



A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF VISUAL ELEMENTS ON SLIDE PRESENTATIONS USED IN COLLEGE ENGLISH CLASS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to establish that visual elements found in slide presentation used in College English Class convey meaning by its interpretation through semiotic analysis. Using the semiotic analysis, fifty-one (51) visual elements were identified and underwent in-depth analysis and interpretation. The study's findings revealed that the visual elements carry meaning and can be interpreted in various ways. The study obtained significant information that helped derive the semiotic features of the visual elements based on their signifier, signified, denotative meaning, connotative meaning, and myth. Moreover, the signifier interpretation of the visual images provided information on how each visual element were classified into- icon, symbol, and index. It was also discussed in the study the detailed description of the signified meanings of each visual element. Additionally, the relevance to the social context of the college English class were examined intensively by analyzing its denotations, connotations, and myths. Indeed, visual elements carry meaning; thus, there is a need for close monitoring and evaluation of the visual elements used in slide presentations as it could affect the learning of the students. Ultimately, the study suggests that the incorporation of visual elements in instructional materials should be carefully considered because this may affect how students learn and perceive the subject matter and discussion in class.

KEYWORDS: Semiotic Analysis, visual elements, slide presentations, signifier, signified, denotation, connotation, myth, Davao de Oro

INTRODUCTION

In 21st- century education, the integration of technology and media in classroom discussion has become an integral part of effective learning. Among many educational tools used by teachers, slide presentation is one of the most engaging support tools in instruction (Lynch, 2022).

In Indonesia, Elmiana (2019) found that visual images in their EFL textbooks include gender bias and stereotypes as males were more frequently portrayed than females (66% for males and 34% for females). In the Philippines, one of DepEd's learning modules, Calipjo-Go as cited by Sadongdong and Colina (2019) reported that a copy of a module contained a creature in Filipino folklore that was mistakenly described as a sex-crazed creature. This pose danger among Filipino students because they will have a misconception of something that is supposed to be culture related.

Considering the concerns discussed, I was urged to dwell on the analysis of the visual elements present in the slide presentation used in college English class to understand its implications and to effectively draw out reflections and realizations. I was propelled to conduct this study to analyze the semiotic construction and collect organized interpretations of the signs and symbols which would lead to a critical understanding of the impact of these visual elements on the achievement of effective learning among college students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this semiotic analysis is to analyze and interpret the meaning behind the visual elements found in the slide presentations used in college English class and the underlying relevance of the symbolism in a social context.

Research Questions

1. What are the semiotic features present in the visual elements on the slide presentations used in college English class?
2. What are the underlying connections of the symbolisms found in the visual elements on slide presentations used in college English class in the social context?

Theoretical Lens

This study was gleaned through the Semiotics Theory advanced by Ferdinand de Saussure in 1916 which asserts that language is a system of signs and symbols. Mambrol (2019) discussed that each sign is composed of a signifier (visual pattern) and a signified (concept). This study was also anchored on the Order of Signification by Barthes (1957). Chandler (2019) stated that in this process, there are different orders of signification namely: first order of signification which is the denotation, the second order of signification which is the connotation, and these two would combine to form an ideology which is described as myth- the third order of signification. Additionally, symbolic interaction theory of Mead and Weber (1920) has become one of the basis for analysis. The key concept of symbolic interactionism is that people attach meaning to elements in the

environment. According to Blumer (1969) as cited by Nickerson (2021) social interaction theory follows the principle that interaction happens in a social and cultural context where objects, people, and situations must be defined in accordance with the individual's subjective meaning.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed qualitative research utilizing semiotic analysis. A qualitative research approach involves the collection and analysis of non-numerical data to understand the concepts and experiences. This approach is used to obtain insights from a natural setting and generate new ideas for research (Bhandari, 2022).

Next, semiotic analysis was utilized to provide detailed and enriched understanding of the signs and symbols in visual elements. According to Franz (2021) semiotic analysis provides framework on the investigation on how humans make meaning out of signs and symbols.

