

**A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF GOOGLE SEARCH ENGINE
LOGOS**



PUBLICATION ARTICLES

**Submitted as a Partial fulfillment of Requirements
for Bachelor Degree of Education
in English Department**

Proposed by:

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**SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA
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ACCEPTANCE

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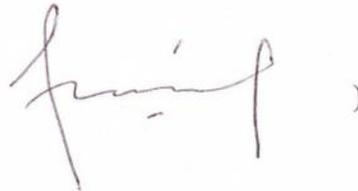
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A SEMIOTICS ANALYSIS OF GOOGLE SEARCH ENGINE LOGOS

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ABSTRACT

Our daily life aspects are full of signs including icon, index, and symbol. The objectives of this research are to describe the way Google search engine logos lead to the identity of the event they represent and the meanings of Google search engine logos.

The data are the Google logos which are taken from the Google doodle official website. In collecting the data, the writer applied the documentation and observation. The theories used are the Pierce theory and Saussure theory. Pierce emphasized his theory on the representamen, interpretant and object. Then, Saussure emphasized his theory in analyzing sign using the signifier and signified criteria. The type of the research is qualitative interpretative type. The several steps are done to analyze the data. In analyzing the way Google search engine logos lead to the identity of the event they represent, the steps are: analyzing the representamen, analyzing the interpretant, and analyzing the object. In analyzing meaning, the steps are: analyzing signifier and analyzing the signified.

This research shows that (1) the events that Google logos represent are: cultural, historical, personal, technological and literature symbol, and (2) the meanings are: referring to cultural, religion, science and entertainment that exist in society.

Key words: Semiotics and Google logos.

A. Introduction

In modern life, there is a useful media to find information which called as internet. It is a virtual tool for searching any information, pictures, videos, e-book, chatting, and many more functions. It can be accessed by mobile phones and computers. Google search engine which is produced by Google Corporation is an example of the product of internet. The corporation with various colors in its logo is the best search engine of the other corporations producing similar product, like Yahoo!, Live Search and Ask.

For the respect of the users all over the world, this American public corporation gives an appreciation by displaying modified origin logo which is called as Google Doodles in celebrating the world events by displaying different logos in certain dates. Doodles are the fun, surprising and sometimes spontaneous changes that are made to the Google logo to celebrate holidays, anniversaries and the lives of famous artists, pioneers and scientists.

For some reason Google prefer to send their message using a image or picture rather than ordinary language, usually it purposed to performed the message into amusement way or just to make it more interesting to be understood. This kind of message is also performed in most logos. They often prepare a special picture to reflect the common phenomena related to the surround society.

For example:

Exhibit 1



The Google logo above appears in the early July which based on the default Google logo. It has plain white background, blue on the Gs, red on the first O, yellow for the second O, green on the L and red on the E but it looks so different with the logo above which contains some components. They are green grass as the background, USA flag on the first G, a pie on a red squares picnic carpet as the second O, the second G with American flag hat on its top, L wears an apron and grabs a spatula, and a red grill as E which symbolize the American holiday life style to celebrate the USA independent day.

Logos are a kind of image or picture and can be categorized as signs. “Signs take the form of words, images, sounds, odours, flavors, acts, or objects. But such things have no intrinsic meaning and become sign only when we invest them with meaning.” (Chandler 2007: 17). To know the objective of using the symbol and its relation with the events happened on the logo, the use of semiotics theory is necessary, because semiotics is the science which studies the life of sign system (Giraud, 1978: 2). The concept of semiotics is used to figure out the relation of non language sign in the logos which support the construction of the discourse.

According to the phenomena, the writer is interested to learn about the hidden meaning in the Google logos.

B. Research Method

The type of the research of this study is interpretative qualitative research. The method focuses on sign and text as the object of study as well as on how the researcher interprets and understands the decoding beyond the sign and the text (Pilliang, 2003: 270).

The object of this research is the semiotics meaning symbolized in the Google search engine logos.

