



## Verbal and Non-verbal Signs of “Scream” Movie Posters

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| ARTICLE INFO                                                                                                                          | ABSTRACT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| Received:<br>05 May 2022                                                                                                              | This study aims to analyze the verbal and non-verbal signs and to figure out the meaning of verbal and non-verbal signs in Scream movie posters. An observation method was used to collect the data. The data were taken from two Scream movie posters downloaded from <a href="https://m.imdb.com">https://m.imdb.com</a> . The method used is a qualitative approach. To analyze verbal and non-verbal signs, researchers used Saussure's semiotic theory, while to analyze the meaning, researchers used the theories of Barthes and Cerrato. As a result, the researchers found eight verbal and five non-verbal signs in these Scream movie posters. The creator's message is usually conveyed implicitly, requiring the viewers to interpret the meaning of the movie posters. The presence of both verbal and non-verbal signs in the movie poster serves to highlight the creator's message to the audience. Furthermore, a movie poster tends to promote a movie, provide information, and persuade the audience to watch the movie. |
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### 1. Introduction

Semiotics is the study of the sign system, which determines how words are found and translated into sign meanings. Semiotics is also a scientific discipline and analysis method for examining the signs contained in an object to determine its meaning. It's the research into how people construct meaning. A sign is something that represents something other than itself in semiotics. People use signs to interpret what is going on around them. According to de Saussure (2011), a signified and a signifier are both required components of a sign. In the study of semiotics, every sign will have a signifier or signified. There are verbal and non-verbal signs in semiotics. Verbal signs are those that include the use of words or texts. A message can be conveyed using spoken or written signs. Non-verbal

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signs are pictures that are used to express messages without using words. Non-verbal signs are typically used to define a company or business's logo or product; in this case, non-verbal signs are expressed through images, shapes, symbols, colors, and other means. Both verbal and non-verbal, Semiotic signs can be found in various media, including movie posters.

Movie posters are created as appealing as possible by including images that resemble movie players and words. Movie posters play an important role in announcing and persuading audiences to watch the movies. Movie posters are the correct media to interest people's attention and encourage them to go to the theater. It also might provide important information about the movie. Furthermore, the movie poster includes verbal and non-verbal signs and the meaning and messages given by those signs. Several viewers may not understand the messages correctly in some contexts. On the other hand, they may not comprehend the memos or misunderstand the indicators.

That's why this research was conducted to analyze the verbal and non-verbal signs found in *Scream* movie posters and to examine the meaning of verbal and non-verbal signs found in *Scream* movie posters. In the research, three main theories are used by the researchers: first, the semiotic theory proposed by de Saussure (2011), which is used to describe verbal and non-verbal signs. Secondly, the idea of meaning proposed by Barthes (1977) is used to analyze the meaning of verbal and non-verbal signs contained in the *Scream* movie poster, along with the theory of color proposed by Cerrato (2012).

## 2. Literature Review

Some previous verbal and non-verbal studies, such as Kadim & Abbas (2022), were done. This study analyzed the chosen cartoons using Peirc's triadic sign system. Examining sarcastic cartoons about military spending suggests governments should cut the military budget. Then, research was conducted by Ares et al. (2011), who prefer to use food labels as data analysis. The labels summarized the essential information, and five yogurt model labels were produced and utilized as stimuli in consumer research. Besides that, research on deaf signed language was analyzed using a semiotic approach (Hodge, Ferrara, & Anible, 2019). This study emphasizes the significance of animacy in signed language discourse. It refutes the idea that informativeness declines as cognitive saliency grow while also illustrating the 'pretend world' indexicality of signed language use and the pluralistic complexity of face-to-face communication.

Furthermore, research conducted by Trinadi, Pratiwi, & Skolastika (2022) examines verbal and non-verbal analysis, and also Kardiana (2020) analyses the movie posters". This research concerns semiotic signs and the meaning of verbal and visual signs in movie posters. The data was taken from five horror movie posters and five action movie posters on the internet. Likewise, a study on a semiotic analysis of public service advertisements was done by Wahyuni, Sulatra, & Pratiwi (2022). Lastly, Yakin & Totu's (2014) research compared Peirce and Saussure's Semiotic Perspectives. This study figured out that semiotics and communication have many common notions, such as symbol, meaning, verbal and nonverbal code, and so on. In a nutshell, the semiotic method is acceptable for

use with the idea that any cultural expression may be seen as a communication process, i.e., any cultural phenomenon is also a significant phenomenon.

