

AN ANALYSIS OF MORAL REPRESENTATION IN ELEMENTAL FORCES OF NATURE ANIMATED FILM: AN ANALYSIS OF SEMIOTICS ROLAND BARTHES

Nadia Carolina Hardanti¹, Hasan Khalawi², Agustina Sri Hafidah³

^{1,2,3}STKIP PGRI Pacitan

nadiacarolinahar@gmail.com, hasankhalawi@gmail.com, hafidahagustinasri@gmail.com

Abstract

The objective of this research is to reveal the moral messages contained in the animated film. The researcher used a qualitative method with a linguistics type of study and focused on semiotics analysis. The analysis of this research will be guided by theories of Roland Barthes' semiotics, involving the interpretation of denotation, connotation, and myth within the context of the film that depicts the moral messages. It was concluded that in the animated movie Elemental – Forces of Nature, each scene contains moral messages, namely temperament, where the main character's actions indicate the excessive emotions and heat that cause her always to experience problems. The second moral message is the discrimination between Ember's family and the fire element in Elemental Town. The third moral message is an external imposition. The external factor of Ember's imposition is the rules and norms her father gives to Ember. This leads to Ember's unspoken feelings because of her ambition to be a good daughter.

Keywords: *Animated Film, Moral messages, Roland Barthes, Semiotics*

Introduction

In the era of globalization, most people use mass media to help them carry out various life activities. In this case, mass media is vital, especially in conveying messages. Technological changes have changed how society accesses, consumes, and disseminates information. The current development of digital technology, especially the internet and social media, has caused messages or data to be spread widely, easily, quickly, and without limits. As is known, there are various forms of information dissemination nowadays, and they are tailored to the target audience it wants to reach. One form of distribution is through film.

Film is a mass media that consists of two components, namely, audio and visual. It can express the reality of meaning, inviting the audience to feel every emotion in the scene. According to Alfathoni & Manesah (2020: 22), audio and visual art displayed in a film can capture a reality phenomenon. It can be used as a forum to convey messages to the audience who watch it. In addition, Danesi (2004: 144) considers films as fiction that can stimulate reflection and lead to a better understanding of some aspects of human reality. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that film is a medium that can be fiction or non-fiction, and film creators produce it to convey messages through the actors' acts or lies within the dialogue. By creating characters, placing them in certain situations, and establishing a point of view, fiction writers make judgments about moral, philosophical, psychological, or social issues (Danesi, 2004: 144). Therefore, the growth and competition for films in society have increased, especially in Indonesia. According to Deputy Head of Bekraf, Ricky JosephPesik (2020), Indonesia is the 16th largest potential market worldwide for box office films. The film market in Indonesia can reach up to US\$ 345 million if converted to the Indonesian exchange rate of IDR 4.8 trillion. Various genres of film have been widely screened in Indonesian cinemas.

Ariyani, Khalawi & Hafidah (2023) stated that communication becomes a conciliator to make it easier for humans to interact and know the conditions of the surrounding environment. As a mass communication medium, film has an audio-visual aspect crucial in conveying messages to viewers. Panuju (2019) stated that good educational media can be obtained from films for viewers. This is not just mere entertainment; through images, dialogue, and acting, films can also transform direct messages so that films are the most effective media for spreading

ideas, missions, and campaigns. In producing their works, film creators also have moral messages implicitly contained in the film through audio-visuals, which often have an influence that the audience themselves will interpret. Films also have values that can be a reference for life and allow people to discuss life values such as honesty, happiness, kindness, beauty, caring, etc. Moreover, film creators are raising topics to attract the public's interest, especially regarding societal morals.

Morals are considered essential and must be known and obeyed by everyone. It can be used to state good, bad, right, wrong, and inappropriate behaviour in life. During globalization, especially for adolescents, interactions are less monotonous and no longer limited to school or the educational environment. In terms of the world of interaction, they can interact in an unlimited way with the help of sophisticated technology. Different interactions can allow adolescents to have split personalities, where they will adapt to the environment and identify whether the climate suits them. They will explore their roles and look for their identity. Adolescents pay more attention to various aspects of life specifically related to what they will experience as adults (Haerani & Daulay, 2020).

