

## **THE MEANINGS OF SIGNS IN PUBLIC SERVICE ADVERTISEMENT**

**Ni Putu Dita Mareta**

Udayana University  
[ditamareta73@gmail.com](mailto:ditamareta73@gmail.com)

**Ni Luh Sutjiati Beratha**

Udayana University

**Putu Wedda Savitri**

Udayana University

### **ABSTRACT**

This research entitled “The Meaning of Signs in Public Service Advertisement”. The aims to find the verbal and visual signs in the United Nation International Children Emergency Fund’s public service advertisement and explain the meaning of signs in the advertisement. The data was taken from website. The discussion of this study was about the verbal and visual signs that found in UNICEF advertisement and explain the meaning of those signs. The theory of Semiotics by Saussure (cited in Chandler) is used to find out the verbal and visual signs that found in advertisement. And the theory from Barthes is used to explain the meaning of verbal and visual signs in advertisement. And supported by the theory of colour meaning by Cerrato. Four verbal and visual cues from UNICEF's advertising are included in the analysis's output. Both denotative and connotative meanings are included in these verbal and visual cues; the former concentrates on providing readers with information about the advertisement, while the latter focuses on revealing additional meanings and hidden messages from the commercial.

**Keywords: Verbal Sign, Visual Sign, Public Service Advertisement**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Today, advertising has grown to be a significant aspect of a culture that can affect our daily life. Offering services has become as one of the most well-liked advertising strategies in recent years, as the range of services available makes this kind of advertising more appealing to consumers. The aim of advertising is to raise awareness of the product or service and persuade customers. From the consumer's point of view, they are aware of product information such as costs, features, and other specifics. We may readily locate advertisements in magazines, newspapers, billboards, buses, the internet, flyers, newsletters, and posters in this globalization period. Promoting a product can also influence how people view a recent occurrence or social phenomenon. Additionally, it can increase people's awareness of their own societal problems.

“The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund's” ads were employed in this study. On December 11, 1946, the “United Nations General Assembly created the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)”, originally known as the “United Nations International Children's

Emergency Fund”, to help mothers and children in war-torn nations with emergency food and medical care. In 1950, UNICEF's purpose was broadened to include the long-term needs of mothers and children in poor nations around the globe.

United Nation International Children’s Emergency Fund usually need media to promote service such as children’s health, keep the world safe for children and woman, and serve the vulnerable. Especially with current issues, UNICEF chooses advertisement as the best way to spread awareness and it has become the main role to attract audiences. The advertisements should be memorable, and prompt appropriate action in order to get the attention of their audience.

Numerous pieces of research have looked into this beneficial politeness. Mayesti (2016) examined the linguistic and visual cues in cosmetic advertising in three of her works. The other research was coming from Syahdini (2019) who focused to find the verbal and visual signs and indicated the French concept of beauty had an impact on the meaning of the L’Oreal Paris advertisement. Another research which rise this topic is Niscita (2022) was also investigated the verbal and visual sign in Iphone 13 advertisement. From those studies, it can see that verbal and visual signs are still crucial to analyze since the communication is always doing in the society.

This thesis has relevance for the public and important to carried out because, namely helping people who want to know about advertisement that has been published by “United Nation International Children’s Emergency Fund” and providing insight about the signs.

## **DATA SOURCE**

The information utilized in this study was qualitative in nature. Non-numerical data is the foundation of this type of data. The data source in this thesis was a public service advertisement published by “United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund.” Those advertisements were chosen because they contain of signs.

The data was advertisements in the form of picture containing written language extracted directly from the website. The advertisements are about children’s health, keep the world safe for children, and children’s education which related to the social issues around the world. It was very interesting to find what the intent of the advertisement and how those sign can persuade the readers.

## **METHODS**

Data for this study was gathered using the documentation approach. Since the advertising used as the data source for this research examined both verbal and visual cues, the documentation method was the most suitable approach for gathering data. Note-taking was the method employed to support the documentation method. The data was gathered using a number of procedures. To facilitate data collection, the data of two ads with verbal and visual cues was first downloaded from [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com); the data was then sorted according to their relevance to global social issues; the data was then compiled into a single folder to facilitate analysis; and finally, a note of the verbal and visual cues included in the data was taken. Finally, information on the advertisement's visual and vocal cues was gathered.

