

A Semiotic Analysis: The Severity of Mount Merapi Eruption Portrayed on Kemal Jufri's Photos as the 2nd Prize Stories Winner of World Press Photo

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ABSTRACT

This Paper Entitled “A Semiotic Analysis: The Severity of Mount Merapi Eruption Portrayed on Kemal Jufri's Photos as The 2nd Prize Stories Winner of World Press Photo”. It is aimed to uncover the meaning behind the photographs and to discover symbols, indexes and modes that appear in the photo stories. The study is qualitative which utilizes Eco's (1994) Hermetic drift theory. The theory mainly focuses on the meaning of a symbol which not only has one meaning, but two or more meaning if the symbol is put in a different context. The main data are 12 photographs which were used in the photo stories taken from www.wordpressphoto.org. The study revealed the Juffri's photo stories about the disaster of Mt. Merapi eruption. The photos portray the suffering of the people near Mt. Merapi, which directly got the worst effect of the disaster. The photo story also portrays collectiveness of Indonesian people to help the victims of the disaster.

Keywords: *Semiotic, Symbolic analysis, index analysis, modes analysis, Photojournalism, Photo analysis*

INTRODUCTION

Semiotics is a study which concerns everything that can be taken as 'signs'. The study also concerns meaning-making and representation of the sign in words, images, sounds, gesture and object (Chandler, 2002, p. 2). Signs are never arbitrary, and 'motivation' should be formulated in relation to the sign-maker and the context in which the sign is produced, and not in isolation from the act of producing analogies and classifications (Kress, 2006, p. 8). Therefore, semiotics can be used to analyze the signs that appear in the images. Everything that appears in the images can be recognized as the sign such as footprint, thunder and smoke.

Peirce (as cited in Chandler, 2002, p. 38) says a symbol is a sign which refers to an object denoted by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the symbol to be interpreted as referring to some object. Then, index is the element of the signs which is not arbitrary but directly connected in some way (physically or causally) to

the signified in which the link can be observed and inferred (Chandler, 2002, p 37). As a result, photos or images can contain symbols and indexes that build the meaning of the images. There are some examples of photos that contain symbols and indexes, such as news photographs. As one of media products, news photographs or known as photojournalism not only consists of pictures of events but also covers news and facts (Becker, 1995, p. 5).

In photojournalism, there is a term called "narrative photo" or "photo story". Unlike a written story, a compelling photo story requires not only complication and resolution, but also action that can be photographed (Kobré, 2004, p. 147). Accordingly, a photo story cannot stand for only a single photo to make meaning, but there should be two photos or more to create a story line. The story line determines the sequences of pictures in the layout (Kobré, 2004, p. 159).

There is also a photo story about the tragedy of Mount Merapi's eruption. Mount Merapi is one of the world's most active volcanoes. Mount

Merapi is located in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The last eruption of Mount Merapi happened on October 2010. That phenomenon was the largest eruption since 1870 (BBC, 2010). The eruption made the area near Mount Merapi was covered by ashes released by Mount Merapi. This phenomenon caused more than 70.000 people to have been evacuated. In the disaster, one hundred people had been killed, many animals had also been killed, and many of the local people had been injured (BBC, 2010). The eruption attracted worldwide attention, especially the journalists and photographers.

Many journalists and photographers came to the area near Mount Merapi to report the phenomenon. One of the journalist photographers who came to report the phenomenon was Kemal Jufri. Kemal Jufri joined the World Press Photo contest in 2011 by sending Mount Merapi eruption photos. He won the second prize winner of World Press Photo 2011 (World Press Photo, 2011). In his picture, he showed the

severity of Mount Merapi eruption, such as the eruption, the victims and the area affected.

Kemal Jufri is an Indonesian journalist photographer who won the world press photo competition, World Press Photo is an independent, non-profit organization based in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Founded in 1955, the organization is known in holding the world's largest and most prestigious annual press photography contest (Worldpressphoto.org). In the first fifty years of establishment, World Press Photo becomes a truly global platform for professional press photography (Panzer, 2005). The mission of World Press Photo competition is to encourage high professional standards in photojournalism and to promote a free and unrestricted exchange of information.

