

THE SYMBOLIC MEANING IN THE SHORT STORY "ANAK KEBANGGAAN" BY A.A NAVIS THROUGH A SEMIOTIC APPROACH

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Abstract

This study analyzes the symbolic meaning of the short story Anak Kebanggaan by A. A. Navis and concentrates on how symbols implicitly construct social critiques related to family values and societal expectations. The main focus of this study is that semiotic research is still limited and does not provide an in-depth analysis of the symbol structures present in the text. The purpose of this study is to identify various kinds of symbols, study how signs interact with each other, and interpret their meanings in social and cultural contexts. The method used is descriptive qualitative with a semiotic approach. Ferdinand de Saussure's dyadic and Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic models are integrated into this approach. Signifiers, signifieds, icons, indices, and symbols are classified after data collection through reading and note-taking techniques. The results show that the main symbols such as characters, actions, and situations in the story represent parental pride, social pressure, and moral contradictions. The layered meanings that emerge from these symbols reflect critiques of societal norms and the illusion of pride embedded in the family structure.

Keywords: *Semiotics, Symbolic Meaning, Short Story, Social Criticism, A. A. Navis*

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature is a form of cultural expression that is born from human relations with language, social reality, and inner experiences (Novianti et al., 2025). Literary works are a type of communication that is delivered in a unique way and gives authors the freedom to convey their creative ideas (Cansrini et al., 2022). Literary works are a form of human expression that provides the beauty of language and various meanings that describe life. Literary works are the pouring of ideas that are imagined into texts that have ethical and aesthetic value (Hasibuan et al, 2020)

Literary works are the embodiment of the meaning that the author wants to convey which is conveyed through the form of literary works (Works & France, 2012). Literary works are the work of humans in which there are certain messages from the author that aim to invite readers to follow the aspirations conveyed by the author. Literary works are a manifestation of the results of human thought. Literary works are created to be enjoyed and appreciated (Jayanti et al., 2022). As a type of literature, short stories have the ability to convey a message in a brief, straightforward, and symbolic way. Authors often use economical language to include implicit meanings in the form of symbols and signs that require further interpretation.

One of A. A. Navis's most rich works of symbolic meaning and social criticism is The Pride Children's Short Story, which shows the relationships between characters and discusses social conditions through complex symbolic representations. Therefore, a method is needed that can comprehensively uncover the meaning behind these signs.

Textual semiotics is a branch of semiotics, which specifically examines texts in their various forms and levels (Piliang, 2024). The definition of semiotics can be understood through

the meaning of semiotics which comes from the word semeion, a Greek word meaning sign. Semiotics comes from the Greek word semeion meaning "sign." (Gumati et al., 2024) In simple terms, semiotics is the science that studies signs and their meanings. Semiotics is defined as a branch of science that deals with signs, starting from the system of signs, and the processes that applied to the use of signs at the end of the 18th century. J.H (Umaya Nazia, 2010). The semiotic approach is an approach that analyzes the sign system and determines the conventions that allow signs or sign structures in a variety of meaningful literature (Soepandi, 2023). Semiotics is the study of systems, norms, and conventions that allow these signals to convey meaning (Oktaviani Ursula, et al, 2022). Because the semiotics approach focuses on the analysis of signs and meanings, this approach is one of the relevant approaches in literary studies. In semiotic theory, a sign is considered to be something that represents something else and has a special relationship to the meaning it produces.

Ferdinand de Saussure's thought emphasized the relationship between markers and signifiers, while Charles Sanders Peirce developed the concept of triadics which included representations, objects, and interpretations. Both concepts provide a strong theoretical foundation in understanding how symbols work in literary texts. Because the semiotics approach focuses on the analysis of signs and meanings, this approach is one of the relevant approaches in literary studies.

In semiotic theory, a sign is considered to be something that represents something else and has a special relationship to the meaning it produces. Semiotics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on signs, symbols, and the underlying processes (Oktaviani Ursula, et al, 2022).

The semiotic approach views literary works as a sign system full of symbols. Short stories not only convey meaning denotatively, but also retain layers of connotative meaning that represent social and ideological ideas (Zahro et al., 2025)

This approach is an approach that discusses the sign system and represents another, namely meaning. In addition, the semiotic approach is an analysis method that examines the signs (Fatimah, et al, 2019).

