

**VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL SIGNS OF LANGUAGE IN ADVERTISEMENTS:  
A SEMIOTIC APPROACH OF TEACHING**

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**Abstract**

This paper takes semiotic as a possible practical approach toward the teaching of language through its verbal and nonverbal signs. Semiotic is the study of signs (verbal and nonverbal) and signs are mostly used in advertisements not even in Public Service Advertisements (PSA). The use of verbal and nonverbal signs is to deliver the messages to the intended audiences. The language learners can understand the messages being delivered through sentences which are mostly performed through verbs at the beginning. The form is imperative forms with the function of persuading. PSA of HIV/AIDS was chosen as the data source because of one among some reasons: based on the statistics number of victim suffered from HIV/AIDS is increasing all over the world. It is a qualitative research and the data was taken from electronic media (internet) through the methods of observation and documentation. The theories of semiotic, linguistics, and teaching method were applied for analyzing the data. The analysis was focused on how verbal and nonverbal signs of language which deliver messages can be effectively understood through semiotic approach of teaching. It is hoped that the findings of this paper will raise awareness of teachers as a foreign language to what constitutes the semiotic approach of teaching and how to apply it.

**Keywords:** semiotic, verbal, nonverbal, teaching

**A. Introduction**

In Indonesia, English is formally taught as a foreign language from the level of elementary schools until the first semester of university students. It is already realized that the importance of this international language is worldwide. The purpose of teaching English as a foreign language is to help the learners to have competence in understanding references written in English, to communicate not only with the native speakers of the language itself but also with people from different countries or of other nationalities who use English for both formal and informal communication. There can be no doubt, the better a person masters the English language the better the job he or she will achieve.

Based on the theme of the seminar 'Shaping the New Trends of English Teaching and Studies' and among the five sub-topics, this paper tries to choose one of the sub-topics, that is 'Studies on English Linguistics'. Although the sub-topic is studies on English Linguistics this paper tries to relate one of many approaches in teaching English as a foreign language. One of it is relating to semiotics and teaching and it becomes semiotics approach in teaching.

In many theories it is explained that one of the fields of linguistics like Semiotics is considered to have high influence in teaching English as a foreign language since it uses lots of signs and this condition make the learners are able to obtain wider information on various disciplines such as literature, art, science, medical, economy, law, etc. It can be said that semiotics is very concern on communication since the purpose of teaching a language to make the language learners to be able to communicate in the foreign language they are studying. The use of semiotics by teachers, instructors, and lecturers in a language class is quite frequent with the purpose that the language learners understand the topic being discussed. By making use of these semiotic elements the students are provided the opportunity to better understand the lesson.

One of the media which can be considered useful for helping to learn and teach language is advertisement, either the commercial or the noncommercial. The noncommercial one is also well known as public service advertisement. This media mostly applies two language signs: verbal and nonverbal. Either verbal and nonverbal signs or aspects are very familiar in semiotics analysis. The verbal signs are usually in the form of imperative sentences with the function of persuading. The verbal signs which are mostly imperatives made shorter and directly started with verbs. This shorter form helps the readers or audiences learn and understand quickly. The nonverbal signs are generally informative and attractive.

Advertising is the dissemination of information through a third-party agency to a large number of people to persuade them to accept the idea, or a product idea. In this definition, the third party can be a brochure, a television commercial, something in a magazine, a piece of editorial in a newspaper, and so on

(Fowles and Mills, 1981:7). Advertisement is one among hundreds of media which can be used to know and to learn something from, even to learn a language.

### B. Related theories

Some related theories such as semiotics, linguistics, and teaching are applied in this paper for the support of the analysis. Among the three related theories semiotics is referred to and applied the most for the reason that this paper concerns with an approach of semiotic in teaching a language.

Semiotics is the science of signs, of symbolic behavior or of communication system (Lyons, 2004, p.17). Another linguist, Nöth (1995: 222) made a specification that in teaching of a foreign language there are three main areas of contact between semiotics and the theory of foreign language teaching: non-verbal and visual communication, cultural semiotics, and the methodology of vocabulary teaching.

Lemke (1990: 186) remarks that "social semiotics is a theory of how people make meaning in social contexts." Accordingly, foreign language learning is considered as a product of the foreign culture.

There can be no doubt of semiotics is also used to facilitate teaching new vocabulary. The teacher can accompany the educational sign like **no-smoking**, **no-enter**, **zebra cross** signs by a sentence or a phrase so that the learners will recall them easily. Cards and varied pictures which are parts of semiotic elements as the verbal signs are frequently used in order to help the learners contextualize the meaning of the vocabulary within their minds. Teachers, instructors, and lecturers also use semiotic symbols as a part of techniques in teaching foreign languages because the use of signs and symbols by teachers, instructor, lecturers and learners is an effective and influential technique in teaching foreign languages.

Hammer (2012:102-106), is popular with his procedure called PPP-Presentation, Practice, and Production to introduce simple language at elementary to intermediate levels. The teachers present the form (the construction), the meaning and use of the new language and then the students practice it (often using drilling and controlled practice). Finally when they have become familiar with the new language, the teachers ask them to produce their own sentences or phrases using what they have just learnt. In this way or practice of teaching the teachers use pictures to be shown to the students, one clue is given and the rests must be completed by the students. A number of other ways to introduce a new language are through situations, stories, dialogues, text, pictures, objects, mimes, etc. All of those ways belong to verbal and nonverbal signs or aspects of language. It is noticed that the importance of semiotics in teaching new language again is proved.

