

## **COLOUR TERMS AND SYMBOLS IN SEASONAL GREETING CARD:**

### **A SEMIOTIC STUDY**

**BY**

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### **Abstrak**

*Studi ini membahas tentang warna dan simbol serta makna mereka yang terdapat pada sebuah kartu ucapan. Studi ini secara spesifik bertujuan untuk menemukan warna dan simbol yang terdapat pada sebuah kartu ucapan selamat Natal dan juga mengungkapkan makna yang terkandung pada warna-warna dan simbol-simbol tersebut. Data yang digunakan sebagai objek penelitian pada studi ini adalah sebuah kartu ucapan selamat Natal yang dirancang oleh Samuel Yanuar (2010). Tanpa disadari warna-warna dan simbol-simbol yang terdapat pada kartu ucapan tersebut merupakan sebuah ciri khas dari perayaan Natal sehingga dibalik warna-warna dan simbol-simbol tersebut terdapat sebuah makna tersendiri yang merefleksikan Natal.*

*Hasil dari studi ini adalah terdapat dua warna dominan yang digunakan pada kartu ucapan dan merefleksikan suasana Natal, yaitu merah, biru dan hijau. Selain tiga warna tersebut, terdapat pula beberapa warna lainnya pada kartu ucapan tersebut seperti kuning, ungu, coklat, abu-abu dan oranye. Selain itu, pada kartu ucapan ditemukan pula beberapa simbol yang menggambarkan Natal seperti pohon natal dan manusia salju. Aspek-aspek visual tersebut memiliki makna tersendiri yang menggambarkan suasana Natal.*

*Kata kunci: simbol, warna, makna.*

#### **1. Background of the Study**

Greeting cards can be so meaningful for a person as congratulatory message. Congratulatory message is usually given on someone's success, someone's birthday or many other special occasions. Congratulatory message is usually sent or given on holidays or special occasions. Greeting cards is also a card to express someone's feelings or give attention to someone else. However, greeting cards are often used to write messages about humor, friendship, love, sympathy or just for saying thank you.

In general, seasonal greeting card has a different meaning. Seasonal greeting is a greeting which is permanent. For example, people usually celebrate Christmas day, and Chinese New year. It is celebrated every year and almost every one celebrates it. In each seasonal greeting card, there are usually some symbols which have a meaning related to the celebration itself. Not only symbols, colours can also give certain meaning related to the celebration. The data of this study are taken from the selected seasonal greeting cards. Christmas greeting card by Samuel Yanuar (2010) is chosen as the data of this study because it consist of colours and symbols that reflected Christmas and have meaning related to Christmas.

## 2. Problems of the Study

The discussions of this study are focused to:

- a. What kinds of colour and symbols are used in the Christmas greeting card?
- b. What are the meaning of colour terms and symbols that are used in the Christmas greeting card?

## 3. Aims of the Study

The purposes that especially achieved in this study are as follows:

- a. To find out what kinds of colour and symbols are used in the Christmas greeting card.
- b. To describe the meaning of colour terms and symbols those are used in the Christmas greeting card.

## 4. Research Method

The data of this study were taken from the selected seasonal greeting card. The selected seasonal greeting card consist of Christmas greeting card by Samuel Yanuar (2010). The data of this study were collected by using documentation method and note taking. The symbols used in the selected greeting card are analyzed based on Pierce in Chandler theory (1931:58), while the colour terms presented in the greeting card are analyzed based on the theory proposed by Wierzbicka (1996: 287). This study also used theory of meaning proposed by Leech (1977:9-19).

## 5. Result and Discussion



### a. Visual aspects of Christmas greeting card

The visual aspect of a picture consists of colours, and symbols. The first discussed about colour used in Christmas greeting card. The colour inside the picture is dominated by green, blue and red, used as the colours of the card in seasonal greeting. Besides those colours, another colour that exists in the picture are brown, yellow, orange, purple and grey. Brown is the colour of the gift, the deer and the clothes worn by human. Yellow as the colour of the bell, star on the Christmas tree and flame on the candle. Orange is the colour of the carrot held by the human. Blue is the colour of the toy car, Purple is the colour of the shoes, ribbons on gifts and gloves used in animal. And grey is the colour of animal behind the Christmas tree. Blue and white are used as the background. Blue is the colour of cloud and white is the colour of snow, ice and snowman.

