attitudes toward difference and diversity. One could infer that this verbal cue signifies a comprehensive prohibition against the "Weirdos," suggesting that they are barred from participating in any activities within the designated space. This exclusion implies not just a restriction on physical presence but also a denial of agency and expression for these unconventional creatures. The very act of prohibiting them from "doing anything" reinforces societal norms that often marginalize those who diverge from established conventions, creating an atmosphere that privileges certain identities while sidelining others. In examining the linguistic features of the music video, Dyer, Beasley, and Dannesl (2002, p. 120) highlight the multifaceted role that words play in shaping our understanding and emotional responses. Words do more than simply convey literal meanings; they evoke concepts, stir emotions, and generate associations

that influence how we perceive the world around us. In this context, the verbal cue operates as a powerful tool for communication, imparting not just rules but also underlying attitudes toward conformity and acceptance. This dynamic suggests that the language used in the video carries significant weight, as it reflects and reinforces cultural attitudes. The choice of words to exclude the "Weirdos" might elicit feelings of discomfort or provoke critical thought in the audience regarding their own biases and preconceptions about normalcy and difference. Additionally, this verbal cue can evoke associations with broader themes of belonging, identity, and the tension between the mainstream and the unconventional.



Picture 2. One of the scenes from Coldplay's *biutyful* music video

As could be seen from the captured scene above, three verbal sign was found. The sign read as 0,1,0 numbers. From a denotative perspective, this sign clearly communicates that the lead singer of the "Weirdos," Angel Moon, participated in a music contest but failed to meet the judges' expectations, as evidenced by the negative scores awarded for the performance. This literal interpretation highlights a pivotal moment in the narrative, indicating that despite Angel Moon's effort and participation, the outcome was unfavourable, emphasizing a sense of disappointment and rejection. The context of a music contest inherently sets up a framework of competition, where performances are evaluated based on specific criteria determined by the judges. By depicting Angel Moon receiving poor marks, the video underscores the challenges faced by unconventional artists in a competitive environment that often favours traditional standards of success. This denotation not only reflects a specific event within the storyline but also serves as a commentary on the often-subjective nature of artistic evaluation. Moreover, this situation illustrates the broader themes of aspiration and failure. Angel Moon's experience in the contest can evoke feelings of empathy from the audience, as many can relate to the pressure of seeking approval and the disappointment that can accompany failure. 0 (zero) is a number representing an empty quantity and quality. The number 0 frequently represents limitless potential or opportunity when used positively. It can be read as the start of a new idea or creation, or as an empty space that could be filled with different meanings or symbols. Since 0 is a number that denotes absolute emptiness, it can also stand for totality or perfection. Negatively speaking, the number 0 can be seen as empty or nothingness that denotes

a lack of significance or worth. This can suggest a lack of depth or an inability to effectively communicate or accomplish anything important. In the image above, the number 0 denotes an emptiness that exposes limitations or a jury member's inability to see talent. Which means that according to the judges the moon angel's voice was not of fill the quality that the judges wanted. 1 (one) is a number that symbolizes one or only unity. Although deep, number 1 can be seen as a symbol of power and leadership.

On a numerical rating scale, the number 1 is frequently the lowest value. This could mean that someone's performance or accomplishments are viewed as inadequate or falling short of expectations. A 1 can be used in several grading systems to denote a low or inadequate quality or achievement. A 1 on an academic or professional evaluation scale, for instance, can mean that the work or performance being assessed has fallen short of expectations. Given the circumstances of the situation above, the number 1 is seen as deficient since it falls short of what is expected of it. According to the female judges Angel Moon only have 1 assessment criteria. This verbal sign, connotatively, serves to encapsulate the overall score that Angel Moon received after participating in the singing contest, conveying more than just a numerical evaluation. The score symbolizes the culmination of the judges' assessments and, by extension, reflects their perception of Angel Moon's performance. This assessment carries emotional weight, suggesting not only the technical aspects of her singing but also the subjective tastes and biases of the judges. Beyond the literal score, the connotation extends to themes of judgment, validation, and self-worth. A low score can evoke feelings of inadequacy and disappointment, both for Angel Moon and for those who empathize with her journey. It may also suggest a larger commentary on how unconventional artists often struggle for recognition in spaces that favour traditional norms and standards. This context enriches the viewer's understanding of the character's experience, framing her performance as a broader commentary on the challenges faced by those who dare to be different. Furthermore, the score can symbolize the societal pressures that come with seeking approval in a competitive environment. It serves as a reminder of the vulnerability that artists experience when exposing their creativity to scrutiny. This connotative reading encourages viewers to reflect on the implications of public evaluation and the impact it can have on an artist's confidence and identity.



