

A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL CARICATURE

COLLECTED BY GATOT EKO CAHYONO



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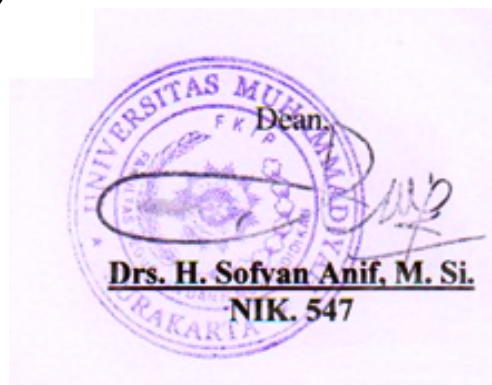
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ABSTRACT

A political caricature is an illustration which is designed to communicate a social or political message. The objectives of the study are: (1) to find the relation between the index and the myths used in the caricature, (2) to identify the meaning of the index used in the caricature.

The type of the study is qualitative interpretative type. The several steps are done to analyze the data. In analyzing the relation between the index and the myths used in the caricature, the steps are: analyzing the denotation level, analyzing the connotation level, and analyzing the myth. In analyzing meaning, the steps are: analyzing the signifier and analyzing the signified.

The results of the study show that: (1) there are relations between the index and the myths used in caricature. From 15 data, there are 5 or 33, 33% the indexes are used based on the context in what time the caricature is made, 3 or 20% are used based on its function on daily life, 3 or 20 % are used based on the general assumption in society. Furthermore, there are 2 or 13, 33 % the indexes are used based on the official symbol, 1 or 6, 67% is used based on the party symbol and 1 or 6, 67 % is used based on the political terminology, (2) the meaning of the index used to represent the reality phenomena. From 15 data, there are 6 or 40% data referring to the political issues, 4 or 26, 67% data referring to the social issues, 3 or 20% data referring to the corruption issues, and 2 or 13, 33% data referring to the human right issues.

Key words: *Semiotics and Caricature*

A. Introduction

Caricature is one of the works of art that can be used as a reference for understanding the social dynamics that happen in society. Caricature builds the society through social messages packaged creatively with a symbolic approach. Meanwhile, the message expressed in caricature is published to the society through a sign.

Generally the sign can be seen from two aspects, namely verbal sign and visual sign. Verbal sign will be viewed from the variety of language, themes, and understanding gained. While the visual sign will be seen from the manner described, whether iconic, indexical, or symbolic, for instance:



Figure 1.1

A caricature above consists of three main components, a cranium, a grenade written with the PERSATUAN DAN KESATUAN BANGSA (unity of nation), and a grenade wick with a construction letters of P.O.L.I.T.I.K - K.E.K.E.R.A.S.A.N. (political violence).

Basically by using Barthes's theory of *denotative* and *connotative* sign, denotatively, first, the index of a cranium above means as a part of the skull that encloses the brain, second, a grenade, means a small explosive bomb thrown by hand, third, a grenade wick means a piece of cord that conveys liquid by capillary

action. Connotatively, the cranium and the grenade connected by a wick written with “POLITIK KEKERASAN” (political violence) symbolize a political violence that will threaten the society and totality of nation. It represents that political situation in 1999, during the New Order government in Indonesia colored by violence.

Unfortunately the illustration of the caricature is not constantly so simple, with the addition of any utterance. The use of symbol to represent society phenomena seems having no relation with the reality at all. To identify the objective of using the symbol and its relation with the real phenomena happened, the use of semiotics theory is required, because semiotics is the science which studies the life of sign system (Guiraud, 1978:2). Semiotics is the study of signs and signifying practices, bringing together the work of linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and language pragmatist Charles Sanders Peirce. One of the broadest definitions of Semiotics is that of Umberto Eco, who states 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. In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects (Eco, 1979: 7 in Chandler, 2002:2)

Furthermore, semiotics also deals with sign and object. Semiotic notion will be used to recognize the relation of non language signs in the caricature which supports the concord of a discourse.

Based on those phenomena, the writer is interested in understanding the hiding message of the caricature collected by Gatot Eko Cahyono.

