

Artikel

Semiotic Analysis in *Barbie Film* by Charles Sanders Pierce Theory

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Abstract

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This research discussed the meaning of the signs in the *Barbie* (2023) film. This research aimed to find the signs contained in the film based on the types of signs in Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic and to interpret the meaning of these signs based on the semiosis process which involved the relationship between representamen, object, and interpretant. In this research, researchers used qualitative methods and data was collected by marking and sorting with a semiotic approach. The researcher found 4 types of signs: icon show that every woman has the same opportunities and rights as other women and has equal gender roles as men in society, qualisign show the feminine side of women and the sexual violence that women often experience, symbol shows allusions to sexism and patriarchal culture, and index shows self-discovery. Based on 4 types of signs that have been analyzed through a semiosis process involving representamen, object, and interpretant, the researcher found the meaning of this film was about the position of women in society, the importance of gender equality without gender stereotypes, women also had the same rights in a career regardless of their physical appearance and skin color, women had ambition and dreams and be able to play an active role in society as well as the meaning about the importance of being yourself.

Keywords: Charles Sanders Peirce, gender equality, gender stereotype, semiotic, semiosis

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas tentang makna dari tanda-tanda dalam film *Barbie* (2023). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan tanda-tanda yang terkandung dalam film berdasarkan tipe tanda dalam semiotika Charles Sanders Peirce dan menginterpretasikan makna tanda-tanda tersebut berdasarkan proses semiosis yang melibatkan hubungan antara representamen, objek, dan interpretan. Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti menggunakan metode kualitatif dan data dikumpulkan dengan menandai dan menyortir dengan pendekatan semiotika. Peneliti menemukan 4 tipe tanda yakni ikon menunjukkan bahwa setiap perempuan mempunyai kesempatan dan hak yang sama dengan perempuan lainnya serta memiliki peran gender yang setara dengan pria di dalam masyarakat, qualisign menunjukkan sisi feminin perempuan dan kekerasan seksual yang sering dialami perempuan, symbol menunjukkan singgungan terhadap seksisme dan budaya patriarki, dan index menunjukkan penemuan jati diri. Berdasarkan 4 tipe tanda yang telah dianalisis melalui proses semiosis yang melibatkan representamen, objek, dan interpretant, peneliti menemukan makna dari film ini adalah tentang kedudukan perempuan di dalam masyarakat, pentingnya kesetaraan gender tanpa

adanya stereotip gender, perempuan juga mempunyai hak yang sama dalam berkarir tanpa memandang penampilan fisik dan warna kulit, perempuan mempunyai ambisi dan impian dan mampu berperan aktif dalam masyarakat serta makna tentang pentingnya menjadi diri sendiri.

Kata Kunci: Charles Sanders Peirce, kesetaraan gender, stereotip gender, semiotik, semiosis

1. INTRODUCTION

Language operates as a tool sustaining the existence of personal, public, and social-communicative experiences. Language is not just a means of communication but is also a means of perception and cognition of the world in the process of communication. As a social phenomenon, language consists of cultural, communicative, developmental, educative, and personal integrative components [1]. Many experts have previously asserted that language is a tool for interacting or communicating and may be used to communicate thoughts, ideas, concepts, or even emotions. As a result, language has a long history as a way of communicating ideas. Because language is a communication tool, it constitutes a social and national phenomenon. This is why language reflects mindsets and the patterns of behavior typical of a certain linguistic community. In his research paper, Kumral (2013) conducted a semiotic approach and proposed an explanation of the interconnection between semiotics and language: Language is a virtual communication system consisting of words and oral signs that already exist in the long-term memory of the speaker of the language concerned. When words are recognized as oral signs with meanings assigned arbitrarily for communication purposes, then semiotic occurs as the primary concern of the whole issue, concerning itself with all domains of language including literary studies, pragmatics, semantics, social and scientific studies, and more.

