

## Peirce's Triadic Model of Sign on Tempo Digital Newspaper Cover 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024 Edition

Dwi Khumaeroh Sa'adah,<sup>1</sup> Myrna Nur Sakinah<sup>2</sup>

Correspondence author: Dwi [saadahdk@gmail.com](mailto:saadahdk@gmail.com)

State Islamic University of Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

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### Abstract

Signs can be found anywhere, as exemplified by the cover of the October 21, 2024, edition of the Tempo digital newspaper, which reflects the prevailing political landscape in Indonesia. This research aims to classify the sign elements in the illustration of the Tempo digital newspaper cover and analyze their meanings. The method employed to examine these signs and meanings is qualitatively descriptive, utilizing the Triadic Model of Sign theory established by Peirce. The results of this research indicate that the seven components of the sign present in the cover show the relationship among representamen (qualisign, sinsign, and legisign), object (icon, index, and symbol), and interpretant (rheme, dicisign, and argument), which collectively contribute to the formation of meaning. This research retains significance due to its potential to enhance readers' understanding of signs and their meanings while raising public awareness of signs that often communicate implicit messages. The research concludes that the signs featured on the cover of Tempo's digital newspaper, 'Dwifungsi Pengusaha-Menteri,' appear to deliver a cautionary message to the audience, prompting them to observe and evaluate the actions of the ministers.

*Keywords:* signs, Triadic Model, Peirce, Tempo

### INTRODUCTION

In everyday life, we communicate through language, involving an exchange of signs throughout the process. Burgoon pointed out that human communication produces meanings between individuals by exchanging signs (Burgoon et al., 2021). So, what exactly is a sign? A sign is an entity that denotes or represents another thing in a particular context or capacity (Suryana, 2021). Ramdani and Sakinah assert that a mental image, thought, or notion is considered as a sign (Ramdani & Sakinah, 2023). Furthermore, every image, object, expression, or other entity can be considered a sign if its existence implies something beyond itself. Consequently, regardless of its type, every sign must represent something beyond its existence (Safavi, 2024). Signs can be explored within semiotics, which focuses on the creation of meaning and the representation of reality through signs, sign systems, and processes of signification (Chandler, 2022). Signs serve as an instrument for conveying information and are present in all sorts of places. When seeking specific information through digital news, finding an article or digital newspaper showing an appealing visual or artistic cover that draws readers in is quite simple. Many of these illustrations are thoughtfully designed, aligning effectively with the content explored in the book or digital newspaper. Naturally, these images or illustrations serve as signs that signify various other concepts.

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Corresponding Author: Dwi Khumaeroh Sa'adah, Bandung, English Literature Department, State Islamic University of Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung, Indonesia, 40535. email: [saadahdk@gmail.com](mailto:saadahdk@gmail.com)

The Tempo digital newspaper's cover stands out for various illustrations and signs, both explicitly and implicitly presented. Tempo Media Group generally releases political news in Tempo. This is the inaugural digital newspaper that operates independently of government affiliation (Sevtiany & Kurnia, 2023). The newspaper's covers typically reflect the current political scenery in Indonesia. Consequently, every element above the covers serves as a symbol indicating something beyond itself. On October 21, 2024, Tempo published a digital newspaper titled 'Dwifungsi Pengusaha-Menteri,' which means Dual Function of Businessmen-Ministers, that extensively examined the involvement of businessmen among ministers, highlighting the potential for conflicts of interest in decision-making (Tempo, 2024). The cover of the digital newspaper is believed to indicate the content of the news within, serving as a warning to readers.

The writer employs Charles Sanders Peirce's theory, specifically the triadic model, to clarify the meaning of the signs displayed on the cover of the Tempo digital newspaper. This triadic model outlines the connection between signs or representamen, objects, and interpretant. Representamens signify other entities, objects indicate their intended purpose or significance, and interpretants are the potential meanings or interpretations derived from representamens (Afisi, 2020). For instance, the representamen can consist of the term "tree," a depiction of a tree, or the actual tree itself. The object refers to a genuine tree in nature or a forest. The interpretant may represent an abstract notion of a tree, an impression of a personal encounter with a tree, or an emotion triggered by a phrase or image of a tree. A simplified version of this triadic model is displayed in the figure below.

