

Murals Semiotic in Medan

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze and describe the message and meaning of the signs in ten murals that are going viral in the landscape of Medan City. The murals are analyzed and interpreted using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory; icon, index, and symbol. This study was conducted using Descriptive Analysis. Photo documentation, interviews, and literature studies are used to gather information. The conclusion is the murals in the city of Medan contain good messages. The messages are addressed to the people of Medan or others who visit Medan. These messages can be satire or criticism, information, and invitations to do good.

Keywords: Mural, Semiotic, Medan, Icon, Index, Symbol.

1 Introduction

Medan is one of the cities in North Sumatra Province in Indonesia. Medan is the capital of North Sumatra Province, and Medan is the third largest city after Jakarta and Surabaya. Medan is also called a Metropolitan city. Medan is one of the municipalities in North Sumatra. Medan consists of several sub-districts, including; Medan Kota, Medan Amplas, Medan Perjuangan, Medan Denai, Medan Petisah, Medan Maimoon, Medan Polonia, Medan Sunggal, and others.

Now, Medan is developing well. This can be seen in the landscape of the city of Medan. On every street, its development can be enjoyed through the senses possessed by the people who see it. In the landscape of Medan, will find some Street Art. Street art is art that is influenced by cultural, social, political, and value elements that exist in urban society and is developed through public spaces, namely on the streets. The characteristic of this street art is its placement without permission (Barry S, 2008:19). This street art is divided into several types, namely; murals, graffiti, stencils, wheatpaste, stickers, and installations. In this study, the writer chose a street art Mural.

The word "*Mural*" comes from Latin, that is "*murus*", which means a large drawing or painting, made on the wall both indoors and in open spaces. Murals have meaning in them and contain messages addressed to the general public. Indirectly, murals can affect everyone who sees them. Murals are a visual communication medium. As a form of visual communication, painters create images with symbols and problems that occur in society so that the message can be interpreted. Gazali (2017), murals play a central role when in public spaces, because public spaces are one of the centers of social interaction for the community, especially in urban areas. The existence of murals in public spaces certainly has a function as a medium to convey aspirations, as an aesthetic, economic, and educational function. The painter's idea is to create murals so that the urban environment can be maintained and preserved together.

The understanding of murals full of signs can be studied in semiotics. The message contained in the mural is communicated visually including codes, signs, symbols, and meanings. Peirce in Sudjiman and Zoest (2019:7) stated that "the true meaning of a sign is to indicate something". Based on the origin of the word, semiotics is taken from the Greek word, "*semelon*", which means sign. Semiotics is the science that studies signs. Danesi M, (2011:6) states that "a sign is everything—colors, gestures, blinks, objects, mathematical formulas, and others—that presents something other than itself.". Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) formulated an innovative model of the triadic sign, emphasizing in his theory that the way we interpret a 'sign' is what allows it to be marked – what gives it meaning.

Infinite signs are all around human life. Peirce offers many different principles on how to categorize them according to their three triadic elements: representation, object, and interpretant. He proposed that signs can be classified according to quality, facts, laws, and conventions related to the object. Peirce also distinguishes three main 'modes' in which signs can be assigned: symbols, icons, and indices. Index marks are easier to understand and more commonly used. The meaning of each object in our environment can be interpreted and confirmed by iconic, indexical, or symbolic analysis.

The study focused on semiotic analysis in all three main modes by Peirce, where signs can be defined as; symbols, icons, and indices on some of the viral murals, which are in the cityscape of Medan. What makes the writer very interested in doing this study is: murals with their characteristics and placement without permission, but this mural-making program was given permission and initiated by the mayor of Medan, Bobby Nasution. This study aims to analyze and describe the message and meaning of the signs in the murals in the landscape of Medan City. This article is one of the assignments of the KKNI Curriculum, namely Mini Research and Project in the Language Semiotic and Multimodal Analysis course.

Mural comes from the word "*murus*" which in Latin means wall. Meanwhile, according to Susanto (2002; 76) as the author of a book entitled Diction of Rupa, murals can be interpreted as large paintings that are produced to support architectural spaces. If the definition is translated further, then the mural actually cannot be separated from the building, in this case, the wall. Walls are seen not only as a space divider or just as an element that must be present in a house or building but also as a medium to beautify a room. Or outdoor walls.

