VISUALIZING CIVIC RESISTANCE: A BARTHESIAN SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF PROTEST POSTERS IN THE "17+8 TUNTUTAN RAKYAT" MOVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Political participation nowadays increasingly takes place through visual protest media. This study analyzes the poster discourses created in the "17+8 Tuntutan Rakyat" movement using the semiotic theory proposed by Barthes to analyze denotation, connotation, and ideological myth. It responds to the limited research on Indonesian protest posters and informs how they communicate democratic critique, contributing to studies in visual communication, cultural semiotics, and civic discourse. The present study is a qualitative descriptive study with analysis performed on three selected protest posters derived from the "17+8 Tuntutan Rakyat" movement. Data were chosen through a purposive method, showing visual material widely disseminated. By referring to Roland Barthes's semiotic model of denotation, connotation, and myth, the posters are considered as cultural texts that show symbolic meaning, ideological messages, and civic expressions. Through this approach, the meaning construction in the three selected posters will be explained within the concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth. Constructed by colors, symbols, and slogans, the analyzed posters build up emotional solidarity and historical continuity with Reformasi. Similar to other global and local visual activism studies, the posters serve as an ideological tool that arouses public perception and mobilizes democratic participation. Based on this, it is concluded herein that the "17+8 Tuntutan Rakyat" posters function as semiotic tools in constructing political meaning through denotation, connotation, and myth. The posters are imbued with civic demands, youth-led reform values, and sustained struggle to defend democracy. Recommendations further call for more research, ethical activism, responsive governance, and public critical awareness, noting that visual communication continues to play a key role in sustaining democratic participation.

Keywords: Visual political communication, Barthesian semiotics, democratic protest movements

ABSTRAK

Partisipasi politik saat ini semakin sering dilakukan melalui media protes visual. Penelitian ini menganalisis wacana poster yang dihasilkan dalam gerakan "17+8 Tuntutan Rakyat" dengan menggunakan teori semiotika yang dikemukakan oleh Barthes untuk menganalisis denotasi, konotasi, dan mitos ideologis. Penelitian ini menanggapi keterbatasan penelitian mengenai poster protes di Indonesia dan mengungkap bagaimana poster-poster tersebut menyampaikan kritik demokratis,

sehingga memberikan kontribusi bagi studi di bidang komunikasi visual, semiotika budaya, dan wacana kewarganegaraan. Penelitian ini merupakan studi deskriptif kualitatif dengan analisis yang dilakukan pada tiga poster protes terpilih yang berasal dari gerakan "17+8 Tuntutan Rakyat". Data dipilih melalui metode purposif, yang menampilkan materi visual yang tersebar luas. Dengan merujuk pada model semiotik Roland Barthes mengenai denotasi, konotasi, dan mitos, poster-poster tersebut dianggap sebagai teks budaya yang menampilkan makna simbolis, pesan ideologis, dan ekspresi kewarganegaraan. Melalui pendekatan ini, konstruksi makna dalam tiga poster terpilih akan dijelaskan dalam kerangka konsep denotasi, konotasi, dan mitos. Dibangun melalui warna, simbol, dan slogan, poster-poster yang dianalisis ini membangun solidaritas emosional dan kesinambungan historis dengan Reformasi. Serupa dengan studi-studi aktivisme visual global dan lokal lainnya, poster-poster tersebut berfungsi sebagai alat ideologis yang membangkitkan kesadaran publik dan memobilisasi partisipasi demokratis. Berdasarkan hal ini, disimpulkan dalam tulisan ini bahwa poster-poster "17+8 Tuntutan Rakyat" berfungsi sebagai alat semiotik dalam membangun makna politik melalui denotasi, konotasi, dan mitos. Poster-poster tersebut dipenuhi dengan tuntutan sipil, nilai-nilai reformasi yang dipimpin oleh kaum muda, dan perjuangan berkelanjutan untuk mempertahankan demokrasi. Rekomendasi selanjutnya menyerukan penelitian lebih lanjut, aktivisme etis, tata kelola yang responsif, dan kesadaran kritis publik, dengan mencatat bahwa komunikasi visual terus memainkan peran kunci dalam mempertahankan partisipasi demokratis.
Kata Kunci: *Komunikasi politik visual, semiotika Barthesian, gerakan protes demokratis*