The data was analyzed using a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach is one of the research techniques that yields descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words as well as the behavior of the individuals being watched, according to Bogdan and Taylor in Widyaningsih (2018:55). Triangulation was the method utilized to analyze the data. Verifying the accuracy of the data on positive politeness techniques and the reaction to their implementation was the purpose of the triangulation methodology. In addition, the acquired data was analyzed in four steps. The following are those stages.

#### 1. Identifying

The information was taken from an advertisement for the “United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.” Data identification entails identifying and exposing the characteristics of the collected data, which include various verbal and visual cues. As a result, data that has been identified and classified according to its kinds makes subsequent classification of the data easier.

#### 2. Classifying

After the data was collected, the next step was to identify its verbal and visual indicators, which are the same categories used to classify the data. Additionally, the triangulation technique—check, re-check, and cross-check—has been used to classify the data. First, examining all of the information gathered regarding the various kinds of visual and verbal cues. The second step is to go over the classified data again and select the utterances that fit into each theory. Finally, cross-checking the previously checked and re-checked data to obtain the relevant data.

#### 3. Describing

A detailed explanation of the facts in relation to the theory was provided. The theory that was applied provided a detailed explanation of the evidence. The information was presented in a straightforward and accurate manner so that readers could understand it.

#### 4. Interpreting

The kinds of verbal and visual cues used in UNICEF advertisements during this process are used to interpret the data. Subsequently, descriptive sentences and paragraphs were used to describe the data.

The research's analysis was presented using an informal approach because the data consisted of words and sentences. The gathered findings were presented using a descriptive style to ensure a clear presentation. Along with thorough explanations pertaining to the commercial, the data was provided in the form of an advertisement based on the various verbal and visual cues.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

In this research, to answer the first research problem, the verbal and visual signs theory proposed by Saussure cited in Chandler (2007) was used. According to Saussure cited in Chandler (2007), to give a linguistic illustration, Saussure states that the word ‘open’ (when involved with meaning by someone who comes across it on a store door frame) is a sign composed of:

- “a signifier: the text ‘open’;”
- “a signified concept: that the store is open for business.”

Both a signifier and a signified are necessary for a sign to exist. It is impossible to have a signifier or signified that are wholly meaningless. A distinguishable pairing of a signifier and a specific signified is called a sign. If the same signifier (the word "open") were on a push-button inside an elevator (the phrase "push to open door"), it might represent a different signified (and so be a different sign). Similar to this, a variety of signifiers may represent the idea of "open" (for example, a small sketch of a box with an open lid on a cardboard packaging for "open this end"); again, each dissimilar pair will represent a dissimilar sign.

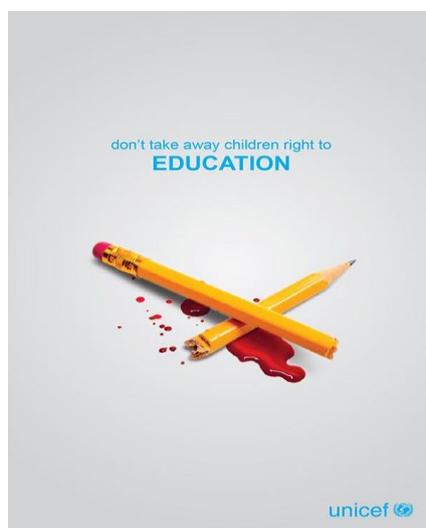
Furthermore, to answer the second research problem, the theory of meaning proposed by Barthes (1964). According to Roland Barthes (1964), there are three major perspectives on meaning: denotative, connotative, and mythical. According to Roland Barthes' theory, the first sign is denotative, while the second is connotative. According to this theory, the relationship between the signifier (expression) and the signified is the initial sign (denotative) in the sign of external reality (content) each point is broken down as follows; Denotative meaning, connotative meaning, and myth.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part shows and discusses the data verbal and visual signs in public service advertisement published by "United Nation International Children's Emergency Fund." There are three different parts; the first part explains the verbal and visual signs in "United Nation International Children's Emergency Fund", the second parts explain the meaning of verbal and visual signs in "United Nation International Children's Emergency Fund", and the third parts explain the color meaning of verbal and visual signs in "United Nation International Children's Emergency Fund."