### 3. Method

This research was designed with a qualitative approach. The principal data analysis in this study was two *Scream* movie posters downloaded from <https://m.imdb.com>. The first *Scream* movie poster was released in 1997, and the second in 2022. As a data source, this *Scream* movie poster contains various meanings and information about the movie. *Scream* is a popular horror movie that has a huge following all over the world. Those data were obtained using observation methods. In analyzing the data, researchers used three main theories, namely the theory of signifier and signified proposed by Saussure (1983), the second theory of meaning proposed by Barthes (1964) used to analyze the connotative and denotative meaning of verbal and non-verbal signs, and also the theory of Color Term proposed by Cerrato (2012).

### 4. Results and Discussion

There are two important discussions in the following section, namely the types of verbal and non-verbal signs in the “*Scream*” movie poster and the meaning contained in the “*Scream*” movie poster.

#### 4.1 The types of verbal and non-verbal signs in “*Scream*” movie poster

In this part, the discussion was focused on identifying the verbal and non-verbal signs found in *Scream* movie posters, then explaining the meanings of verbal and non-verbal signs in *Scream* movie posters. The data on the *Scream* movie posters are presented in Table 1 as follows.

**Table 1.** Verbal and Non-Verbal Signs in *Scream* Movie Posters

| No | Title of Movie           | Verbal Signs                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Non-Verbal Signs                                                                                                      |
|----|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | <i>Scream</i> Movie 1997 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Someone has taken their love of sequels one step too far.</li> <li>- <i>Scream</i></li> <li>- 2</li> <li>- The new thriller from Wes Craven.</li> <li>- December 12</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Two faces of different women.</li> <li>- Black color background</li> </ul>   |
| 2  | <i>Scream</i> Movie 2022 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It's always someone you know.</li> <li>- <i>Scream</i></li> <li>- Only in theatres 1.14.22</li> </ul>                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ghost face</li> <li>- Knife</li> <li>- The background black color</li> </ul> |
|    | Total                    | 8                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 5                                                                                                                     |

The data, in table 1, were analysed based on the theory of sign proposed by Saussure (1983), while the meaning was analyzed based on the theory proposed by Barthes (1964) and analyzed the meaning of color proposed by Cerrato (2012). The analysis of verbal and non-verbal signs and the meaning of signs were found in *Scream* movie posters. The

verbal and non-verbal signs of the *Scream* movie posters and the information of the meaning could be interpreted as the interpreter of the poster.

#### ***4.2 The meaning of verbal and non-verbal signs found in “Scream” movie posters.***

##### ***The Meaning of Verbal Signs***

Two posters are displayed, as the main data analysis, in the following section. In the first poster, there were five verbal signs. The verbal signs are delivered only by written texts. The written texts used in this movie poster help the audience understand the messages in the advertisement. Table 2 below consists of the verbal signs of the “Scream” movie poster. Then, it was divided into two categories; called signifier and signified.

##### **Poster 1:**



**Figure 1.** Scream Movie Poster 1997

Based on the analysis of the figure 1 above, researchers found the signifier and signified of verbal signs as described and classified into table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Signifier and Signified of Verbal Signs found in Scream Movie Poster 1997

| No | Signifier                                                | Signified                                                     |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Someone has taken their love of sequels one step too far | Represent that the answer to this mystery is murder           |
| 2  | Scream                                                   | Which indicate of horror inspiration                          |
| 3  | 2                                                        | Represent the second sequel to the first Scream movie in 1996 |
| 4  | The new thriller from Wes Craven                         | Represent that the movie was directed by Wes Craven           |
| 5  | December 12                                              | The released date of the movie                                |

There are five verbal signs found in the first *Scream* movie poster. The first signifier is “Someone has taken their love of sequels one step too far.” The statement above signified that the answer to this mystery is murder. It is because the movie explains the reason why the serial murders in this movie happened, which can make the audience feels the tension with the scary atmosphere in the movie. It is because of the word “far,” which means distance. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2022), “far” means; at, to, or from a great distance in space or time. The connotative meaning in the sentence “Someone has taken their love of sequels one step too far” is someone who takes action too far to cause the series of murders in this movie’s story.