A. Introduction

In contemporary society, political engagement no longer relies solely on institutional channels such as elections, debates, and Congress. Instead, public discourse is increasingly being expressed through visual and digital forms of communication: posters, online graphics, memes, banners, and protest art—symbolic media voicing public opinion, collective identity, and ideological positions. Indonesia is one such example where the "17+8 People's Demands" movement demonstrates how the public, particularly youths and students, use posters as a strategic medium in response to concerns about transparency, political reform, empathetic leadership, and the decline of democracy. These posters also bear emotional and ideological messages, creating solidarity and raising civic awareness. These posters not only act as media for voicing social and political criticisms but also function as an instrument in

shaping mass consciousness. Posters have also become an effective form of resistance communication through which people can negotiate meaning, contest authority, and proclaim their version of social change. The presence of posters in the virtual world extends the scope and the impact of these political messages. Social media distribution provides greater public involvement and solidifies solidarity across regions and classes. Posters, therefore, are not just visual artifacts but cultural discourses that reflect the dynamics of digital democracy in Indonesia today.

Similar occurrences related to visual protests exist across the world. Research investigated feminist protests through posters in Jordan in response to a prominent case of domestic violence. These posters used hashtags such as #JerashCrime and #Enough to express collective empathy and calls for justice (Altamimi, 2022). Similarly, another research used the multimodal discourse theory developed by Kress and van Leeuwen. These posters on social media following the death of #MahsaAmini represented Iranians' disobedience and sparked global unity (Mada & Author, 2023). Moving on to Indonesia's cyberspace, a research investigated #EmergencyAlert posters on Instagram. The findings showed that these posters are vivid semiotic channels for civic engagement (Purnamasari et al., 2025). Not only used for protests but political posters used for campaigns can create ideological stories. Evidence supporting this can be found in another presidential campaign for Nigeria (Adeagbo, n.d.). On the other hand, another research explained how protest placards used by Baloch Long March express resistance with collective suffering portrayed by vigorous words and images (March & Through, 2024).

Multisensory protest spaces are discussed by Young (2024), with elements such as sound, movement, and touch adding layers of meaning. Protests related to feminism, including those held in the Aurat March in Pakistan, integrate strong graphic representations to express resistance to gender inequality. These graphic representations convey meaning not only through design, but also through the use of color. Color design has been used in protests related to Russia and Ukraine to represent aggressiveness, resistance, and

nationalism (Journal & Studies, 2024). The use of text and images reinforces protest communication, as seen in climate protests involving posters (MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF VISUAL PROTEST, 2022).

This research is related to and builds on universal literature related to visual protests with posters by exploring posters not only in terms of aesthetic and artistic values but also in terms of multimodal ideological texts. To identify these levels of meaning inherent in posters, this research relies on Roland Barthes' Semiotic Approach to meaning, which concentrates on three levels of meaning: denotation (the literal meaning or message represented), connotation (meanings related to cultural images), and finally, myth (meanings related to deep ideological concepts).

It is with this analytical framework in mind that this research hopes to contribute to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding about how protest posters work as a significant means of communication that expresses societal grievances, voices collective hopes for society, and captures societal values. On the other hand, this research will also derive insights from research conducted on visual environmental communication, which is concerned with the same issues. Previous research has found that visual frame metonymy is used in 142 posters on Chinese environmental management published on Environment Day in 2023. The posters represent natural landscapes, urban structures, human activities, endemic species, and cultural heritage with a goal to promote coexistence between human beings and nature. The discursive practice concerning the philosophical notion of "Two Mountains," which is based on traditional landscape thinking in China, activates emotional effects with a goal to promote environmentally responsible human practice (Wen, 2025).

Such findings indicate that visual media, whether it is environmental or political in nature, can give a symbolic and emotional storyline that can increase awareness and bring about collective actions for a goal that corresponds with how protest posters represent civil resistance.

Thus, by positioning studies on environmental visual communication on an equal footing with practices

related to protest posters, this research highlights that both have equally important roles to play with respect to establishing how society collectively understands a particular issue. Whether it is related to the environment or is political in nature, posters have significant uses towards establishing collective emotions, impacting public opinion on matters related to societal issues, and establishing collective actions.