### b. Meaning of symbols of Christmas greeting card

The messages were analyzed using the theory of semiotics about sign, symbol, meaning, etc. The analysis of colour terms is particularly focused on the semiotic triangle to find out message behind the picture. There are some symbols that can be seen from the card:

1) The symbol of Christmas tree

A Christmas tree became a symbol of Christmas celebration. The Christmas tree is usually a pine tree in similar three which has a conical shape. Christmas tree comes from an ancient culture in Europe, exactly from Germany in the sixteenth century. In the end the culture moved and spread to USA and all over the world. A pain tree is used as a Christmas tree because when Christmas arrived, it was winter in Europe. Only pain trees which always had Green leave so they always looked green. Meanwhile, the leaves from other trees fell down. So pain trees represented evergreen. The symbolic meaning is that in order to make our spiritual life always grow and become a beautiful witness for other people. Pain trees are not identical with the birth of Jesus but they are identical with the seasonal celebration more family celebration. And in the role of Churces there is no obligation to put a Christmas tree at Church or at home.

A Christmas tree is usually decorated brightly, it comes from the story of Martin Luther which was impressed by the beauty of sparkling stars in the sky which sparkle trough tree branches when he was walking in the pine forest he tan cut a pine tree and took it home. To give sparkling effect he put candles in each branch. So, it was the beginning of the tradition to make Christmas tree with sparkling ornaments as one of the symbols for Christmas Celebration.

2) The symbol of the snowman

A snowman is usually found in Christmas celebration and is a winter decoration. A snowman generally represents winter or snow which falls down in Christmas celebration. A snowman is one of the symbol and icon in Christmas celebration. Snowmen consist of three large snowballs of different sizes with some additional accoutrements for facial and other features. Common accessoriesion. Not only on Christmas day we can see a snowman, nowadays winter holiday or snowy days are represented also by snowman. Include branches for arms and a rudimentary smiley face; a carrot can stand in for a nose. Human clothing, such as a hat or scarf, may even be included. Low-cost and availability are the common issues, since snowmen are usually in a cold and/or

wet environment, and abandoned to the elements once completed. Melting is a common end-of-life scenario for most snowmen. Snowman now are getting more popular along with the globalization. The snowmen fans are getting more creative to make and decorate the snowmen with the result that snowmen become more like a symbol of Christmas celebration. A snowman has a meaning to arouse happy feelings, simplicity and joy. Many people, from children to adults, love snowmen.

c. Meaning of colours of Christmas greeting card

There are several colors which are traditionally associated with Christmas such as red, green, and gold. Most of the colors and their meanings come from the western/northern European traditions and customs, when Christmas is in the middle of winter and it is dark and cold.

1) Meaning of green

Evergreen plants, like Holly, Ivy and Mistletoe have been used for thousands of years to decorate and brighten up buildings during the long dark winter. They also reminded people that spring would come and that winter wouldn't last forever. The Romans would exchange evergreen branches during January as a sign of good luck. The ancient Egyptians used to bring palm branches into their houses during the mid winter festivals. In many parts of Europe during the middle ages, Paradise plays were performed, often on Christmas Eve. They told Bible stories to people who couldn't read. The 'Paradise Tree' in the garden of even in the play was normally a pine tree with red apples tied to it. Now the most common use of green at Christmas is Christmas Trees. Green is complementing of red it represents healing and communes and fights growing.

2) Meaning of red

As mentioned above, an early used of red at Christmas were the apples on the paradise tree. They represented the fall of Adam in the plays. Red is also the color of Holly berries, which is said to represent the blood of Jesus when he died on the cross. Red is also the color of Bishops robes. These would have been worn

by St. Nicholas and then also became Santa's uniform. Red also represents the colour of fire. A symbol of holly spirit which is full of power it is used on Pentecostal celebration. Red also represented the colour of blood and loyalty until died.

### 3) The meaning of blue

The color blue is often associated with Mary, the mother of Jesus. In medieval times blue dye and paint was more expensive than gold. So it would only be worn by Royal families and very rich people. Mary was often painted wearing blue to show she was very important. Blue can also represent the color of the sky and heaven.

## 6. Conclusion

Based on the foregoing analysis of the seasonal greeting cards, symbols and colours, it can be concluded that the pictures of seasonal greeting card are structured by almost all of visual aspects in semiotic, starting from color and symbol. The in Merry Christmas greeting card used the dominant red, blue and green colors. The symbols used in the Merry Christmas greeting card, include the symbols of Christmas tree and snowman. For the meaning of colors in Merry Christmas Greeting cards, the dominant colors are red, blue and green. Red represents the color of fire, blood, power, and etc. The meaning of green is generosity, and renewal, while blue is often associated with Mary, the mother of Jesus. The meaning of some symbols such Christmas tree is the symbol of spiritual growth in life, while the meaning of snowman has a meaning to arouse happy feelings, simplicity and joy.

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