



## **A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF SARCASM MEMES IN @SARCASM\_ONLY INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to analyze the signs contained in 10 sarcasm memes on the @sarcasm\_only Instagram account. The signs found were analyzed using Charles Sanders Peirce's theory, namely triadic meaning. In sign there are 3 aspects, namely Representamen, Object, and Interpretant. This research used descriptive qualitative method. While the data from this research are sarcasm memes in the form of text and images. This study focused on memes containing sarcasm found on the Instagram account @sarcasm\_only that can be attributed to everyone regardless of their gender. In the analysis, 26 signs were found. 12 signs were found in the form of images and 14 signs in the form of text. Further researchers are advised to conduct research on sarcasm memes in the form of videos. Because this study examines sarcasm memes in the form of images, some aspects such as Index are rarely found.

**Key words:** Semiotics, Sarcasm, Memes

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Language is a communication tool that connects humans with other humans in order to understand each other. Noermanzah (2017) explains that language is a message conveyed in the form of expression as a communication tool in certain situations in various activities. The development of language now causes many linguistic phenomena, such as the use of slang words, code-mixing, and even variations in language media, one of which is memes. Memes as a medium for conveying an idea or message can certainly be studied more deeply. In a meme, you can find signs that are processed to get the meaning that the meme wants to convey. The process that occurs when interpreting the sign is called semiotic.

Semiotics is a study that analyzes signs as a fundamental part of cultural life and communication. From semiotics, it can be seen how culture and reality can be understood through signs. Semiotics is the study of the meaning of signs that help humans to gather information and communicate better and more efficiently through signs that are around (Prasojowati et al., 2019). Semiotics

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plays an important role in communication so that there is no misunderstanding of meaning.

The development of technology and information today significantly facilitates all aspects of human life. One of them is the internet. With the internet, humans can connect with other humans. One of the way is with social media. On social media, people can express their expressions through photos and videos. In such case, one of the most popular social media today is Instagram. Instagram is an application that allows users to upload photos or videos with various filters to share with other Instagram users. There are also those who upload photos or videos in the form of the photos and videos contain text that have explicit or implicit meanings, one of the forms is memes.

Memes can spread in a rapid pattern from one individual to another through social media or through the internet. One type of meme that can be found is sarcasm memes. Memes have recently become popular as a medium to express something. Memes can contain jokes, criticism, satire, and even sarcasm. Dawkins (1976; 1989) suggests that memes are a cultural replica. From this statement, it can be said that memes are a medium for expressing human thought which is a replicator of a culture that can spread from one generation to the next ones.

Keraf (2010:143) states that sarcasm is a language that contains ridicule that aims to be rude. With the same thought as Keraf, Waluyo (2002:86) states that sarcasm is the use of harsh words aimed at satire or criticism. Sarcasm is associated with allusion through praise but has the opposite meaning of what is conveyed. This is often found in English sarcasm. According to Bharti in Salsabila (2020) states that sarcasm is a type of sentiment where people express their negative feelings using a choice of words that seem positive. Therefore, it can be said that sarcasm is an expression that can hurt someone because the expression conveyed indirectly has a rude implicit meaning.

For this study, the semiotic theory initiated by Charles Sanders Peirce (1834-1914) will be used to describe the memes. With the theory, the sarcasm contained in the memes posted on the @sarcasm\_only instagram account will be used as data to be analyzed. In this study, the researcher will analyze the semiotic features found in the sarcasm memes in the @sarcasm\_only account. In analyzing the data, the researcher will use the triadic sign model in semiotics which was proposed by Charles Sanders Peirce (1931-1935: 228). The object of this study is sarcasm memes posted on the Instagram account @sarcasm\_only. This study focuses on the meaning of signs.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

In this study, the researcher used descriptive qualitative methods. The researcher collects data, analyzes it, transforms it, and finally draws conclusions based on the data. The data from this research are sarcasm memes in the form of text and images taken from instagram account @sarcasm\_only. In this study, the researcher will use the table as an analysis model.

## C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Result

Data analysis is the process of using analytical and logical reasoning in evaluating data to analyze each component contained in the data. This form of analysis is one of the steps taken in conducting a study. The data contained in the source will be collected, retrieved, and analyzed to form a finding and conclusions.

In this chapter, the researcher will explain in more detail the results of the analysis of the use of Peirce's triadic sign in sarcasm memes. In analyzing the data, the researcher used the semiotic theory by Peirce (1931-1935). Peirce's theory will be used to analyze the meaning of the signs found in sarcasm memes. Sign, object, and interpretant are elements that are processed and understood into meaning. Signs can be divided into qualisign, sinsign, and legisign. Objects can be divided into icon, symbol, and index. While interpretants can be divided into rheme, dicent, and argument

#### Datum 1

@sarcasm\_only, Sunday, June 19 2022.