Therefore, by comparing practices associated with protest posters with those related to visual communication on the environment, this research work is highlighting that both practices have a significant role to play in terms of establishing a collective understanding for a particular issue. Whether it is environmental issues, or political issues in terms of protests, posters have significant uses in establishing collective emotions, opinion, and actions.

Construction of public perceptions with regards to democracy, reform, and the role of the state. Nevertheless, studies directly focusing on "17+8 Tuntutan Rakyat" have not been much noted, despite its critical importance related to current issues on democratic regression. Also, although Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory is broadly used for analyses in cultural studies and media research, there is considerable territory yet to be investigated on protest art related to Indonesia. Most semiotic studies done on Indonesia would pertain to advertising, lifestyle branding, cinema, and religious images.

The current research is anchored on these three guiding research questions: (1) What are the denotative features on display in the protest posters used by the protest group "17+8 Tuntutan Rakyat"? (2) What are the connotative messages that can be decoded by combining both pictorial and textual elements in these protest posters? (3) What cultural and ideological myths are created in these protest posters using Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory? These research questions aim to interrogate not only what is on the surface but also what is actually expressed in these images.

Corresponding with these research questions, there are three objectives for this research: (1) The objective is to identify and describe the denotative elements found in the

protest posters selected. (2) to examine connotation arising out of visual images, typography, color, and words. (3) Interpretation of cultural and ideological myths expressed in posters via Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. These objectives aim to cover all elements necessary for a comprehensive semiotic analysis that would start with a descriptive process and advance to an ideological interpretation.

The current study offers a contribution to both visual communication studies and cultural semiotic studies with regards to democracy by focusing on protest posters in Indonesia through the lens of semiotic studies. From a theoretical standpoint, it can be noted that this current investigation offers a continuation of the utilization of Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory in political activism instead of advertising or literature. This particular theory showcases how denotation, connotation, and myths can unveil the ideological and emotional elements which are entangled in civic protest communication mediated via media in Indonesia.

From a practical standpoint, this research highlights the role of young movements and net activists in using visual media effectively for empathy, solidarity, and awareness generation. These findings can be used by educators for visual literacy education but will prove even more useful for activists looking to communicate effectively and policymakers trying to understand public opinion.

On a conceptual plane, this research contributes to academic discussions by illustrating that protest posters are more than aesthetic representations; instead, they function dynamically as semiotic systems influencing civic identity, collective memory, and political imagination.

B. Research Method

Research Design

In this study, the qualitative descriptive method is used. The methods are appropriate for research explaining, interpreting, and describing deep social events. For this case, the event studied is the process of meaning formation contained in the protest posters that appeared in the "17+8 People's Demands" civil movement. Qualitative approaches allow researchers to examine symbols, visual messages, and textual

elements as culturally meaningful signs, rather than mere numerical data.

In order to interpret these signs, this study applies the Semiotic Theory of Roland Barthes, which analyses meaning on three levels: denotation (literal meaning), connotation (implicit cultural meaning), and myth (deep ideological narrative). This analytical framework is particularly fitting because the posters are not just visual communication artifacts but cultural texts shaped by historical and political contexts.

Data Source and Data Type

The main data in this study comprised three public protest posters circulated online during the "17+8 People's Demands" movement. Each of these posters contained visual elements-comprising images, colors, and typography-and textual elements in the form of slogans, phrases, and labels. The posters were subjectively selected based on the following criteria: (1) clearly mentioning the "17+8" movement or its ideological message; (2) containing visual and textual semiotic elements; and (3) having widespread distribution on both physical and digital channels like Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter.

This is considered non-numerical data; it is treated as an interpretive symbolic material, and it therefore becomes the main unit in qualitative semiotic analysis. The data is analyzed not as quantitative artifacts but as visual texts that describe cultural meanings, ideological narratives, and social expressions of resistance.

Subject of the Study/ Population and Sample

Population

The sample population that this study investigates includes visual protest materials that emerged during the "17+8 People's Demands" demonstrations in Indonesia: posters, banners, placards, digital illustrations, and online campaign visuals presenting the visual identity and spirit of the movement. As part of the greater study of this broader visual output, this research narrows its focus to protest posters, both those physically displayed at public demonstration sites and those circulated digitally via social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp.

