

## Symbols in Children's Drawings as a Visual Communication Tool

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### ABSTRACT

Symbols are always present in communication, especially in communication through visual media in the form of children's drawings. Children's drawings are one of the media that can represent children's imagination, creativity, experience, and emotions that can be used as a medium for children's communication. Through children's drawings, we can see the messages they want to convey. This research aims to see that symbols in children's drawings can be used as a visual communication tool, so that the messages they make will be conveyed. The method used in this research is a descriptive method by analyzing data, namely observing symbols in children's drawings using a semiotic approach. The result of the research is that the symbols contained in children's drawings contain the meaning of happiness and cheerfulness, containing the message that a happy life is the desire and hope of children.

Keywords: Children's drawings, Visual Communication, Semiotics, Symbols

### INTRODUCTION

Drawing is one of the communication activities that children love regardless of whether they have talent in it or not. Because by drawing children can pour their imagination, creativity, experience, and emotions into it [1]. That is why drawing is a fun activity for children and can encourage them to explore more, solve problems, and make decisions for themselves [2].

Drawing activities have been carried out since childhood even from the age of 1-2 years. Starting from meaningless scribbles, to forming images of imitations of objects around them and the embodiment of their imagination [1]. At the age of 2-7 years (preoperational stage) children begin to learn to use symbols such as in speech and images to solve simple problems in thinking or talking about things that are not visible at that time [3]. Based on other literature, the periodization of the general characteristics of children's drawings based on their age and socio-intellectual development is divided into three stages, namely the scribbling stage (scribbling period that applies at the age of 2-4 years), pre-schematic stage (pre-chart period that applies at the age of 4-7 years), schematic stage (chart period that applies at the age of 7-9 years), early realism stage (early realism period that applies at the age of 9-12 years), and finally the pseudo naturalistic stage (pseudo naturalistic period, which applies at the age of 12-14 years) [4]. They are active learners who build a better understanding of the world around them through exploration and manipulation of objects [5]. They can imitate, change, reduce,

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or even eliminate some of the objects depicted from the surrounding nature [4]. That is why in every drawing produced by children, they use elements and symbols that they already know or understand.

Children's drawings are a place for children to express themselves by pouring what is experienced, seen, experienced, along with emotions that are the result of cooperation between all the senses of children that they process into a picture [1]. Children's drawings have their own messages and can be used as a tool to convey their messages or stories (communication tools in visual media). Children's drawings consist of a mixture of various visual elements such as dots, lines, colors, and symbols in the form of visual elements that have been agreed upon.

Terminologically, symbol comes from the word *symballo* in Greek which means throwing together, putting together in one idea or idea; representing an idea [6]. Meanwhile, based on the design science of signs, a symbol is a type of sign that represents an object through agreement or agreement in a more specialized and detailed context [7]. Symbols are part of the signifier in addition to icons and indexes based on Pierce's classification of signs [8]. Because symbols are classified as a type of signifier, symbols can be analyzed using a semiotic approach.

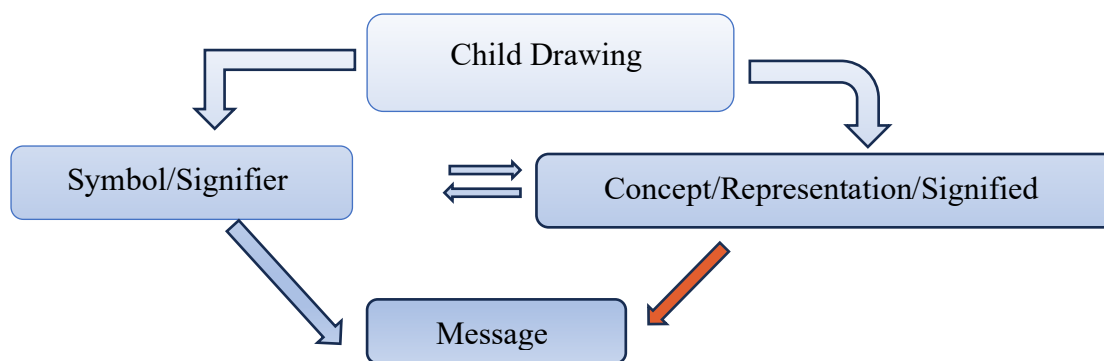
Semiotics is the study of signs, the functioning of signs, and the production of meaning [9]. Saussure in Pradopo (1991) argues that a sign is the unity of two inseparable fields, where there is a sign there is a system there [9]. This means that a sign has two aspects, the signifier, which is in the form of the signifier field or form and the signified, which is the concept or meaning. Simply put, the signifier is the form of a sign, which can be in the form of sounds, words, photos, facial expressions, icons, indexes, including symbols. While the signified is the concept or object represented by the signifier [8].