Some studies have investigated photojournalism by using semiotic analysis. In 2010, Lovelace investigated Vietnam War photographs. Goodnow (2010) discovered any underlying visual bias

found in the photo essay of Obama and Clinton. Caple and Knox (2012), investigated the online news galleries as a new genre of multimodal news reporting.

Lovalance (2010) published her paper entitled iconic photos of the Vietnam War era: A semiotic analysis as a means of understanding. There are 5 selected photos related to the Vietnam War. This semiotic analysis used the method of Mendelson and Smith (2006), firstly identifying the sign in the image then determining what the sign signify, and lastly is exploring the meanings of the signs in a cultural context: in this case the context of the Vietnam War era. She found the 5 photographs of Vietnam War uncovered the common threads of emotional outrage, all of the photos convey emotion through the characters in the photos, the portrayal of innocence: the killing of the innocent becomes a common theme of Vietnam War.

Goodnow (2010) discovered any underlying visual bias found in the photo essay of Obama and Clinton, the

two candidates of US presidential election in Time magazine. There are 8 photos analyzed, 4 photos for each candidate's photo essay. She used social semiotic theory of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) to focus on content and style of photographs. From the analysis, it is found that the overall compositions of the photo essay reveal obvious bias in the images. The two candidates are portrayed differently. Obama images feel more familiar than the Clinton images through the use of short size, gaze, framing and color.

Caple and Knox (2012), on their paper entitled *Online news galleries, photojournalism and the photo essay*, investigated the online news galleries as a new genre of multimodal news reporting. The researchers used three steps to analyze the data. First step is an exploratory survey of a small number of image galleries in online newspapers. The second step is surveying English language on online newspapers and investigating the uptake of multimedia, in particular, galleries. Lastly, to analyze the progress at the time of

writing, involves a more detail analysis of a small sample of galleries. The findings of this paper suggest that the established practices of newspapers reporting may make it more difficult to tell hard-news stories in galleries than telling 'human interest' or soft-news stories.

METHODOLOGY

As the previous studies which have been mentioned, this study also concern on photojournalism especially about photo story. Hermetic theory proposed by Eco (1994) is used as a guide to achieve the goal of this study. The purpose why hermetic drift is chosen as the guidance of this study is because the theory mainly focuses on the meaning of a symbol which does not only have one meaning, but two or more if the symbol is put in a different context.

Eco (1994) provided Hermetic drift to discover the meaning in the photograph. The analyzed by C₁, C₂, and C₃. Therefore, C₁ represents the first Content or literal meaning of the sign. C₂ or the Second Content

represents a connotation which comes from the Expression (E₁) plus the first Content (C₁). The last is C₃ or the Third Content which represents the meaning of the sign according to a context given.

The data consisted of the photo essays of Mount Merapi eruption taken from www.worldpressphoto.org as the 2nd story winner photographed by Indonesian photojournalist, Kemal Juffri. Here, the photo essays of Mount Merapi eruption were the data source of this study because the disaster was the hot issues in the world mass media and was the 2nd winner in the most prestigious press photo competition in the world.

To conclude, there were 12 photographs of Kemal Juffri about the disaster of Mount Merapi eruption taken from www.worldpressphoto.org. Furthermore, the photos were analyzed by using Eco's (1994) Hermetic Drift theory to discover hidden meaning behind the photographs, specifically about the portrayal of the severity of mount Merapi eruption in 2011.

To obtain a comprehensive analysis, symbol and indexes that appear in each photograph were analyzed by using Eco's Hermetic Drift (1994) theory. The analysis which uses Eco's (1994) is based on such components as E1, C1, C2, and C3. E1 represents an expression or sign. C1 represents the first content or literal meaning of the sign. C2 or the second content represents a connotation which comes from the expression (E1) plus the first content (C1). The last is C3 or the third content which represents the meaning of the sign according to a context given. Thus, to fully understand the connotative meaning in the photograph, the color, pose, facial expression, fashion, and the basic techniques of photography are elaborated in the analysis to uncover the meaning of the photographs.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

According to the photo story, there are 4 photos which were analyzed. The photos show 4 conditions that are caused by the eruption; 1) damages, 2) causalities, 3) the process of evacuation, and 4) refugees.