Adolescence is when many turbulent problems occur, which are influenced by internal and external factors. One of the examples of a problem that is often experienced by adolescents nowadays is in terms of emotional intelligence, namely difficulty in controlling anger or temperamental issues. Many Indonesian parents encourage their children to have high intellectual intelligence but indirectly ignore the importance of emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence is intelligence in managing feelings, regulating moods, controlling the heart, not exaggerating pleasure or sadness, keeping pressure at bay, keeping pressure from feelings or the burden of stress from paralyzing the ability to think, the ability to survive frustration, the ability to motivate oneself, empathize and pray (Masril et al., 2020). The emotional development of adolescents shows a compassionate and reactive nature to various situations or social situations. Negative and temperamental emotions make adolescents aggressive, resistant, stubborn, quarrelsome, fight, like to disturb, be alone, or use drugs (Unayah & Sabarisman, 2016). The ability to control emotions in Indonesia among adolescents is still deficient, and this is proven by the large number of brawls involving students and not a few of these incidents resulting in fatalities. Reporting from Kompas.id, on Friday, January 12th, 2023, a brawl occurred between groups of adolescents, which started from giving challenges to each other on social media. As a result, one of the students suffered severe injuries from a sickle slash on his head, ears, and fingers and had to be treated in hospital.

Furthermore, the external factor is the background of the difference in the society that leads to their ability to adjust to the environment, which can be mentioned as tolerance. Tolerance shows a process of self-personality in respecting other people regardless of their differences. Tolerance can make someone appreciate differences, such as the qualities of different people, the ability to accept new opinions and views, and others' goodness. Tolerance in Indonesia is still very low. Even though Indonesia has the slogan "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*," which means "*Berbeda Beda Tetapi Tetap Satu Jua*," people still do not understand the real meaning of it, which causes discrimination. Discrimination still occurs a lot and is even a significant case in Indonesia. This often happens because such factors as social status, minority factors, and other things influence it.

An institution or organization even does this case. An example is the difference in service between BPJS and non-BPJS patients. Reporting from BBC News Indonesia (2023), The advocacy organization BPJS Watch shows that throughout 2022, there were 109 cases of discrimination experienced by BPJS patients related to medication administration, re-admissions, and disabled membership. AgustinusFerdianto, the spokesperson for BPJS Kesehatan, admitted that he had tried to eliminate discriminatory practices against BPJS patients, but this was to no avail. Discrimination also occurs in minority groups. For example, the research

by M. Ansor (2016) entitled “Being Like Another Religion”: The Hijab and Hybrid Identity of Acehnes Christian Students explains the existence of discrimination in religion. In his research, he revealed that there were Christian students who were treated differently from other students because they did not wear the hijab. On other campuses, a security guard at the college prohibited students from entering the campus area without wearing the hijab. This shows that minorities have limited space in terms of human rights. Moreover, this must be the primary concern of the government and society, remembering that Indonesia is a country with many differences, so this does not become the cause of the disharmony that occurs in Indonesian society.

External imposition is another external factor that can harm and become a problem for adolescents. The pressure that often occurs in adolescent problems is the demands of parents. Children are not robots who must do a lot of work and follow all their parents’ orders or wishes. Most parents think that everything they want will positively impact their children. For this reason, parents sometimes force their children to do things that do not follow the child’s wishes. This can have a negative impact on children’s mental health. According to Chicetti and Toth in Papalia &Feldman (2015), as reported by Kumparan, nowadays, many parents want their children to succeed and achieve. This is not the child’s wish but to fulfil the parent’s emotional needs. If pressure continues to be applied, the child will experience depression.

In this case, a solution is needed to reduce the problems that occur, and using film as a medium can be an effective solution. It is essential to know the moral meaning contained in a film, considering that films have significant meanings that can be used as a lesson for human behaviour and actions. Nurgiyanto (2013:11) stated that in the context of films, moral messages generally refer to views about what is considered good or bad that are typically accepted regarding actions, attitudes, obligations, and others. In this research, the researcher used a film entitled *Elemental – Forces of Nature* as a medium to describe the moral messages, namely the inability to control self-emotion/temperament, discrimination, and external imposition contained in this animated film.

