

Semiotics Analysis of Racism in the Comic Captain America: Sam Wilson

Maldini Radjab Junior¹, Juanda²

^{1,2}Universitas Komputer Indonesia – Bandung, Indonesia

Abstract. Racism is still common, especially against African Americans in the United States and is a problem that until now has not been resolved. Racism is again a hot topic as police brutality started popular movements such as Black Lives Matter that tried to raise awareness about racism in the United States. The comic "Captain America: Sam Wilson" describes the phenomenon of racism against society, especially in the United States. This article aims to find out the signs that represent racism in the comic "Captain America: Sam Wilson", signs that show verbal and non-verbal violence. This study uses a qualitative method with the semiotic approach of Roland Barthes. The data is taken from panels or scenes in the comic "Captain America: Sam Wilson," which contains racism. From the data obtained.

Keywords: Basic composition, noun, adjective

Received: 27 January 2022 | Revised: 21 March 2022 | Accepted: 29 March 2022

1 Introduction

Racism is a belief that feels that one race is superior or superior to other races. Racism is directed against a person or group of different ethnicity, religion, race, custom, class or physical characteristics of a person. Currently, racism has entered various media. One example is comics. Racism can happen anywhere. Research shows that racism most often occurs in the environment around the home, school, workplace, public transportation, at an event and others. Racism is sometimes expressed in the media. An example is comics. Many consider the lack of cultural diversity shown in the media as another form of racism.

Comics are picture stories composed of still images to form a story. Comics convey information or the author's message and entertain the reader. All story texts in comics are neatly arranged and interconnected between images (visual symbols) and words (verbal symbols). Comics are a collection of immovable images arranged sequentially and interconnected between one image and another to form a storyline [1]. Therefore, comics are an effective educational medium from the material is presented in a short

*Corresponding author at: Universitas Komputer Indonesia – Bandung, Indonesia

E-mail address: firmaldiniradjab@email.unikom.ac.id

and very easy-to-understand manner because the combination of images and text makes it easy for readers to capture the messages in the comics.

Based on the above background, the purpose of this study is to find out the signs that represent racism contained in the comic "Captain America: Sam Wilson" as follows: 1) to find out the denotative meaning of the comic "Captain America: Sam Wilson"; 2) to find out the connotative meaning of the comic "Captain America: Sam Wilson". 3) to find out the meaning of the myth in the comic "Captain America: Sam Wilson". Previous research has been conducted by Tirahmawan, which discusses a practice that degrades the black race into a commonplace because of the belief in the ideology of skin supremacy. Sutopo discusses the other research on racism. His research discusses racism and marginalization. They describe the phenomenon that deliberate indexicality due to its relationship to the context [2].

2. Method

The method used in this research is a qualitative method with the semiotic approach of Roland Barthes. The qualitative research method is based on the post-positivism philosophy, which is used to examine scientific conditions using the researcher himself as a tool. Data collection techniques and qualitative analysis emphasize the importance of meaning [3][4]. Qualitative research makes researchers highly dependent on information from objects or participants on a broad scope, general questions, collecting data mostly from text or participant words, and explaining and conducting analysis. Subjectively collected texts [5][6].

Semiotics is the study of signs and everything related to signs. The word "semiology" comes from the Greek semeion, which means "symbol". Which means "the meaning of the sign". Semiotics tries to explain how meaning is formed, encoded, and communicated. Semiotics systematically explains the nature, characteristics, and forms of signs and the process of formation and reading that accompany them.

The Semiotics Roland Barthes examines the sign through several meanings:

- a. Denotation is the definitional, literal or explicit meaning of a sign.
- b. Connotation is the sociocultural and personal associations (ideology, emotion, etc.) of a sign. Especially related to class/social status, gender, age, ethnicity, and others from the interpreter (user/sign interpreter).
- c. According to Barthes, how does culture explain or understand long-established connotations in the local community?

3. Result and Discussion

Discriminatory treatment, which includes racism profiling. Immigrants endanger national security as an identity threat to Americans. The mythical element is that black people in the United States commit crimes at a higher rate than any other racial group. Another myth is that this form of racism aims to deter the presence of foreigners [7]. In literature, the moment people remember the most is how the actor presents it. It depends on the background of the listener on how they achieve it [8].

Panel Description 1



Figure 1. Captain America brings Sam Wilson out of prison

Denotation

Captain America frees Sam Wilson from prison for wrongful arrest. The police think Sam Wilson is a criminal who robbed a bank.

Connotation

The panel contains elements of acts of racism, namely discriminatory treatment, which includes acts of racial profiling. Racial profiling is the act of suspecting someone based on stereotypes of race, ethnic group, religion, or nationality. The cop did this profiling because he thought Sam Wilson was a criminal based on his skin.