The following analysis is the 4 different conditions that portrayed in the photo story:

1. Damages

The picture shows the effect of Mt. Merapi eruption. The picture below is located at Argomulyo, Yogyakarta. Almost all the houses at Argomulyo were damaged by the hot cloud and the ash from Mt. Merapi. In the picture below, you can see the living room covered by the ash from Mt. Merapi eruption.



Furniture burns in a house layered with volcanic debris, in the village of Argomulyo, which was badly hit by a pyroclastic flow from the erupting Merapi volcano.

Table 1 Diagram of neoplastic connotative growth on photo stories 2
Source: Eco (1994)

<p style="text-align: center;">C3 (Connotation + context)</p> <p>Living Room is a place where the family gathers. It was burned and covered by Mount Merapi ashes</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">E1 + Context</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Living Room covered by the ashes of Mount Merapi</p>	
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<p>connoting the massive eruption and damages</p>		
	<p>E1 (Sign) Living Room</p>	<p>C2 (Connotation which comes from the expression) Living Room which covered volcanic ashes and burning wood connotes massive disaster</p>
	<p>E1 (Expression of the sign) Living Room covered by the ashes of mount Merapi and burned wood beside the chair</p>	<p>C1 (First content or literal meaning of the sign) Living Room is a room in a house for general and informal</p>

		everyday use by the family	
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The photo shows furniture burned in a house layered with volcanic debris, in the village of Argomulyo, which was badly hit by a pyroclastic flow from the erupting Merapi volcano. Based on the table above, the first E1 or sign is living room, while the second E1 or expression of the sign is the fire and ashes which covered the living room. C1 or a first content in this photo is a living room defined as a place in a house for general and informal use by the family, while C2 is a connotation which comes from the expression. In the picture, the expression is the living room which covered by volcanic ashes and the burning wood. It connotes the disaster is critical and massive. The third E1 is expression and context in this photo is living room which covered by Mount Merapi ashes which

indicates the critical disaster. The last is C3 or Connotation with context. In this photo, the C3 is the living room where the family usually gathers, was burned and covered by Mount Merapi ashes. It indicates the massive eruption and causes critical damages.

Living room is a symbol of family and living in a house. In this photo, the living room is damaged and burned, which symbolizes gloom and death while the ashes and fire are indexes of massive disaster of mount Merapi eruption.

Juffri uses medium long shot in this photograph. According to Chandler (1994), as cited in <http://www.aber.ac.uk>, medium long shot is used to give tight presentation. In this case, Juffri uses a medium long shot in this photo to give the general

presentation of the damages caused by Merapi eruption.

According to Zammito (2005), color has particular connotation. In this photo, grey color is dominant color which means critical, sadness, seriousness, moreover red color also appears in this photo. It symbolizes hot and danger.

2. Casualties

The photo shows a body which lies on the ground in the village of Argomulyo. Juffri begins to show the victim caused by Mt. Merapi eruption. In fact, it is not only one person died because of Mt. Merapi eruption, but there are more than 350 people were killed by the disaster.



A body lies covered by volcanic ash, in the village of Argomulyo.

Table 2 Diagram of neoplastic connotative growth on photo stories 3

Source: Eco (1994)

<p style="text-align: center;">C3 (Connotation + context) Human dead body covered by the ashes of mount Merapi indicates the eruption caused the damages and casualties</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">E1 + Context The victim of mount Merapi eruption</p>		
	<p style="text-align: center;">E1 (Sign) Human Dead Body</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">C2 (Connotation which comes from the expression) Human dead body covered by volcanic ashes connotes the disaster caused casualties</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">E1 (Expression of the sign) The Human dead body covered by the ashes of mount Merapi</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">C1 (First content or literal meaning of the sign) Dead Body is a</p>	

		natural object consisting of a dead animal or person	
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The photo shows a body which lies covered by volcanic ash, in the village of Argomulyo. Based on the table above, the first E1 or sign is a dead body while the second E1 or expression of the sign is the dead body covered by the Merapi ash. C1 or a first content in this photo is human dead body defined as a natural object consisting of a dead animal or person, and C2 is a connotation which comes from the expression. In this picture, the expression is a human dead body covered by volcanic ashes. It connotes the disaster caused the casualties. The third E1 is expression and context in this photo is dead body covered by Mount Merapi ashes which indicates the critical disaster. The last is C3 or Connotation with context. In this photo, the C3 is the dead body and

ruined village damaged by the eruption. It indicates the massive eruption and caused critical damages.