Picture 3. One of the scenes from Coldplay's Biutyful music video

In the third scene of the music video, two verbal signs are prominently featured on a poster. The phrase "Busking, Humans Only" serves as a denotative visual sign indicating the act of performing music or singing in a public place with the expectation of receiving donations, but restricted exclusively to humans. The term "busking" refers to a diverse range of activities performed primarily for entertainment or as a means of livelihood, with a significant emphasis on musical performances in public spaces. This practice often involves artists showcasing their talents, such as musicians, dancers, magicians, or street performers in areas where passersby can easily observe and engage with them, such as spoken or written words. Connotatively, the sign "Busking, Humans Only" suggests that this particular form of busking is exclusively reserved for humans, excluding any other beings or equipment. This connotation suggests a deliberate emphasis within the scene that certain activities are specifically designated for humans, excluding those who might be viewed as outsiders or unconventional. By establishing this boundary, the phrase underscores a cultural narrative that prioritizes mainstream identities and expressions, while sidelining those that diverge from societal norms. This emphasis not only delineates who is allowed to participate in public performances but also highlights underlying biases about what constitutes acceptable or valued artistic expression. The exclusion of outsiders or unconventional beings can evoke a sense of privilege among those who are considered "insiders," reinforcing a hierarchy of artistic legitimacy. It may suggest that certain forms of creativity, particularly those that challenge traditional expectations, are not welcome in this space. This dynamic invite viewer to consider the broader implications of such exclusivity, prompting reflection on issues of identity, belonging, and the often-rigid standards that govern artistic participation.

Additionally, this emphasis on human-only activities may provoke critical thought about the nature of creativity itself. It raises questions about what it means to be an artist and who gets to define the boundaries of artistic expression. By intentionally reserving space for humans, the scene creates a contrast with the unconventional, prompting audiences to grapple with their own perceptions of difference and acceptance in the realm of art and beyond. This connotation highlights a deliberate choice to reserve specific activities for humans, reflecting societal attitudes

toward inclusion and exclusion. It encourages viewers to engage with themes of identity, belonging, and the complexities of artistic expression, fostering a deeper understanding of the cultural narratives that shape our perceptions of who can participate in creative spaces. Overall, this scene illustrates how the semiotic analysis of verbal signs can reveal layers of meaning beyond their literal interpretations. It underscores the video's exploration of human activities and exclusivity, adding depth to its thematic portrayal through nuanced symbolic representations.

Conclusion

From the analysis of three scenes in Coldplay's music video "Biutyful," it becomes evident that the verbal signs employed carry both denotative and connotative meanings. Denotative meanings directly convey the literal interpretation of words or objects depicted in the music video scenes. Concurrently, these signs also possess connotative meanings, which unveil underlying and often symbolic implications beyond their literal definitions. This study identified three verbal signs within the video that effectively balanced denotative and connotative layers of meaning. In this research, Roland Barthes' distinction between denotative and connotative meanings was particularly relevant. Denotative meanings were consistently present across all verbal signs, accurately reflecting their literal definitions. Conversely, connotative meanings emerged when these signs attempted to convey additional layers of interpretation beyond their surface definitions. This dual approach to semiotic analysis enriched the understanding of how verbal signs function within the music video, illustrating how they contribute to conveying deeper narratives and thematic complexities.

References

- Allen, G. (2003, March). *Elements of semiotics*. Retrieved from <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/>
- Arinata, I. M. T., Pratiwi, D. P. E., Sulatra, I. K. (2022). An Analysis of Verbal and Non-Verbal Signs in Rexona Clinical Protections Advertisement. *Austronesian: Journal of Language Science & Literature*, 47-55.
- Audia, E. (2015). Peirce's semiotics analysis of icon and symbol on perfume advertisements. *English Letters Departement Letters And Humanities Faculty State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta*.
- Barthes, R. (1964, March). *Elemets of Semiology*. New York. Retrieved from <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/>
- Cahyani. N. M. R., Santika. I. D. A. M., Ariyaningsih. N. N. D. (2022). Meaning within the Movie Posters of Despicable MeMovie Series: A Semiotic Analysis. *English Literature, Linguistics and TranslationStudies*, 10.

- Coldplay. (2022, October). *Coldplay Biutyful*. Retrieved from Youtube:
<https://youtu.be/raHLFg6bkNI?si=OdgpdDF1QS1of4Uq>
- Dhananjaya. P. A., Wandia. I. K., Maharani. S. A. I. (2019). Verbal and Non-Verbal Signs of "Moana Movie Poster". *Jurnal Humanis, Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Unud*, 43-50.
- Dyer, G. (1982). *Advertising As Communication*. In G. Dyer, *Advertising As Communication*. London: The Language Of Advertising.
- Jack R. Fraenkel, Norman E. Wallen, Helen H. Hyun. (2012). How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education. In G.-H. I. Edition, *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education* (p. 642). New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2012.
- Jayanti, N. N. T., Santika, I. D. A. D. M., Pratiwi, D. P. E., . (2021). An Analysis of Verbal and Non-Verbal Signs in Nivea Nourishing Body Lotion Advertisements. *English Literature, Linguistics and Translation Studies*, 94-103.
- Modok, M. A. N., Santika, I. D. A. D. M., Pratiwi, D. P. E., (2021). An Analysis of Verbal and Visual Sign Found on Grave of The Fireflies Posters. *English Literature, Linguistics and Translation Studies*, 66-74.
- Seobok. (1996). *Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics*. In Seobok, *Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics*. Toronto: Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1996). *Semantics: Primes and Universal*. In A. Wierzbicka, *Semantics: Primes and Universal* (p. 512). United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.