B. Research Method

The type of the study of this research is interpretative qualitative research. Interpretative qualitative method is a 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 the study is the semiotic meaning symbolized in caricature. The data of the study are the caricatures that are taken from a book “KUMPULAN KARIKATUR POLITIK” collected by Gatot Eko Cahyono. The book is a political caricature collection book collected by Gatot Eko Cahyono, a journalist and well-known caricaturist from Yogyakarta. The book represents the political situation when the president of Indonesia was Soeharto, the New Order government of Indonesia. Besides, the book also tells about the political situation when Indonesia was led by Abdurahman Wahid (Gusdur).

The data are collected by documentation of a political caricature collection book collected by Gatot Eko Cahyono, published by PT Pustaka Sinar Harapan Jakarta.

The several steps are done to analyze the data. In analyzing the relation between the index and the myths used in the caricature, the steps are: analyzing the denotation level, analyzing the connotation level, and analyzing the myth. In analyzing meaning, the steps are: analyzing the signifier and analyzing the signified.

C. Underlying Theory: Notion of Semiotics, Typology of Sign, Notion of Context, Notion of Caricature, Understanding Reasons of the Use of the Picture.

1. Notion of Semiotics

The term, which was spelled semeiotics, derives from the Greek *semeion* that means sign. Semiotics can be applied to anything which can be seen as signifying something, in other words, to everything which has meaning within a culture. The different point of view between Saussure and Peirce is on the function of the sign. Saussure emphasizes the social function of the sign, while Peirce its logical function. But the two aspects are closely correlated and today the words *semiology* and *semiotics* refer to the same discipline (Guiraud, 1978:2).

- a. Eco (in Chandler, 2002:2) states 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. In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects.
- b. Peirce (1839-1914) is one of the most original and multi dimensional American philosophers (Zoest, 1993:8). He is also called ‘the founder of modern theory of sign’ (Weiss and Burks, in Nöth, 1990:39). One of his elaborate definitions of sign is: 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 (Chandler, 2002:32-33).
- c. Saussure (1857-1913) is a linguist from Switzerland who is studied the life of signs in society. The first edition of his *Course in General Linguistics*, published posthumously in 1916, contains the declaration that: It is . . . possible to conceive of a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life. It would form part of social psychology, and hence of general psychology. We shall call it semiology (from the Greek *semeîon*, “sign”). It would investigate the nature of signs and the laws governing them. Since it does not yet exist, one cannot say for certain that it will exist. But it has a right to exist, a place ready for it in advance. Linguistics is only one branch of this general science. The laws which semiology will discover will be laws applicable in linguistics, and linguistics will thus be assigned to a clearly defined place in the field of human knowledge. (Chandler, 2002:2-3).

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

- a 'signifier' (signifiant) - the *form* which the sign takes; and
- the 'signified' (signifie) - the *concept* it represents.

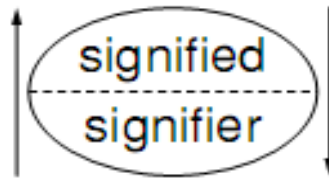


Figure 2.1

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. Barthes (November 12, 1915- March 25, 1980) was a French literary critic. Barthes spent the early 60s exploring the fields of semiology and structuralism. In the 1950s Roland Barthes published a series of essays examining modern myths and the process of their creation in his book *Mythologies*. Barthes gives attention to the things that he calls as secondary system. This secondary system then known as connotative. Moreover, he also introduced the primary system that known as denotative.
- e. 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. One of the function are always stick out without forget about the another function (Sudaryanto, 1990:12 in Sobur, 2004:69)
 - Referential function as a contextual information
 - Emotive function as self expression

- Connotative function as a vocative or imperative addressing of receiver
- Metalingual function that explain the code which is used
- Phatic functions to check, form, and maintain the contact between speaker and the addressee
- Poetic to coding the message

2. Typology of Sign

a. Symbol

This term is polysemic both in everyday discourse and in philosophical scientific discourse including the semiotic one. Etimologically, 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) stated that icon is physical things that imitate what it represented. For example, the picture of Soeharto is the icon of Soeharto. Graphic, scheme, or map are also can be said as an icon.

c. Index

Indexicality is perhaps the most unfamiliar concept, though its links with everyday uses of the word ‘index’ ought to be less misleading than the terms for the other two modes (Chandler, 2007:42). Sobur (2004:160) states that “Index is defined as sign which come associatively as a result

from the existence of fixed characteristic relation of the reference". 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, someone who can not shows his driving license, is an index that he will lose his money for police a penalty. Index can be divided into:

- Material (smoke is index from fire)
- Natural (flood is index from cat and dog rain)
- Physical (pregnant is index from sexual relationship)
- Sound (the bell rang is index from the coming of guest)

An index 'indicates' something. There is a direct physical connection to its object and it is a matter of fact.

