

A VISUAL SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS ON WEBTOON TRUE BEAUTY

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Abstract

This research is aimed to identify the signs in the webtoon True Beauty and aim to interpret the meaning of signs in the webtoon True Beauty by using Charles Sanders Pierce's triadic theory. This research is applied the qualitative method. The data source in this research are the webtoon True Beauty. In collecting the data, researchers need to download the True Beauty webtoon to get softcopy data, then researchers take several panels from the selected True Beauty webtoon episodes. There are five data analyzed from the 149th episode of the webtoon True Beauty and each data consists of the sign and interpreting meaning. The signs found on webtoon True Beauty consisted of representamen (legisign), object (icon), and interpretant (rheme) and there are three steps to interpreting the meaning of signs that are found on webtoon True Beauty, they are non-verbal communicative legisign, framing techniques, and communicative act.

Keywords— visual semiotic; sign, meaning; pierce; triadic theory; True Beauty webtoon.

Introduction

Comic is one of the media that convey our ideas. In this modern era, we do not need to buy comics at bookstores because there are already many applications and websites that provide digital comics. In addition to providing interesting and exciting stories, comics also provide interesting illustrations that pamper the readers. According to Scott McCloud (1993:9), Comics as juxtaposed pictures and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and to produce an aesthetic reaction in the reader. According to Eisner (1985:7), comics communicate through language that relies on a visual experience common to both creator and audience. So, by reading comics, we are indirectly trained to improve visual skills and verbal interpretive ability to get the meaning behind the picture but many readers are difficult to understand the meaning of the comic itself so researcher is interested in analyzing visual and verbal signs in digital comic.

Semiotics is a field of linguistics that studies about a sign. There are 3 popular philosophers which have a big contribution in this field. They are Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Pierce and Roland Barthes. The three of them have their respective theories, Ferdinand de Saussure introduced the theory of signified and signifier. Then, Charles Sanders Pierce introduced the triadic theory and Roland Barthes also has contribution in semiotic introducing a theory connotation and denotation meaning. Semiotics has a sub-branch called visual semiotics. Visual semiotics describes how visual images communicate a message and also explains the meaning of text and images in one frame. Visual semiotics is also used to study artifacts, images, interior designs, texts and more. From the explanation above, we cannot recognize that visual semiotics is only a subfield of semiotics because this field can be used to analyze other disciplines, such as art history and design, cultural studies, media and

communication studies, and others. There are so many studies about semiotic analysis, but the objects are mostly posters, logos, advertisements and the others. So, the researcher is interested in analyzing objects that are not widely discussed, namely webtoon.

Webtoon is an application of digital comic or online comic that originated in South Korea. First time, the webtoon is in South Korea that was launched by Naver Corporation in 2004 and entered Indonesia in 2015. Webtoon provides so many titles and genres of comics, so the webtoon users can read various comic genres. Furthermore on webtoon, comics are made in colorful, high quality images and also we can change the language settings needed. Below the example of display comic on the webtoon application:



This research analyzed webtoon comic entitled True Beauty as by using Pierce's theory triadic sign, where Pierce introduced the triadic or trichotomy theory, they are Representamen, Object and Interpretant aims to identify the sign and rhetorical function of the verbal signs and non-verbal signs. Then, analyze verbal and non-verbal communication. The non-verbal communication legisigns can be analyzed by bodily contact, proximity, interpersonal spacing, facial expression, gestures, posture and appearance. This is why the researchers applied triadic theory by Pierce, because triadic theory is appropriate to analyzing visual signs, interpreting a signs, also to find out how the webtoon True Beauty used in verbal and non-verbal communication since the comic combined text and picture. Then, this research can also help the connoisseurs of the True Beauty comic to understand the verbal and non-verbal signs in this comic.

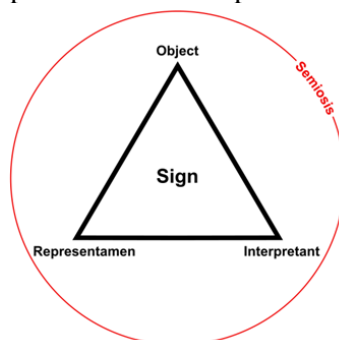
Literature Review

Semiotics

Semiotics is a part of linguistics and a science that study about signs. There are two founders of semiotics, they are Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sander Pierce. Ferdinand de Saussure is a linguist and Charles Sanders Pierce is a philosopher. They have different theories, Saussure introduced signified and signifier and Pierce introduced Triadic theory. According to Saussure, signified and signifier are purely psychological. Signifier refers to the material aspect of the sign and the image aspect of the sound (level of expression). For example, when someone said "cow", what they hear is sound "c-o-w" it is signifier. While signified is the concept of cow (level of meaning), for example the concept about cow, it is a mammal and has four legs.