Symbols in children's drawings are signifiers that can be analyzed using semiotics, so that they can see the signifier and what message the child wants to convey when drawing. When the message is conveyed and communication occurs, then children's drawings can be used as a communication tool. The purpose of this research is to see that symbols in children's drawings can be used as a visual communication tool, so that the messages they make will be conveyed.

### METHOD

The method used in this research is descriptive research method by describing the findings of literature review and observation on children's drawings analyzed through Saussure's semiotic approach. Symbols as signifiers in children's drawings will be analyzed for signs that lie at the level or content of ideas through the level of expression/ signifier. The relationship between the signifier and the sign will bring out the message that the child wants to convey and is interpreted based on cultural understanding. To make it easier to understand, the explanation of the research method can be seen through the chart in Figure 1.





**Figure 1**

In this research, the object studied is a child's drawing by a 6-year-old student of a kindergarten in Bandung. The object that can be seen in Figure 2 was chosen because it has elements in the form of symbols that can be studied through semiotics.



**Figure 2** Children's drawing by Alika Syakila Putri-6 years old

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

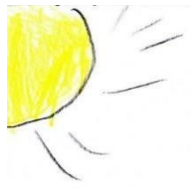



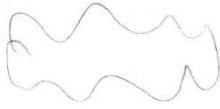
In previous research made by Nursanti (2022), it discusses the study of semiotics in children's drawings with the theme of diversity [4]. The purpose of the study was to find the meaning of diversity in children's perspectives (the object of research was children's drawings aged 9-12 years). The research focuses on the relation/relationship of all elements in the children's drawings studied, as a unitary totality using synchronic analysis with a structuralism approach. The result is an interpretation of the meaning of the children's drawings under study. The previous research then became one of the references used in the writing process and a reference to the differences from the current research.

The current object research was conducted by observing a child's drawing, the work of a 6-year-old student from a kindergarten in Bandung, which can be seen in Figure 2. In the


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drawing, the elements are drawn based on the child's experience, vision, and what the child has gone through regarding simple everyday scenes, such as the sun, clouds, houses, hearts, rainbows, and land. The visual elements in the children's drawings are symbols that are included in the signifiers that children make from the signifiers they see in their daily lives before, or at the time the drawings are made. The presentation of the results of observations on the object of research is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

No	Visual Element	Symbol (Signifier)	Signified	Message
1		Draw a truncated circle with lines	The Sun and the distribution of its rays	The sun is a natural object that can be seen during the day. The bright yellow image of the sun represents something cheerful and vibrant as well as a warm atmosphere. The image of the sun's shape is cut off at the top corner of the paper in the picture on the side, making the sun's sphere not intact with the addition of a variety of lines around it as if indicating the glowing sun[10].
2		Draw a colorful set of semicircles and a wavy ball shape at both ends.	Rainbows and clouds	Rainbow is a natural phenomenon that occurs after rain. The image of a rainbow in a child's drawing can come from what the child has seen or experienced. In this case, the rainbow with three colors, red, yellow, and bright green, belongs to the bright colors that attract children. The rainbow image also represents a beautiful thing after sadness, because the rainbow appears after the rain.
3		Draw triangles and squares.	A roofed house with two windows and a door	The house is the next shape that is often drawn by children. The position of the house image in the middle of the picture indicates that the house is very important to children. The representation of a pink house is identified with a house full of love. A house with two windows represents more light entering the house, so that the house becomes warm.
4		Heart shape	Heart	The heart shape is a marker that has been around for a long time. In general, this shape is taken from a simplified heart shape and agreed upon as a symbol of the heart (not the biological liver) [11]. In terms of meaning, the shape is often associated with love, affection and romantic things[12].
5		Curved lines that form a plane	Derived from clouds and their	Apart from the sun and rainbows, clouds are celestial or natural objects that often appear in children's drawings. Children recognize clouds through introductions at school, pictures in

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			irregular shapes	storybooks, and games. Some children believe that clouds are a collection of soft cotton, so they draw clouds as objects in the sky and also a sunny day accompanied by the sun and rainbow.
6		Two wavy lines with brownish green color	Land/plain where the house stands	The two lines drawn under the house show that the lines are a simplification of the image of the ground or land. The wavy green line can also be a representation of uneven ground or grass.

Based on the findings of the objects in Figure 2 presented in Table 1, it shows that the symbols contained in the children's drawings are visual elements such as the sun shining, rainbows, white clouds, pink houses, and hearts, all of these symbols contain the meaning of happiness and joy. So that the child's drawing contains a message that a happy life is the desire and hope of children.

### CONCLUSION

This research on children's drawings shows that drawings made by children can be used as a communication tool between children and the adults around them. As the messages obtained from the symbols in this study contain children's wishes and hopes for a happy and cheerful life.

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