### 1. The verbal and visual sign in the United Nation International Children Emergency Fund

This chapter presented the findings related to the types of signs based on their object that were discovered in the selected advertisements of the UNICEF based on the theory proposed by Saussure cited in Chandler (2007).



**Figure 1.** UNICEF Education Advertisement

In this advertisement, the researcher found four components of signs. The signs were two visual signs and two verbal signs. The first verbal sign “**don’t take away children right to EDUCATION**” the sentence “don’t take away children right to” was written in small word and the word “education” was written with capital. The signs “**don’t take away children right to Education**” which signifier the slogan of the advertisement. It signified the situation where children’s right to an education is being eroded. The second verbal sign is the text written “**unicef**”. The second sign “unicef” which signifier the name and logo of United Nation International Children Emergency Fund.

The first visual sign is a picture of **a pencil has been broken with red blood** below the pencil which signifier a pencil is a tool for writing and red blood which signifier the red liquid that circulates in the arteries and veins of humans. It signified the hopelessness feeling. The picture of a pencil became the iconic depiction about education, a broken pencil with orange colour and there is red blood as a depiction about hopelessness feeling for children to have a good education. The second visual sign is the **logo of UNICEF** organization. The sign is signifier the logo of the organization. It signified the iconic picture of UNICEF organization.

## **2. The meaning of sign in the United Nation International Children Emergency Fund**

The denotative meaning of the first verbal sign, according to Oxford English Dictionary, “take away” means buy food at café or restaurant for eating elsewhere, “children right” means children have access to standard of living, health care, food, education and service. And “Education” is a process of teaching, learning and training, especially in schools, colleges or universities, to increase knowledge and develop skills. The denotative meaning of the text “**don’t take away children right to EDUCATION**” is a prohibition to that educational right cannot be taken away. Every human in the world has the right to get something. Education is one of the children right because of education they have an opportunity to obtain a better life in the future. Whether someone take their education, they cannot approach the world and obtain the bad life. The denotative meaning of the second verbal sign is the logo of UNICEF, it contains information related to the activity about UNICEF

The denotative meaning of the first visual sign is “United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund” engaged the readers that children have a right to get their education. Education is very important to children to obtain the better future in their life. The broken pencil with red blood is a depiction about something has been injured. The second visual sign is the **logo of UNICEF** organization. The sign is signifier the logo of the organization. It signified the iconic picture of UNICEF organization. This visual sign also portrayed the meaning denotatively. The UNICEF’s logo denoted the symbol a mother lifting up a baby. It meant this organization took care of all children in the world.

The connotative meaning of the first verbal sign is shown from the verbal sign “**don’t take away children right to EDUCATION**” is what this advertisement will advertise is children have a right to obtain their education because education is very important for human life. In the background, a pencil is shown an expression as an illustration for people who drop out of school. The blood of pencil helps the reader to understand the children’s feeling when they cannot obtain their right for

education. This condition is illustrated by the term "**don't take away children right to EDUCATION**" because the advertisement helps to save the children to obtain their education used fundraising by UNICEF to get their desire. The connotative of the second verbal sign is to show the reader that "UNICEF" is an organisation has published the advertisement. The connotative meaning of the first visual sign is a pencil is one of iconic symbol of education because it can write and create something. The broken pencil with red blood means children's feeling when they cannot get their right to have good education. The blood of pencil helps the reader to understand the children's feeling when they cannot obtain their right for education, UNICEF shows it to the readers with the advertisement and engaged the readers to help the children by fundraising. The second visual sign connotated the gesture of a mother lifting up a child which symbolized the hope, security, and joy that could be shared by this organization to the family on how they could build a good relationship between the parents and their children. This gesture spread the energy and enthusiasm to the parents how they should bring up the children

The myth meaning of the verbal sign is in several communities, especially in Bali. According to article entitled "*Kesetaraan Gender Perempuan Bali dalam Pandangan Amina Wadud*" written by Masrurroh. There are people who forbid their children to get the best education especially for a girl. For example, is patriarchal culture among the community. They have opinion that a girl doesn't need a good education for her life. The myth that found in the visual signs is in several communities there are people who forbid their children to get the best education especially for a girl. For example, is patriarchal culture among the community. They have opinion that a girl doesn't need a good education for her life.