The data of this research is the Google search engine logos which are collected from the Google doodle official website by selecting the logos which have popular events randomly as many as 20 pictures.

The concept of the data analysis is defining the way Google search engine logos lead to the identity of the event they represent by the representamen, interpretant and object used in the logo, analyzing the index used to represent the logo and then find the suitable context represented by the logo.

C. Underlying Theories

Notion of Semiotics, Typology of Sign, Notion of Logo, Notion of Search Engine, and Understanding Reasons of the Use of the Picture.

1. Notion of Semiotics

Semiotics is known as the study of sign, it learns about the territorial of the sign system, where the sign appear and produced, horizontally to the

object it represent to, and vertically to the psychological role as the main actor of the system.

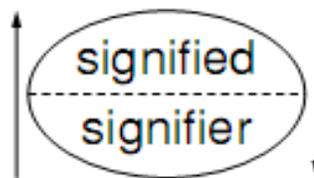
- a. Eco (in Chandler, 2002: 2) confirms that “semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign”. Semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as “signs” in everyday speech, but of anything which “stands for” something else.
- b. Peirce (in Chandler, 2002:32-33) states that: A sign ... (in the form of a *representamen*) is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that *object*, not in all respect, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the *ground* of the representamen.
- c. Saussure (1857-1913) is a Switzerland linguist who studied the life of signs in society. His book, *Course in General Linguistics* has made him become the undisputed founder of modern linguistics (Sobur, 2004: 43). The core of Saussure’s contribution to semiotics known as *semiology*, the name for his project for a general theory of sign systems (Nöth, 1990: 57). The Saussure’s statement above shows that he has different view with Peirce, Saussure put his basic thinking about sign through to the psychological point of view that the sign is a project of psychological work appears as the behavior attitude.

Saussure offered a 'dyadic' or two-part model of the sign. He defined a sign as being composed of:

- 1) a 'signifier' (signifiant) - the *form* which the sign takes,
- 2) The 'signified' (signifie) - the *concept* it represents.

Exhibit 2

The Three Terms in Saussure's Dyadic Sign Model



The relationship between the *signifier* and the *signified* is referred to as 'signification', and this is represented in the Saussurean diagram by the arrows. The horizontal broken line marking the two elements of the sign is referred to as 'the bar' (Chandler, 2007: 17).

- d. Jakobson (October 11, 1896 – July 18, 1982) was a Russian thinker who became one of the most influential linguists of the 20th century. Moreover he also claimed as one of the pioneer in linguistics structuralism approach. He distinguishes six communication functions, each associated with a dimension of the communication process.
- e. Barthes (November 12, 1915- March 25, 1980) was born in Cherbourg and grew up in Bayonne, French. He also known as the structural thinker who focuses to apply the Saussure's model of

linguistic and semiology (Sobur: 2004: 63). He also published a series of examining modern essay myths and the process of their creation in his book *Mythologies*.

2. Typology of Sign

a. Symbol

This term is polysemic both in everyday discourse and in philosophical scientific discourse including the semiotics one. Etymologically, symbol derived from Greek words ‘*sym-ballein*’ means throw something together (things or activity) that relate to one idea (Hartoko and Rahmanto, 1998: 133 in Sobur 2004: 155). Cobley (2001: 272) stated that the term of symbol can be distinguished become two main acceptations: a synonym for sign and a special type of sign.

b. Icon

Peirce gave various definitions of the icon which focus on different criteria valid for a large class of semiotics phenomena. In Peirce universal categorical system, the icon belongs to the category of firstness, in contrast to the index and symbol, which belong to secondness, and thirdness. The firstness is the absolute present and doesn't represent anything else except itself (Nöth, 1990: 121). Sobur (2004: 158) states that icon is physical things that imitate what it represents.

c. Index

Index is defined as sign which comes associatively as a result from the existence of fixed characteristic relation of the reference (Sobur, 2004: 160). Budiman (2005: 57) gives his definition about index as a sign which has physical relation, existential, or causal between the representamen and its object. For example, thunder is an index that there will be going to come a storm.