According to Pierce, semiotic was "the formal doctrine of signs" which was closely related to logic. He stated that "every thought is a sign" (in Chandler, 2007:3). In Triadic theory,

Pierce introduced three important elements, it is sign (Representamen), Object and Interpretant. A sign is something that can be caught by the human senses and represents another meaning. The object is the social context as a sign reference. Interpretant is a sign user or thought concept that uses signs and also the relationship between the interpretant and the object.



For example, the word “book” is the representamen, yet the object is the picture of book itself. For the interpretant is what thought which is appeared when someone hears the word "book", such as paper, letter, and etc. The table below describe the triadic theory by Charles Sanders Pierce.

Trichotomy	Firstness	Secondness	Thirdness
Representamen	Qualisign	Sinsign	Legisign
Object	Icon	Index	Symbol
Interpretant	Rheme	Dicisign	Argument

Representamen, Object, and Interpretant have each subclass. Based on the table above, the representamen have 3 subclass and classified into qualisign, sinsign and legisign. Object have 3 subclass and classified into icon, index and symbol. Interpretant also have 3 subclass and classified into rheme, dicisign and argument. The object of this research consists of picture and text. The researcher needs to analyze legisign or more properly the case of picture, verbal and non-verbal communication legisign for example analyze boily contact, proximity, facial expression, gesture, posture, or appearance. The second step, analze the framing technique is the presentation of visual elements in an image, especially the placement of the subject in relation to other objects. then, the last step, analyze the communicative act is the utterance, or the set of utterances which is used to perform the linguistic action or function in communication.

Visual Semiotic

Visual semiotics is a part of semiotics that has existed since the 1990s. Visual Semiotics based on Ferdinand de Saussure (Piliang Amir. Y, Hipersemiotika 2001, p: 256) is course in General Linguistic as knowledge explains about sign as a part from social live. The difference between semiotic and visual semiotic is if semiotics is a study about the signs and symbols whereas visual semiotics is a study about signs and symbols that we see because the meaning of the sign is not given but is constructed.

Digital Comic

According to Jen Aggleton (2018), "Print comics and digital comics are very broad media, although there are many items recognized as 'comic', hard to assign a set characteristics that apply to all items that can be considered digital comics". Digital comics are comics published visually through websites or software, so with the presence of digital comics we can read comic without having to go to a bookstore because we can read the comics on a website or application.

True Beauty Webtoon

True Beauty is a webtoon that tells about insecurity, bullying, love and this webtoon

written by Yaongyi. The official English version of webtoon True Beauty was released on August 15, 2018. There are three main characters on Webtoon True Beauty, they are Im Ju-gyeong, Lee Suho and Han Soe-Joon. A girl named Im Ju-gyeong has insecurity about her appearance. Since she was little, she was often bullied because of her face and appearance. She wanted to look beautiful then she learned how to wear make-up. Lee Suho and Han Soe-Joon fell in love with Im Ju-gyeong.

Research Method

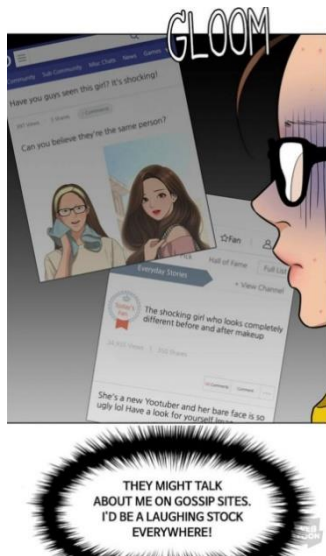
The type of this study was descriptive qualitative research. The data source of this research was webtoon True Beauty created by Yaongyi. The data is collected from the 149th episode was published on 9th June 2021 and the data can be downloaded on the webtoon application. The data are visual and verbal signs in webtoon *True Beauty*. The visual signs are the images in the webtoon and the verbal signs are the texts of the panel in the webtoon consist of words, phrases, clauses and sentences.