Moreover, the study was also based on Barthes' Order of Signification in 1957 which entailed the analysis of the denotative and connotative meaning of the signs, explanation of the myths present in a visual element.

Research Material

In this study, the corpora that were used are the most recent visual elements in slide presentations used in college English class among local colleges in Davao de Oro. Braun and Clark (2006) have specified that 10-100 entries are the ideal number of entries in a corpora-based study. In this study, fifty-one visual elements were selected and picked out the from each slide presentation based on the inclusion criteria set on the study.

Data Analysis


This study employed Semiotic analysis in the interpretation and explanation of the data. Vos (2022) mentioned that semiotics is the study of signs and symbols. This was organized in a tabular discussion that presented the signifier and signified. In addition, the Order of Signification by Barthes was utilized to determine the denotative meaning, explain the connotative implications, and identify the myths for each visual element. The underlying connection of the symbolism to social context was also explained based on Social Interaction Theory of Mead and Weber. To ensure validity and reliability of the semiotic analysis, an expert debriefer who has a Doctorate degree in Applied Linguistic was sought to check and review the analysis.

RESULTS

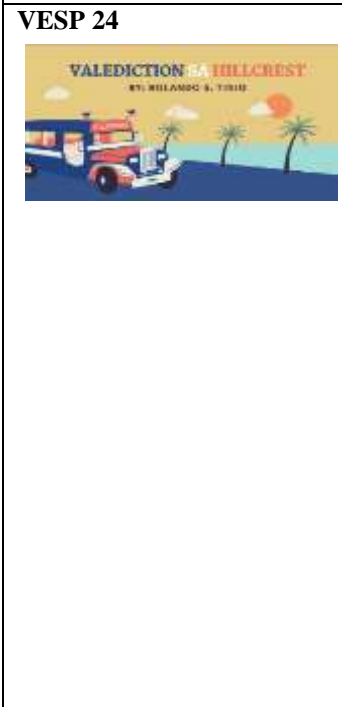
Table 1
The Semiotic Features present in the Visual Elements on Slide Presentation used in College English Class

| VISUAL ELEMENTS | SEMIOTIC FEATURES | |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| | SIGNIFIER | SIGNIFIED |
| <p>VESP 01</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -An image of notepad, notebook, and pens. - Pink and orange background and black color font text. | <p>The images found is used as materials for recording information and is commonly used by students in studying and for people to remember details of an information. The pink and orange background are bright colors that can stimulate student's attention.</p> |
| ICON | | |
| <p>VESP 04</p> | | <p>VESP 04 is comprised of two-wooden chairs placed side by side and a flower and a rainbow on each corner. These chairs are usually used by people to sit and relax. The position of the chairs gives an idea that there is communication that occurs between two people. The decorative icons of flowers and rainbow adds life and creativity to the slide presentation.</p> |
| SYMBOL | | |
| <p>VESP 36</p> | | <p>The slide presentation did not use images however, it uses bright colors (red, orange, yellow, green, and blue) to emphasize the subject matter being discussed. These colors represent fun and bright feeling which evoke feelings of happiness and excitement.</p> |

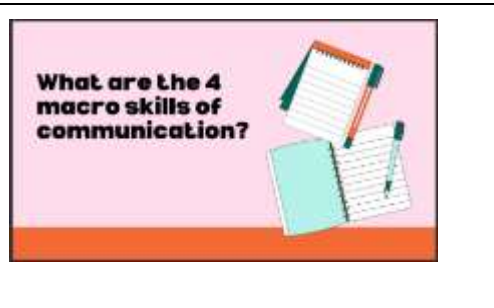
INDEX


| | | |
|----------------|---|--|
| <p>VESP 19</p> |  | <p>VESP 19 shows argumentation of different people with opposing ideas in an informal set-up. Their gestures and facial expressions imply that they have their own ideas and they want to express their arguments. The mood is full of tension, however, there are still elements that will make the environment calm and soft, and it is represented by the beige-colored background, quotation mark, star, random pattern, and flower.</p> |
|----------------|---|--|


SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE VISUAL ELEMENTS

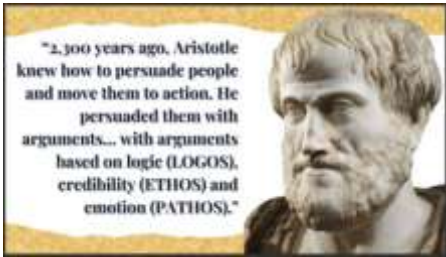
| VISUAL ELEMENTS | SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE VISUAL ELEMENTS | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| | DENOTATIVE MEANING | CONNOTATIVE MEANING | MYTH (Underlying Connection to the Social Context of English Class) |
| <p>VESP 24</p>  | <p>There is an image of jeepney with two Philippines flags and words “Pilipinas” and “MNL” in front. It also has images of three palm trees lined up on the border of the dark blue pavement and blue green sea. It has a golden colored sky, white clouds, and orange circle sun.</p> | <p>The image of Philippine jeepney represents Filipino identity of being a social person and being resilient and flexible. A Philippine jeepney is cramped with different people, when one person wants to leave, everybody says “para po”. It is a manifestation of how Filipinos care for one another despite not knowing each other. The images of palm trees manifests the tropical weather of the Philippines and the clear sky and orange sun represents the hot and dry weather of the country. The blue and mint colored road and sea is a representation of how Filipino people can make someone comfortable and relaxed despite the hot weather.</p> | <p>The images used in this slide presentation is essential in identifying the original location where the author lived. It is important to know the hometown of the author as it can help in establishing an appropriate mental picture of the setting of a literary piece so that reading comprehension can be achieved.</p> |


LITERAL- IDEOLOGICAL

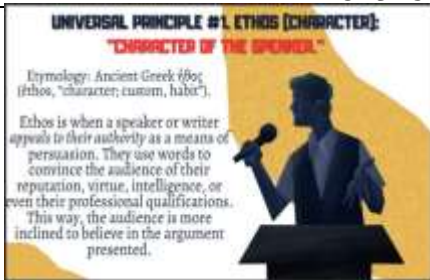
| | | |
|----------------|---|---|
| <p>VESP 01</p> |  | <p>VESP 01 is categorized as literal in its denotative meaning as it can only be interpreted as notebook and pen used to record an information. Its connotative meaning falls under ideological aspect because it can directly connote learning and education. The utilization of these visual elements could help the teacher in making his/her students become more interested in the lesson. With this, it can furthermore imply that an image of materials usually used in studying can aid in motivating students to be prepared and motivated to listen and learn new concepts or topics.</p> |
|----------------|---|---|

| LITERAL- EMOTIONAL | |
|--|--|
| <p>VESP 48</p>  | <p>The image portrays different facial expression based on variety of emotions. With this, VESP 48 is considered to contain a literal denotation because people can directly understand the emotions these images convey based on their facial expression. Also, it has an emotional connotation because the image contains different emotions which people can relate to. These faces are representations of how people express different kinds of emotions how it affects the overall appearance of a person. Furthermore, the image was used to provide representation of different emotions since the topic is “expressions” in the aspect of speech delivery.</p> |

| LITERAL- SUBJECTIVE | |
|--|--|
| <p>VESP 29</p>  | <p>The images used in the slide presentation consist of two hands holding a musical instrument known as gong. VESP 29 has a literal denotation and a subjective connotation because it stems an idea of culture and artistic identity of certain group of people especially of those indigenous group. All of the symbolisms in this visual element relate to the concept of preservation and maintenance of culture. With this, the use these images enhance the discussion of culture-related subject matter such as literature or art. The use of these images in the discussion of literature can help widen students’ perception of the subject by having a mental representation of their culture and tradition.</p> |