The term semiotics itself comes from the Greek word *semeion* which means sign or *seme* which means interpreter of sign [2]. According to Peirce (58), nothing is a sign until it is interpreted as a sign. It means everything may be a sign as long as someone interprets it as 'signifying' something that refers to or stands for something other than itself. Things are interpreted as signs largely unconsciously by relating them to familiar systems of conventions. It is this meaningful use of signs that is at the heart of the concerns of semiotic (Chandler 13). As it was shown in the other research that the stereotypes of the three animal characters in the film are different from the common acceptance. Mouse which are dirty and poor are depicted differently as they are wealthy and prosperous. Rabbit which are weak and fearful is depicted as strong and brave [3]. Therefore, ornament in the form of plant motifs, ornaments in the form of animal motifs, ornaments in the form of natural motifs, and ornaments in the form of calligraphy motifs [4].

Peirce and Saussure are commonly regarded as semiotic pioneers. They introduced two important theoretical traditions. Saussure's term 'semiology' sometimes refers to the Saussurean tradition, whereas the term 'semiotic' sometimes refers to the Peircean tradition. Nowadays, the term 'semiotic' is commonly used as an umbrella term to embrace the whole field (Nöth 14). Nonetheless, semiotic and semiology are terms that relate to the same discipline. Both of these terms pertain to the study of sign. The difference between the Saussurean and Peircean models is that the Peircean model is being triadic rather than dyadic, variants of Peirce's triad are often presented as the semiotic triangle (Chandler 33). Meanwhile, Saussure's model of the sign is in the dyadic tradition. He defined a sign as being composed of a signifier (*signifiant*) and a signified (*signifié*) (14).

Chandler (2007) defines semiotics, as signs which take the forms of words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. Thus, semiotic can be used to examine the meaning of the film since film contains aspects such as words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects that can be analyzed using semiotic. By analyzing signs portrayed in *Barbie* film using

semiotic by Charles Sanders Peirce, the research aims to uncover the meaning of the signs through a semiosis process involving representamen, object, and interpretant. This paper aims to analyze the semiotic in *Barbie film* which consist of type of signs.

2. METHOD

The researcher applied a qualitative method to analyze the research since the data are presented in the form of words, not numbers. In their book, Auerbach and Silverstein (3) explained that qualitative research involves analyzing and interpreting texts and interviews to discover meaningful patterns descriptive of a particular phenomenon.

The researcher used a qualitative research approach, which tries to discover and narratively represent what individual people do in their daily routines, as well as what their decisions mean to them [5]. Qualitative research aims to produce integrated and comprehensive interpretations based on extensive, complex, and detailed data (Mason 3). Qualitative research investigates and comprehends the meaning that groups or people assign to a social or human issue (Cresswell 1). Then the researcher applied a semiotic theory to analyze the data in the *Barbie 2023* film.

The data used for representamen, object, and interpretant are taken from scenes that represent signs in the *Barbie* film. In addition, dialogues are chosen by the researcher to strengthen and support the data in this research. The data source is from a film entitled *Barbie* which lasted for 195 minutes and is accessible to watch on Netflix. It is because qualitative research is a type of research in which the researcher or a designated core researcher gathers and interprets data, making the researcher as much a part to the research process as the participants and the data they provide [6].

In order to collect the data, the researcher took a number of steps. First, the researcher watched *Barbie* from beginning to end. Second, the authors captured the scenes that represented signs. Last, the researcher marked and noted the data based on the type of sign and formulated the representamen, the object, and the interpretant. The study was then carried out using the data analysis theory established by John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell. The first step in doing this analysis is to organize and prepare the data for analysis. During this step, the researcher selects and organizes the data into various categories [7,8]. The second step is to read or view the entire dataset. This stage presents an overview of the information and opportunity to reflect on its overall meaning. At this point, the researcher examined the data again to ensure that no important information had been overlooked. During the reading process, the researcher wrote notes on any thoughts or notions that emerged regarding the data. The next step is to begin the process of coding all data. The fourth step involved creating descriptions and themes. In this step, the researcher uses coded data and descriptions of setting or persons, as well as categories or themes for analysis. The fifth step is to provide the descriptions and themes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This subchapter presents the answers to the research questions, which are the types of signs found in *Barbie* and the semiosis process in the *Barbie* film according to Peirce's theory. Several signs that were in accordance with the type of signs categorized by Charles Sanders Peirce in *Barbie* (2023) were found by the researcher. Thus, according to Sapwan, et al, (2022) [9] showed that the semiotic things such as blue face, burning fire, tears, smoke, traces of spilled blood, blood splatter, and traces of wasp attacks. The authors explained the context and the type of sign found belonged to what type in Peirce's explanation. The analysis and explanation of the findings were as follows.