Remembering history, H. W. Janson (2020) in his book History of Art explained that murals first appeared in the form of images of animals and birds that were worked on with carving, carving, and painting techniques. In addition, there are also bison paintings that have a certain impression of dark and light colors. The painting is thought to be part of a ritual magic ritual to honor the existence and death of game animals. The existence of mural itself has existed since 31,500 years ago in a cave painting in Lascaux, southern France. Pablo Picasco was the most famous mural painter of the time. Pablo's mural tells a commemoration of the bombing by German soldiers in a small town. Meanwhile, in Indonesia itself, during the war of independence, many heroes and people used mural media to ignite the spirit of achieving independence. Generally, this mural is in the form of encouraging writings such as "*Boeng Ajoe Boeng*" and "*Merdeka ataoe Mati*".

Judging from its development, the function of murals is not only limited to emphasizing aesthetic values but there is something more essential than this, namely containing messages and social criticism as resistance and upheaval that arises during society. In addition, murals are used as

a tool for conveying ideas, and even as a promotional medium for certain products, as quoted from the book Rainbow of Indonesian Language and Culture by Yuana Agus Dirgantara.

In this regard, the use of semiotics in mural research is very important. The first modern semiotic theory to study signs was put forward by a nineteenth-century philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce. According to Charles Sanders, Semiotics is a science that studies signs and all related things, namely how they function in the series with other signs, and their senders and receivers by those who use them. Thus, Charles Sanders Peirce put forward his semiotic theory in the form of the triangle meaning theory. The main elements include signs, objects, and interpretations. Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis (in Rahman, 2021:36-37), consists of three important perspectives, including; Sign or representation, Referring to the sign, and Use of the sign (interpretant). The reference of the sign (object) is the social context in its application as an aspect of meaning or referred to by the sign:

- a. Icon, is an image in the form of an image or image. In icons, signs that contain a resemblance of appearance are thus recognizable to the wearer. For example, a painting has an iconic relationship with its object, and there is a similarity between the two.
- b. Index, is a sign that has a phenomenal relationship between the representative and the object. The relationship between the sign and the object is a cause-and-effect relationship. For example, a wet umbrella is an index of rain.
- c. Symbol, is something that can symbolize and represent ideas, and objects, but the reference to the object is not the similarity or causal relationship, but the result of an arbitrator convention. For example, a yellow flag is installed on a street corner, as a sign that someone has died. The direct relationship between the yellow flag (which symbolizes) and the presence of a dead person (which symbolizes) does not need to exist. This indicates the outcome of the convention which is an arbitrator.

Thus, semiotics, according to Peirce, is closely related to the use of the elements of the composition of signs with their reference objects, their existence has a causal relationship due to the conventional bond with these signs. Semiotics is an analytical knife used in expressing goals, feelings, communication of thoughts, and all forms of expression conveyed by artists to the audience or art connoisseurs through the elements of sign composition. According to the explanation above, the advantage of Peirce's theory is that it is found that there is a relationship between signs and each other so it contains many meanings in the signs of an object being studied.

Thus, the researcher uses Peirce's semiotic analysis which describes the meaning contained in the sign of an object, both from icons, indexes, and symbols, the researcher can explain in more detail the meaning of the sign from the mural in the landscape of Medan, which contains various messages that are closely related to the essence of the product, education, and social culture and culture of Medan. Moreover, the city of Medan stores many historical buildings that are also inseparable from mural works. So many works decorate spaces in cities, cafes, hotels, and stadiums by sharing the form of images that have a message or meaning in them. This is also to prevent Vandalism in the city of Medan.