3. Notion of Context

Nunan (1993:8) states that there are two different types of context.

They are:

a. Linguistic Context

Linguistic context is the language that surrounds or accompanies the piece of discourse analysis.

b. Non linguistic Context or Pragmatics Context.

Pragmatic context include the type of communication (for examples: joke, story, lecture, greeting, conversation), topic: the purpose of the event, the setting: including location, time of day, season of year, and the physical aspect of situation (for example: size of room, arrangement of furniture), the participants and the relation between them, and the background knowledge and assumption underlying the communicative event.

4. Notion of Caricature

There are some definitions of caricature.

- a. Caricature is visual art or descriptive writing that greatly exaggerates certain features of a subject to create a comic or absurd effect (Richard Nordquist, <http://www.About.com>).
- b. A political caricature is an illustration which is designed to convey a social or political message (S.E. Smith, <http://www.wiswGEEK.com>). This art form dates back to at least the 1500s in European culture, and it is considered an important part of visual expression in much of the West.

5. Understanding Reasons of the Use of the Picture

According to Barthes in his mythologies study (Nurhadi, 2004:155) and (Chandler, 2002:144), the writer applies theory of myth to understand reasons of the use of picture as follows:

- a. ‘Denotation’ tends to be described as the definitional, ‘literal’, ‘obvious’ or ‘commonsense’ meaning of a sign. In the case of linguistic sign, the denotative meaning is what the dictionary attempts to provide.
- b. The term ‘Connotation’ is used to refer to the socio-cultural and ‘personal’ associations (ideological, emotional etc.) of the sign. These are typically related to the interpreter’s class, age, gender, and ethnicity and so on.
- c. Related to connotation is what Roland Barthes refers to as *myth*. People usually associate myths with classical fables about the exploits of gods and heroes. But for Barthes myths were the dominant ideologies of our time. Popular usage of the term ‘myth’ suggests that it refers to beliefs which are demonstrably false, but the semiotic use of the term does not necessarily suggest this. In short, the term myth here refers to interpreter’s interpretation in naturalizing the social and cultural aspect by considering denotation level of the certain sign.

D. Discussion of the Finding

In analyzing the relation between the index and the myth used in the caricature, the writer used the theories of Barthes relating to denotative level,

connotative level, and myth as the instruments. Roland Barthes identifies two different types of meaning a picture can evoke: denotative and connotative. Denotative is the literal or actual meaning of the picture. Connotative is the culturally influenced meaning. His “Myth” is the cultural values and beliefs that are expressed at this level of connotation (Nurhadi, 2004:155) . So, myth allows the connotation meaning of a particular thing or image to appear to be denotative, hence literal or natural.

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’ (*signifiant*) refers to the form which the sign takes; and the ‘signified’ (*signifie*) refers to the concept it represents (Saussure, 1983:67 in Chandler, 2002:21).

Candra Bagus Nugroho (2008), a student of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta conducted the study entitled *A Semiotic Study on the Islamic CD’s Cover*. He used Islamic CD’s cover as the subject of study. He also analyzed the meaning of index, sign and written language on the Islamic CD’s Cover by using theories of Barthes relating to denotative level, connotative level, and myth. The result of the study shows the relation between the myth and the index. The index represents the myth besides the title and the content of the CD.

In this study, the writer focuses the study on the relation between the index and the myth used in the caricature and the meaning of the index used to represent the reality phenomena. After analyzing fifteen pieces of political caricature in the book of “KUMPULAN KARIKATUR POLITIK” collected by Gatot Eko Cahyono, the writer interprets the result of his findings. This study is able to find the relation between the index and the myths used and the meaning of the index used to represent the reality phenomena. The index represents the myth that survive in society. The relations are the indexes are used based on the context in what time the caricature is made, its function on daily life, and based on the general assumption in society. Moreover, some of the indexes are used based on the official symbol, the party symbol, and based

on the political terminology. The meanings are referring to the political and social issues, and referring to the corruption and human right issues.