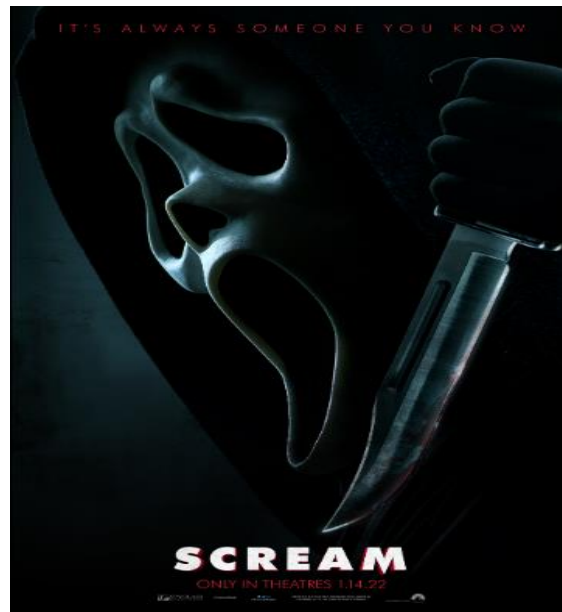
The second signifier verbal sign is “Scream,” which signifies the title of this movie and gives the horror impression. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2022), “Scream” means to say or cry something loudly, usually on a high note, mainly because of strong emotions such as anger, fear, or excitement. The denotation here is the word “Scream.” Generally, it means great emotion, scared, pain, or asking for help. That word has a connotation that indicates the word scream is a movie title.

The third signifier is the number ‘2’. The signified ‘2’ indicates a sequel to the *Scream* movie. The denotative meaning here is the ‘number.’ According to Cambridge Dictionary (2022), ‘number’ is a figure that represents a certain quantity and is used in counting, calculating, or displaying orders in a serial. Therefore, the connotative meaning that the creator wants to convey here is telling the audience that this movie is the second series of the *Scream* movie, which was released in 1997.

The fourth signifier is “The new thriller from Wes Craven.” The “signified” represents the movie directed by Wes Craven. The denotation in this sentence is Wes Craven. He is a director and writer from America who is known as a popular horror movie maker. The sentence has a connotative meaning because the creator’s purpose in writing the director’s name on the movie poster aims to attract the audience’s attention and watch the movie. Moreover, Wes Craven is an idol of some viewers.

The last signifier is “December 12”. The signified explains the date of release for that movie on December 12. This sentence has a denotative meaning because “December 12” gives viewers information about the movie’s date of release. Furthermore, the analysis of poster two has been described and classified in table 3 as follows.

**Poster 2:**



**Figure 2.** Scream Movie Poster 2022.

Based on the analysis of figure 2, there are three of verbal signs in the second *Scream* movie poster as described in table 3.

**Table 3.** Signifier and Signified of Verbal Signs found in Scream Movie Poster 2022

| No | Signifier                    | Signified                                                                                               |
|----|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | It's always someone you know | The killer in this movie is a person who related to the previous movie and is a relative of its victims |
| 2  | Scream                       | Represents the title of the movie                                                                       |
| 3  | Only in theatres 1.14.22     | Which indicates the date of movie released                                                              |

The first signifier of verbal sign in table 3 is “It’s always someone you know.” It signifies the killer in this movie is a person related to the previous film and is a relative of its victims. The above statement also creates the audience’s curiosity, so they strive to guess who the killer is, who always uses a ghost face mask. The connotation the creator wants to convey here is to tell the audience that the victims and the killer have a relationship with each other. Therefore, there is always a reason why the killer commits an act of murder.

The second signifier is “scream,” which means the movie title. The denotation of a scream is the high utterance or a loud cry or emits a piercing and shrill sound. Therefore, the word “scream” in this movie poster has a connotation that is intended to emphasize that this movie can make the audience scream a lot. This movie has a scary story and is a horror-thriller genre.

