

SEMIOTIC STUDIES ON FILM: READING HIDDEN MESSAGES

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Abstract

Film is a separate work of art that is full of concepts, ideologies, and certain ideas that can be interpreted. This means that a film is a medium for conveying messages used by its makers. This study aims to reveal hidden messages in the film through semiotic analysis. The method used is qualitative with a literature review approach. The results of the study show that films contain many symbols, signs and meanings that have a major influence on how the audience understands the message the filmmaker wants to convey. There are many meanings that can be drawn from symbols and signs in films, depending on the experience, knowledge, and background of the audience. All the meanings and symbols that exist in films are usually analyzed through visual analysis. Visual analysis is very closely related to semiotics based on Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory which is often referred to as the "Grand Theory" in visual analysis, this semiotic relationship is suitable when it is correlated with what actually happens or what is seen in the media.

Keywords: Film, Semiotics, Hidden Messages, Visual analysis

A. INTRODUCTION

Art in the form of music, dance, literature, visuals, and acting requires appreciation from its connoisseurs. Art appreciation can be interpreted as an appreciation of existing works of art. Along with the times, works of art have developed and produced a harmonious blend of literature, music, acting, and comedy in the form of films. Film is a medium used to spread entertainment, stories, music, drama, comedy, and other techniques to the general public (Oktavianus, 2015).

A number of experts say that film is a record of the reality that develops in society and is shown on the screen. On the other hand, films are full of varied and contested interests, conflicts, and facts. The mass media is often used as a domination tool to manipulate and confirm the presence of certain ideas (Sobur, 2003; Chandler, 2022).

Film has the function of *cultural transmission* or cultural transmission. Walter Lippman (1998) explains this with his expression; world outside and pictures in our heads. Movies have the potential to shape meaning. It is possible that films open up the interpretation of people or audiences, through the images or audio visuals presented. Movies can change people's perceptions of certain entities, concepts, and even thoughts. Views of reality are displayed by the media, including films, in certain ways (Reihooudt & Audier, 2018).

The special reasons why someone likes movies, because there are elements in human efforts to find entertainment and spend time, because movies look lively and enthralling, watching movies can be used as

part of dating programs between men and women. This is the main goal for filmmakers to be able to produce films packaged in interesting stories, and incorporate values that can enrich the mind to be presented to society as a reflection of things in this world with a new understanding. Because of this, films are considered as a means of expression and description of everyday life (Hotimah, 2022).

In acting, language is indeed the main element . Words or language, in linguistics, are defined as meaningful and actualized sound symbol systems, which are arbitrary and conventional, which are used as a means of communication by a group of people to generate feelings and thoughts. Language is a combination of words that are arranged systematically, so that they can be used as a means of communication. The word itself is an integral part of the symbols used by community groups (Piliang, 2004).

Film is a work of art created to entertain, inform, or inspire audiences. However, films also have many symbols, signs and meanings hidden within them. Symbols and signs in films can carry very important messages, and this can influence how the audience understands and responds to the film (Wijaya, 2017). In this process, the symbols used by the participants consist of the symbols used by the communication participants, both verbal (oral and written language) and non-verbal (body movements, pictures, colors and various signs that do not include words). or language). As a non-verbal symbol, images can be used to express thoughts or feelings. The science that studies these signs is semiotics (Yatun et al, 2020).

Semiotics is a method used to read symbols and signs in a work of art. This method helps us to understand the message hidden in the artwork. In the context of film, semiotic analysis can help us to understand the meaning contained in every scene, camera movement, lighting, music, and many more. Therefore, research on semiotic studies in film is very important in helping us understand and interpret the messages conveyed by filmmakers (Oetomo & Kusumandyoko, 2022; Wardaniningsih & Kasih, 2022).

This study aims to discuss the semiotic study of films as an attempt to read the messages hidden in them. It is hoped that this research can contribute to increasing understanding of film and semiotic analysis. This research can help filmmakers to pay attention to the symbols, signs, and meanings contained in each scene of their film so that the message to be conveyed can be clearer and easier for the audience to understand. In addition, this research can also provide new insights for researchers in expanding the object of research and deepen understanding of cultural differences that exist in film.

B. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method to describe the facts in the scope of a predetermined topic. The topic in question is Semiotic Studies on Film: Reading Hidden Messages. The approach used in this study is a literature review. Literature studies or research use literature to obtain and process data comprehensively (Zed, 2008). The library sources used will not be separated from the theme of the representation and the film. Library sources are books, journal manuscripts, and texts in *online media* related to the topic being studied. Data analysis techniques are carried out through reduction, presentation, and formulation of conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The results of data analysis are described according to the appropriate categorization in order to obtain a factual picture of the topic being discussed (Bogdan & Taylor, 1990).

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Semiotic Studies

Sobur (2003) explains that the word semiotics is taken from the Greek "Semeion" which means sign. More broadly it is said to be a social convention that represents an explanation of something else. For example, something that is wet indicates the presence of water. Whereas in the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), it is mentioned as a science or theory related to signs and symbols that exist and are known to humans. Like Morse code, punctuation in grammar, to traffic signs. Preminger, mentions it as the science of signs that places social phenomena as signs. Then the system that exists in society, conventions, and rules have a role in determining whether a sign has an important meaning or not.