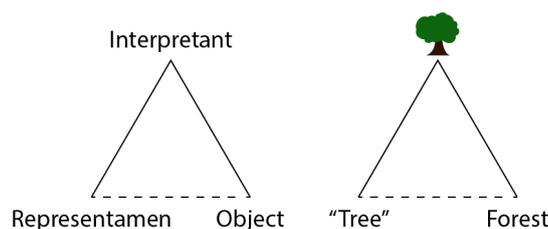


Figure 1: Peirce's Triadic Model of Sign Representation  
Source: Fetlegen 2015

Furthermore, Peirce in Bellucci stated that signs can be categorized based on three specifications: first, their modes of existence as representamens; second, their modes of reference to their objects; and third, their modes of reference to their interpretants. Signs can be categorized as qualisigns (abstract characteristics), suisigns (particular objects or events), or legisigns (general types, laws, or habits). In the second classification, signs can be categorized as icons (signs whose reference to their respective objects is based on the characteristic features of the signs themselves), indexes (signs whose reference to their specific objects arises from genuine dyadic relations between the signs and those objects), or symbols (signs whose reference to their respective objects is determined by laws or conventions that define their interpretation as referring to those objects). In the third classification, signs are categorized as rheme (a sign whose proper interpretant disregards any distinction between the sign and its object), dicisign (a sign whose proper interpretant denotes the object as distinct from the sign itself), or arguments (a sign whose proper interpretant identifies it as a sign) (Bellucci, 2020).

The previous research that led to the conduct of this study was conducted by Wijaya et al., which is entitled "*Semiotics Analysis of Pandemic Covid-19 Conducting in Tempo and Gatra Cover Magazine.*" The study employed the Charles Sanders Peirce theory, which posits that signs consist of three components: representation, object, and interpretant. The research used semiotic analysis to uncover the implicit meanings of the illustrations on Tempo and Gatra covers (Wijaya et al., 2022). The latest research on this topic is titled "The Meaning of Tempo Magazine Cover in

Semiotics by Charles Sanders Peirce" conducted by Sevtianny and Santana. The study attempted to analyze the meaning of the sign, the element of repetition inside the sign, and the appeal of the Tempo magazine cover (Sevtianny & Kurnia, 2023).

The distinction between this study and the previous research is that Peirce's theory used to analyze objects not only divides the sign into representations, objects, and interpretants, but will be categorized again into other trichotomy so that the type of sign analyzed becomes more specific. Furthermore, this study provides an analysis of the meaning of signs from multiple perspectives, resulting in the emergence of diverse meanings for each sign.

This study aims to classify the elements of signs in the illustration of the cover of the Tempo digital newspaper and analyze their meaning. After knowing the meaning of the displayed signs, the reader's perception may widen and is not limited to the images that can be seen. The research remains significant because of its potential to improve readers' understanding of signs and their meanings while also increasing public awareness of signs that often communicate implicit messages. That way, the signs on the cover of this digital newspaper become effective as a tool to convey a message. The theoretical implications of this study are to build on previous research on signs in semiotics, especially those studied using Peirce's theory. This study also supports the continuation of research on markings in semiotics that broadens the perspective on the topic in its analysis. On the other hand, the practical implications of this study are to broaden the reader's perspective regarding the implicit meaning contained in signs. In addition, this research can also increase readers' awareness of the current political situation in Indonesia through an understanding of signs.

## METHODS

The author employs a qualitative research method to analyze the significance of signs. Qualitative research, focusing on context, existence, experience, perspective, meaning, and subjectivity, provides a distinctive framework for examining and interpreting the complexity of social phenomena (Lim, 2024). The data for interpretation is derived from community-relevant signs, namely an illustration on the cover of the Tempo digital newspaper published on October 21, 2024. The technique used for the collection of data is simple random sampling (SRS). Simple Random Sampling is the fundamental and widely utilized method for sample selection, in which each unit is selected independently, with an equal probability of selection (Noor et al., 2022). The data was obtained as a digital image of a newspaper cover retrieved directly from the Tempo website. Additionally, data analysis will be conducted employing a descriptive analysis methodology. Descriptive analysis is a form of synchronous analysis in which content is examined independently of normative judgment (Kurbanova & Ataeva, 2020).

## RESULTS

The October 21, 2024, issue of Tempo digital newspaper cover features at least seven signs identified by the writer. The assembled signs create an impression of individuals in formal clothing engaging in a game of Monopoly beneath the table. Some people display smiles, while others put their index fingers in front of their mouths. They appeared to be enjoying themselves while grasping money in their hands. The digital newspaper cover, predominantly yellow, was titled '*Dwifungsi Pengusaha-Menteri*,' which means Dual Function of Businessmen-Ministers.