Sample

Considering the qualitative nature of this research, a purposive

sampling strategy was employed to select visual materials most relevant to the purpose of the study. The selection focused on posters that contain both visual imagery and textual elements, which clearly express public criticism, political messages, or ideological standpoints, and that exhibit symbolic features suitable for semiotic interpretation. Circulation and recognition within the wider protest context were also considered to ensure that the selected materials reflected the movement's communicative importance.

Three protest posters were selected as primary data from this process. These works represent a range of visual styles, symbolic representations, and linguistic features, which enable a deep semiotic reading by applying Roland Barthes's analytical framework. Limiting this research to three posters follows the qualitative research principle of prioritizing depth over quantity, which enables nuanced interpretation of visual and cultural signs. The poster constitutes an analytical unit that may comprise dimensions such as imagery, color, composition, typography, slogans, and textual expressions. These dimensions can be divided into several layers of meaning at the levels of denotation, connotation, and myth in accordance with the conceptions created by Roland Barthes.

Data Collection Procedure

The process of data collection was designed to be systematic so that the validity and contextual relevance of the posters would be maintained for semiotic analysis. First, protest posters related to “17+8 Tuntutan Rakyat” were identified through social media like Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and public records and visual documentation taken on the street demonstrations. Following this identification, purposive sampling was applied using the criteria of clarity, symbolic depth, relevance to the movement, and reach of circulation, eventually leading to the selection of three key posters.

Each selected poster was downloaded, archived, and labeled with a unique identification code for reference. Extra contextual information on the date of circulation, socio-political background, and public responses was added to the interpretative framework. Organized into a matrix, all gathered data have been systematically analyzed

according to the semiotic model developed by Roland Barthes. In this way, data were guaranteed to be authentic, culturally based, and sufficient for detailed and meaningful interpretation.

Data Analysis Technique

This paper applies Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory as the main analytical framework in investigating how meanings were visually and ideologically produced in the selected protest posters. The analysis is conducted in three interrelated levels: denotation, connotation, and myth. At the level of denotation, every single visual and textual element was carefully described against its literal meaning, including color, imagery, typography, symbols, and written expressions. The second level underlined the connotative aspects, which involve emotional, cultural, and ideological signification arising from the posters in view of their socio-political context.

At the final level, the analysis considered the mythic dimension, highlighting how the posters reinforce, challenge, or reshape the dominant cultural narratives and existing configurations of power. The results of each level of analysis followed a descriptive mode, underpinned by visual tables and interpretative explanations. Each poster was regarded as a complex cultural artifact that communicates interrelated layers of political meaning, civic identity, and collective resistance, directly aligning with the overall aims and research questions of this study.

C. Findings and Discussion

The findings from the semiotic analysis, as laid down by Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory, in which he viewed signs as systems comprising denotation, connotation, and myth, are presented in this chapter to analyze three selected posters in relation to "17+8 Tuntutan Rakyat" and public discourse on democracy in Indonesia. Further, this approach allows the visual and textual elements of the posters to be analyzed to disclose explicit and implicit messages sent to an audience.

Denotative Level (Literal Meaning)

At the denotative level, the posters reveal a mixture of text and images presented quite straightforwardly. The first and second posters strikingly bear the slogan “17+8 Tuntutan Rakyat” or “17+8 Demands from the People,” followed

by the words Transparansi (Transparency), Reformasi (Reformation), and Empati (Empathy). The graphic style makes use of bold typography, minimal design, and color contrast: pink, green, and black.

The third poster shows thousands of demonstrators on top of the dome of the Indonesian Parliament Building (DPR/MPR), holding national flags and banners. The slogan above the picture reads "RIP Indonesia's Democracy" with a black silhouette of the Garuda Pancasila symbol. The available imagery within both figures creates a vivid representation of social and political articulation of public discontent and collective mobilization.



