Semiotics Approach on Verbal Signs in *Would You Care More IF I Was A Panda?*

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Abstract

This study is aimed at identifying the verbal signs with their mode and connotative meaning of an advertisement. The data of this study was a wildlife advertisement entitled *Would You Care More IF I Was A Panda?* (2011) created by Ogilvy and published by World Wild Life. The data were collected using documentation method with note-taking technique. The data were analyzed qualitatively using Peirce's semiotic theory to identify the verbal signs with their mode and Leech meaning theory to analyze the connotative meaning of the sign. The result of this study shown that there were three verbal signs found in the advertisements that belong to symbolic signs in the form of the combination of alphabets. The verbal signs consist of representamen, interpretant, and object. The connotative meanings are expressed in words, phrases, or sentences with the interpretation based on knowledge, emotion, and imagination.

INTRODUCTION

Advertisement has been chosen as one of many ways to widespread a campaign. Making people aware with social issue, especially about wildlife, is not easy. The use of creative method is necessary to gain viewers' attention. Verbal sign is often used in the advertisement in order to be able delivering more message to the people efficiently even though there is not enough space provided in the advertisement. The usage of verbal sign can attract viewers' attention to pay their attention to the advertisement as well. Chandler (2000: 27) states that verbal sign is something that deals with text and word. The textual things can produce the connotative meanings that deliver the deeper messages of the advertisement. However, it is difficult to understand the message produces by the advertisement due to the different ideas and ways from each person in interpreting the signs. Therefore, this study analyzed verbal signs and the connotative of each sign in order to understand the meanings consisted in the advertisement.

METHOD AND THEORY

The application of research method is important in this study. Research method can

be divided into four such as data source, method and technique of collecting data, method and technique of analyzing data, and method and technique of presenting the data analysis. Those are explained as follows.

The data of this study was taken from wildlife advertisement entitled *Would You Care More IF I Was A Panda?* This advertisement was created by Ogilvy and published in 2011 by World Wild Life. The advertisement is a campaign to stop doing overfishing on Bluefin Tuna. The data are in the form of words, phrases, and sentences.

In collecting the data, this study used documentation method with note-taking technique. It was done in several steps. First, observed the advertisement carefully and repeatedly as necessary to understand and able to identify the words, phrases, and sentences as the form the signs took that signify certain meaning. Determining something as a sign was based on Peirce semiotic theory which must consist of representamen, interpretant, and object. Then, did note-taking to collect the data and classify each of the signs based on their modes such as symbol, icon, or index. Finally, combined all the data.

The data were analyzed qualitatively by using content analysis method. Weber (in Neuendorf, 2002: 10) defined content analysis as a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text. The technique of analyzing the data was done by several steps. First, analyzed the mode of the sign based on the relationship between signifier and signified. Then each of the sign's element such as representamen, interpretant, and object were analyzed to understand how the sign vehicle (representamen) can signify another meaning beyond the signifier by using triadic model based on semiotics theory proposed by Peirce. Furthermore, each of the sign was analyzed using meaning theory by Leech to obtain the conceptual and connotative meaning. Finally, concluded the data based on the data analysis. Lastly, the results were presented using an informal method which means the data were presented in the form of words, sentences, and paragraphs without using table or diagram.

Review of Literatures

Semiotics has been discussed in a huge number of studies. Those studies were reviewed to support the process of this study and as the comparison in order to see the position of future research.
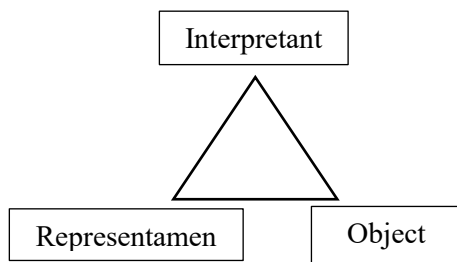
Diryani (2013) discussed that sign is very important for the process of communication to understand the intent of the speaker with different point of view. Sign becomes a way of communication used by modern people who have particular condition in producing sound or the other alternative ways to interact with the others (Yanti, 2018). Verbal sign consist of linguistic features such as the use of adjective and verb which dominantly in lexical choice (Candra & Putri, 2019). Emphasizing the verbal text with some changes to its typographic elements can trigger people's emotion (Ardhianto, 2019). Every sentence has their own meaning and function in order to make the readers understand about the advertisement (Prasetya, 2018). A sentence generally contains literal or connotative meaning which is unstable and not perceived in the same way by the speakers of a language (Prayitna, 2015). The studies proposed by Ayu (2013) and Wijaya (2017) discussed that advertisement influences people to follow the message delivered and consisted in the advertisement. Furthermore, the studies proposed by Uraida (2014) and Indrawati (2015) discussed that each sign has a very important role in the advertisement to convey the additional expected idea to the readers.