Figure 2: Tempo Digital Newspaper Cover 21st October 2024 Edition  
Source: Tempo 2024

The seven identified signs contain depictions of ministers, a Monopoly game, money, a smile, an index finger placed in front of the mouth, sitting beneath the table, and the color yellow. The cover of Tempo digital newspaper embodies the Triadic Model, consisting of representamens, objects, and interpretants. Each component of the sign can additionally be categorized into three distinct categories. Representamen is categorized as qualisign, sinsign, and legisign. An object is categorized into icon, index, and symbol. The interpretant is categorized into rheme, dicensign, and argument. In brief, these signs can be presented as follows.

Table 1. Triadic Model of Signs on Tempo Digital Newspaper Cover 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024 Edition

No.	Representamen		Object	Interpretant
1.	Ministers	Qualisign	Icon	Rheme
2.	Monopoly game	Legisign	Symbol	Argument
3.	Money	Legisign	Symbol	Dicensign
4.	Smile	Sinsign	Index	Rheme
5.	Index finger in front of the mouth	Legisign	Icon	Rheme
6.	Sitting beneath the table	Legisign	Symbol	Argument
7.	Yellow	Qualisign	Index	Dicensign

The representamen of the illustration of the ministers is qualisign, while the object is an icon, and the interpretant is rheme. The representamen of the Monopoly game is legisign, the object

is a symbol, and the interpretant is an argument. The representamen of money is a legisign, the object is a symbol, and the interpretant is a dicisign. The representamen of the smile is legisign, the object is a symbol, and the interpretant is rheme. The representamen of the index finger in front of the mouth is legisign, the object is an icon, and the interpretant is rheme. The representamen of sitting beneath the table is legisign, the object is a symbol, and the interpretant is an argument. Lastly, the yellow representation is qualisign; the object is the symbol, and the interpretant is the argument.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Ministers

The starting representamen is an image of ministers depicted alongside various individuals attired in formal clothing, including suits and ties. Concerning its portrayals of politicians, the digital newspaper's title includes the term 'Menteri,' allowing the five individuals identified as representatives of the ministries. The depiction of this minister in official attire that signifies their role is classified as a qualisign. The illustrated object also represents the minister's typical appearance, specifically formal attire. Thus, the object of the representamen is the icon. This aligns with Peirce's assertion in Bellucci that a qualisign can solely be an icon (Bellucci, 2020). On the other hand, the interpretant of this representamen of the ministerial image may be viewed as a figure of authority, a leader, an important individual, or a person in a position of responsibility. The interpretant can be categorized as a rheme, as the interpretations may differ among individuals based on their perspectives and experiences about the representamen.

### 2. Monopoly game

The subsequent representamen that gets noticed is the depiction of the Monopoly game engaged in by the ministers. The Monopoly game is typically linked to capitalism and pursuing financial profit. This representamen is classified as a legisign, as this game is a cultural and social product with a collectively established play mode. The game's purpose is for each participant to compete to gain wealth. The benefit is a symbol, signifying that a player's income indicates success and prosperity. This aligns with Peirce's view, as emphasized by Bellucci, that a symbol can alone be a legisign (Bellucci, 2020). Simultaneously, the significance or interpretant of this Monopoly game serves as a social critique of the desire for financial achievement. The digital newspaper cover, with the term 'businessman,' suggests that the interpretation of the Monopoly game relates to the ministers' business endeavors, attributed to their capacity to make profits and accumulate money. The interpretant is an argument due to its logical relationship with economic concepts.

### 3. Money

The money possessed by the ministers on the cover of Tempo digital newspaper symbolizes their wealth and serves as a representamen. Money serves as a medium of exchange, usually regulated by legislation. Thus, its representamen is a legisign. As Pelkey asserted, all conventional signs are legisigns (Pelkey, 2023). Consequently, money comprises an object, precisely economic value. This representation of money includes a physical reference; nonetheless, its significance is predominantly symbolic and conventional, categorizing the object as a form of symbol. On the other hand, the interpretant of money serves as a means of trade possessing economic value. In this scenario, the funds collected by ministers represent the wealth derived from the outcomes of the Monopoly game. The interpretant, associated with the physical attributes of money and its value, is incorporated into the dicisign.

#### **4. Smile**

Four of the five ministers depicted in the image have happy facial expressions. The smile is the subsequent representamen of the sinsign type, since it appears in response to a particular setting. The smile on the digital newspaper cover may be from the pleasure derived from the money they are holding. The object of this smile undoubtedly signifies a feeling of satisfaction or happiness, thus categorizing it as an index with a causal relationship. The causal relationship between the sign and its object renders the sinsign indexical (Pelkey, 2023). The interpretant of the smile may differ between situations. However, on this digital newspaper cover, the ministers' smiles could signify their contentment with the money they possess or serve as a social facade, concealing their genuine attitude. If the resulting meaning is not specific, the interpretant is a rheme.