Richards and Rodgers (1990:37) stated "Situational language teaching employs a situational approach to presenting new sentence patterns and a drill based manner of practicing them." For Richards and Rodgers, the situation refers to the manner of presenting and practicing the information (the structure of language) in the language class. "The situation will be controlled carefully to teach the new language material. . . . in such a way that there can be no doubt in the learner's mind of the meaning of what he hears. . . almost all of the vocabulary and structures taught in the first four or five years and even later can be placed in situations in which the meaning is quite clear."

Another method of teaching a language is through communicative approach. In communicative approach or communicative language teaching, the instructional materials play an important role. "A wide variety of materials have been used to support communicative approaches to language teaching. Materials thus have a primary role of promoting communicative language use." (Richards and Rodgers, 1990:79). The materials incommunicative language teaching can be studied in three groups. They are text-based, task-based and realia. In the text based materials, depending on the context of study, to start the conversation, dialogues, drills, sentence patterns, visual cues, taped cues, and pictures are used actively. In the task-based activities, a variety of interactional patterns like, pair work, group work, games, role plays. In this respect, the cue-cards, pictures and the activity cards are actively used as the semiotic elements of the course. In terms of realia, as is clear, the communicative language teaching requires the use of authentic and from life materials in the classroom. These materials can be in the form of, language-based realia, such as signs, magazines, and advertisements and their symbols, graphics and statistics (i.e. maps, pictures, charts, symbols).

### C. Data Analysis and Discussion

In the session of data analysis and discussion there are three data analyzed based on the related theories mentioned in the previous part of this paper. As has been mentioned above most of the analysis is based on the theory of semiotic. It analyses both of the signs in the data especially the meaning and the message which are delivered through the signs. The reasons that this paper discusses the relevance of semiotics in teaching English language. The linguistics and teaching are provided less space. The linguistics analyses only the verbal sign. The point of teaching analyses how semiotic approach can be fruitful either for the instructors or the learners. Then about the three numbers of data is classified into Public Service Advertisement, about HIV-AIDS and are taken from the electronic media: internet. Each of the data has two



power and motivation to overcome the burden of life and also can share their own experiences. The blood is the symbol of life and in this picture it can be equalized with a way for the virus to get into someone's body.



The blood or the life has been infected by the silent killer virus. And the red colour has the meaning of danger in this context, the black colour strengthen the messages delivered in the clause: education is a must, and the sentence: suffered from or infected by this virus brings disaster in somebody's life. By making use of the above semiotic symbols the students will have chances to enrich the vocabulary, develop and improve their competence in the skills of writing and speaking in English. In this case for discussing the negative effects of being uneducated and this will

bring serious problems or even disaster for our life.

#### Data C-3

Data C-3 has both verbal and nonverbal signs. The verbal sign is in the form of clauses **Don't share** and **Call 863-AIDS**. The nonverbal sign consist of pictures and colours. The pictures are the medical tools for injection and a phone call; the colours are black, grey,

white, and orange. The medical tool for injection is placed between the two clauses. Compared with the two data above this data has the most number of colours. For the teaching of a foreign language Nöth (1995: 222) specifies that "there are three main areas of contact between semiotics and the theory of foreign language teaching: non-verbal and visual communication, cultural semiotics, and the methodology of vocabulary teaching". This data has the visual communication apart from verbal communication. The verbal communication or the verbal sign is written in two colours, orange and black. From the semiotics point of view the black colour stands on each side of the advertisement and in between are the clauses **Don't share** and **Call 863-AIDS**. The black colour represents the meaning of strength and the message of being strong both mentally and morally in order not to be influenced by negative behavior. The first imperative clause consists of the verb **do** with negation **not** and the verb **share**. The messages which want to be delivered: (1) it is not allowed to share the injection tools; (2) it is not safe since it may has been infected with the dangerous virus; and (3) it will be very dangerous for the human life. While the second clause consists of one verb **call** and one noun **AIDS**. Within this clause some messages are delivered: (1) there is a phone number available if somebody needs information about the right way and procedure in using the injection tools either by general practitioners, paramedic or by the people themselves; (2) referring to the word **AIDS**, the word itself is delivering messages and information that some aids are available if people contact this phone number. It can also be interpreted that there is information about HIV/AIDS if people need it. The most important message delivered through this public service advertisement (data C-3) is never to share an injection tool with other people in order for safety.

#### D. Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the analysis of three numbers of data above some conclusions can be drawn as follows: (1) semiotic can be effectively used as an approach in teaching English language because the verbal signs are usually short and it will be easier for the language learners to understand the meaning and the message delivered; (2) the non verbal sign gives chances for the language learners to think creatively because they have pictures with them. Through the pictures or nonverbal signs they can widen their knowledge and enrich the vocabulary in order to develop and improve their skills mostly in speaking and writing, but it does not mean that the other skills such as reading and listening have little chance in using semiotics as an approach to teach English language.

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