| OBJECTIVE- IDEOLOGICAL | |
|--|---|
| <p>VESP 08</p>  | <p>VESP 08 objective denotative interpretation because a statue does not only show the image of a person but also commemorates a person’s contribution. It has also an ideological connotative meaning since it conveys an idea of a profound knowledge. The image of the statue of an old man represents knowledge and wisdom. Furthermore, since the statue is made of stone, it implies that the knowledge is solid and that it can be made as a foundation for a more refined knowledge. And since it has been used to the slide presentation, it means that the concept is credible and has passed through the test of time.</p> |

| OBJECTIVE- EMOTIONAL | |
|--|---|
| <p>VESP 14</p>  | <p>VESP 14 is categorized as objective in its denotative meaning as it portrays an argumentation between two people. It also falls under emotional aspect in its connotative meaning since beyond its surface view, it can be determined that the image displays what seems to be an argument between two people. The image, as used in the slide presentation, effectively portrays its subject matter which is debate wherein two or more people discuss a certain topic with opposing views and opinions. The image enhances students concept visualization of what a debate setting looks like.</p> |

| OBJECTIVE- SUBJECTIVE | |
|--|--|
| <p>VESP 10</p>  | <p>VESP 10 has an objective denotative meaning because the image can be interpreted in various ways. It also holds a subjective connotative interpretation because the image can be interpreted through the subjective perspective of people. The photo consisting of text and image of a man’s silhouette speaking over a microphone depicts confidence and competence that a speaker must possess to gain the empathy of the audience. Public speaking is primarily used to convince the audience that what you said must be heard and one way of doing it is to pose with proper body language and provide a certain level of qualifications to make yourself believable.</p> |



DISCUSSIONS

The Semiotic Features Present in the Visual Elements on Slide Presentation Used in College English Class

Signifier

The signifier in this study was categorized in three- icon, symbol, and index. Icons, in its most basic function, was created in order to deliver a message in its most schematic form or in its most compressed form like in image or a picture (Munoz, 2019). Icons are deemed effective in the scaffolding of learning among students since it assists students' comprehension of the subject matter, it enables students to see connection of the subject matter with their prior knowledge, and for promoting active learning as implicated in the study of Legg (2016).

Moreover, one of the categories of a signifier is a symbol. Symbols are used in teaching to aid in picking out key concepts of the topic through images which may help students with comprehension difficulties get a grasp of the lesson (Ryves and Thompson, 2024). They also added that symbols support the explanations of lesson which helps teachers discuss the lesson with ease.

Lastly, another category of a signifier is an index. In a semiotic study conducted by Sakinah et al. (2020) indices were identified based on its ability to provide a cause-and-effect relationship between the image or a picture and its representation. This means that when analyzing the index of an image, it is necessary to look at the background, function, purpose, and even cultural indications of that image in order to identify the cause and give implications to its effect.

Signified

According to Dawson (2020) signified refers to the meaning or idea expressed by the sign which is distinct from its physical form. Signified reveals how an image brings out meaning to people as well as reflects how people attaches meaning towards an image or an object. This notion is similar to the claims of Abramjee (2024) in which she mentioned that images tend to engage the cognitive processes of the students which makes them remember and recall the visual stimuli presented to them.

Furthermore, as observed in the slide presentations, images also depict emotions and feelings. Alpuim and Ehrenberg (2023) suggested that when people look at an image, it is not just the visual faculty of the brain that worked, but also the emotional processing of the brain was also activated.

Relevance of the Symbolisms found in the Visual Elements on Slide Presentations used in College English Class in the Social Context

Denotation

In denotation, it is necessary to look only on the surface and describe and define what has been observed. This supports the claims laid out by the study of Wijayanto and Iswari (2021) in which they discussed that denotative marking serves as the first representation of an image that provides literal meaning which serves as the natural and surface character of a particular image. With this, denotation aims to give literal and objective description of the thing that would become a platform in providing deeper interpretation beyond what was observed.

In the analysis conducted on the visual elements of the slide presentations, the visual elements were identified as a literal denotation when it can be interpreted directly and can be understood and interpreted at first glance. This is similar to the study of Nadira (2018) which implies that denotation is definitional and is described as the literal, obvious, and common-sense knowledge of a sign.