Figure 1 Poster 17+8



Figure 2 Poster 17+8



Figure 2 Poster RIP Indonesia's Democracy

Table 1.1 Denotative Elements of the Posters

poster	Visual Elements (What is Seen)	Textual Elements	Immediate Meaning (Denotation)
Figure 1	Black background ; bold pink and green text	"17 + 8 Demands from the People", "Transparency . Reformation. Empathy."	Announcement of public demands with direct emphasis on reform values
Figure 2	Pink and blue background ; bold green text	"17 + 8 Tuntutan Rakyat", "Transparansi. Reformasi. Empati."	Reinforcement of civic and moral demands in Bahasa Indonesia
Figure 3	Protest crowd at DPR/MPR dome; Indonesian flags; Garuda silhouette	"RIP Indonesia's Democracy"	Visual depiction of protest as a reclaiming of democratic power

Connotative Level (Cultural and Ideological Meaning)

Connotatively, the posters bring meanings other than the literal one. 17+8 represents an expansion of demands, which means the people's concerns are not singular but

intertwined and cumulative. The recurrence of the terms transparency, reformation, and empathy indicates that there is a call for moral and political integrity from the government.

The hue of pink in the first poster carries a modern and young feeling; it is associated with the spirit of digital activism and nonviolent civic expression. On the other hand, the presence of green signals hope, renewal, and moral obligation, further solidifying the moral stance of the posters and their demand for integrity within governance. Together, these color choices evoke optimism and moral consciousness, which brings the visual message into alignment with the ideological heart of the movement.

The third poster shows protesters occupying the dome of the Parliament building-a visual metaphor reclaiming democratic power. The phrase "RIP Indonesia's Democracy" is supposed to evoke grief and urgency, implying something in decline, and an undermining or betrayal of the democratic ethos that underpins the country. Meanwhile, the reinterpreted Garuda-mostly a symbol of unity and national identity-implies the erosion or betrayal of essential democratic values.

Table 1.2 Connotative Meanings (Cultural and Ideological Interpretation)

Visual/Text Element	Color / Symbol Used	Connotation (Cultural / Emotional Meaning)
The number **17 + 8**	Numerical accumulation	Suggests multiple and expanding civic demands; solidarity across issues
Pink typography	Associated with youth activism	Peaceful, soft, but firm call for change led by younger generations
Green typography	Color of renewal and moral clarity	Hope, ethical governance, accountability
DPR/MPR Building Dome	Symbol of state authority	Public reclaiming democratic space; questioning legitimacy of power
Garuda silhouette	National symbol of unity and sovereignty	Expresses disappointment, symbolically mourning betrayal of democratic values
Phrase “RIP Indonesia’s Democracy”	Language of mourning loss	Signals perceived crisis in democratic governance

Myth Level (Cultural Narrative)

The posters construct and reinforce a **myth of collective struggle for democracy**. By referencing historical memories associated with **Reformasi 1998**, particularly the image of students protesting at the Parliament building,

the posters evoke a shared cultural narrative: when political leadership deviates from democratic principles, the people must unite to defend them.

This myth is significant because it situates the present movement within a **continuum of democratic resistance**, framing today's social unrest as not merely reactionary but as a **historically justified civic duty**.

Table 1.3 Myth (Deep Cultural Narratives Constructed by the Posters)

Myth Constructed	Supporting Visual/Text	Cultural Meaning
Democracy must be defended by citizens	Protest crowd reclaiming DPR building space	Suggests the people, not political elites, are guardians of democracy
Reformasi is ongoing, not completed	Use of reform-related terminology	Connects present civic actions to the historical 1998 student movement
Moral governance is a public expectation	Words: transparency, reformation, empathy	Implies leadership is accountable to ethical standards
Youth as active agents of change	Use of digital-native design (pink/green tones)	Positions younger citizens as central to democratic resistance

DISCUSSION

The findings of the analysis indicate that these posters are not mere informative or expressive tools, but more importantly, they serve as political semiotic instruments in shaping the public imaginary and galvanizing collective identity. With their conscious selection of imagery, color, and language, they appeal to emotional solidarities through the arousal of empathy and shared concern, to moral responsibility through calls for transparency and accountability, and to historical continuity by invoking the legacy of Reformasi.

Hence, the posters function as cultural texts contributing to the continuous negotiations of democratic values in contemporary Indonesia. They reflect the tension between state authority and civic agency while reaffirming the belief that democracy is not a fixed achievement but a system that continuously needs protection and participation.