### **3. The color meaning of sign in the United Nation International Children Emergency Fund**

According to Cerrato (2012: 4) different colors release different wavelengths, and we are affected differently by these distinct frequencies. The colour both of the signs are blue, make the text visible and contrasted to the colour of the background. According Cerrato (2012) "Blue is the colour of the sky and sea. It symbolizes trust, loyalty, wisdom, confidence, intelligence, faith, truth, and heaven", the use of blue colour to the text helps to spread the energy of trust, loyalty, wisdom, confidence, intelligence, faith, and, trust from the UNICEF organisation of the advertisement to the audiences aiming to enhance their enthusiasm to help and donate funds. as well as emphasizes the intelligence of an education to obtain children's better future. According to Cerrato (2012: 4) different colors release different wavelengths, and we are affected differently by these distinct frequencies. Ceratto states that "Orange combines the energy of red and the happiness of yellow. It is associated with joy, sun- shine, and tropics. Orange represents enthusiasm, fascination, happiness, creativity, determination, attraction, success, encouragement, and stimulation." A broken pencil in the picture represents the unhappiness of something which means is education. Red colour on the blood, according to Cerrato (2012: 4) "Red is a very emotionally intense color. Red is the color of fire and blood, so it is associated with energy, war, danger, strength, power, deter- mination as well as passion, desire, and love." In this condition blood in the picture the emotional of hopelessness and sadness from the children who can deserve the good education.

The second visual signs is the logo of UNICEF which has blue colour. “Blue is symbolizes trust, loyalty, wisdom, confidence, intelligence, faith, truth, and heaven.” Ceratto (2012: 11). Blue color on logo UNICEF means that UNICEF is created as a hope to help children in the world who cannot get their right education.

## CONCLUSION

The process of interpreting the sign could be evaluated through the image, color, and object of the advertisement would explain more about the message than the written language, which is known as semiotics. This linguistics study demonstrated how language works in advertising information through the media. The primary issue in this investigation was the element known as sign. Analyzing the message of the sign can assist readers in understanding the objective of the advertisement. This study has objectives which were about the types of signs and the meaning of sign that found in UNICEF’s advertisements. The main theory was proposed by Saussure cited in Chandler (2007) related to the theory of sign. Moreover, this study was also supported by using two theories which proposed by Barthes (1964) regarding to the meaning of sign namely denotative and connotative meanings. Furthermore, the theory of color was analyzed by Cerrao’s theory (2012). The first advertisement has two visual signs and two verbal signs. The visible signs are the UNICEF emblem, photographs of broken pencils, and color combinations. The verbal signs in advertisements are slogans and brief statements. Additionally, both visual and verbal cues have connotative and denotative interpretations. In general, both visual and verbal cues have mythical, connotative, and denotative meanings.

## REFERENCES

- Barthes, R. (1964). *Elements of Semiology*. New York: Hill & Wang.
- Barthes, R. (1998). *The Semiotics Challenge*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Cerrato, Herman. (2012). *The Meaning of Colors*. Retrieved September 19, 2022. <https://blocs.xtec.cat/gemmasalvia1617/files/2017/02/the-meaning-of-colors-book.pdf>
- Chandler, D. (2007). *Semiotics the basics. Second edition*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Dyer, G. (2009). *Advertisiing As Communication-(studies in culture and communication)*. New York: Routledge.
- Hidayah, A. G. D., & Bustam, M. R. (2023). ANALYSIS OF DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION MEANINGS IN THE SONG LYRIC “LA LA LOST YOU” BY NICOLE ZEFANYA (NIKI). *Mahadaya: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Budaya*, 3(1), 41-48. <https://badge.dimensions.ai/details/doi/10.34010/mhd.v3i1.9655?domain=https://ojs.unikom.ac.id>
- Masruroh, I. S. (2022). Kesetaraan Gender Perempuan Bali dalam Pandangan Amina Wadud. *Jurnal Hawa: Studi Pengarus Utamaan Gender dan Anak*, 4(1), 104-115. <http://dx.doi.org/10.29300/hawapsga.v4i1.6822>
- Leech, N. L., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2008). Qualitative data analysis: A compendium of techniques and a framework for selection for school psychology research and beyond. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 23(4), 587-604