Myth

The action in figure 3.1 results from white people stereotyping that black people in the United States commit crimes at a higher rate than other racial groups. This negative stereotype is falsely used as an excuse for police to practice racial profiling.

Panel Description 2



Figure 2. The debate between Ariella Conner and Falcon (Joaquin Torres)

Denotation

Ariella Conner speaks publicly about illegal immigrants in the United States, then Falcon (Joaquin Torres) cuts her off, and they argue. Falcon as an immigrant, came to the United States wanting a better life, but his struggle to live a better life is not easy. Falcon has to do many jobs that others do not want. Conner also replied that if Falcon does not like how immigrants are treated, it is better to return to their home country.

Connotation

The meaning of the connotations in Figure 3.2 is that immigrants endanger national security and pose economic threats because they need jobs and take Native American jobs, cheap housing, access to health care, and so on. In addition, immigrants pose an identity threat, especially if they have a different culture, religion and norms from the country they come to, fundamentally destroying their way of life.

Myth

The myth that is obtained is that some people are xenophobic toward immigrants who come to the United States. Xenophobia is a form of racism because it aims to eliminate the presence of foreigners from other countries and the fear of losing national, ethnic or racial identity.

After conducting an analysis using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory of the two selected panels, it can be concluded that the comic "Captain America: Sam Wilson" represents racism in the form of discrimination, humiliation, and negative stereotypes that lead to acts of racism against a different race. In accordance with the formulation of the problem, objectives, and benefits that the authors have expressed, it can be concluded as follows: The two panels in the comic "Captain America: Sam Wilson" contain elements of racism in the form of verbal discrimination such as insults, as well as non-verbal discrimination such as racial profiling, and negative stereotypes against ethnic minorities. It can be said that the meaning of denotation in the comic "Captain America: Sam Wilson" is how the actual examples of racist acts shown in the comics are real things that ethnic minority people accept today [9].

There are three fundamental signs of a finite entity, namely: The existence of the appearance of the name, (b) The existence of the appearance itself, and (c) The appearance of the introduced [10]. Style can persuade people through text in banners or pamphlets rewritten on paper [11].

4. Conclusion

The connotation meaning contained in the comic "Captain America: Sam Wilson" is that minorities in the United States are often the target of acts of racism by white people who regard all minorities as criminals and think that the presence of immigrants destroys the way of life and work of black people.

The myth in the comic book "Captain America: Sam is how white people mistreat minorities in the United States. One example is the racial profiling by the police,

especially in the United States, against black people even though they do not necessarily commit criminal acts. This is because there are still stereotypes that think black people are criminals because of their dark skin color. Negative stereotypes like this are dangerous for minorities because they are based on assumptions rather than personalized information. In this way, white people can justify denying minorities education, employment, housing and other opportunities.

REFERENCES

- [1] F. D. Patricia, "Analisis Semiotika Komunikasi Visual Buku 'Memahami Komik' Scott McCloud," *J. Stud. Komun. (Indonesian J. Commun. Stud.)*, vol. 2, no. 2, Jul. 2018, doi: 10.25139/jsk.v2i2.702.
- [2] T. Lubis, "Indeksikalitas dalam Perspektif Antropolinguistik," in *Seminar Antarbangsa Kajian Linguistik dan Kearifan Lokal*, 2017, pp. 128–134. doi: 10.31227/osf.io/dwa7p.
- [3] Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Alfabeta, 2020.
- [4] S. Shaumiwaty *et al.*, "Teacher performance toward students' mathematical literacy in teaching linear program mathematical models," *J. Phys. Conf. Ser.*, vol. 1663, p. 012066, Oct. 2020, doi: 10.1088/1742-6596/1663/1/012066.
- [5] John W. Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. Boston: Pearson Education, 2018.
- [6] L. J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2005.
- [7] B. Nurgiyantoro, *Pengkajian Sastra*. Yogyakarta: Gajah Mada University Press, 2010.
- [8] T. Lubis, "Studying Characteristic and Identity Through Oral Literature in Malaynese," in *SEMINAR INTERNASIONAL SASTRA LISAN*, 2017, no. September, pp. 245–252. doi: 10.17605/OSF.IO/SZHKB.
- [9] K. Ratna, *Teori, Metode, dan Teknik Penelitian Sastra*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2010.
- [10] S. Wibowo and T. Lubis, "Naming Paya Badau at Taman Cadika Pramuka Medan: Semiotic Narative Analysis," *Tradit. Mod. Humanit.*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 47–55, 2022.
- [11] S. Hasrul, "Translation of Political Advertisements from Alas Language into Indonesian," Universitas Negeri Medan, 2015.