The photo shows the foreground of dead body laid in the street with the ruining village in the background of the photo taken from high angle and medium long shot. It indicates the eruption causing the casualties and damages, high angle affects this photograph to give the sense of powerless to the people in that area to avoid the disaster.

The ruined village is the index of the damages caused by mount Merapi eruption while the dead body is the symbol of death and critical of the disaster, the grey color is dominant in the photo which means seriousness, sadness, and critical (Zammito, 2005).

3. Process of Evacuation

The photo shows the rescuers carrying the victim of Mt. Merapi eruption. Juffri begins to portray the process of evacuation in the sixth photo. It can be seen on the picture

when the officer and the volunteer hold the corpse bag. The picture also shows the hectic condition of the evacuation process. It can be seen from the flying ash caused by the officer's and the volunteer's steps.



Indonesian rescue workers carry the body of a victim of the eruption of Mount Merapi.

Table 4 Diagram of neoplastic connotative growth on photo stories 6

Source: Eco (1994)

<p>C3 (Connotation + context) The citizens and Indonesian special</p>	<p>E1 + Context The process of evacuation</p>	
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<p>forces working together indicates the disaster is critical and massive, which attracts special attention from the government</p>			
	<p>E1 (Sign) The citizens and Indonesian special forces</p>		<p>C2 (Connotation which comes from the expression) The citizens and Indonesians special forces which work together to evacuate the victims connotes the process of evacuation that should be performed collectively and rapidly</p>
	<p>E1 (Expression of the sign) The Citizens and Indonesian special forces working together to evacuate</p>	<p>C1 (First content or literal meaning of the sign) Citizen is a person who</p>	

	the victims of the eruption	legally belongs to a country and has the rights and protection from that country. The special forces are military units highly trained to perform unconventional, often high-risk missions
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The photo shows Indonesian rescue workers carrying the body of a victim of the eruption of Mount Merapi. Based on the table, the First E1 or the signs of this photo are the citizens and Indonesian Special Forces which carry up the victims of mount Merapi eruption. The second E1 or the expression of signs portrays the citizens and Indonesian Special Forces working together to evacuate the victims defined as a person who legally

belongs to a country and has the rights and protection from that country, while the Special Forces indicated with red beret are military units highly trained to perform unconventional, often high-risk missions. C2 or the connotation of the expressions, the citizens and Indonesian special forces which work together to evacuate the victims connotes the process of

evacuation that should be performed collectively and rapidly. Then, C3 is the connotation of the sign according of the context. Indonesian Special Forces indicated with red beret which work together with the citizens, indicates the disaster is critical and massive which attracts special attention from the government and Indonesian Special Forces.

Special Forces is the symbol of authority's seriousness in evacuating the casualty around Mount Merapi. While the victim carried by rescuers is the severity index of Mount Merapi eruption which caused many people died.

This photo was taken from the eye level with a mid shot. The photo shows general impression of the evacuation process. The rescuers are placed as a foreground in the photo, it means the rescuers play the important role in this photo, especially Indonesian Special Forces. Indonesian Special Forces positioned in the right of the photo give bigger impression than the citizens positioned in the left side of the photo. The citizen

rescuers positioned in the left side of the victims express sadness expression while carrying the victims of the eruption. According to Ekman (2003), sadness and agony are indicated with mouth open, corners of lips down, raised cheek, eyes look downward and upper eyelids drops. Then, Indonesian Special Forces used masks and googles to protect their respiration from the volcanic ash which can cause respiration problem.

The background of the photo shows the damage caused by the eruption, while on the left side, there is the dead body of the farm animal placed between the burned car and broken house. The dead body of the farm animal, framed between burned car, and the broken house, indicates the eruption caused the economic activity in the village stopped. It also shows that the eruption caused big losses.