There are 2 signs that can be found in the picture. The first Representamen is a Sinsign, which shows a woman. The Object is an Icon, which shows a woman who has an annoyed face peeking from a slightly opened door. She is waiting for visitors to leave so she doesn't have to greet them. The other sign is a sentence. The representament of the sentence is a Legisign and the object belongs to Symbol that explain the context of the picture. The Interpretant of this picture is an Argument that explains how someone can feel uncomfortable around guests in their house or just feel shy. This can be related to people despite of their gender nowadays who spend most of their time alone with their gadgets in their rooms.

#### Datum 2

@sarcasm\_only, Friday, June 17 2022.

There are 2 signs that can be found in the picture. The first Representament is an Sinsign that shows a man who packs his clothes. The Object is an Icon which shows a man who packs for his 3 days vacation. The other sign is a sentence. The Representament is a Legisign. The Object of it is a Symbol which explain the context of the picture. The Interpretant of the picture is an Argument which explains how someone despite of their gender is often overpack for their short vacation and even packs their unused clothes into their baggage.

### **Datum 3**

@sarcasm\_only, Tuesday, June 14 2022.

There are 3 signs that can be found in the picture. The first Representament is a Sinsign, which is bag. The object is an Icon which shows a bag that has the word “heavy and awkward” written on it. The other 2 signs are texts. The Representamens are a Legisigns. The objects of them are Symbols which represents someone who feels the same as what written on the bag, “heavy and awkward”. The interpretant of the picture is an Argument which how someone is a heavy person who is awkward around other people. They are unlikely to joke or be funny.

### **Datum 4**

@sarcasm\_only, Wednesday, June 1 2022.

There are 2 signs that can be found in the picture. The first Representament is a Sinsign, which is a bag. The Object is an Icon which shows bag that has the word “heavy and awkward” written on it. The other sign is a text. The Representamen is a Legisign. The Object of it is a Symbol which represents someone who feels the same as what written on the bag, “heavy and awkward”. The interpretant of the picture is an Argument that explains how someone is a heavy person who is awkward around other people. They are unlikely to joke or be funny.

### **Datum 5**

@sarcasm\_only, Tuesday, May 31 2022.

There are 2 signs that can be found from the picture. The first Representament Sinsign, which shows Kermit the Frog. The Object is an Icon which shows Kermit the Frog showing a gesture of looking for something. The other sign is a text. The Representament is a Legisign. The Object of it is a Symbol which describes about how someone didn't ask for one's opinion. The interpretant of the picture is an Argument which explains about how someone is often get opinion that they didn't want or ask. It is considered not polite to give someone advice when they aren't asking for it.

### **Datum 6**

@sarcasm\_only, Friday, May 27 2022.

There are 6 signs that can be found in the picture. The Representmen of the 2 pictures are Sinsigns. The object of them are Icons which shows pictures of a man who at first looks optimistic that he will be happy at the beginning of the year but in the middle of the year seems to realize that his ambition to be happy this year cannot be fulfilled. The other 4 signs are texts. The Representamens of

them are Legisign. The object of them are Symbol which is in the form of words and statements that represent the context of the picture. The interpretant of this picture is an Argument that explains how someone usually feels optimistic at the beginning of the year with all of their ambitions and resolutions but by the middle of the year they start to feel that this year has been a bad year. In the context of the image that is uploaded in 2022, it can be said that this year is not pleasant because of the ongoing pandemic and the conflicts of countries affecting the world economy. So it affects the life of every individual regardless of whether they are male or female.

#### **Datum 7**

@sarcasm\_only, Wednesday, May 25 2022.

There are 2 signs that can be found in the picture. The first Representament is a Sinsign. The object is an Icon which shows a man and a woman who jumped from a yacht to the sea to swim. The other sign is a text. The Representament is a Legisign. The Object is a Symbol, which explains the context of the picture. The interpretant of the picture is an Argument of how someone can immediately jump into conclusions or making assumption without doing some research or looking for reasons.

#### **Datum 8**

@sarcasm\_only, Monday, May 23 2022.

There are 2 signs that can be found in the picture. The first Representamen is a Sinsign. The object is an Icon, which is a woman with judgmental expression. And the other sign is a text. The Representamen is Legisign and the Object is a Symbol, which explains the opposite. The interpretant of the picture is an Argument of how someone can claim that they're not judgmental but they actually are. People who are judgmental are often rushes to judgment without reason and their opinions are harsh and critical.

#### **Datum 9**

@sarcasm\_only, Sunday, May 14 2022.