This film is Disney and Pixar’s production in 2023, with its genre is about animation, comedy, fantasy, kids, and family. This film was produced by Denise Ream and directed by Peter Sohn. *Elemental* is an original feature film set in *Elemental City*, where the residents are fire, water, air, and land. This main story is about Amber, the fire girl with tough, ambitious, and fiery characteristics. She has a friend who has a different character from her. His name is Wade, the water boy. His characteristics are fun, sappy, and go-with-the-flow. Amber often cannot control her emotions, making her from red-hot into a more ominous purple shade. One day, she feels angry and cannot control her emotions. She ruptures her father’s pipe at the store, which causes the store to flood, and Inspector Wade gushes into her store. In the short story, both complete each other. Wade helps her control her emotions, and romance sparks happen between the two. Unfortunately, Amber’s father does not approve of both. Amber and Wade never give up striving for their love.

According to the explanation above, the researcher has pre-observed the dialogue and action within the scenes of the film, and it turned out that indirectly, it gave signs of a moral message that could make the viewers aware. Meanwhile, in this research, the researcher used Roland Barthes’ semiotics theory and found three moral problems that became the concern of this study, namely the temperament issue of Amber and the discrimination of Amber’s family, especially the fire element. These issues will be analyzed using Roland Barthes's theory, which focuses on revealing moral meaning through denotation, connotation, and myth. According to Barthes, denotation is concrete, connotation is a more complex and abstract concept, and myth is a message.

Many researchers have conducted the same issues about the moral values or other messages in a film, such as research by Vicky Dianiya (2020) titled “Representation of Social Class In Film (Semiotic Analysis of Roland Barthes Film *Parasite*),” research by Andia Jingga

Langit Persada Timur and Redi Panuju entitled (2022) “The Moral Message in the Film “Better Days 2020” by Derek Tsai,” research by M.Ali Sibram Malisi, Surawan Surawan, Sayyidatul Hasanah, Siti Zaida Hanum (2023) entitled “Film as a Mass Communication Media: Analysis of Moral Messages Through Omar Hana’s film,” and a thesis by Matthaeus (2023) entitled “Moral Message In The Film A Man Called Otto Semiotic Theory Analysis of Charles Sanders Peirce”. The difference between this study and the previous study is the Semiotics theory analysis method. The earlier study used Charles Sanders Peirce to analyze the moral messages in the film and focus on the interpretation of symbols and signs that appeared in the movie. Meanwhile, in this research thesis, the researcher used Roland Barthes’s semiotics theory because this theory is considered more in-depth in analyzing social values in a film. Moreover, the researcher used animated films to be analyzed.

In analyzing the moral dimensions of Elemental – Forces of Nature Animated film, the researcher believes that the narrative construction, character interactions and relations, and thematic development will contribute to shaping viewers’ ethical perceptions and judgments about temperament, discrimination, and external imposition in social life. By doing so, the researcher gives the title “An Analysis of Moral Representation in Animated Film: An Analysis of Semiotics Roland Barthes.” Furthermore, the novelty of this research lies in the combination of Roland Barthes’ semiotics approach with a focused analysis of the moral messages found in the dialogues and actions between the actors.

Method

The researcher used qualitative and linguistics to analyze the phenomena in this research. This approach involves collecting descriptive data that focuses on the meaning given by the subject, and this research is often conducted in the field to understand the context and complexity of the phenomena being observed. This research focuses on semiotics analysis. The data will be collected through observation and documentation of the animated film entitled “Elemental: Forces of Nature” as the primary data. However, the secondary data in this research are e-books, journals, and thesis. To collect the data, the researchers used several research instruments: (a) frame-by-frame, (b) movie transcripts, and (c) note-taking. Then, the data collection includes the observation and documentation. Finally, for the data analysis, the researcher used Miles and Huberman's (1992) method, which included data reduction, data display, and verification drawing. Moreover, for the theory of semiotics, the researcher has used Roland Barthes’ theory.