3. Notion of Logo

- a. A logo is a graphic mark or emblem commonly used by commercial enterprises, organizations and even individuals to aid and promote instant public recognition. Logos are either purely graphic (symbols/icons) or are composed of the name of the organization (a logotype or wordmark). (<http://www.wikipedia.com/logo>).
- b. Logo is a printed design or symbol that a company, organization, etc uses as its special sign. (Oxford Learner's Pocket Dictionary 2003: 253)

4. Notion of Search Engine

- a. A web search engine is designed to search for information on the World Wide Web. The information may consist of web pages, images, information, and other types of files. (http://www.wikipedia.com/search_engine).

- b. Web search engine is a set of programs which are used to search for information within a specific realm and collate that information in a database. (<http://www.wisegeek.com/whatissearchengine?/>)

5. Understanding Reasons of the Use of the Picture

There are so many pictures that used to represent the logo. Each picture applied refers to certain reasons. According to Pierce semiotics study (Chandler, 2002:32), the writer applies theory of sign to understand reasons of the use of picture as follows:

- a. *Representamen* which refers to the form taken by the sign,
- b. *Interpretant*, the mode of sense referred to the representamen.
- c. *Object* which refers to the sign refers to.

The writer also applies the Saussure dyadic or two-part model of the sign to understand the meaning of the picture as follows:

- a. A 'signifier' which also called as significant refers to the form which the sign takes.
- b. The 'signified' or signifie refers to the concept which is represented by the signifier.

D. Discussion of the Finding

In analyzing the way Google search engine logos lead to the identity of the event they represent, the writer used the Peirce's theory of representamen, interpretant and object as the instruments. Charles Sanders Peirce identifies two different types of meaning a picture; they

are representamen, interpretant and object. Representamen refers to the form taken by the sign. Interpretant refers to the mode of sense referred to the representamen. Object which refers to the sign refers to .

In analyzing the meaning of the index used to represent the reality phenomena, the writer applies the Saussure's theory of signifier and signified to identify the meaning. A signifier refers to the form which the sign takes; and the signified refers to the concept it represents.

Safariyani (2004), Student of English Department of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, conducted her research in Dominant Ideology in Watch Advertisement Poster (Semiotics Approach). This study deals with semiotics analysis of dominant ideology and the structural elements related to watch advertisement poster. The result of her study shows that most of the watch advertisement posters use the image of a man, women, and watch to present the advertisement and the meaning .

In this study, the writer focuses the study on the way Google search engine logos lead to the identity of the event they represent and the meaning of the index used to represent the logo. After analyzing twenty pieces of Google logo from the Google doodle official website, the writer conducts the result of his findings. This study is able to the way Google search engine logos lead to the identity of the event they represent and the meaning of the index used to represent the logo. The index represents the way Google search engine logos lead to the identity

of the event they represent. The relations are the indexes are used based on the context with the events, its function on daily life and based on the general assumption in society. Moreover, some of the indexes are used based on the cultural symbol, the historical symbol, and the personal symbol.

1. The way Google search engine logos lead to the identity of the event they represent.

The research findings are as follows:

Table 4.1
The way Google search engine logos lead to the identity of the event they represent.

No	The way Google logos lead to the event identity	Amount	Number of data	Percentage (100%)
1	The indexes are used based on the cultural symbol.	8	1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 14, 18, 20	40 %
2	The indexes are used based on historical symbol.	1	11	5%
3	The indexes are used based on the personal symbol.	6	5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 15	30%
4	The indexes are used based on technology symbol.	2	12, 17	10%
5	The indexes are used based on literature symbol.	3	13, 16, 20	15%
	TOTAL			100%

From 20 data, there are 8 logos or 40% the indexes are used based on the cultural symbol, 1 logo or 5% are used based on historical symbol, 6 logos or 30 % are used based on the personal symbol. Furthermore, there are 2 logos or 10 % the indexes are used based on technology symbol and 3 logos or 15% is used based on literature symbol.