Previous studies have shown that the study of semiotics in literary works has been carried out with various approaches. One of the relevant studies was conducted by (Lili Agustina, 2017) in the study of short stories "*My Mother's Tears in a Bowl of Chicken Soup*".

The results of his research show that the meaning in short stories can be revealed through five semiotic codes according to Roland Barthes, namely puzzle, connotative, symbolic, action, and cultural codes. According to this study, literary works are a complex system of signs and their meaning is related to the social and cultural realities of society.

In addition, research conducted by {Formatting Citation} highlighting semiotics as a qualitative research method in studying signs. In this study, semiotic analysis is more theoretical and emphasizes the relationship between signs, meanings, and the role of the reader in the interpretation of the text, which is influenced by the social context and the interpretation of the reader. This research explains that the meaning of texts not only has a clear meaning, but also has a hidden meaning that is influenced by the social context.

Despite the fact that both studies made significant contributions to the field of semiotics, there are clear differences between the two. A. M. Irfan Taufan Asfar emphasizes the conceptual and methodological aspects of semiotics, while Lili Agustina focuses more on the grouping of semiotic codes in short story texts. However, this study does not only look for codes or concepts of semiotics, but this study tries to develop a more in-depth analysis by connecting the structure of signs with social context and understanding meaning as a whole. Thus, this study not only identifies symbols but also uncovers how symbols construct meaning

and represent social criticism in the short story "Proud Child" by A. A. Navis, by integrating the semiotic approaches of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to find and analyze the symbols found in the story 'Anak D'Pride' by A.A Navis and find the meaning contained in them. It is hoped that this research will improve our understanding of the works of A. A. Navis and help the development of Indonesian literary research, especially related to semiotic analysis.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative semiotics approach, and the type of research used is descriptive qualitative research. This is in line with the opinion Sugiyono which states that “*Qualitative research methods are research methods used to research on the condition of natural objects, where the researcher is the key instrument*” (Sugiono, 2019). The purpose of this study is to describe and interpret the symbolic meanings contained in several selected short stories without using statistical calculations.

Text analysis is a research design used, with short stories as the main object of research. This study concentrates on the analysis of signs, which include symbols, indexes, and icons according to Charles Sanders Peirce as well as the concepts of *signifiers* and *signifieds* according to Ferdinand de Saussure.

This research focuses on the short stories chosen because of their relevance to the study of semiotics and the richness of symbols contained in them. This research will analyze the symbolic meaning of the elements of the short story, including the characters, setting, plot, and the use of language that contains semiotic signs. This study was conducted on April 11, 2026. This research was carried out in a non-field manner, or a literature study, namely by analyzing written literature, such as books, scientific journals, and short stories.

The study used literature studies and read-notes to collect data. The researcher had collected data by reading the novel thoroughly before noting the parts that contained signs or symbols associated with the study of semiotics. Methods such as documentation are not thoroughly discussed.

In this study, the data was analyzed in several stages. These stages include (1) data reduction, by selecting and focusing data relevant to symbols and signs; (2) data presentation, by grouping data based on the type of sign, such as icons, indexes, and symbols; and (3) drawing conclusions, by understanding the symbolic meaning contained in short stories by using a semiotic approach to understand the relationship between symbols and signs in short stories.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on the semiotic analysis that has been carried out, it was found that the meaning of symbols in the short story "Anak Keprigaan" by A. A. Navis through a semiotic approach is built through the use of signs in the form of markers and markers, symbols, indexes, and icons that represent the social reality of society.

According to the analysis that has been carried out, there are 13 markers and markers, 8 symbols, 17 indexes, 3 icons found in the text. The text contains characters, settings, and objects that help form semiotic signs.

The findings of the study show that markers and signs are an element in building meaning because every word, phrase, and event in the text is related to social concepts, such as hope, success, and family pride. The index found to be the most dominant among the others is that the text shows a strong causal relationship between the actions of the characters and the

conditions they experience, while the icons represent a direct picture of the reality of social life raised in the story. The data obtained showed that all the signs found were interrelated and formed a unity of meaning in the text. These findings show that the short story has a systematic and organized sign structure in conveying symbolic meaning.

The following will be presented in table 1 of the markers and signs in the text of the short story "Anak Keprigaan".