#### **5. Index finger in front of the mouth**

On the cover of Tempo digital newspaper, another representamen is the gesture of the index finger placed in front of the mouth, suggesting a message to remain silent. This gesture is a well-established convention in society, widely recognized and utilized, making this type of representamen a legisign. Positioning the index finger in front of the mouth signifies the action of silencing or closing the mouth. The gesture resembles the act of shutting or suppression, categorizing the object as an icon. In the meantime, the meaning intended to be communicated through the gesture is to indicate silence. In the earlier context, it seems the minister may have preferred that his colleagues' words and actions remain unnoticed by others. The gesture signifies the general meaning of societal rules. Thus, it can be classified as a rheme. The understanding of this gesture is indicated by the execution of the object, precisely silence. This aligns with Hellberg's perspective that rheme serves as a sign understood to denote its object (Hellberg, n.d.).

#### **6. Sitting beneath the table**

The cover of Tempo magazine also features other representamen, specifically ministers sitting beneath the table. These representamen denote deeds executed secretly. This definition is a well-recognized interpretation derived from societal consensus. Thus, it falls within the category of legisign. The object portrayed by the representamen is an action executed covertly or can be perceived as a secret. The depiction of ministers sitting beneath the table symbolizes secrecy and a desire to keep some information hidden. Therefore, the writer categorizes this image as a symbol. The interpretant of the image is either concealing themselves or engaging in silent operations. The picture of ministers beneath the table explains their behavior, indicating they are hiding something or wish to keep their actions concealed from others. Consequently, the interpretant constitutes an argument. This aligns with Peirce's perspective in Bellucci, asserting that only symbols can serve as arguments (Bellucci, 2020).

#### **7. Yellow**

The next representamen on the cover of Tempo digital newspaper is the prominent yellow color. The color that expresses this cautious message pertains to the quality visible through the five senses; thus, it belongs to the category of qualisign. The yellow color acts as a warning indicator. Based on the interpretants of the earlier representamens, the yellow color in this context suggests that the audience should exercise caution. Due to this indication, the object shows an index type. In the meantime, the interpretant of this yellow color signifies a condition that demands special attention; in this case, it represents a lurking danger if the ministers' Monopoly game

persists. Given the prior context, this interpretant serves as a dicisign. As discussed by Bellucci, Peirce defines a dicisign as an index or symbol characterized by a propositional structure capable of making statements (Bellucci, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

The representamen of the minister's illustration is qualisign (the depiction of this minister in official attire). At the same time, the object is an icon (represents the minister's typical appearance), and the interpretant is a rheme (figure of authority, a leader, an important individual, or a person in a position of responsibility). The representamen of the Monopoly game illustration is legisign (the depiction of the Monopoly game engaged in by the ministers), the object is a symbol (indicative of the ministers' success and prosperity), and the interpretant is an argument (social critique of the desire for financial achievement). The representamen of money illustration is a legisign (the depiction of money itself), the object is a symbol (economic value), and the interpretant is a dicisign (representing the wealth derived from the outcomes of the Monopoly game). The representamen of the smile illustration is legisign (the image has happy facial expressions), the object is a symbol (a feeling of satisfaction or happiness from money), and the interpretant is rheme (signifies their contentment with the money they possess or serve as a social facade concealing their genuine attitude). The representamen of the index finger in front of mouth illustration is legisign (the gesture of the index finger placed in front of the mouth), the object is an icon (signifies the action of silencing or closing the mouth), and the interpretant is rheme (the minister may have preferred that his colleagues and his words and actions remained unnoticed by others). The representamen of sitting beneath the table illustration is legisign (the depiction of ministers sitting beneath the table), the object is a symbol (action executed covertly or can be perceived as a secret), and the interpretant is an argument (hiding something or wish to keep their actions concealed to others). Lastly, the yellow representation is qualisign (the prominent yellow color), the object is the symbol (a warning indicator), and the interpreter is the argument (a lurking danger if the ministers' Monopoly game persists). The various interpretations associated with each sign suggest that the signs featured on the cover of this digital newspaper are likely intended to convey an implicit message. The signs presented on the Tempo digital newspaper cover convey a cautionary message to viewers, urging them to observe and evaluate the actions of the ministers closely.

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