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Study of Sign in The Naruto Film: A Semiotic Analysis

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Abstract

This research aims to explore in depth the use of signs in the Naruto film through a semiotic perspective. The researcher used a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach, which allows for in depth analysis of the meaning contained in each visual and verbal element. Data were obtained from various key scenes, dialogues between characters, and visual elements that are significantly relevant to the storyline. Through systematic data collection, this study focuses on how these signs are used to shape the narrative and convey specific messages in the Naruto film. The analysis process was conducted with reference to the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce and Roland Barthes. Peirce's theory is used to identify signs in the form of icons, indexes, and symbols, while Barthes' theory is used to interpret the meaning of signs through three levels, namely denotation, connotation, and myth. The results of the study revealed that the signs found not only have basic meanings according to the context of the story, but also contain cultural and moral messages. These layered meanings play an important role in enriching the story, building an emotional atmosphere, and conveying cultural values to the audience. Thus, this research confirms that semiotic studies are an effective approach to understanding the multimodal communication that occurs in Naruto, especially in relation to the delivery of moral messages and cultural values.

Keywords: Sign, Semiotics, Naruto, Multimodal Communication

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I INTRODUCTION

Naruto is a globally popular manga and anime series, not only entertaining but also rich in symbolic elements and moral values. Naruto Uzumaki, the main character, not only strives to become Hokage but also conveys important messages about courage, perseverance, and

forgiveness through various signs and symbols in the audiovisual narrative. Using a semiotic approach, this study seeks to uncover how visual and verbal signs in Naruto construct broader moral and ideological meanings.

This research is significant because it broadens understanding of how popular cultural works like anime convey complex moral messages through visual and narrative symbolism, and demonstrates its relevance in communication and cultural studies. Film, as a form of art and a medium of communication, plays an important role in delivering messages, values, and certain ideologies to its audience. Within a film, various signs such as language, images, symbols, character expressions, and even music interact with one another to produce meaning. Therefore, film should not merely be understood as entertainment, but also as a text that is rich in signs and can be analyzed through a semiotic.

Semiotics, derived from the Greek word *sēmeion* (sign), is the research of signs and the process of meaning-making. Roland Barthes and Charles Sanders Peirce are two prominent figures in semiotic theory who have contributed significantly to the understanding of how signs work. Peirce divides signs into three categories: icon, index, and symbol. Meanwhile, Barthes explains the levels of meaning in signs through denotation, connotation, and myth. In addition, Ferdinand de Saussure emphasizes that language itself is a system of signs, in which the linguistic sign consists of the signifier and the signified. In other words, language is the most dominant form of sign in human life because it serves as the

primary medium of communication and meaning construction.

In addition to visual signs, linguistic signs such as dialogues, slogans, mantras, and special terms also carry significant meaning. Naruto's famous expression "Dattebayo", for example, is not only a linguistic marker but also signifies his optimistic and energetic personality. Likewise, his statement "I will never go back on my word" represents moral consistency in the form of courage and loyalty. These linguistic signs are closely related to language as a system of signs, because through language values can be conveyed, interpreted, and reinterpreted by the audience. In everyday life, language serves the same function: it communicates identity, asserts attitudes, and expresses social and moral values within a community.

The relationship between sign and language is clearly evident in Naruto. Language as a linguistic sign functions as the primary medium that strengthens visual signs, thereby producing richer and deeper meanings. For example, when the symbol of a headband is combined with a character's spoken oath, the two signs together reinforce the representation of moral values. This indicates that signs cannot be separated from language, and language in turn functions as a sign that can be examined through semiotic analysis.

II RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Method of Collecting the Data

The data collection method used in this research is the documentation method. According to (Sugiyono, 2018:240), documentation is a technique of collecting data by recording, reviewing, and analyzing documents in the form of writings, images, or audiovisual materials. This method was chosen because the object of the study, the Naruto Shippuden anime, is an audiovisual text that contains both verbal and visual signs.

2.2 Method of Analyzing the Data

This research uses a semiotic analysis method. The data used in this research are based on two classical semiotic theories. First, Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory describes a sign as consisting of three interrelated components: representamen, object, and interpretant.

According to Peirce, a sign is something that has a true triadic relationship with its object and interpretant, which forms a complete meaning-making process (Peirce, 1931: 2.243). This theory is used to identify and classify the types of signs such as icons, indexes, and symbols that appear in anime, helping to reveal how these signs express moral concepts such as courage, loyalty, and self control.

2.3 Technique of Collecting the Data

The technique of collecting the data in this research is the documentation technique. (Sugiyono, 2018:240) defines documentation as "a technique of collecting data by recording, and reviewing documents such as writings, pictures, or audiovisual materials." This technique is suitable because the data source of this research,

Naruto Shippuden, is an audiovisual text containing verbal (dialogues) and visual (scenes, gestures, symbols) elements.