3.2.1 Icon

The scene below shows a woman wearing a sash that says "president". The woman with black skin and curly hair is speaking in the middle position while to her right and left stand women with different physical appearances. There are dark, medium, and fair skin. The scene showing a black woman with curly hair wearing a sash that says the

president appears several times in the *Barbie* film namely at minutes 00.06.56, 00.11.45, and 01.31.09 thus the researcher classified this data as a repetition which is one of the indications of sign. According to Boggs and Petrie (61), repetition serves to heighten the item's importance and sign potency with each reappearance thus the researcher believes that this repetition is one of the indications of a sign.

As stated by Peirce, an icon interrelates with its semiotic object by virtue of some resemblance or similarity with the object it represents. Based on this statement, the researcher classified the cut scene of a woman with black skin and curly hair as an icon because it had a physical similarity to the object it represented namely President Barbie.

01.31.09 – 01.31.44



Figure 2. Qualisign

a. Representamen

Representamen or ground conveys information about the object it represents [2]. The eighth data found by researchers is a cut scene showing a woman with black skin and curly hair speaking while holding a hammer and wearing a sash that says 'president'. This cut scene is classified by the researcher as a Representamen [R].

b. Object

For Peirce, an object is anything that is represented in a sign [2]. In this case, the cut scene showing a woman with black skin and curly hair speaking while holding a hammer and wearing a sash that says 'president' which is classified by the researcher as a Representamen [R] represents the object [O] a black woman with curly hair giving a speech among other women.

c. Interpretant

The relationship between the representamen [R] and the object [O] will generate an interpretant. Interpretant is the sign that appears in the receiver's mind after seeing the representation. In this case, the position of the woman with black skin and curly hair standing in the middle of other women with a slightly forward position indicates that this woman has an important role in the *Barbie* film. This is supported by the sash she is wearing and the position of her hand holding the hammer which indicates that this woman plays an important role in decision-making in Barbie Land. She is also seen standing in the middle of other women with different physical appearances, some with fair, medium, and dark skin. All these women seem to listen to the black woman. The researcher classifies Interpretant [I] of the eighth data as women with dark skin and curly hair also have the same rights as other women to lead and make decisions in society [10].

3.2.2 Qualisign

The scene below is the scene from the first time Barbie and Ken go to the Real World. However, the men in Real World behave badly towards Barbie and say indecent things and even call her 'Blondie'. According to Boggs and Petrie (61). Value in an object, if a specific character confers interest and significance to an item, it becomes charged as a sign by displaying remarkable care for the item. Based on this statement, the researcher classifies Barbie's blonde

hair as value in an object which is one of the indications of a sign. In the Barbie Land, each Barbie has a variety of hair colors. However, Barbie Barbara has blonde hair [11,12].

The researcher classified this sign as a qualisign. According to Peirce's classification of sign, a qualisign is a quality that is on the sign such as color, harsh, hard, weak, or soft. Barbie's hair was classified as a qualisign because it contained the qualities contained in a sign. This quality was the blonde color of Barbie's hair. Blond hair had become extremely sexualized thus blonde women were often considered dumb and often received less respect and aggression. They were also seen as an object.