A study proposed by Sharma (2015) has the same topic discussion to this present study which is about semiotics. Sharma (2015) states that advertisement deliver and also utilize a wide range of meaning, symbol, and messages. Some previous studies (e.g. Ali & Ullah, 2015 and Zhang, 2019) are more focusing on the visual signs with their meaning. A study proposed by Zuldianof (2015) is more focusing on the connotative meaning of the signs, however, it does not analyze the mode of each sign. Furthermore, another study by Amalina (2014) discussed more about visual signs. This present study focuses more on discussing the verbal signs with their mode by using semiotics theory

proposed by Peirce and the connotative meaning of the signs by using meaning theory by Leech.

Peirce's Semiotics Theory

This study uses semiotics theory proposed by Peirce to identify the verbal signs. Pierce stated that sign is anything that can be interpreted as a sign (in Chandler, 2007: 13). The sign can be in the form of words, images, sounds, odours, flavours, acts or objects, but it does not have the intrinsic meaning. The signs and its meaning are the focus of semiotics. Sign begins with what it represented (object), how it represented through the form the sign takes or signs vehicle (the representamen), how it interpreted (the interpretant) (Chandler, 2007: 29). A sign can be produced by uniting those elements.

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        ┌──────────────┐
        │ Interpretant │
        └──────────────┘
              △
             ╱ ╲
            ╱   ╲
           ╱     ╲
 ┌───────────────┐   ┌────────┐
 │ Representamen │   │ Object │
 └───────────────┘   └────────┘
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According to semiotics theory proposed by Peirce (in Chandler, 2007: 29-42), sign can be analyzed using the triadic model. The triadic model consists of representamen [R], interpretant [I], and object [O].

The Representamen

Representamen or sign vehicle is a thing (can be material or not) that represents or stands for another thing in some capacity or respect.

An Interpretant

Interpretant is a sense created in the mind by interpreting the representamen. It also can be called as a sign in the mind of the interpreter which creates an equivalent or more developed sign.

An Object

Object is something beyond the sign that resembles in some respects. The object shows to which the representamen refers.

Pierce (in Chandler, 2007: 36-37) classified the object into three modes as follows.
a. Symbol/Symbolic

It is a mode in which the representamen (signifier) does not have the similarity and does not resemble the object (signifier). The example of symbol such as language in general (plus specific languages, alphabetical letters, words, punctuation marks, phrases and sentences), numbers, traffic lights, morse code, national flags. Peirce (in Chandler, 2007: 39) stated that interpreting a symbol can lead someone to refer it to the object.
b. Icon/Iconic

Icon is a mode in which the signifier is having a similarity or perceived as resembling or imitating the signified in some of its qualities. Iconic signs are more likely to be read as natural than symbolic signs when making the connection between signifier and signified has become habitual (Chandler, 2007: 42).
c. Index/Indexical

Index is a mode in which the signifier conveys the concept of the signified that directly connected in some ways. Although icon and index are said as natural signs, but both are different. The object of an icon may be fictional, in contrast, index stands for existing thing that characterized by contiguity (Chandler, 2007: 42).

Leech's Meaning Theory

This study uses the meaning theory proposed by Leech (1981:10-23) as the main guidance for the sign meaning analysis. According to Leech (1981:10-23) meaning can be classified into seven types, however, this study is focusing only on connotative meaning.