Results and Discussion

There are so many episode of webtoon *True Beauty*. In this study, the researcher chose 149th episode webtoon *True Beauty* which is released on 9th June 2021. After selecting the episode, the researcher selected several panels from episode 149th on webtoon *True Beauty*. There were 5 panels that were analyzed by using Charles Snder Peirce’s visual semiotic analysis. The analysis can be seen below:

Data 1

Below are the signs that found in data 1:



Sign (Legisign)	Feeling worried
Object (Icon)	Im Ju-gyeong
Intepretant (Rheme)	The picture shows that Im Ju-gyeong read a issue about herself on social media.

The sign found is legisign because the picture from the webtoon *True Beauty* shows the meaning through an object by general expression of worried. The object is an icon because the webtoon character is figurative picture and resembles the object. Then, the interpretant is categorized as rheme because it stands for its object in respect of quality.

Then, analyzing the meaning of sign in the data 1 through three

steps:

The first step is analyzing non-verbal communication legisign. In this webtoon it is analyzed based on Im Ju-gyeong’s facial expression. According to Joumana Medlej in human anatomy fundamentals series (<http://design.tutsplus.com>) Im Ju-gyeong show worried expression. It can be seen by the anxiety in her eyebrows and the direction of sight looks worried.

The second step is analyzing the framing technique. The frame takes Im Ju-gyeong opened social media and she read the issues about herself.

The third step is analyzing the communicative act. The verbal sign that was found in webtoon *True Beauty* is the description of a balloon speech “*They might talk about me on gossip sites. I’d be a laughing stock everywhere!*”. The sentence is statement. So, we can conclude that Im Ju-gyeong was worried if people tell about her face.

Data 2



Below are the signs that found in data 2:

Sign (Legisign)	Feeling depressed
Object (Icon)	Im Ju-gyeong
Intepretant (Rheme)	The picture shows Im Ju-gyeong was depressed



The sign found is legisign because the picture from the webtoon True Beauty shows the meaning through an object by body gesture of depression. The object is an icon because the webtoon character is figurative picture and resembles the object. Then, the interpretant is categorized as rheme because it stands for its object in respect of quality.

Then, analyzing the meaning of sign in the data 2 through three steps:

The first step is analyzing non-verbal communication legisign. In this webtoon it is analyzed based on Im Ju-gyeong's body gesture. According to Joumana Medlej in human anatomy fundamentals series (<http://design.tutsplus.com>) a typical body language gesture of depression is the head is bowed, tilting the head forward slightly so that the person end up looking slightly down and slap his own forehead.

The second step is analyzing the framing technique. The frame takes Im Ju-gyeong was sitting on the chair and she felt depressed.

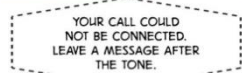
The third step is analyzing the communicative act. The verbal sign that was found in webtoon True Beauty is the description of a balloon speech "I shouldn't have lied from the beginning" "Hold up! Getting prettier by using makeup is not me lying". Those sentences are statement. So, we can conclude that Im Ju-gyeong was depressed for what she did.

Data 3



Below are the signs that found in data 3:

Sign (Legisign)	Tried to call
Object (Icon)	Im Ju-gyeong's hand
Intepretant (Rheme)	The picture shows Im Ju-gyeong tried to call Suho Lee.



The sign found is legisign because the picture from the webtoon True Beauty shows the meaning through an object by hand's gesture. The object is an icon because the webtoon character is figurative picture and resembles the object. Then, interpretant is categorized as rheme because it stands for its object in respect of quality.

Then, analyzing the meaning of sign in the data 3 through three steps:

The first step is analyzing non-verbal communication legisign. In this webtoon it is analyzed based on Im Ju-gyeong's hand gesture that tried to call Suho Lee.

The second step is analyzing the framing technique. The frame takes Im Ju-gyeong tried to call Suho Lee.

The third step is analyzing the communicative act. The verbal sign that was found in webtoon True Beauty is the description of a balloon speech "Your call could not be connected.

Leave a message after the tone”, “Why can’t get through? Has something happened to him?”. The sentences are statement and question. We can conclude that Im Ju-gyeong call Suho Lee and call was not dialed.

Data 4



Below are the signs found in data 4:

Sign (Legisign)	Feeling drained
Object (Icon)	Im Ju-gyeong
Intepretant (Rheme)	The picture show that Im Ju-gyeong was tired.