2 Method

This study uses descriptive qualitative research with a semiotic analysis approach from Charles Sanders Peirce's ideas, used to find out the meaning of the message on the signs contained in the art street mural. The object of this research is 10 murals that are going viral in the city of Medan. In this study, the researcher used three data, namely; Documentation (mural photos), Literature Study, and Interview. For documentation, the researcher collects data obtained through internet media, for literature study the researcher collects research data through previous research from other researchers' papers such as journals, theses, and dissertations that have similarities in research data, and for interviews, the researcher conducts direct interviews with several informants who are around the location of the mural.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 The Following is an Analysis of the Ten Most Viral Murals in Medan

Table 1. Ten Most Viral Murals in Medan

No	Mural	Analysis
1		<p>Icon: - Painting of a young couple dancing.</p> <p>Index: - The painting of a young couple dancing the Malay dance "Persembahan" (offering) with a "tepak" at the Fly Over Amplas Medan indicates that Welcome to Medan City.</p> <p>Symbols - The painting of a young couple dancing the Malay dance "Persembahan" (offering) with a tepak at the Fly Over Amplas Medan is a symbol of Welcome to Medan City.</p> <p>This mural is located at Medan Amplas, Flyover. The content of the mural is the dance "Persembahan" (offering) from the Malay tribe as a welcome to Medan.</p>

2



This mural is in the center of Medan, Stasiun Kereta Api Street, Kesawan, Medan Barat. In front of the Railway tracks, Ikan Lama market. This mural was created in 2019. The content of the mural is a criticism of the world of children who are lost in the era of modernization.

Icon:

- Painting of several children.

Index:

- The painting of several children playing in their environment barefoot, indicates that it no longer exists in the modern era.

Symbol:

- The painting of several children playing is a symbol of criticism of the world of children who have been lost in the era of modernization.

3



This mural is located on the banks of the river Perjuangan Street, Setiabudi, Tanjung Rejo, Medan Sunggal. This mural was made by Sugeng Hariadi (51) in March 2019. The content of this mural is the Life of the People of Medan.

Icon:

- Painting of “Raya” Mosque.
- Painting of PDAM Monument.
- Painting of house.

Index:

- The painting of the “Raya” Mosque in the city of Medan, indicates that the Muslim community of Medan worships at the mosque.
- The painting of PDAM Monument in the city of Medan, indicates that the people of Medan are facilitated by the Drinking Water Company (PDAM).
- The painting of the house on the riverside indicates that the level of life of the people of Medan city is greatly influenced by the economic level.

Symbol:

- The paintings of the Great Mosque, the Medan Drinking Water Company (PDAM) Monument, and the house by the river are symbols of Community Life in the city of Medan.

4



This mural is located in Medan Amplas, Flyover. The content of this mural is an important work about the endangered species of Tiger and Orangutan.

Icon:

- Painting of a tiger.
- Painting of an orangutan.

Index:

- Paintings of a tiger and an orangutan on the Medan Amplas, Flyover, indicate that these tiger and orangutan species are almost extinct, and we must preserve them.

Symbol:

- The painting of a tiger and an orangutan in the Medan Sandpaper flyover is a symbol of the endangered species of Tigers and Orangutans, and we must preserve them.

5



This mural is located on SM. Raja Street, right across from the Antares Indonesia Hotel, Medan Kota. The mural was created by Ernest Zacharevic and friends. The content of the mural is that humans must guard and protect elephants from extinction. Don't sell for the sake of your wealth.

Icon:

- Painting of a Woman.
- Painting of Elephant.
- Painting of Money.

Index:

- The painting of a woman sitting on an elephant indicates that humans guard and protect the elephant.
- The painting of several hundred thousand rupiah bills forming a swaying elephant indicates that if humans sell elephants, they will get a lot of money.

Symbol:

- The painting of a woman sitting on several hundred thousand rupiah bills forming a swaying elephant is a symbol that humans must guard and protect elephants from extinction. Don't sell for the sake of your own wealth.

6



This mural is located on Juanda Street, Medan Kota. The content of this mural is a burning forest. Protect the forest from fire.

Icon:

- Painting of Forest fire.
- Painting of a Monkey.

Index:

- The painting of the forest fire indicates that all the trees will burn down.
- A painting of a brown monkey crossing between the burning trees indicates that it will no longer be visible because the trees have burned down.

Symbol:

- The painting of a forest fire and a brown monkey crossing between the burning trees is a symbol of Protecting the forest from fire.

7



This mural is located on Perdana Street, Medan Petisah. This mural was created by Ernest and friends. The content of this mural is that pedicabs are one of the most preferred means of transportation in the city of Medan.

Icon:

- Painting of three children.
- Painting of one monkey.
- Painting of a pedicab.