Findings And Discussion

The Moral Messages Contained in Elemental Forces of Nature Animated Film

Based on the results of the analysis of the meaning of denotation, connotation, and myth contained in the 14 scenes in the animated film Elemental – Forces of Nature refers to the theory of Roland Barthes, which states that the real meaning of the sign is conveying the message conveyed, then for each sign as in the findings above, it is known that these signs have different meanings according to the object or sign reference. The moral messages in Elemental – Forces of Nature Animated Films are temperament, discrimination, and external imposition.

Temperament

Temperament predicts developmental outcomes such as behaviour problems (Caspi, Henry, McGee, Moffitt, & Silva, 1995). Temperament is biologically based and strongly influenced by the environment (Allport, 1961; Rothbart & Bates, 1998; Rothbart & Derryberry, 1981). Meanwhile, according to Allport (1937) in Karbono’s (2017) journal, temperament is a characteristic symptom of an individual’s emotional nature, including whether he is easily exposed to emotional stimulation, the strength and speed of reaction, the quality of the strength of his mood, all the ways of fluctuation and intensity of mood. Therefore, these symptoms depend on constitutional factors and are mainly of hereditary origin.

However, temperament refers to a person's characteristic emotional and internal disposition, which influences how they generally respond to and interact with the world around them. It encompasses behavioural tendencies, emotional responses, and patterns of thought that are relatively consistent over time and across varied situations.

In this film, four scenes refer to the main character's problems, Ember, with her temperament issue. For example, in data 5:

“Take a breath and make the connection! Take a breath and make connection!”

Along with Ember saying that sentence, she slowly turns purplish red, and the sparks get more prominent, which over time causes an explosion that makes everything freeze instantly and burn. Apart from the examples above, several scenes show Ember's temperament with her fire explosions, namely in data 4, 7, and 8.

Ember is a brave and ambitious child. Unfortunately, she has a limitation in that her emotions are so strong that it is difficult for her to suppress them. Over and over again, Ember's emotions overflowed, resulting in significant problems for her and her family. Feelings of anxiety in Ember make her lose control of her emotions, which triggers excessive reactivity in her.

Discrimination

Discrimination is an act that violates human rights. The definition of discrimination, according to the Big Indonesian Dictionary, is the treatment of fellow citizens based on class, ethnicity, skin colour, economy, religion, and gender. Fulthoni stated that the definition of discrimination is unfair and unequal treatment carried out to differentiate individuals or groups based on something, usually categorical, or distinctive attributes, such as based on race, ethnicity, religion, or membership of social classes. Meanwhile, According to Theodorson and Theodorson (in Abdullah 2018:30) in Yulinar et al. (2021), discrimination is unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on something, usually categorical, such as based on race, ethnicity, religion, or membership in social classes.

In this study, the researcher found five scenes of data in the film that were presented either verbally or non-verbally, which contained elements of discrimination experienced by the Ember family and other fire residents in Elemental City. For example, found in data 6:

“... the city is not made with fire people in mind.”

This shows that there are differences in the treatment of the fire element. The fire element does not have the same rights as other elements. The fire element is considered more powerful and accessible to destroy than other elements such as water, air, and earth. This perception causes fire elements to experience discrimination and be unfairly labelled harmful or less valuable by different groups of other elements without paying attention to their uniqueness. This causes them to be isolated or discriminated against.

Data 1, 2, 3, and 9 show other examples of discrimination in the film. The Ember family was the first generation to pioneer the existence of the fire element in the city of Elemental. When Bernie and Cinder first came to downtown Elemental, they received terrible treatment from the residents.

While boarding the train, the other elements cornered Bernie and Cinder with cynical glances. It did not stop there. When Bernie and Cinder tried to find accommodation, everyone refused because they did not accept the presence of the fire element in their midst. Their slogan about tolerance is just a myth. Bernie and Cinder finally decide to occupy an empty building on the edge of town and set up their dream place. Thanks to Bernie and Cinder, the initially cold environment is now filled with the simplicity and warmth of the fire citizens. The activities

of fire element residents are limited when they are in the city centre. Because of the discrimination and prohibitions imposed, the fire elemental citizens never set foot in the Elemental city again.