Table 1. Markers and Signs in the Text of the Short Story "Anak de Prigegaan"

No.	Markers	Signs	Remarks
1.	The word/title of "doctor" that Ompi wants	A symbol of success, honor, and high social status	Designation of "doctor"
2.	The condition of an only child	The center of hope, the focus of the elderly life	Only child
3.	Ompi's attitude that always makes his son proud	Excessive parental love + unrealistic expectations	Over-ambitious
4.	The story of Ompi's wife	Sadness, loss, and loneliness	Memories of a deceased wife
5.	Ompi takes care of a child without a partner	Great sacrifice and responsibility	Raising your own children
6.	Aging physical condition	Limited time and future worries	Ompi's old age
7.	Ompi wants his son to become a doctor.	The medical profession is considered noble and successful.	Doctor's Aspirations
8.	The child's name was changed to Edward, Ismail, then Indra Budiman.	The belief that a name can bring good luck.	Changing the child's name
9.	Ompi said his son would become a big man.	High ideals imposed on children.	Hope for the future of the child
10.	People praised Ompi's son.	The influence of people's speech on father's pride.	Community praise
11.	Ompi wants to match his son with a beautiful girl.	The desire to see children get married.	Matchmaking
12.	Ompi fell ill after being disappointed.	Mentally devastating stress that destroys the physical.	Getting sick
13.	Pak Pos brought a yellow telegram.	Stressful news	Telegram

Furthermore, in the text of the short story there are 8 symbols, 17 indexes, 3 icons that will be presented in Table 2 Symbols, Indexes, Icons in the short story "Anak Keprigaan"

Table 2.1 Identification of Symbols in Short Story Text

No.	Symbols	Remarks
1.	Doctor	Honors
2.	Treasures	Guarantee of the future
3.	Only child	Hope/successor
4.	Disappointment	The destruction of hope
5.	Education	Success
6.	Night	loneliness
7.	Qualification	Pride
8.	Hard work	Responsibilities

Table 2.2 Index Identification in Short Story Text

No.	Table of Contents	Remarks
1.	Sadness	Loss
2.	Loneliness	Death
3.	Longing	Loss
4.	Affection	Children
5.	Indulge	Ribbon
6.	Laziness	Upbringing
7.	Disappointment	Hope
8.	Sadness	Failure
9.	Regret	Statement
10.	Conflict	Opposition
11.	Hope	Quote
12.	Ambition	Desires
13.	Hard work	Responsibilities
14.	Sacrifice	Affection
15.	Fatigue	Jobs
16.	Pressure	Hope
17.	Downturn	Failure

Table 2.3 Identification of Icons in Short Story Text

No.	Icons	Remarks
1.	Cover	The Value of Indra Budiman's Fight
2.	Telegram	Message delivery
3.	Hours/Hour	Indicates time

Semiotically, each sign has a meaning that is not only direct but also hidden. Therefore, to better understand the meanings contained in short stories, this study also analyzes denotative and connotative meanings as part of the sign interpretation process. As for the text, there are 10 connotative meanings and 10 denotative meanings.

The following is presented in Table 3 connotative and denotative:

Table 3.1 Connotative Meanings

No.	Connotative	Meaning/Meaning
1.	Pride child	Not only an ordinary child, but a child who is very proud and is the hope of parents
2.	Heartbreak	Not really devastated, but very sad feeling
3.	Hope is extinct	Lost or unfulfilled hopes
4.	Up the Stairs	Very angry/high emotions
5.	His heart was broken	Very sad or devastated
6.	Bad breath	People who like to speak evil or slander.
7.	Red face	Not just the color of the face, but a sign of embarrassment or offending
8.	A play on his depraved life	Life full of pretense/lies
9.	A stiff heart	Feelings of fear, anxiety, or unwellness.
10.	Imagining	Highly hopeful or imaginative

Table 3.2 Denotative Meanings

No.	Denotative	Quotes in text
1.	Clerk (occupation)	"In his youth, Ompi became a clerk in the Resident's office."
2.	Collecting treasures	"Then he had time to accumulate a great amount of wealth."
3.	His wife died	"Since his wife died twelve years later..."
4.	Writing on paper	"When Ompi started to think of the additional name, he took paper and pencil."
5.	Only child	"... his attention was spilled on his only child..."
6.	Send a school report card	"It turns out that every semester Indra Budiman sends his school report card..."
7.	Pak Pos came with a letter	"On a bad day, Mr. Pos came with a handful of letters in his hand."
8.	Read the letter	"When Ompi read his son's letter announcing his progress..."
9.	Falling seated	"But the accident is getting worse. That is when Ompi fell seated."
10.	Sign receipts	"A moment when I received and signed the receipt of the telegram."