This paper reveals that political posters used in local elections in Türkiye on March 31, 2024, do not only provide visual information but construct meaning through layers to convey emotional, cultural, and ideological messages to their viewers. Based on Saussure, Peirce, and

Barthes' linguistic and semiotic frameworks, the analysis reveals how slogans, leader imagery, colors, and visual symbols are strategically chosen to craft compelling political narratives and influence voter perception (Sanders, 2025). By drawing on three levels of signification proposed by Barthes (1977)-denotation, connotation, and myth-this study shows that although on a denotative level, recognizable figures and symbols were in view, these elements gained deeper meanings at the level of cultural, emotional, and social significance at the connotative level, reinforcing in addition broader ideological narratives at the mythic level: those touching on national identity, democratic participation, social justice, and collective solidarity.

This meaning-making process underlying the function of posters points out that visual political communication cannot be neutral. The poster designers consciously orchestrated symbolic imagery, textual cues, color harmony, and layout composition to shape public sentiment on contemporary political issues. Pride, anger, grief, or hope can all facilitate collective identity through emotive resonance and the mobilization of political behavior. This also relates to studies on protest and political art challenging dominant narratives by appealing to cultural memory and shared symbolism. For instance, environmental poster campaigns show how visual framing can nurture ethical human-nature relationships by metaphorically guiding public awareness.

This research corresponds to the studies of local electoral visual communication, such as the analysis of campaign posters in the 2024 Malang Regency elections, which show how visual and verbal elements are used to encode thematic political messages. According to Rachma (2025), a poster is a combination of three levels of signification: denotation, connotation, and myth, with emotional and symbolic appeals that may affect voter interpretation (Rachma, 2025). A similar dynamics has also been widely created in Shepard Fairey's contemporary political poster "Guns and Roses," where Van Zoest's semiotic framework underlined color, iconography, and composition in communicating ideological themes such as peace, anti-war criticism, gender issues, and social justice

(Setyoko & Yudianto, 2022). Indonesian activist posters by Alit Ambara, like "Wkwkwk" and "Semua Didoakan," use iconic leader figures and dark palettes of visuality to denote political and humanitarian criticism. According to Marianto (2025), these serve as visual interventions that may stimulate public reflection and critical awareness, rather than merely delivering propaganda.

This research also relates to the semiotic analysis of the “Emergency Warning” poster that circulated in Indonesia during debates on constitutional interpretation. With its use of the Garuda symbol, blue background, bold typography, and glitch effects, the poster creates a symbolic atmosphere of national crisis and urgency, effectively mobilizing awareness and civic engagement in defense of democratic processes (Kasus et al., 2025). Similar semiotic tactics are also present in cultural media like film posters. The poster for How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies uses expressive character imagery, bright color palettes, and distinctive typography to communicate thematic blends of humor, emotional urgency, and family tension, serving as both promotional material and visual commentary on material ambition and moral responsibility (Saussure, 2024).

The same semiotic constructions of religion and gender can be seen in Indonesian religious-themed horror film posters like Kiblat, Siksa Neraka, and Sijjin. Religious symbols are used to portray fear, and most have generated controversy with regard to perceived disrespect of sacred values. Women are commonly made victims and are used to reinforce patriarchal stereotypes of gender. Using Stuart Hall’s Representation Theory, this research discusses the ways in which these posters develop a visual and ideological framing of social discourses about religion and gender within the cultural context of Indonesia (Pratiwi et al., 2024).

Finally, the semiotic function of the visual would extend to digital activism, as in the signification of Palestinian cultural symbols represented by the watermelon, olive tree, and key. Using Barthes's denotation and connotation, these are signs that point to Palestinian national identity and resist colonial narratives. The analyzed digital posters here demonstrate how social media has

acted as an important space through which the fight for cultural struggle is intensified and augmented through collective memory and the perpetuation of identity-based solidarity within political conflict (Haqi et al., 2025).

In all, the integrated findings point to the fact that posters—whether used in electoral campaigns, activist movements, legal advocacy, religious film promotion, or even digital identity struggles—are not simply visual ornamentation; rather, they represent ideological interventions. They shape public consciousness, construct cultural and emotional meaning, and influence social and political behavior by inviting audiences into processes of interpretation and negotiation of broader narratives within visual representation.