Objective denotation involves not only the physical description of the image, but it also provides the background information of the image. According to Yamasaki (2023) objective denotation refers to making interpretations without the influence of personal feelings and an approach that is based only on facts and evidence.

Connotation

In the process of making a connotation out of a word or image, it is important that it should be described as how it should be understood (Kramer, 2023). Moreover, connotation discusses the ideological, emotional, and subjective description of images or texts (Ackerley, 2019).

In ideological connotation, the meaning is based on the concepts, ideas, and abstract notions about a certain text or image. As mentioned in the study of Han et al. (2020) ideological connotation includes any system of ideas, such as economics, politics, law, morals, religion, philosophy, art, theory, etc. which is a result of people's abstract knowledge of those related concepts.

Additionally, emotional connotation considers how an image evokes emotions and how it influences their understanding of the image. According to the study of Wicken et al. (2021) human cognition includes mental imagery which impacts the emotions of people allowing them to associate themselves with the image and aids in the act of interpretation of those images.

Furthermore, there were visual elements that were interpreted based on subjective connotation. This is because as explained in the study of Ishar and Irwan (2022) connotations of images leads to the discussion of social and personal associations.

Myth

The third order of signification is myth. Myth considers the interpretation of complex concept and the explanation of the shared values and ideologies of a particular culture or group. This supports the claims of Bouzida (2015) which explains that myth reflects the way people think and conceptualize that is based on their culture and normative judgement.

Implications for Teaching Practice

The integration of visual elements into the educational process aids in improving students' visual literacy. Therefore, the results of the analyses of the semiotic features of the visual images in slide presentations, as well as the symbolisms revealed in relation to the social context of English class, may provide a basis in making an effective instructional materials for teaching students as they embark on their journey to become critical thinkers of the twenty-first century education.



This study provides relevant information for the teacher to properly and appropriately utilize visual elements in their instructional materials. They would be able to know that proper selection, placement, and arrangement of these visual elements are crucial in the process of meaning-making of the students. Thus, the study provided more knowledge to the teachers in considering what visual elements to choose and how it would be placed on the instructional materials.

Recommendations for Further Research

There are several applications for semiotic analysis in social norms, people's culture, brand analysis, image appropriateness, and applications (Arora, 2021). This type of research looks at the relationship between signs and how individuals use them to interpret things on a daily basis.

In addition, to fully comprehend the significance of signs or symbols employed in communication, it is essential to investigate semiotics in a variety of contexts, including music, film, and media. Therefore, this study recommends that future researchers explore other communication platforms and domains such as posts and images in social media, political or advertising posters, popular music, short-content creations etc., where signs and symbols are common and essential for conveying meaning to the intended audience.

Furthermore, it is suggested that semiotics be applied to other areas such as in advertisements, films, artwork, and other scenarios. The results of the recommended studies may provide basis for policy making and guidelines for creators and may even serve as an anchor in the formulation of local laws, rules, and regulation in using visual elements or images that will be displayed in the public.

Concluding Remarks

As an English teacher of 21st-century students, it is critical to ensure that teachers and students acquire the four macro-skills in the target language, which were initially reading, writing, listening, and speaking abilities. I realized that these fundamental skills is now added with the viewing skill, the ability to decipher and create meaning from visual images. In order to successfully assess and evaluate the effectiveness of incorporating visual in any instructional resources employed by the teacher, teachers and students must know how to properly interpret images. This became the main subject of my research inquiry, which looks into the interpretation of visual images.

The findings of this study provided me with new information because I also create slide presentation for my class discussions that include visual components. I can attest from my experience that when visual aids are not integrated, students struggle to comprehend concepts, particularly in English-related courses. In the conduct of this study, I was able to understand deeply the underlying relationships of the visual elements to social context as well as the meanings and symbolisms of the visual elements used in college English class slide presentations.

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