Discussion

The results of the analysis of the short story "Anak Keprigaan" show that the structure of the meaning of the text consists of a system of signs that are organized in the form of markers and signs and categorized into three main categories: symbols, indexes, and icons. The collected data has been processed and presented in the form of a table, with systematic and interpretive categorization results.

Based on the research, there were 13 data markers, 8 symbols, 17 indexes, and 3 icons found. The results show that the signs in short stories are very complex and layered. The themes of hope, ambition, parental affection, as well as disappointment and adversity dominate the signs in the text.

For example, "doctor" indicates success, honor, and high social status, and "wealth" indicates future security, and "title" indicates social pride. In contrast, indices such as "sadness", "disappointment", and "stress" show a relationship between an individual's actions and the emotional effects they experience. Icons such as "report card", "telegram", and "clock" serve as a direct representation of the situation experienced by the characters in the story.

The results of the study also show that the meaning of short stories is not only limited to the semiotic sign system; It also builds through layers of language meaning known as denotative and connotative meanings. In this study, ten denotative meanings and ten connotative meanings improve the structure of the meaning of the text.

Words that have a literal meaning, such as "only child", which means having only one child, "doctor", which means a job in the medical field, "report card", which means learning outcomes, and "school", which means a place of education.

Connotative meanings, on the other hand, indicate the existence of deeper meanings and interpretations. For example, "proud child" not only means a proud child, but it also symbolizes the parents' high expectations. "Doctors", on the other hand, are considered a symbol of high social status and success. In addition, words that are considered connotative,

such as "sadness", "disappointment", "pain", are considered psychological suffering, "silence" is considered resignation, and "cry" is considered an emotional outpouring.

Ferdinand de Saussure developed the theory of semiotics, which states that signs are made up of signifiers and signifieds. This theory may explain the findings of this study. Markers such as "doctor" and "only child" are used in these short stories to indicate the parents' hopes, social status, and focus on life.

In addition, the classification of signs used in this study is in line with Charles Sanders Peirce's idea of dividing signs into three categories: symbols, indexes, and icons. In short stories, symbols indicate social value, while indexes indicate cause-and-effect relationships.

Denotative and connotative analysis in the context of language meaning supports semiotic results. Connotative meanings relate to social and cultural experiences, while denotative meanings show a direct relationship between markers and reality.

The results of this scientific research show that literature not only conveys meaning directly but also uses complex symbols and connotations. That society in short stories uses social status as a measure of success is shown by the dominance of symbols such as "doctor" and "title".

However, a number of indices, such as "disappointment", "sadness", and "getting sick", show a cause-and-effect relationship between parental expectations and the child's psychological state. Phrases such as "bad report cards" and "crying" add to the picture of the emotional stress experienced by the characters.

This analysis shows that the meaning of short stories is formed through the interaction between signs, social contexts, and interpretations made by readers. It shows a depth of meaning that can only be understood through literal meaning.

Previous studies have also found that parental figures are often a symbol of social pressure on children, according to the study. This research is also in line with the study of literary semiotics which states that literary texts are a system of signs that represent social and psychological reality.

However, this study shows a difference in the intensity of the use of connotative meanings that are more dominant in describing the emotional state of the characters. In addition to narrative conflict, this short story uses symbols and connotations to deepen psychological meaning.

IV. CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that A.A. Navis's short story "Anak Keprigaan" contains a complex system of signs that are built through markers and signs and categorized into symbols, indexes, and icons that are interconnected to form meaning. According to the analysis, the meaning in short stories is not only denotative, but develops through social and cultural contexts connotatively. In particular, its meaning describes parents' expectations, desires, and pressures on children. The results answer the purpose of the research, which is to identify and uncover the symbolic meaning in the text. In addition, these results offer assistance in improving semiotic approaches by combining denotative and connotative analyses. All of this contributes to a broader understanding of the meaning of literary works.

Practically, the findings of this study show that the interpretation of literary works through a semiotic approach can be used as a tool for social reflection, especially with regard to how excessive expectations impact individual development. In addition, these findings can be used in the literary learning process to improve the ability to critically analyze the meaning of texts.

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