After analyzing 20 of Google logos from the Google doodle official website, the writer interprets that representamen, interpretant and object analysis help the reader to relate or to understand about the way Google search engine logos lead to the identity of the event they represent. The result of this research is different with the previous research in the kind of the image. The previous research used image of a man, women, and watch and this research used cultural, historical, personal, technology and literature image.

2. The meaning of the index used to represent the reality phenomena

The writer analyzes the reference of the meaning by using theory of signified and signifier.

The research findings are as follows:

Table 4.2
The meaning of the index

No	Meaning	Amount	Number of data	Percentage (100%)
1	The meaning is referred to the cultural issues.	8	1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 14,18, 20	40%
2	The meaning is referred to the religion issues.	1	1	5%
3	The meaning is referred to science issues.	4	6, 8, 9, 17	20%
4	The meaning is referred to the entertainment issues.	7	5, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 20	35%
	Total			100%

From 20 data, the writer found that the meaning of the indexes used is 8 or 40 % referring to the cultural issues, 1 or 5% refers to the religion issues, 4 or 20% refers to the science issues, and 4 or 35% refers to the entertainment issues. On the level of signifier, the index refers to denotative meaning. On the level of signified, which illustrate the concept of the index, most of them refers to the connotative meaning. The result of this research is different with the previous research in the meaning the image. The previous research found the meaning on a man, women, and watch aspect and this research found cultural, religion, science and entertainment issues.

Understanding logo does not simply understand the signifier, it is a matter of understanding the signifier meaning. The writer has a

notion that signifier is only represents the appearance of those logos. Moreover, the writer concludes that signifier can give the reader more information about what event in the logo. By using signifier and signified analysis, the reader can realize the comprehensive meaning that happens on those logos and the reader can relate to the complete meaning in logo.

E. Conclusion and Suggestion

After analyzing the data and discussing the finding of this study, the writer has drawn the conclusion and suggestion as follows:

1. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, the writer found the way Google search engine logos lead to the identity of the event they represent and the meaning of the index used to represent the logo.

- a. The way Google search engine logos lead to the identity of the event they represent.

From 20 data, there are 8 logos or 40% the indexes are used based on the cultural symbol, 1 logo or 5% are used based on historical symbol, 6 logos or 30 % are used based on the personal symbol. Furthermore, there are 2 logos or 10 % the indexes are used based on technology symbol and 3 logos or 15% is used based on literature symbol.

After analyzing 20 of Google logos from the Google doodle official website, the writer interprets that representamen,

interpretant and object analysis help the reader to relate or to understand about the way Google search engine logos lead to the identity of the event they represent.

- b. The meaning of the index used to represent the logo.

From 20 data, the writer found that the meaning of the indexes used are 8 or 40 % referring to the cultural issues, 1 or 5% refers to the religion issues, 4 or 20% refers to the science issues, and 4 or 35% refers to the entertainment issues. On the level of signifier, the index refers to denotative meaning. On the level of signified, which illustrate the concept of the index, most of them refers to the connotative meaning.

Understanding logo does not simply understand the signifier, it is a matter of understanding the signifier meaning. The writer has a notion that signifier is only represents the appearance of those logos. Moreover, the writer concludes that signifier can give the reader more information about what event in the logo. By using signifier and signified analysis, the reader can realize the comprehensive meaning that happens on those logos and the reader can relate to the complete meaning in logo.

2. Suggestion

After answering the problems, the writer has some suggestions, as follows;

a. Lecturers

The lectures should be helped to know more deeply about semiotics in logos hidden meaning for linguistic lecturing material.

b. Future Researchers

They can be inspired to take semiotics for writing research that is used in any media through other perspective.

c. Internet users

Internet users should be helped to know the hidden meaning of Google logos.

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