External Imposition

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, imposition is imposed as an excessive or uncalled-for requirement or burden. Meanwhile, External Imposition refers to the recognition or application of rules, norms, or expectations assessed by external realities on individualities or groups. This covers various social, political, and organizational aspects and can impact individuals' behaviour, opinions, or social interactions.

An example of a scene that shows the external imposition is in data 10. In this scene, Ember stands sadly reflective, looking at the shop. She remembered her father's obligations and dreams, which made her have to put aside her dreams and become Ember like her father wanted. The other example that indicates external imposition is found in data 11, 12, 13, and 14. In these data, the main character, Ember, experiences an external imposition in her life. She had a father who gave her advice throughout her life.

She carries out the rules, norms, and obligations to realize her father's dream and become a good daughter to repay his services. This results in self-imposition where Ember, the main character, is ambitious to make her father proud but puts aside her inner desires. The result of what Ember did was the emergence of anger, which had been a significant problem for her because of the compulsion that made her always harbour her true feelings.

The feelings within her began to rebel to say that what she had been doing, namely realizing her father's dream, was not what she had always wanted. The fear of being disappointed by her father made her sacrifice, putting aside her feelings. By the reason of this, she lost precious moments and the most important things in her life. At the end of the story, Embers begins to realize that all this time, she had other talents and was not what her father wanted

Compenential Analysis and Hidden Meaning Analysis.

Elemental – Forces of Nature, directed by Peter Sohn, is an animated film that intricately weaves themes of loss and love through its narrative and characters. Here is an in-depth analysis of how the movie portrays these themes.

Exploration of Loss

Ember's journey reflects her particular experience of loss. Her father's struggle to maintain their family's fire-based store amid societal changes represents an emotional and cultural loss. This struggle evokes a sense of displacement and nostalgia for a time when their way of life was more secure and accepted. The film subtly depicts the loss endured by Ember's community as they navigate surroundings that decreasingly marginalize their unique traits. Undermining their artistic identity and traditions illustrates a broader loss associated with change and adaption.

Emotional Impact

Ember's determination to recognize her family's heritage despite their hardships reflects the emotional weight of loss. Her adaptability and immolation emphasize how particular loss can motivate individuals to forge ahead, indeed, as they grapple with their grief.

Exploration of Love

The budding love between Ember and Wade is central to the film's narrative. Their passion transcends elemental barriers, emblemizing a harmonious blending of differences. This relationship portrays how love can bridge gaps and foster understanding between seemingly incompatible individualities. Their relationship demonstrates how love can be transformative. Wade's openhearted nature and acceptance help Ember defy her fears and insecurities, highlighting the power of love to facilitate particular growth and healing.

Familial and Cultural Love

Ember's love for her family is a driving force behind her actions. Despite challenges, her commitment to conserving her family's heritage showcases a deep sense of domestic devotion and the significance of nurturing and honouring one's roots. The film also explores communal love, as Ember's interactions with other elemental beings reveal a complex tapestry of connections and cultural exchanges. This broader definition of love emphasizes its part in fostering unity and mutual respect among diverse groups.

Conclusion

The analysis of semiotic theory can be done in linguistic studies, one of which is Roland Barthes, who sparked connotations, denotations, and myths used in linguistic studies. After identifying and analyzing the meaning of denotation, connotation, and myth in the animated film *Elemental – Forces of Nature* in the previous chapter, it can be said that based on the analysis using visual signs and supported by images in the film. In this research, the researcher found a hidden meaning that the director wanted to deliver through the actors, namely the feeling of loss and love. Besides that, the researcher also found that there are three moral messages contained in the film. Researchers point out the three main moral messages: temperament, discrimination, and external imposition. Signs of moral messages indicate that *Elemental – Forces of Nature* animated film is a film is full of twists that can lead to moral messages

It was concluded that in the animated film entitled *Elemental – Forces of Nature*, each scene contains moral messages, namely temperament, where the main character's actions indicate the excessive emotions and heat that cause her to always experience problems in her life. The second moral message is discrimination that happens to Ember's family and the fire element in *Elemental Town*. The third moral message is an external imposition. The external factor of Ember's imposition is the rule and norms her father give to Ember. This leads to Ember's unspoken feelings because of her ambition to be a good daughter.