This paper has several limitations. First, it analyzes only three intentionally chosen posters that may not represent all visual styles and messages of the movement. Second, the process of semiotic interpretation is by nature subjective, as audiences might perceive signs, connotations, and myths differently than the researcher. Third, because data were retrieved primarily from online sources, some posters might have been distributed offline or have limited circulation, featuring distinctive semiotic elements. Fourth, the research setting is bound to a specific time period, which inherently limits its capacity to represent change and development of protest discourse over time. Lastly, the lack of comparative analysis with other movements limits the generalization of conclusions. Considering the mentioned limitations, the study contributes to the understanding of how protest posters work as semiotic means for the articulation of civic claims and democratic ideals.

The study reveal that protest posters are complex multimodal texts, whose meaning is created by visual images, typography, color, layout composition, and written language interacting with one another. This in itself makes them quite relevant to ELT, especially in the present day, when learners navigate both online and offline forms of communication that happen to be very multimodal. Using multimodal discourse analysis in ELT allows students to understand how the visual and verbal together express social, political, and ideological messages. This skill of

interpretation is crucial for the development of critical literacy, which is a core feature in modern times in English language education.

These results also highlight the significance of developing critical thinking and reflective learning in ELT. Upon critically analyzing how posters present civic issues, use emotive appeals, and incorporate cultural myths, students develop an insight into how public communication channels present a persuasive message. This also indicates that communication never remains a neutral platform and it remains affected by issues of power, culture, and ideology. Using protest posters as a vocabulary input in ELT provides significant knowledge of meaningful issues of society, as well as knowledge of vocabulary, interpretation, and discourse. These concepts match contemporary approaches in ELT that focus on issues of meaning-making, relevance, and multimodal interpretation, rather than mere linguistic concerns.

Besides, the application of this study's results can be further generalized into project-based tasks in class. For instance, students are supposed to create their own posters for different purposes like a social campaign, a school event, as well as a fiction story in which English plays a prominent role. This way, students would be able to accomplish several tasks all at once, including writing a persuasive text, a visual text, as well as a multimodal text. Other than developing their communicative skills, using this technique in ELT also enhances teamwork, computer literacy skills, as well as problem-solving skills.

D. Conclution and Recomendation

Conclusion

This paper discusses how visual media shapes and communicates public political discourse in contemporary Indonesia, based on the semiotic analysis of selected posters related to the "17+8 Tuntutan Rakyat" campaign. As discussed, Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory is applied at three levels: denotation, connotation, and myth.

The posters are composed of bold textual elements and strong visual symbolism, such as the wordings "17+8 Tuntutan Rakyat" and "RIP Indonesia's Democracy", with the imagery of the Parliament building and the Garuda emblem. These elements

explicitly carry the context of public demonstration, civic participation, and socio-political demands.

This is important because, on the level of connotation, the posters also delineate larger ideological messages. Color, language, and historical visual references are indicative of calls for moral governance, transparency, empathy, and reformation. The style speaks to the tone of youth activism and mobilizations rooted in digital media and ethical political critique.

On a myth level, the posters reinforce the cultural narrative of Reformasi as a defining moment in Indonesian political consciousness. The imagery and slogans revive this myth that democracy must be defended by its people when threatened-reflecting a collective identity based on historical struggle and civic responsibility.

In all, the posters analyzed are not just expressions of discontent but semiotic instruments that build, maintain, and resuscitate democratic values. They remind society that democracy is not a fixed entity; rather, it is negotiated continuously through participatory action and public voice. Thus, the posters contribute to democratic discourse in process and symbolize people's desire to see a transparent, accountable, and empathetic government.

Recommendations

From these findings, some recommendations are suggested. Academics and researchers should further investigate how political visual communication on digital platforms shapes the civic engagement of youth, as well as compare semiotic messages across regions, movements, or periods in order to attain deeper understanding of visual activism. Social and political activists should continue using inclusive, ethical, and culturally resonant symbols in promoting peaceful participation and emphasizing shared national identity to enhance unity. It is recommended that the government and policymakers consider such posters as positive public input, focus on transparency and accountability, and work toward participatory policymaking for the restoration of public confidence and strengthening democratic legitimacy. The general

public should be more aware and think more critically about political communication, verify information, engage in dialogue, and contribute to discussions on national governance more responsibly.

This research underlines that visual communication is inherently constitutive of democratic expression. The posters studied here speak of not only the demands of the people but also their hopes, frustrations, and accumulated experiences in their collective memory. Ultimately, maintaining democracy is a shared responsibility, and visual media remains a strong medium to undertake that task with.

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