Index:

- The painting of the pedicab indicates that the pedicab is one of the means of transportation in Medan.
- The painting of three children playing on a pedicab indicates that children like to use pedicab transportation.
- The painting of a monkey playing on a pedicab indicates that the pedicab can also transport animals.

Symbol:

- The painting of three children and a monkey playing on a pedicab is a symbol that a pedicab is one of the most preferred means of transportation for the people of Medan.

8



Icon:

- Painting of Governor Bobby Nasution.
- Painting of the Post Office Building.
- Painting of the Building of PT London North Sumatra (Lonsum).
- Painting of the Statue of Guru Patimpus.

Index:

This mural is located in the Merdeka Medan field area, Medan Petisah. This mural was created by the Ancient Solomon Fedrico. The content of the mural is that the mayor of Medan, Bobby Nasution, supports the development of Medan, by maintaining historical buildings in the city of Medan, and at the same time preventing vandalism.

9



This mural is located on Stasiun Kereta Api Street, Medan Barat. This mural was made by the painters of the Medan mural community. The mural content is an appeal campaign to wear masks and wash hands due to changing social life conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The painting of Mayor Bobby Nasution in the Merdeka Medan field, indicates that the mayor provides support for development in the city of Medan.
- The painting of the Post Office Building,

Icon:

- Painting of a policewoman.
- Painting of a man.
- Painting of virus.
- Painting of house.

Index:

- The painting of a policewoman officer wearing a mask and wearing a mask in the community indicates that it is an appeal to the public to use masks during the COVID-19 pandemic
- The painting of a man wearing a mask by a female policeman indicates an appeal to the public to use masks during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Painting of a Virus that Disturbs Humans indicates that an appeal to the public must be vigilant about the spread of the COVID-19 virus
- The painting of a house in one neighborhood indicates an appeal to the community to maintain health protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Symbol:

- The painting of a policewoman officer wearing a mask on a man who was harassed by the virus in the community is a symbol of an appeal to the community to comply with health protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic.



This mural is in Medan Ampelas, Flyover. The content of the mural is that the Batak tribe is one of the tribes of the community in Medan.

Icon:

- Painting of a traditional house of the Batak tribe.
- Painting of a woman wearing traditional Batak clothing.

Index:

- The painting of the traditional house of the Batak and the painting of a woman wearing traditional clothes of the Batak tribe indicates that the people of Medan consist of various tribes, and the Batak tribe is one of them.

Symbol:

- Paintings of traditional houses of the Batak and paintings of a woman wearing traditional clothes of the Batak tribe are symbols that the Batak tribe is one of the tribes of the community in Medan.

From the data above, it can be concluded that the data analysis that has been carried out is 10 Murals that are going viral, with Peirces three signs; icon, Index, and symbol. The selected mural content themes are; [1] Welcome to the city of Medan, [2] Criticism of the world of children lost in the era of modernization, [3] Community Life of Medan City, [4] Endangered Tiger and Orangutan Species, [5]. Protecting elephant animals from extinction, [6] Protect the forest from fires, [7] Pedicabs are one of the most preferred transportation in Medan, [8] The mayor of Medan, "Bobby Nasution", prevented Vandalism, [9] Be aware of the covid 19 virus, and [10] Batak is one of the tribes of the Medan Community.

Classification based on location, namely, in [1] Medan Ampelas (Fly Over) is 3 murals, [2] The center of Medan, Stasiun Kereta Api Street, Merdeka field area is 3 murals, [3] Medan Sunggal, Perjuangan Street, Setiabudi is 1 mural, [4] Medan Kota, Sisingamanga Raja is 1 mural, Juanda Street is 1 mural, and [5] Medan Petisah, Perdana Street is 1 mural. A total of 10 murals.

3.2 And The Following are the Results of the Interview

The interview was conducted with three questions;

- a. Is this painting interesting?
- b. What interests you?
- c. What do you think is the moral message of this painting?