There are 2 signs that can be found in the picture. The first Representament is a Sinsign. The Object is an Icon, which shows a man who looks happy because his depression is cured because someone says 'don't be depressed'. The other sign is a text. The representamen is a Legisign. The object is a Symbol, which explains the context of the picture. The interpretation of the picture is an Argument of how someone's depression cannot be cured just simply by saying 'don't be depressed'. People tend to underestimate depression and mistreat people with diagnosed with depression.

## **Datum 10**

@sarcasm\_only, Tuesday, May 10 2022.

There are 3 signs that can be found from the picture. The Representamen of the 2 pictures are Sinsign. The Object of the signs are Icons, which shows a women in two pictures. The first one she looks happy, and the other one is shocked. The other sign is a text. The Representamen is a Legisign. The object is a Symbol, which describe the context of the picture. The interpretant of the picture is an Argument about someone who is shocked when checking her card balance after doing impulsive purchases. People today is considered consumptive since it is easy to buy stuff from around the world with one simple click. And with various offers, they are more easy to be convinced to buy stuff that they might actually don't need.

## **2. Discussion**

From the explanation above, it can be seen that there are three semiotic features that can be found in a sign. They are Representamen, Object, and, Interpretant. Peirce (1908) stated "I define a sign as anything which is so determined by something else, called its object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call interpretant, that the later is thus mediately determined by the former". This means that Representament, Object, and, Interpretant are connected to each other in harmony.

The representamens found in this study are in the form of pictures and texts. There are 12 pictures in the form of actions and expressions that can be categorized as Sinsigns. While there are 14 texts that explain the context and background of the memes which are categorized as Legisigns. There are more Legisign found than Sinsign that can be found in the memes. While there are no Qualisign since they can be found in memes with no verbal sign or text.

The objects found in this study are in the form of pictures and texts. There are 12 Pictures that represent a man, woman, or other character are categorized as the Icon. While the 14 texts that explains the context of the meme are categorized as Symbol. There are more Symbols than Icons that can be found in the memes. While there are no Indexes found in the memes that were analyzed.

The interpretants found in this study are processes that occurs in the mind of the people who see the memes. The interpretants of the sarcasm memes studied were considered based on the context of the picture and the existing cultural context. There are 14 Arguments that can be found in the memes. The sarcasm in the memes is aimed at the young and adult generations with the aim of making fun of them. The development of memes in modern times makes the context and meaning of these memes understandable by people from all over the world. So that the sarcasm aimed at those who are shy to greet guests, those who are always

over packed before going on vacation, those who are ambitious, and those who are shy, can be understood by today's young and adult generations.

The result of this study is in line with Prasojowati (2019) which stated that semiotic signs contained in the data have been successfully brought the messages to the person who saw it and is easy to understand by the addressee. The semiotic signs found in the sarcasm memes brought the messages to the audience to be interpreted. While this study is different from what in in Murtaisah (2020) which only analyzed regular memes and only analyzed the Icons and Symbols contained in the memes. This study is also analyzed memes that can be related to anyone despite of their genders which is not in line with Salsabila (2020) that only analyzed sarcasm memes related to women.

## **D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **1. Conclusion**

The process of semiotic analysis begins with the Representamen. Representamen is language, texts, images, or combination of them. Pictures or texts found on memes are Representamens. Then, for the next step is to determine the object of the Representamen. An object is something that comes to mind based on its Representamen. The last is the Interpretant. The Interpretant is the result of the researcher's interpretation of the combination of the Representamen and the object of a sign. So, the semiosis process that occurs in memes consists of three steps, namely Representamen, Object, and Interpretant. This process is described by Peirce's triadic meaning.

From this study, it can be concluded that sarcasm memes can be an object to be analyzed by semiotic theory. The signs can be found in the form of pictures or texts. From 10 sarcasm memes that was taken as data, there are 26 signs obtained. The memes were analyzed using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory. From which the Representamens can be found are categorized as Sinsign and Legisign. While the Objects found are categorized as Icons and Symbols. And lastly the Interpretants are only categorized as Argument.

This study is also analyzed Representament, Object, and Interpretant along with its features which are called Trichotomy (Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness). That makes this study different from other previous studies which only analyzed some part of Trichotomy or none of them. This study is also took the sarcasm memes that can also related to anyone despite of their gender. The account @sarcasm\_only are mainly posts memes that related to women, but it can be found that many of them are also relatable to the other gender.

### **2. Suggestion**

The researcher realizes that this research is not a perfect work due to the lack of experience and knowledge of the researcher. Therefore, further researchers are advised to conduct research on sarcasm memes in the form of a video. Because this study examines sarcasm memes in the form of images, so some aspects such as Index are rarely found.

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