There are many types of Semiotics, which are very familiar in life. Maybe even without realizing it, you often use it. The following types are based on the book *Lexical Semanti* (2001; Silverman, 2022).

- a) Descriptive. It is the study of semiotics on a sign system that has existed for a long time, then still exists today with an unchanged meaning. An example is a sign when rumbling is heard from a volcano, usually it will be accompanied by the eruption of the volcano.
- b) Analytic. This type examines various signification systems that will later produce a meaning, object, or idea. Mostly used in a delivery of information. One example is when someone claps their hands indicating an appreciation for something.
- c) Cultural. Cultural studies are related to a culture, because of course in a culture there are certain signs that explain important information related to that culture. For example, the ogoh-ogoh parade performed by Hindus marks the arrival of Nyepi.
- d) Faunal. This is different from faunal semiotics which examines various signs from animals. Usually it will be related to animal habits, then it becomes a sign and the truth can be proven. For example, a cat strokes his master's leg because he feels affection or asks for food. It could also be a sign of a dog barking at night, indicating that something was seen.
- e) natural. Natural studies will identify various natural signs that occur in nature, without human intervention. For example, cloudy indicating that it will rain.
- f) Narrative. This type of narrative semiotics explains narrative signs that were spoken or written in ancient times and are still a source of information for some people. One of them is a sign of the myths of ancient parents, about sitting in front of the door of the house has a negative meaning that is keeping away fortune. However, the truth of this information cannot be ascertained.
- g) Structural. Related to signs that emerge from a language structure. As an example, in Javanese there is a formal language structure that is spoken when meeting important people or elders. Then there are also non-formal structures that are spoken to peers and are more relaxed.
- h) Social. It is a study of signs related to social communication in society. For example shaking hands when introducing yourself, nodding when agreeing to something, covering your face when afraid, shaking your head when disagreeing, and many other examples.
- i) Normative. That is in the form of a study to see the sign that is the embodiment of various norms in society. For example, *janur kuning* indicates someone who is married. Black flags, indicating someone has died, as well as traffic lights where each color has its own meaning.

To ensure that a sign is included in the study of semiotics, there are three existing instruments because these instruments will be the cause of communication that results in an understanding.

- a) Cue. That is one person's efforts to tell information to other people, by doing certain things. It is temporal or in accordance with the time of communication. When someone points his thumb at someone, when asked about his condition. It is a signal, which the questioner will respond to without the need for further communication.
- b) Symbol. Is something that becomes a source of one's understanding of an object. Its existence is associated with various social, cultural, or conditional conditions. The meaning of this symbol also varies, some have figurative, subjective, special, or dynamic meanings. While the shape is also varied, can be in the form of colors, objects, tones, to imaginative forms but have their own meaning.
- c) Sign. A semiotic study also has an instrument in the form of a sign, which will explain a condition or object. The form is very diverse, such as objects, writing, code, sentences expressed, to a certain event.

2. Film

The definition of film literally is a film (cinema) in the form of a series of live (moving) images, often also called a movie (Alfathono & Manesah, 2020; Gorlee, 2022). According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary, film can be interpreted in two senses, film is a thin membrane made of soluloid for negative images (which will be made portraits) or for positive images (which will be played in cinemas and television), secondly, films interpreted as a play (story) of living images.

The definition of film according to the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 8 of 1992 is a work of art and culture which is a visual-audience mass communication media made based on the principle of cinematography by being recorded using celloloid tape, video tape, video disc, or other technologically-invented materials in all shapes, types, and sizes through chemical processes, electronic processes, or other processes, with or without sound, which can be displayed or can be displayed with mechanical, electronic and other projection systems .

Films always influence and shape society based on the message *behind* it. Never the other way around. Film always records the reality that grows and develops in society and then projects it onto the screen . Film has become a familiar audio-visual communication enjoyed by all people of various ages and social backgrounds. The power and ability of film to reach many social segments, then makes the experts believe that film has the potential to influence its audience (Sutanto, 2017; Siregar, 2022). Films have an impact on every audience, both positive and negative impacts. Through the messages contained in it, films are able to influence and even change and shape the character of the audience .

In conveying messages to audiences, the director uses imagination to present a message through film with elements related to exposition (direct or indirect presentation). There are not a few films that tell real stories or really happen in society. There are many ideological contents in it, so that in the end it can influence the mindset of the audience. As a moving image, film is a reproduction of reality as it is

3. Semiotic Studies in Film

Film is a medium that can reinforce messages. The filmmakers concoct messages in an interesting way in the film, there is a meaning that they want to show, there are ideas that they want to convey to the audience. Therefore, film cannot be separated from the production process which involves the owner of the idea and the spread of ideology. Film has a unique power because in the process of delivering messages it can be spiced up

with manipulative work (McQuail, 1987; Crow, 2022). As well as entertainment, films can also be used as a tool for public diplomacy.