Table 2. Interview Results

No	Mural	Interview results	
		First-person	Second person
1		<p>(Jones, 45, public transport driver)</p> <p>1st question: <i>Sangat menarik.</i> (Very interesting)</p> <p>2nd question: <i>Lukisannya bagus, warnanya cantik.</i> (The painting is good, the colors are beautiful)</p> <p>3rd question: <i>Selamat datang di kota Medan.</i> (Welcome to the city of Medan)</p>	<p>(Tiwi, 19 years old, public transportation consumer)</p> <p>1st question: <i>Sangat menarik.</i> (Very interesting)</p> <p>2nd question: <i>Lukisan tari persembahan melayu.</i> (Dance painting of a Malay performance)</p> <p>3rd question: <i>Selamat datang dikota Medan.</i> (Welcome to the city of Medan)</p>
2		<p>(Rustam, 55 years old, parking attendant in ikan lama market)</p> <p>1st question: <i>Sangat menarik.</i> (Very interesting)</p> <p>2nd question: <i>Cantik, rapi, sudah gak Nampak kotor lagi.</i> (Beautiful, neat, no longer look dirty)</p> <p>3rd question: <i>Sudah tidak adalagi anak-anak main kayakgini, semua sudah main hp.</i> (No more children are playing like this, all of</p>	<p>(Lily, 46 years old, visitor of ikan lama market)</p> <p>1st question: <i>Sangat menarik.</i> (Very interesting)</p> <p>2nd question: <i>Kelihatan cerah. Mungkin karena warnanya cerah.</i> (Looks bright. Maybe because the color is bright)</p> <p>3rd question: <i>Untuk mamak-mamak, jangan biarkan anaknya main hp, jadi kurang bersosialisasi.</i> (For moms, don't let their children play)</p>

		them are playing cellphones (Wawok, 30 years old, pedestrian)	cellphones, so they are less social) (Rina, 25 years old, pedestrian)
3		<p>1st question: <i>Menarik kali.</i> (Very interesting)</p> <p>2nd question: <i>Cantik.</i> (Beautiful)</p> <p>3rd question: <i>Potret kota Medan.</i> (Portrait of Medan city)</p>	<p>1st question: <i>Sangat menarik.</i> (Very Interesting)</p> <p>2nd question: <i>Cantik.</i> (Beautiful)</p> <p>3rd question: <i>Orang islam sembahyang di masjid raya, menggunakan air Pam.</i> (Muslims pray in Raya mosque, using pump water)</p>
4		<p>(Pak Rambe, 30 years old, a local trader)</p> <p>1st question: <i>Menarik kali.</i> (Very interesting)</p> <p>2nd question: <i>Cantik.</i> (Beautiful)</p> <p>3rd question: <i>Harimau dan orangutan adalah Binatang langka.</i> (Tiger and Orangutans are rare animals)</p>	<p>(Rina, 25 years old, pedestrian)</p> <p>1st question: <i>Sangat menarik.</i> (Very interesting)</p> <p>2nd question: <i>Cantik.</i> (Beautiful)</p> <p>3rd question: <i>Harimau dan orangutan jangan sampai punah.</i> (Tigers and Orangutans should not go extinct)</p>
5		<p>(Anto, 25 years old, restaurant worker)</p> <p>1st question: <i>Sangat menarik.</i> (Very interesting)</p>	<p>(Dewi, 18 years old, internet counter guard)</p> <p>1st question: <i>Sangat menarik.</i> (Very interesting)</p>



2nd question:
Lukisannya unik.
 (The painting is unique)

3rd question:
Gading gajah itu kan dijual, mahal harganya. Kalo bisa kita jagalah biar tidak punah.
 (The elephant tusks, are expensive. If we can, keep it from becoming extinct)

(Iwan, 38 years old, mechanic worker)

1st question:
Sangat menarik.
 (Very interesting)

2nd question:
Lukisannya bagus.
 (The painting is good)

3rd question:
Janganlah dibakar hutan, kasihan monyetnya.
 (Do not burn the forest, the monkey is pitiful)

2nd question:
Lukisannya cantik, unik.
 (The painting is beautiful, unique)

3rd question:
Kurang tau. Mungkin artinya, kalau dijual gajah itu, harganya mahal. Jadi kayalah orang yang menjual itu. Tapi kan nanti jadi habis gajah kalau dijualin.
 (I don't know. Maybe it means, if the elephant is sold, the price is expensive. So the person who sells it is rich. But later it will run out of elephants if it is sold)

