

**A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF FRONT COVERS OF VIDEO GAME
PACKAGES AS SEEN IN PLAYSTATION 2**

A Thesis

*Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement
For the Degree of Sarjana Sastra*

TRI NOVKEL
05 185 109



ENGLISH DEPARTMENT-FACULTY OF LETTERS

ANDALAS UNIVERSITY

PADANG

2010

ABSTRAK

Dalam skripsi ini dibahas tentang tanda-tanda yang terdapat pada sampul depan Playstation 2. Tanda yang ada dibagi atas dua macam yaitu linguistik dan non linguistik. Kedua tanda tersebut dijabarkan menurut fungsinya dengan merujuk kepada diagram segitiga semiotik yang dikemukakan oleh Charles Sander Peirce. Tujuan penulisan skripsi ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan kaidah semiotik yang terdapat pada sampul depan game-game Playstation 2 yang disampaikan melalui penggunaan tanda dan bahasa.

Data diambil dari internet sebanyak 8 sampel dalam bentuk gambar (*image*). Kemudian analisis data dilakukan dengan menggunakan metode padan referensial dan distribusional. Selanjutnya penelitian ini menggunakan teori diagram segitiga semiotik yang dikemukakan oleh Charles Sander Peirce. Dalam hal ini Peirce mengemukakan bahwa ada 3 faktor pembentuk interpretasi dari sebuah tanda yaitu, *sign* (tanda), *object* (objek), *interpretant* (interpretasi). Seterusnya penulis menjabarkan makna denotatif (*denotative meaning*) dan konotatif (*connotative meaning*) yang disampaikan melalui tanda-tanda linguistik (*linguistic signs*) maupun tanda-tanda non-linguistik (*non-linguistic signs*) dengan menggunakan teori Roland Barthes. Makna denotatif mencakup makna kamus atau makna dasar dari sebuah tanda. Makna konotatif mencakup makna tambahan yang melekat pada makna denotasi yang dipengaruhi oleh faktor emosi, sejarah, dan budaya. Makna konotatif dari sebuah produk dianalisa dengan melihat hubungannya dengan makna tanda-tanda yang lain melalui tabel tahapan signifikasi (*order of signification*).

Dari analisis makna dan tanda pada sampul Playstation 2, diketahui bahwa sampul-sampul pada game Playstation 2 menciptakan makna konotatif terhadap produk yang dihasilkan dengan cara mengaitkan produk tersebut pada makna tanda-tanda lain yang berkaitan dengan kode-kode budaya tertentu (*cultural codes*) sehingga tercipta suatu pesan bahwa produk tersebut bagian dari kode budaya tersebut.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Language in terms of communication takes many forms, such as communications of human language, animal language, body language, computer language, and also video games languages as far as it is being used for communication. Video games delivers sophisticated of communicating ways by means of processing significant data and its way of communicating with others to persuade people to use (play) the game through its own language. As the video game industry continues to be successful and the consumption of games is largely unexplored, increasing resources and experiences have enabled game developer to develop impressively more complex games.

Generally, the consumers tend to see the package (cover) at glance, so that they can visualize what genre of games it is, that is by looking at the design of the game cover before they play it. As Franck Cochoy (2004) states: 'packaging is probably one of the most important and powerful mediators in the building of consumer choices.' (p.205-206). It means that packages have to capture and visually communicate on a very limited space the essence of an entire product.

The cover design can be with words, signs, sentences or symbols and it has a different type and function as directive and informative terms. Directive terms are a term which has certain function as an order to attract people to play the games and informative terms used to inform the choice of games pursuant to the linguistics attributes. This research concerns on how language is used in form

of images or pictures. Both of them have meanings based on the image represented. To analyze and uncover it, semiotics is considerably a good approach deals with this kind of circumstances. Schroeder in *Visual Consumption* states that semiotics is a good tool for this kind of image analysis as it provides a framework for both the construction and decoding of meaning in images (2002).

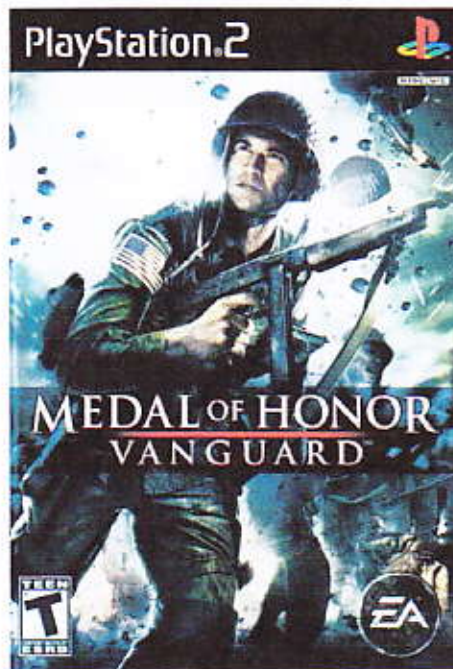
General definition of semiotics is simply a study of signs. One of definitions comes from the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure stated that language is a system of signs that expresses ideas, and is therefore comparable to a system of writing, the alphabet of deaf-mutes, symbolic rites, polite formulas, military signals, etc. It is the most important of all these systems (Saussure, in Danesi, 2004:8). Semiotics involves the study not only of what is referred to 'signs' in everyday speech, but of anything which 'stand for' something else. In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gesture and objects (Chandler, 2002:2). Contemporary studies of semiotics tend to study signs not in isolation but as part of semiotics 'sign system' (such as a medium or genre); they also involve the study of how meanings are made and how realities are represented. Semiotics can be applied to any kind of texts such as television, radio, film, music, game, advertisement, photography, painting and so on.