2.4 Technique of Analyzing the Data

The technique of analyzing the data in this research is analysis, focusing on the

interpretation of signs found in the Naruto anime series. After collecting the data in the form of dialogues, visuals, and symbolic elements, the researcher analyzes the meaning of those signs using semiotic theories.

III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher focuses on analyzing the data that has been collected. The data were obtained from selected scenes in the Naruto film that are most relevant to the study of signs. The researcher collected these data by observing the visual and verbal elements that appear in the scenes and documenting them in detail. The documentation includes both the imagery and the dialogues that contain significant signs related to the research objectives.

3.1 Analysis of Signifier and Signified in *Naruto Shippuden*.

In this section, the analysis focuses on the relationship between the signifier (the form of the sign) and the signified (the concept it refers to). The signifier is the pattern of sound, image, or form displayed in the anime, while the signified is the mental concept or meaning associated with it. This section discusses the classification of signs appearing in the Naruto film, based on Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic model (icon, index, and symbol) and Roland Barthes's semiotic theory (denotation, connotation, and myth). Each type of sign plays a crucial role in conveying meaning and contributing to the film's narrative and thematic structure.

In Naruto, signs are not limited to visual elements but also include verbal language, body language, and symbolic representations. Through identifying and categorizing these signs, this study aims to uncover how meaning is constructed and how cultural values are embedded in the story.

According to Peirce, signs can be divided into three main categories:

- **Icon:** A sign that represents its object through resemblance or similarity. In Naruto, examples of icons include visual representations such as the Konoha village symbol, which visually resembles

a stylized leaf, directly reflecting its meaning.

- **Index:** A sign that shows evidence or a causal relationship to its object. For instance, a torn headband worn by rogue ninjas indicates their rejection of village allegiance.
- **Symbol:** A sign that is connected to its object through a socially agreed convention or cultural understanding. The ninja headband itself is a symbol of loyalty, identity, and pride.

From Barthes's point of view, signs can also be examined on three levels.

- **Denotation:** The literal or primary meaning of the sign. For example, the Rasengan is denotatively a swirling ball of chakra.
- **Connotation:** The associated or secondary meaning, often influenced by emotions, culture, or context. The Rasengan connotes Naruto's determination and his mentor's legacy.
- **Myth:** The ideological or cultural narrative that the sign conveys. In the case of the Rasengan, it may symbolize the perseverance and willpower necessary to achieve one's goals.

Applying this framework, this research identifies that signs in Naruto often operate on multiple levels simultaneously. A single sign can function as an icon, index, and symbol, while simultaneously carrying denotative, connotative, and mystical meanings

3.2 The Meaning of Sign in The Naruto Film

In the previous chapters, the theoretical foundations of semiotics, as proposed by Charles Sanders Peirce and Roland Barthes, were outlined to interpret the representation of signs in visual and narrative media. This chapter explores how signs are represented through signs in the anime Naruto.

Through selected scenes, this section identifies signs that symbolize moral concepts such as courage, loyalty, perseverance, and forgiveness. The data below illustrates these values through their denotative and connotative meanings and through Peirce's triadic model (icon, index, symbol). Example of data analysis:

1: Obito Witnessing Rin's Death

Episode / Title: Naruto Shippuden Episode 345- I'm in Hell

Timestamp: 00:14:28 – 00:15:25

Sign Type	Shapes in Scenes	Reasons for Categorization
Icon	Visual of a waving flag	It is called an icon because its shape and appearance resembles a real flag in the real world.
Indek	The afternoon light hit Naruto's face.	It is categorized as an index because it indicates the afternoon time and creates a victorious atmosphere.
Symbol	Konoha flag	It is a symbol because it represents unity, identity, and protection for the village.

Scene Description

Obito, still a teenager, stood stunned as Rin was stabbed to death by Kakashi. The scene shows Obito's shocked expression, the gushing blood, and Kakashi's halting movements. The soundtrack falls silent, except for Obito's accelerated heartbeat.

Dialogue:

Obito: "Why?! Why did you let Rin die?!"

Rin: "I knew... this would happen... I asked Kakashi to do it..."

Semiotic Analysis**A. Roland Barthes' Model**

Denotation: Kakashi's hand pierced Rin's body with Chidori, blood came out, Rin's face smiled faintly before falling.

Connotation: The profound sense of loss, the betrayal Obito felt, and the crushing of his youthful hopes

Myth: Love shattered by tragic fate, depicting that war can take away the most precious relationships.