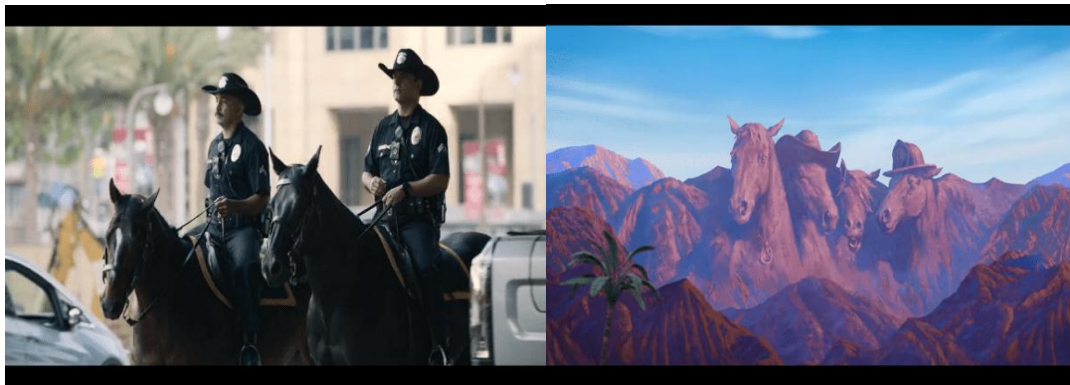


Figure 3. Qualisign

a. Representamen

Qualisign has a relationship between the representamen and the object based on the quality that is on the sign. the representamen is something that can be perceived by senses and stands to something else. In this case, the cut scene of a woman with blonde hair is categorized by the researcher as a Representamen [R].

b. Object

An object is anything that is represented in a sign or something that the representamen stands for. In the ninth data, Barbie and Ken are wandering around the Real World on roller skates. But the people around them look at them strangely. These people laugh at Barbie and Ken who look flashy. Several men also appear to be catcalling and harassing Barbie. The cut scene of a woman with blonde hair which is a Representamen [I] stands for the Object [O] Barbie's blonde hair.

c. Interpretant

Interpretant is the sign that appears in the receiver's mind after seeing the representamen. It is based on the relationship between the representamen and the object. Based on the context of the *Barbie* film, The relationship between the cut scene of a woman with blonde hair which is a Representamen [I] stands for the Object [O] Barbie's blonde hair, generates the Interpretant [I]. Blonde women are often stereotyped as a symbol of sexuality [13,14].

3.2.3 Symbol

Horses appear several times in the *Barbie* namely in the Real World and Barbie Land. According to Boggs and Petrie (61), repetition serves to heighten the item's importance and sign potency with each reappearance thus the researcher believes that this repetition is one of the indications of a sign. This sign is also shown in close-up shots. According to Boggs and Petrie (63), dominant colors, extended close-ups, odd camera angles, switches from strong to soft focus, freeze frames, and lighting effects can all be used to emphasize a scene visual. Thus the researcher believes that a close-up shot is a hint that something should be interpreted as a sign.



[00.31.02 and 00.58.17]

Figure 4. Symbol

The researcher classified this sign as a symbol. In Chandler (36) A symbol is a mode in which the signifier does not resemble the signified but which is fundamentally arbitrary or purely conventional so that this relationship must be agreed upon and learned. In this case. Ken who thought that horses were a symbol of power and dominance in the Real World made horses a symbol of patriarchy in Barbie Land. The other Kens also agreed that horses were a symbol of patriarchy. Therefore, the horse was classified as a symbol because it was fundamentally arbitrary or purely conventional and it was agreed upon and learned [15,16,17].

a. Representamen

A symbol interrelates with the representamen and the object based on convention and agreement. Representamen is something that can be perceived by the senses and functions as a sign that stands to something else, this something else is called an object. The eighth sign that the researcher notices after watching *Barbie* is the cut scene of horses in the Real World and Barbie Land which is classified by the researcher as a Representamen [R].

b. Object

An object is anything that is represented in a sign or something that the representamen stands for. In the eighth data, the cut scene of horses in the Real World and Barbie Land which is a Representamen [I] stands for the Object [O] horses.

c. Interpretant

Interpretant is the sign that appears in the receiver's mind after seeing the representamen. It is based on the relationship between the representamen and the object. Based on the context of *Barbie* film, The relationship between the cut scene of horses in the Real World and Barbie Land which is a Representamen [I] stands for the Object [O] horses. Then this relationship generates an Interpretant [I] patriarchy because horses symbolize masculinity, power, and dominance. The researcher interpreted the meaning of this sign based on Johnson and Arp's (292) that a literary sign's meaning should be defined and sustained by the story as a whole. The story itself provides the sign's meaning, not another source.