1. The relation between the index and the myth used in the caricature. The writer analyzes the relation between the index and the myth used in the caricature by using theory of denotative level, connotative level, and myth. The research findings are as follows:

Table 1
The relation between the index and the myth

No	The relation between the index and the myth	Amount	Number of data	Percentage (100%)
1	The indexes are used based on the context in what time the caricature is made	5	1, 3, 4, 9, 10	33, 33 %
2	The indexes are used based on its function on daily life.	3	2, 7, 14	20%
3	The indexes are used based on the general assumption in society	3	6, 12, 15	20%
4	The indexes are used based on the official symbol	2	8, 5	13, 33%
5	The index is used based on the party symbol	1	13	6, 67%
6	The index is used based on the political terminology.	1	11	6, 67%
	Total			100%

From 15 data, there are 5 caricatures or 33, 33% the indexes are used based on the context in what time the caricature is made, 3 caricatures or 20% are used based on its function on daily life, 3 caricatures or 20 % are used based on the general assumption in society. Furthermore, there are 2 caricatures or 13, 33 % the indexes are used based on the official symbol,

1 caricature or 6, 67% is used based on the party symbol and 1 caricature or 6, 67 % is used based on the political terminology.

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 2
The meaning of the index

No	Meaning	Amount	Number of data	Percentage (100%)
1	The meaning is referred to the political issues.	6	3, 4, 8, 9, 12, 13	40 %
2	The meaning is referred to the social issues.	4	2, 5, 10, 11	26, 67%
3	The meaning is referred to the corruption issues.	3	1, 6, 7	20%
4	The meaning is referred to the human right issues.	2	14, 15	13, 33 %
	Total			100%

From 15 data, the writer found that the meaning of the indexes used is 6 or 40 % referring to the political issues, 4 or 26, 67% referring to the social issues, 3 or 20% referring to the corruption issues, and 2 or 13, 33 % referring to the human right 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.

A. 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 some relation between the index and the myth used in the caricature, and also the meaning of the index used to represent the reality phenomena.

- a. There are relations between the index and the myth used. The index represents the myth that survive in society. From 15 data, there are 5 caricatures or 33, 33% the indexes are used based on the context in what time the caricature is made, 3 caricatures or 20% are used based on its function on daily life, 3 caricatures or 20 % are used based on the general assumption in society. Furthermore, there are 2 caricatures or 13, 33 % the indexes are used based on the official symbol, 1 caricature or 6, 67% is used based on the party symbol and 1 caricature or 6, 67 % is used based on the political terminology.

After analyzing fifteen pieces of political caricatures in the book of “KUMPULAN KARIKATUR POLITIK” collected by Gatot Eko Cahyono, the writer interprets that denotative and connotative analysis help the reader to relate or to understand about the relation between the index and the myth used in the caricature. It also helps the reader to comprehend about the situation and the condition that is happened in Indonesia at that time.

- b. 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. On the level of signifier, the index refers to denotative level. On the level of signified, which illustrate the concept of the index, most of them refers to the connotative meaning. From 15 data, the writer found that the meaning of the indexes used is 6 or 40% referring to the political issues, 4 or 26, 67% referring to the social issues, 3 or 20% referring to the corruption issues, and 2 or 13, 33%

referring to the human right issues. The writer has a notion that denotative meaning is only represents the appearance of those caricatures. Moreover, the writer concludes that connotative meaning can give the reader more information about what the reality phenomena happened in the caricature. By using denotative and connotative analysis, the reader can realize the comprehensive meaning that happens on those caricatures. Besides, the reader can relate to the complete meaning and more information in the caricature without facing difficulties any longer.

2. Suggestion

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

a. For the lecturers

The lecturers should use various visual aids which contain of sign, symbol, index, and icon, etc, so that the students will get the knowledge about semiotics.

b. For the future researcher

They can study the index that is used in any media trough other perspective.

c. For the caricaturists

The caricaturists should be more creative and sensitive in choosing a political issue that will be shown on caricature because the political issues are going to have much impact for other policies.

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