Connotative Meaning

According to Leech (1981: 12-13), the connotative meaning is the communicative value an expression has by virtue of what it refers to, over and above its purely conceptual content. Connotative meaning can be subjective or unstable which depends on how an individual or people perceived the word. Connotative meanings are indeterminate and open in the same sense as our knowledge and beliefs about the universe that is opened-ended. For example, the word "sea" denotes a large body of water, however

in connotative meaning it may mean a sense of danger.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are three verbal signs found in the advertisement. Each sign consists of representamen, interpretant, and object. Those are explained as follows.

Picture of Would You Care More IF I Was A Panda? advertisement published by World Wild Life taken from *https://www.boredpanda.com/powerful-animal-ads/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic*

WOULD YOU CARE MORE IF I WAS A PANDA?

The first verbal sign easily can be found in the headline of the advertisement that says "WOULD YOU CARE MORE IF I WAS A PANDA?" The sentence of the headline is belong to interrogative sentence that is a type of sentence to ask a question. That headline is presented firmly with all the alphabets typed in uppercase and uses modern font family that called sans serif. It is colored with pale blue slightly similar to the color of the background. In that interrogative sentence, the word "PANDA" conveys another meaning. The verbal sign that takes the form of the combination of the alphabets is classified as symbolic sign. The semiotic process of that word is explained as follow.
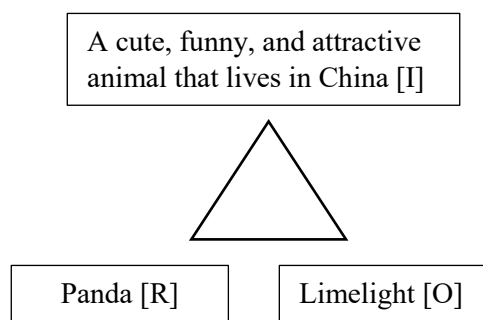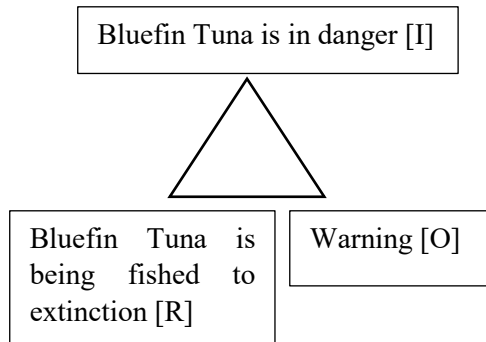

Based on the semiotic process above, it can be known that the word "PANDA" in the headline of the advertisement signifies limelight. Pandas are animals that mostly attract people's attention because of their appearance and behavior. According to World Wild Life (WWF), panda previously listed on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's list of endangered species with 1.114 pandas in the 1980s in China. Due to that, the awareness of protecting pandas become increasing. Thus, the survey in 2014 conducted by WWF reported that the population of panda increasing from 1.114 to 1.864 pandas after thirty years of conservation. Therefore, panda as the animal that is to be in the limelight can help gaining people's attention and awareness to protect them from extinction.

Combining that word into the whole sentence that is "WOULD YOU CARE MORE IF I WAS A PANDA?" help to understand the headline more accurate. The headline conveys another meaning. Connotatively, the headline means Bluefin Tuna are not as unique and adorable like panda. People tend to protect and have any interest in protecting the animals if they like that animals. The headline shows the comparison between panda, which most of the people like it, with the Bluefin Tuna. The Bluefin Tuna does not really stand out like the panda. The appearance of Bluefin Tuna is not as cute as panda. Hence, asking people to participate in protecting Bluefin Tuna must be harder than protecting the panda.

The Bluefin Tuna is being fished to extinction

Under the headline of the advertisement, there is a declarative sentence that states "The Bluefin Tuna is being fished to extinction" The declarative sentence is expressed in the form of statement to declare something. The typeface that is used by that sentence is sans serif font family. That sentence is not really easy to be read because of the smaller size of its font. All the alphabets are colored with pale blue similar to the headline. The verbal sign takes that sentence as a sign vehicle belongs to symbolic sign. Verbal sign belong to symbolic sign because the signifier does not

resemble the signified and the relationship must be agreed upon and learned. The semiotic process of that sign is explained as follow.