B. Charles Sanders Peirce's Triadic Model**2: Naruto Promises to Become Hokage**

Episode / Title: Naruto Shippuden Episode 479 – Naruto Uzumaki!!

Timestamp: 22:10 – 22:20

Sign Type	Shapes in Scenes	Reasons for Categorization
Icon	Visual of Rin being stabbed by Chidori	It is called an icon because it visually represents directly the events that occur in the story.
Indek	Blood flowing from Rin's body	Categorized as an index because it was a direct result of Kakashi's actions towards Rin.
Symbol	Rin's faint smile before he died	It is a symbol because it represents the attitude of forgiveness and peaceful separation between the characters.

Scene Description

Naruto stood before the Konoha army, with the village flag waving in the background. The afternoon sun reflected off his face, giving him a determined and energetic look.

Dialogue:

Naruto: "I will become Hokage and protect everyone!"

Semiotic Analysis**A. Roland Barthes' Model**

Denotation: Naruto standing tall with a determined expression, the Konoha flag behind him.

Connotation: Spirit of leadership and determination to protect the village.

Myth: Ideal leaders are those who are ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their people.

B. Charles Sanders Peirce's Triadic Model**3: Itachi Touches Sasuke's Forehead**

Episode / Title: Naruto Shippuden Episode 138 – The End

Timestamp: 16:00 – 16:10

Scene Description

Tachi, in his dying state, slowly raises his hand to touch Sasuke's forehead. The camera zooms in on Sasuke's shocked expression and his eyes welling with tears.

Dialogue:

(No dialogue, just sad background music)

Semiotic Analysis

1. Roland Barthes' Model

Denotation: A gentle touch on Sasuke's forehead.

Connotation: The last expression of affection from an older sibling.

Myth: Family love is eternal even in the face of conflict.

IV CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis presented in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that the film *Naruto* contains a wide range of signs that convey profound narrative and thematic meanings. Through the combined application of Charles Sanders Peirce's Triadic Model and Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, this research was able to uncover how visual, verbal, and symbolic elements are systematically embedded to construct layers of meaning within the storyline. The signs identified in the film not only serve as narrative devices but also operate as cultural codes that communicate values, emotions, and social messages to the audience.

The analysis revealed that Peirce's categories icon, index, and symbol are frequently intertwined throughout the film. Visual elements such as the ninja headbands, village symbols, and character specific jutsu often function as icons by directly resembling their referents, as indices by signifying situational context or emotional states, and as symbols by representing broader ideological concepts such as loyalty, unity, and resilience. Similarly, Barthes' levels of denotation, connotation, and myth provide a deeper understanding of how seemingly simple scenes and objects gain layered meanings. Denotative elements offer the literal storyline, while connotative readings reveal cultural and emotional undertones. At the mythic level, recurring motifs such as sacrifice, perseverance, and the pursuit of peace are transformed into universal narratives that transcend the fictional world of *Naruto*. The interplay between Peircean and Barthes perspectives demonstrates that signs in *Naruto* are not isolated phenomena but part of a complex semiotic system. For example, a single scene may simultaneously function as an icon of a character's physical state, an index of an ongoing conflict, and a symbol of moral or philosophical values. At the same time, the same scene's denotative meaning may be clear to any viewer, yet its connotation may vary depending

on cultural background, and its mythic resonance may contribute to the perpetuation of shared societal ideals. From a broader perspective, this research highlights that *Naruto* successfully integrates entertainment with moral and cultural education. The film's sign system operates in such a way that moral values are not merely told but experienced through the narrative, visual aesthetics, and symbolic constructs. This semiotic richness ensures that the messages are accessible to audiences of different ages and cultural backgrounds while still leaving room for deeper interpretation. In conclusion, the research affirms that a semiotic approach is not only effective in dissecting the film's visual and verbal components but also in understanding its cultural significance. Through applying the theories of Charles Sanders Peirce and Roland Barthes in an integrated manner, this research has shown that *Naruto* serves as both a source of entertainment and a medium for the transmission of complex social and moral ideas. Such findings underscore the relevance of semiotics in film studies and open pathways for future research that might explore other media or genres through similar theoretical frameworks.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of this research, several suggestions can be made for future researches and for readers interested in semiotic analysis of films, particularly anime.

For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct a more extensive analysis that includes a wider range of episodes or films. This could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how signs and symbols function throughout the entire narrative. Additionally, combining semiotic theory with other analytical approaches, such as discourse analysis or cultural researchers, may yield deeper insights into the relationship between visual signs, language, and cultural context. For educators, the findings of this research can be

used as a supplementary resource in teaching media literacy, literature, or communication researchers. Analyzing signs in anime like

Naruto can help students develop critical thinking skills by interpreting meaning beyond what is explicitly shown

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