(Silvi, 16 years old, visitor)

1st question:
Sangat menarik.
 (Very interesting)

2nd question:
Lukisannya menarik. Ini aku mau foto.
 (The painting is interesting. I want to take a photo)

3rd question:
Lukisan ini mengandung arti. Hindari kebakaran hutan.
 (This painting contains meaning. Avoid forest fires)

7



(Hartono, 51 years old, pedicab driver)

(Wati, 43 years old, local)

1st question:
Menarik.
(Interesting)
2nd question:
Ada anak-anak sedang bermain, ada monyet.
(Children were playing, and there was a monkey too)

3rd question:
Kalau naik becak, selain bisa nengok-nengok, sambil menikmati anginnya.
(If you are on a pedicab, you can not only look around, while enjoying the wind)

1st question:
Sangat menarik.
(Very interesting)
2nd question:
Lukisannya bagus.
(The painting is good)

3rd question:
Becak Medan harus dilestarikan.
(Medan pedicabs must be preserved)

8



(Vander, 23 years old, student)

(Sri, 20 years old, railway consumer)

1st question:
Sangat menarik.
(Very interesting)

2nd question:
Pak Bobby Nasution, walikota Medan.
(Mr. Bobby Nasution, the mayor of Medan)

1st question:
Sangat menarik.
(Very interesting)

2nd question:
Ada lukisan pak Bobby Nasution.
(There is a painting of Mr. Bobby Nasution)

Question 3
Mari kita jaga bangunan bersejarah di kota Medan.
(Let's take care of historical buildings in the city of Medan)

Question 3
Gedung tua seperti kantor pos, lonsum harus dijaga, patung patimpus harus dijaga.
(Old buildings such as the post office, Lonsum

9



(Fajar, 29 years old, a railway consumer)

1st question:
Menarik sekali.
(Very interesting)

2nd question:
Virus Corona.

3rd question:
Gunakan masker agar terhindar dari virus Corona.
(Use a mask to avoid the coronavirus)

must be maintained,
Patimpus Statues must be maintained)

(Lia, 27 years old, visitor to Merdeka Square)

1st question:
Menarik sekali.
(Very interesting)

2nd question:
Virus Corona.

3rd question:
Lakukan protocol Kesehatan, Ketika bepergian, jangan lupa pakai masker.
(Do health protocols, when doing activities outside the room, don't forget to wear a mask)

10



(Pinsen, 30 years old, local trader).

1st question:
Sangat menarik.
(Very interesting)

2nd question:
Jeges.
(Jeges is one of the words from the Batak language, the meaning is beautiful)

3rd question:
Suku batak adalah salah satu suku yang ada di kota Medan. Toleransi antar suku sangat baik di Medan.
(Batakness is one of the tribes in the Medan. Tolerance

(Yara, 20 years old, public transportation consumer)

1st question:
Menarik.
(Interesting)

2nd question:
Seorang Wanita bersuku batak.
(A Batak woman)

3rd question:
Horaaassss,.....
(Horas is a word in the Batak language, namely greetings of familiarity when meeting each other)

between tribes is very
good in Medan)

From the data above, it can be concluded that in the first question on all murals, in general, the public says it is very interesting, in the second question, in general, the community answers with beautiful, unique, and interesting pictures, and in the third question in general the public already understands the message given to the community through the murals above.

As a result of additional findings, it was found that there were things that the writer did not know before. This can be seen in the results of the interview instrument. Previously, the writer predicted that only educated people would understand the moral message contained in the mural. But from the results of the interview instrument, we can see that the general public also understands and knows the moral message conveyed through the mural.

4 Conclusions

This study aims to analyze and describe the message and meaning of the signs in ten murals that are going viral in the landscape of Medan City. The murals were analyzed and interpreted using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory; icons, indexes, and symbols. It can be concluded that murals in the city of Medan contain good messages in the form of satire or criticism, notices, or invitations to the public.

This research is expected to be additional literature in future research both in the study of English Applied Linguistics, Medan State University, and other institutions. Hopefully, this study can be useful for the general public who want to increase their knowledge about Linguistic Semiotic and Street Art Murals.

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