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        ┌─────────────────────────┐
        │ Bluefin Tuna is in danger [I] │
        └─────────────────────────┘
                   /\
                  /  \
                 /    \
                /      \
┌────────────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
│ Bluefin Tuna is    │ │ Warning [O]  │
│ being fished to    │ └──────────────┘
│ extinction [R]     │
└────────────────────┘
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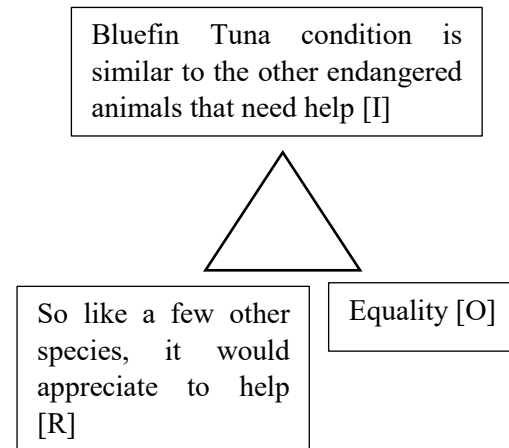
Based on the semiotic process above, that sentence signifies warning. Bluefin Tuna are facing extinction if there is no action in protecting them. Due to the massive demand for Bluefin Tuna for making food, specifically sushi, causes overfishing and illegal fishing over few decades (Harvey, 2013).

The connotative meaning of that sentence means that Bluefin Tuna is on high demand that causes the fisherman to do overfishing for it without caring for the population. Cited form a research article by Sun et al (2019), the demand for fresh Japanese Bluefin Tuna from 2003 to 2016 was 249,5325119 tons on average. That big numbers prove Bluefin Tuna is on high demand, specifically in Japan. Moreover, a big Bluefin Tuna was sold for more than $3 million at New Tokyo Fish Market. The demand for Bluefin Tuna causes its population decreases. Moreover, the lack of effort in making fishing regulations to overcome it causes the fisherman keep fishing and selling it to the black market.

So like a few other species, it would appreciate to help

That sentence is placed under the previous sentence. It is typed using sans serif font family. That sentence is not easy to read due to its small size. That sentence conveys verbal sign. The verbal sign that is conveyed in that sentence belongs to symbolic sign because it is in the form of the combination of the alphabets which need to be learned and agreed upon to understand its meaning. The semiotic process of that sign is explained as follow.

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        ┌─────────────────────────┐
        │ Bluefin Tuna condition is │
        │ similar to the other endangered │
        │ animals that need help [I] │
        └─────────────────────────┘
                   /\
                  /  \
                 /    \
                /      \
┌────────────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
│ So like a few other│ │ Equality [O] │
│ species, it would  │ └──────────────┘
│ appreciate to help │
│ [R]                │
└────────────────────┘
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Based on the semiotic process above, it can be known that the verbal sign signifies equality. Bluefin Tuna is similar to the other endangered animal. It should be protected as well as the other animal, for example, panda. The Bluefin Tuna seems out of the attention unlike the other animal. Therefore, through the verbal sign, Bluefin Tuna is expected to be equal to the other animals.

The connotative meaning of that sentence means equality. Bluefin Tuna is the same as the other animals. It has any right to live freely without threatened by the fisherman. Therefore, the government and all people have to protect them consciously.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing analysis, the conclusion can be drawn as follow.

Related to the first problem of this study, there are three verbal signs found in the advertisement that belong to symbolic sign. Verbal sign is anything that can be interpreted as a sign that deals with words and text. All the textual things can be assumed as a verbal sign but must consist of at least one meaning. All the verbal signs belong to symbolic signs because the representamen (signifier) does not have the similarity and does not resemble the object (signifier). The relationship between signifier and signified must be agreed and learn upon.

Second, the connotative meaning of the verbal signs is expressed in words, phrases, or sentences. That meaning is based on the interpretation of the individual on how perceives the word which can be unstable. The connotative meaning can be subjective due to the knowledge, emotion, and

imagination of the individual in interpreting the sign.

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