4. Refugees

The photo was taken at Gemampir village. They were so many women holding the children on their

arms in the photo. From the facial expression, it can be seen that they were sad to be re-evacuated to another

safety zone. Their camp was not safety anymore, so they need to move to another camp.



People gather at a shelter in Gemampir village. They were later forced to be re-evacuated to another camp even

further from the continuously erupting Mount Merapi, as authorities expanded the safety zone.

Table 4.11 Diagram of neoplastic connotative growth on photo stories 11
 Source: Eco (1994)

C3 (Connotation + context) People gather at a shelter in Gemampir village. They were later forced to be re-	E1 + Context Refugees gather at a shelter in Gemampir village.	
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<p>evacuated to another camp even further from the continuously erupting Mount Merapi, as authorities expanded the safety zone.</p>			
	<p>E1 (Sign) Refugees</p>		<p>C2 (Connotation which comes from the expression) Refugees gather in the shelter implies that mount Merapi was still erupting</p>
	<p>E1 (Expression of the sign) Refugees gather in the shelter</p>	<p>C1 (First content or literal meaning of the sign) Refugee is a person who flees to a shelter, or place of safety</p>	

People gather at a shelter in Gemampir village. They were later forced to be re-evacuated to another

camp even further from the continuously erupting Mount Merapi, as authorities expanded the safety

zone. Based on the table above, the First E1 or the signs of this photo are the refugees. The second E1 or the expression of signs portrays refugees which gather in the shelter. C1 or the first content or literal meaning of refugee is a person who flees to a shelter, or place of safety. C2 or the connotation of the expressions portrays refugees which gather in the shelter. It implies that mount Merapi was still erupting. Then, C3 is the connotation of the sign of the context. This photograph portrays the refugees gathering at a shelter in Gemampir village. They were later forced to be re-evacuated to another camp even further from the continuously erupting Mount Merapi, as authorities expanded the safety zone.

The symbol in this photo is the refugees that symbolize the massiveness of the disaster and caused the people around mount was fled to find shelter, while the index in the photograph is the expression of the refugees portraying agony and sadness. According to Ekman (2003), the expression of mouth open, corners

of lips down, raised cheek, eyes look downward and upper eyelids dropshows agony and sadness.

The photographer used a neutral view with midshot which informs the refugees' condition in the camp. The refugees who are mostly old women show deeply sadness expression. It can be seen on the photo in which a woman carried a child by her left hand and the other hand touched her head. The expression of the woman and her gesture in the photo indicate what she feels about the disaster.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study, a semiotic analysis of the severity of mount Merapi eruption portrayed in Kemal juffri's photos as the 2nd prize stories winner of World Press Photo, aims to reveal the severity of Mt. Merapi eruption portrayed in the Juffri photo story, using Eco's Hermetic Drift (1994). In addition, the symbol, index and mode are also analyzed to uncover the whole meaning in the photographs.

The signs appeared in the photo were analyzed by Eco's (1994) hermetic drift, which involves the context of the sign to reveal the meaning behind the photograph. In the story, the symbol and index can be concluded that (33,3%) portray the victims of eruption and (41,6%) portray the damages and losses, while the element of modes in the story shows that (58.3%) photos in the story are dominated by grey & black color. According to Zammito (2005), those colors are related to death and sadness. The fashion identity in this photo shows the people wearing uniform and collar. According to Barnard (2006), the uniform is related to the collectivism, in the stories, people who wear the uniform appeared in (25%) of the photos and collarrelated to the citizens appeared (8,3%) of the photos. A sad facial expression indicated by mouth open, corners of the lips down, raised cheek, eyes look downward and upper eyelids drop (Ekman &Keltner,2000) appeared in the (25%) photos in the story.

The research found that the Juffri's photo story about the disaster of Mt. Merapi eruption portrays the suffering of the people near Mt. Merapi, which directly got the worst effect of the eruption disaster. The photo story also portrays collectiveness of Indonesian people to help the victims of the disaster.

For future research, it is suggested not only to analyze the picture but also to analyze the caption by using particular framework to see the correlation between the photo and the caption.

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