The sign found is legisign because the picture from the webtoon True Beauty shows the meaning through an object by general expression of drain. The object is an icon because the webtoon character is figurative picture and resembles the object. Then, the interpretant is categorized as rheme because it stands for its object in respect of quality.

Then, analyzing the meaning of sign in the data 4 through three steps:

The first step is analyzing non-verbal communication legisign. In this webtoon it is analyzed based on Im Ju-gyeong’s facial expression. According to Joumana Medlej in human anatomy fundamentals series (<http://design.tutsplus.com>) Im Ju-gyeong show drained expression. Drained means no energy left, it can be seen her eyes can hardly stay open, eyebrows are more plaintive, head drops noticeably and the pockets are stressed.

The second step is analyzing the framing technique. The frame takes Im Ju- gyeong was tired and grasping something.

The third step is analyzing the communicative act. The verbal sign that was found in webtoon True Beauty is the description of a balloon speech “here”. The sentence is statement. So, we can conclude that Im Ju-gyeong brought something and gave it to Lee Suho.

Data 5



Below are the signs that found in data 5:

Sign (Legisign)	Felt sick
Object (Icon)	Im Ju-gyeong and Lee Suho
Intepretant (Rheme)	The picture show that Im Ju-gyeong tried to persuade Lee Suho to go to the doctor.

The sign found is legisign because the picture from the webtoon True Beauty shows the meaning through an object by general expression of feeling sick. The object is an icon because the webtoon character is figurative picture and resembles the object. Then, the interpretant is categorized as rheme because it stands for its object in respect of quality.

Then, analyzing the meaning of sign in the data 5 through three steps:

The first step is analyzing non-verbal communication legisign. In this webtoon it is analyzed based on Lee Suho's facial expression and gesture. According to Joumana Medlej in human anatomy fundamentals series (<http://design.tutsplus.com>) Lee Suho shows that he felt sick. It can be seen by the eyes are closed or narrowed, his lower lip pushed up while the corners of the mouth are strongly pulled down. Lee Suho's gesture, where he covered his mouth with clenched palm and it showed he was coughing.

The second step is analyzing the framing technique. The frame takes Lee Suho cough and Im Ju-gyeong tried to persuade Suho who got a fever to go to the doctor.

The third step is analyzing the communicative act. The verbal sign that was found in webtoon True Beauty is the description of a balloon speech "Do you catch a cold from standing in the rain? It look like you've got a bad fever", "I'm okay", "should't you go to the doctor's office? Let's go!". The sentences are statement and question. So, we can conclude that Im Ju-gyeong asked about Suho's condition and persuaded him to go to the doctor.

From the five analysis above, the researchers found each panel of the webtoon consists of sign (legisign), object (icon) and interpretant (rheme) which stand for a meaning or idea conveyed by the webtoon creator. The sign found in the data 1 are legisign is feeling worried, the icon is Im Ju-gyeong, and the interpretant is Im Ju-gyeong read a issues about herself on social media. The sign found in the data 2 are legisign is feeling depressed, the icon is Im Ju-gyeong, and the interpretant is Im Ju-gyeong was depressed. The sign found in the data 3 are legisign is someone's hand tried to call, the icon is Im Ju-gyeong's hand, and the interpretant is Im Ju-gyeong tried to call Lee Suho. The sign found in the data 4 are legisign is feeling drained, the icon is Im Ju-gyeong, and the interpretant is Im Ju-gyeong felt tired. The sign found in the data 5 are legisign is felt sick, the icon is Im Ju-gyeong and Lee Suho, and the interpretant is Im Ju-gyeong tried to persuade Lee Suho to go to the doctor. While the interpretation of the meaning of sign in each panels through 3 steps, they are non-verbal communication legisign, framing technique, and communicative act.

Conclusion

After analyzing the webtoon True Beauty episode 149th by using Charles Sanders Peirce's Triadic Theory, the researchers concludes that the signs found in the webtoon True Beauty are representamen (legisign), object (icon), and interpretant (rheme). The researchers found that the writer chose to use legisign since the panels in webtoon True Beauty has general information that the creator wants to tell the reader. Meanwhile, the interpretation of meaning in webtoon *True Beauty* episode 149th is analyzed based on nonverbal communication legisign, framing techniques, and communicative act. The non-verbal communication legisign is analyzed based on facial expression, body language and gesture. The framing technique is analyzed based on what the image or picture shows. Then, the communicative act is analyzed based on the verbal sign that found in webtoon True Beauty.

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