This research is expected to be useful for future research, particularly in acknowledging linguistics. The researcher suggests that another researcher conduct additional research and exploration into existing linguistics-related phenomena and examine how influential film is morally in society so that this research can be further developed and yield positive results.

References

- Amin, K. Emosi Dan Pengaruh Kematangan Emosi Dengan Kecenderungan Memaafkan Pada Remaja Akhir.
- Ananda, F., & Wiksana, W. (2023). Representasi Komunikasi Negosiasi dalam Film Drama Remaja. Bandung Conference Series: Communication Management.
- Ansor, M. (2016). 'Menjadi Seperti Beragama Lain': Jilbab and Hybrid Identities of Christian Students in Aceh. *Penamas*, 29(1), 11-30.
- Ariyani, W., Hafidah, A.S., & Khalawi, Hasan (2023). Ideology Representation of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Candace Owens in Responding Abortion Through Critical Discourse Analysis Framework.
- Burton, Neel. 2024. "The Problem of Desire". *Psychology Today*. Published on June 24th 2024.
- Dewi, S. R., & Yusri, F. (2023). Kecerdasan Emosi Pada Remaja. *Educativo: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 2(1), 65- 71.
- Fahida, S. N. (2021). Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes pada Film "Nanti Kita Cerita Hari Ini"(NKCTHI) Karya Angga Dwimas Sasongko. *Cinematology: Journal Anthology of Film and Television Studies*, 1(2), 33-42.
- Hakim, M. A., & Rochim, M. (2020). Analisis Semiotika Pesan Moral dalam Film Animasi *Toy Story 4*. *Prosiding Manajemen Komunikasi*, 6(2), 251-254.
- Imperial, Lance. 2022. "What Is Metaphysics: Introduction To Metaphysics To Solve The

- Problem Of Personal Identity”. *Amazon.com*. Published on January 5th 2022.
- Khalawi, H., & Rahayu, E. D. M. Students’ Writing Viewed from Error Analysis Perspective. Theme: Future Trends of Science and Education: The Use of Artificial Intelligence in the New World, 2962, 121
- Malisis, M. A. S., Surawan, S., & Hasanah, S. (2023). Film as a mass communication media, Analysis of moral messages through Omar Hana’s film. *Informasi*, 53(1).
- Matthaeus, M. (2023). Pesan Moral Dalam Film A Man Called Otto Analisis Teori Semiotika Charles Sanders Peirce (Doctoral Dissertation, Kode universitas 041060# Universitas buddhidharma).
- Muthohar, S. (2016). Antisipasi degradasi moral di era global. *Nadwa: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 7(2), 321- 334.
- Nasywa, P. 2022. “Orang Tua Terlalu Menekan, Begini Dampaknya ke Anak”. Kumparan. Published on December 19th 2022.
- Ndanu, M. C., & Syombua, M. J. (2015). Mixed methods research: The hidden cracks of the triangulation. Name: *General Education Journal*, 4(2).
- Royhan, M. W. (2024). Analisis Semiotika Pesan Moral Dalam Film “Jalan Yang Jauh Jangan Lupa Pulang”. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi Dan Sosial Politik*, 1(3), 453-456.
- Suprihatno, Eko. 2023. “Mario Dandy Satriyo, Anak Polah Bapak Kepradah” *Media Indonesia*. Published on March 6th 2023.
- Timur¹, A. J. L. P., & Panuju, R. (2022). Pesan Moral dalam Film “Better Days 2020” Karya Derek Tsai. *Jurnal Representamen Vol*, 8(2).
- Woida, K.L. 2023. “Social Classes of Ancient Greece: A Comprehensive Summary”. *Crunch Learning*. Published on January 17th 2023.