The third verbal sign is “only in theatres 1.14.22”. This signifier indicates the date when the movie was released (signified). The word “theater” has a denotative meaning:

a place, whether a building or an outdoor area, where plays and other dramatic performances are given. Meanwhile, the connotative meaning of the statement above is to inform the audience about the movie's release date so that the enthusiasts can enjoy the film at the nearest theatres.

#### *The Meaning of Non-Verbal Signs*

An image delivered the non-verbal signs in this *Scream* movie poster with frightening nuances set against a black color as a background. The researchers discovered two non-verbal signs in this movie poster, as described in Tables 4 and 5 below.

**Table 4.** Signifier and Signified of Non-Verbal Signs found in *Scream* Movie Poster 1997

| No | Signifier                    | Signified                                              |
|----|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Two faces of different women | Represents the fear expressions of two different women |
| 2  | Black color background       | Represents dark is scared                              |

The first non-verbal sign is “two faces of different women.” This signifier shows the fear expressions of two different women (signified). The connotative meaning of two pictures of women with half their faces illustrates that this movie is the second in the *Scream* movie series. Furthermore, the different expressions showed a straight face in one of the women, and the other showed a surprised expression in the picture.

The second non-verbal sign is “black color background.” This signifier indicates dark is scared (signified). In color terms, this poster is dominant with black color. According to Cerrato (2012), black is a color with strong emotions and has mystery, evil, and death. Therefore, the connotative meaning of the black color in this poster means scared and darkness.

**Table 5.** Signifier and Signified of Non-Verbal Signs found in *Scream* Movie Poster 2022

| No | Signifier                  | Signified                                                             |
|----|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Ghost face                 | Which describe the main evil entity of the serial <i>Scream</i> movie |
| 2  | Knife                      | Implies the tool used for the act of murder                           |
| 3  | The background black color | Which indicates the power of mystery                                  |

The signifier in the first non-verbal sign in table 5 is “Ghost face.” The “signified” describe the central evil entity of the serial *Scream* movie. The connotation here is that the creator wants to tell the audience that Ghost face is a killer in this movie who uses a Ghost face mask and black cloak to kill the target he is aiming for.

The second verbal sign is “knife” (signifier) which implies the tool used for the act of murder (signified). The denotation in the second non-verbal sign implies a tool used for cutting. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2022), a knife is a tool having a metal blade and a handle that can be used to cut and spread food or other things, as well as a weapon. Meanwhile, the connotation of the knife above is intended as one of the weapons

used by Ghost face to kill the target it is aiming for and launch a serial killer action carried out by Ghost face.

The signifier in the last non-verbal sign is the black background color and the signified, which indicates the power of mystery. Therefore, the denotation from the data above is color. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2022), color is the appearance of something as a result of light refraction. Likewise, Cerrato (2012) said that black is usually related to death, evil, suffering, and mystery. Moreover, the connotation of the background above is to tell the audience that this movie is a horror genre, the impression is scary, and there is a mystery in the story of this movie.

## 5. Conclusion

This study concerns verbal and non-verbal signs, especially for Scream movie poster analysis. Clearly, verbal and non-verbal signs should be understood by semiotics (Mikhaeil & Baskerville, 2019; Rigotti & Greco, 2006). Therefore, two important things have been discussed, namely, denotative and connotative meanings. Verbal signs analyzed in this poster occurred in written form. Meanwhile, non-verbal signs studied in this poster are in the form of images and colors. Therefore, verbal and nonverbal signs used in this movie poster have connotative and denotative meanings.

To sum up, the connotative meaning is more dominant than the denotative because the scream movie poster has a more hidden meaning for the viewers. The creator tends to convey their message implicitly, so the audience must interpret the meaning behind these movie posters. The presence of verbal and non-verbal signs in the movie poster reinforces the statement given by the creator to the viewers. Furthermore, movie posters also have functions to promote a movie, provide information, and also influence the audience to watch the film.

## Conflict of interest

The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest.

## Authors' contribution

The author made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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