A number of experts say that there are two elements that make up a film (Pratista, 2008; Hemais et al., 2022). These two elements are narrative elements and cinematic elements. These two elements are integrated to form good and engaging media so that the message conveyed can reach optimally. In general, narrative elements are the elements or materials to be processed. Usually, it is interpreted as a story idea, including the script that will be mixed. While the cinematic element is a way to process these narrative elements. Filmmaking techniques fall into the category of cinematic elements.

The elements in the film allow the audience to interpret what the maker is saying. On the other hand, there are often representations of entities in the film. It is in this context that film becomes attached to the science of communication. There is a language that is conveyed, both verbal and nonverbal. Verbal through dialogue, or nonverbal through actions or movements.

Language can always make people externalize the meaning of what they encounter. Up to the stage of cultural similarity and similar understanding of language, the process of circulation of representations can be said to be running smoothly. The meaning of all entities that want to be translated, have a relationship with how to represent them, including through the media of film (Putri, 2013).

Visual analysis in a number of literatures is referred to as an effort to explain culture and social life through the implementation of visual products. One of the experts who explained about visual analysis divided the area of viewpoint into three areas (Rose, 2001). With the initial assumption, depiction is never just an artificial illustration, but also photographing phenomena.

Visual analysis is closely related to the study of semiotics. Semiotics is a science or analytical method for studying signs. Signs are devices used in trying to find meaning. Which is then also associated with humanity (humanity), in order to interpret things (to signify), as a medium of communication (Sya'dian, 2019). According to him symbols occur based on metonymy, which means names for other objects that become their attributes. Symbols are also close to figure of speech, for example, metaphors and suppositions. Including, allusions that are often ejected in the language of literature and art.

On the other hand, Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory is often called the "Grand Theory" in visual analysis, although this theory is not always used. Admittedly, Peirce's presentation has a lot of compatibility with the components in the film. Peirce explained about three elements in a sign that are interconnected, namely representamen, object, and interpretant. The semiotic relationship is appropriate when it is correlated with what actually happened, or what is seen in the media.

Semiotics is a scientific discipline about signs that have a system order. However, the principle is not standard because there is an element of interpretation in it. Semiotics is not a science that has certainty, singularity and objectivity like natural science which demands mathematical measurements. Semiotics is relatively dynamic, flexible and open to various forms of reading and interpretation, not about absolute truth.

Therefore, film studies can have many variants of meaning in its development. Semiotics always outlines plural meanings (polysemy). When discussing doctrines and ideas, for example, Semiotics does not only develop in one absolute doctrine, and can actually be debated (Fahma & Darwis, 2020). Argumentation becomes a middle way to see the suitability of the ideas in the film. Visual semiotics enters into special semiotics, in this case the function of communication is attached to it, the function of signs in conveying

messages from a message sender to sign recipients based on certain rules and signs. The communication function requires that there be a two-way (one or two-way) relationship between the sender and the recipient of the message which is mediated by certain media (Tinarbuko, 2010; Dolgopolas & Dagiene, 2022).

Films are moving pictures which aim to convey a message or story. Film is a form of visual communication formed from cinematographic techniques, which are a combination of the arts of communication and photography. Therefore, in essence, cinematography is the art of visual validation (Pratista, 2008). Big media such as films with huge capital and distribution channels can easily provide understanding to the people who are their consumers. Hollywood film "factory" which has power in the form of roaming ability to distribute messages and texts has the potential to spread discourse in the form of new knowledge.

Film is relevantly a field of study for semiotic analysis, because films are built solely on signs. These signs include various sign systems that work well together to achieve the same effect as architectural signs, especially indexical in films where iconic signs are used, namely signs that describe something.

The more important semiotic system in film is the use of iconic signs, namely in the form of signs that can describe something intended in conveying the message to the audience. Metz in Sobur said that although there are other efforts outside of continental thinking about des Hautes Etudes et Sciences Sociales (EHESS) Paris, it is the main figure in cinematographic semiotic thinking until now. Metz's contribution to film theory is an attempt to use structural linguistic conceptual tools to review existing film theory

D. CONCLUSION

Films based on semiotic studies are very urgent and interesting, because the development and growth of films is so rapid and able to move audiences as spectators. There are many ways to analyze film through Semiotics theory. The method in question is visual analysis. Visual analysis is closely related to semiotics. Pierce explained three elements that are interconnected in a sign, namely representamen, object, and interpretant. This semiotic relationship is suitable when it is correlated with what actually happened or what is seen in the media. Semiotics is not a science that has certainty, singularity, and objectivity like the natural sciences which require mathematical measurements. Semiotics is relatively dynamic, flexible and open to various forms of reading and interpretation, not about absolute truth. Therefore, film analysis can have many variants of meaning in its development. Semiotics always outlines many meanings (polysemy). When talking about doctrines and ideas, for example, semiotics does not only develop in one absolute doctrine and can give rise to many interpretations and readings,

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