3.2.4 Index

The researcher believes that the writing "I am Kenough" on Ken's hoodie is a sign. The researcher interprets that the writing I am Kenough on Ken's hoodie comes from the word "I am enough". The writing I am Kenough on Ken's clothes is considered a sign because it contains a value in an object which is one of the indications of a sign. According to Boggs and Petrie (61), value in an object, if a specific character confers interest and significance to an item, it becomes charged as a sign by displaying remarkable care for the item.



(01.41.31 – 01.41.39)

Figure 5. Index

The researcher classified the writing "I am Kenough" on Ken's hoodie as an index, the writing I am Kenough on Ken's hoodie came from the word "I am enough" which could be seen as an indexical sign. The writing contained the implied meaning that Ken had figured out who he was without Barbie, without Barbie Ken was still Ken thus he felt enough for himself. The writing "I am Kenough" on Ken's hoodie was a non-arbitrary association with the character's emotional state.

a. Representamen

The writing "I am Kenough" on Ken's hoodie comes from the word "I am enough" which is classified by the researcher as a Representamen [R] which is a non-arbitrary association with the character's emotional state.

b. Object

In the ninth data, the cut scene showing the sentence I am Kenough on Ken's hoodie which is a Representamen [R] stands for the object the sentence "I am Kenough" in Ken's hoodie comes from the sentence I am Enough.

c. Interpretant

Interpretant is the sign that appears in the receiver's mind after seeing the representamen. It is based on the relationship between the representamen and the object. The writing "I am Kenough" on Ken's hoodie which is classified by the researcher as a Representamen [R] stands for the object [O] the sentence "I am Kenough" in Ken's hoodie comes from the sentence I am Enough. The relationship between the representamen and the object generates an Interpretant [I] Ken has figured out who he is without Barbie, without Barbie Ken is still perfect thus he feels enough for himself.

4. CONCLUSION

This research intends to find out the signs existing in the *Barbie* film and interpret their meanings. The researcher focuses on the interpretation of the signs and relates those signs to the representamen and object. In the findings section, there are 4 types of signs namely icons, qualisigns, a symbol, and an index.

The researcher analyzes the meaning or the interpretation of the sign by connecting it to the object and the representamen. Moreover, The researcher classified the type of sign based on Charles Sanders Peirce's theory and analyzed the data using his triadic concept that is made up of representamen, object, and interpretant. The interpretation of each sign's meaning was mostly determined by the relationship between the representamen and the object because the interpretant gets generated by the relationship between the representamen and the object. After analyzing the data, the researcher finds the types of signs namely icon, qualisign, symbol, index in *Barbie* film.

From the signs that have been collected, analyzed, and interpreted by the researcher, the researcher found that *Barbie* film contained meaning about the importance of gender equality without gender stereotypes, women

also have the same rights in a career regardless of their physical appearance and skin color, women have ambition and dreams, and be able to play an active role in society. Apart from that, this film also contains meaning about the importance of being yourself. In one of the scenes when Barbie and Ken first visit the Real World, several men are seen teasing and harassing Barbie. The researcher interpreted this scene as a satire on society's stereotypes about blonde women as well as a satire on women who are often seen as objects.

This research also showed that the use of semiotic to analyze signs is not only limited to signs such as symbols. Semiotic can also be used to interpret the meaning of something based on the position of people or objects, what the characters in the film wear, and also words that contain meaning. In interpreting the meaning of a sign, one person's interpretation may be different from another person's because the interpretation of semiotic signs is also influenced by someone's experience thus different experiences will lead to different interpretations.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Arini Widi Astari worked to collect the data and did the data analysis and Alamsyah analyzed the data, proofread, and prepared the supporting articles to strengthen this paper.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors state that no conflict of interest of this paper.

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