Based on the explanation above, the writer tries to explore how game covers, and its particular covers, allude to semiotics point of view that appears in some cover of video games package that using words, images, photographs, symbols, etc. Packages have to capture and visually communicate the essence of entire products within very limited spaces. In this research, the writer focuses on analyzing Playstation 2 front covers packages. Consequently, the primary focus is

placed on designing a message that induces consumer purchases. This approach might be fruitful from a retailing or product-marketing point of view, but it does not address the broader cultural implications of its consumption. Similar approaches are scarce, with Cochoy's (2004) work on package design and Schroeder's (2002) work on advertising as few exceptions. the writer attempts to analyze how game covers, and in particular covers, refer to broader cultural frameworks in order to communicate through visual representations.

The signs, words or pictures appear in the cover have a meaning, but not all consumer know it. In this research, the writer analyzes the meaning of the signs by identifying the linguistic sign and non-linguistic signs, as example below:

Cover Medal of Honor Vanguard



Cover 1.1 First Person Shooter

(Source: http://www.gamespot.com/pages/image_fps/boxshot.php?pid=953291)

Above image is represented a First Person Shooter game (FPS). The cover contains linguistic and non linguistic form. The cover entitled 'MEDAL OF

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data, the writer found linguistic and non linguistic signs in the front covers of Playstation 2 packages. The linguistic signs are identified from the words, sentences, and texts in the cover. The non linguistic signs are identified through the sign of the covers.

Linguistics signs are formed in written text; gives an explanation about the goal of the cover itself. Since designer rather uses short sentences or phrases to contribute their information, linguistic signs become ambiguous and difficult to understand. In order to make it clear, the advertiser combines it with non linguistic signs. Non linguistic signs are added in form of pictures. People can understand it clearly because through picture meaning can be conveyed. In this phenomenon the writer concludes that the signs with linguistic sign helps the reader and the user to understand the sign more easier. So the signs with combination of linguistic signs and non linguistic signs more easier to understand than signs only with non-linguistic signs.

If the consumers know the signs through the linguistics and non-linguistics sign in general, the meanings of signs can not be defined fully by it. Based on Roland Barthes, meaning includes denotation and connotation, both of meaning as order signification. The writer found the meanings of signs in these covers which have important roles, because the factor that influences the consumers choose the game is based on the meaning of these signs, especially the connotative meaning.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barthes, Roland. (1977). *Image, Music, Text: Essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath*. London: Fontana Press.
- Bergvall, Sven and Mikolaj Dymek. (2006). *Uncovering Sport Game Covers—The Consumption of Video Game Packages*. *Journal of European Advances in Consumer Research (Volume 7)*
- Chandler, Daniel. (2005). *Semiotic for Beginners*. Retrieved March 22, 2009, from <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/S4B/> Quoted at 19/12 2007.
- Chandler, Daniel. (2002). *Semiotics: The Basics*. London: Routledge.
- Cobley, Paul and Litza Jansz. (1997). *Introducing semiotics*. Cambridge: Totem Books.
- Cochoy, Franck. (2004). Is the modern consumer a burdian's donkey? Product packaging and consumer choice," in *Elusive consumption*, eds. Ekström and Brembeck. Oxford: Berg.
- Davies, Siân. (2002). *Semiotic Analysis of Teenage magazine Front Covers*. Retrieved August, 2009, from <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Students/sid9901.html>
- Dupree, Zach. (2006). *The Superman Logo : Logo research Newsletter*. Retrieved February 27, 2010, from www.logoblog.org/superman_logo
- Eco, Umberto. (1979). *A Theory of Semiotics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- ESRB Ratings Definition Pop-Up Page. (1994). *ESRB Game Ratings Descriptors*. Retrieved June 25, 2009, from <http://www.esrb.org/ratings>
- Dinur, Anggi Van. (2010). *Signs As Found on T-shirt in Punk Rock Show*. Andalas University: Padang.
- Hawkes, Terence. (2003). *Structuralism and Semiotics*. New York: Routledge.
- Hornby, AS. (2000). *Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. Sixth Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Johansen, Jorgen Dines and Svend Erik Larsen. (2002). *Sign In Use: An Introduction to Semiotics*. London: Routledge 11 New Fetter Lane.
- Lury, Celia. (1996). *Consumer culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press.