

Semiotic Signs In Everyday Use For Communicative Purposes

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ABSTRACT

*The crux or fulcrum of semiotic study or analysis remains hinged on a recurrent subject matter – SIGN. This is one major concept that has preoccupied semiotic discourse for years now. The works of Ferdinand de Saussure (founder of modern linguistics) and Charles Sanders Peirce (founder of semiotics) encouraged more research inputs in this regard. In a book posthumously published as *A Course in General Linguistics* (1916) by some students of Ferdinand de Saussure, and based mainly on his lecture notes laid the solid foundation for modern linguistics. This text announced the formal evolution of modern linguistics. In it, De Saussure identified “langue” and “parole”, “signifier” and “signified” which formed the powerhouse of his semiology – a study of signs used in language. However, Charles Sanders Peirce advanced this study and later, compartmentalised SIGN into a tripod stand of iconic signs, indexical signs and symbolic signs. Icons view the relationship between a signifier and a signified on basis of resemblance or lookalike while indexical signs are determined by a cause and effect relationship between the signifier and the signified. Lastly, symbols are in arbitrary relationship blended by conventionality between the signifier and the signified. According to Saussure, signs of a language are arbitrary, in the sense, that the relationship between the physical and symbolic distinction from each other, have no grounds but convention. The thrust of this paper is to undertake a study of some semiotic signs in everyday use and how they are valuable for communicative purpose (especially the non-verbal communication). Humans use some signs and symbols for transmission of information, expression of their feelings and emotions and many others. These semiotic signs are veritable tools for communication in human societies.*

Keywords: Signifier, Signified, Semiology, Semiotics, Sign

INTRODUCTION

Semiotics deals with the scientific study or analysis of signs. This goes to confirm our position elsewhere, in this paper, that the thematic pre-occupation of semiotic analysis is the sign. The word 'sign' is a 12th century old French “signe”, Latin: “Signum”, mark, sign, signal, image; verb use from “signare”/“signatum” to make with a sign. In this regard, McArthur posits: “a sign is something that conveys meaning, such as object, token, mark, image, movement, gesture, sound, events, pattern and the like” (855).

In another development, Charles Sanders Peirce considers signs as one of the task elements of semiotics. Following a Peircean classification, the three basic semiotic elements are

the sign, object and interpretant. A sign (representamen) represents in the broadest possible sense of “represents. It is something interpretable as saying something about something. It is not necessarily symbolic, linguistic or artificial. An object (or semantic object) is a subject matter of a sign and an interpretant. It can be anything discussable or thinkable, a thing, event, relationship, quality, law, argument among others, and can, even be fictional. An interpretant (or interpretant sign) is the sign's clarified meaning or ramification, a kind of form or idea of the difference which the sign's being true or unreceptive would make (Eluke & Ngulube 217).

Again, Pierce considers a symbol as a sign that denotes its object solely, by this, it will be interpreted to do so. The symbol consists of natural or conventional or logical rule, norm, and habit that lacks (or has shed) dependence on the symbolic signs having a resemblance or real connection to the denoted object. Similarly, McArthur says this about a sign:

... also, sign, a system of manual communication used by the deaf. It is widely believed that such sign languages consists of instinctive gestures that picture the world and are understood no matter which part of the world a signer comes from. This is not so: the signs are conventional movements that represent a rank of meanings like those expressed by speech (including abstract notions) and differing widely between communities. There are two main types: concept – based systems used as national languages: language-based systems often used when teaching deaf children to communicate... there are many thousands of signs in the leading sign languages (855).

According to McArthur, the use of sign can be multilayered as canvassed from the foregoing postulations. In which ever guise, this basic concept in semiotic analysis has advanced and aided the cause of meaning and effective communication. From Saussure's semiology (which anchors on the principles of the signifier and signified) to the triadic typology of Sander's the sign, object and interpretant, the study of semiotics has increasingly flourished.

De Saussure viewed the signifier as a form of a sign. This form might be a sound, a word, a photograph, a facial expression while the signified is the concept or object that is represented. This concept or object might be the perception of the signifier by the addressee. Charles Sanders Peirce advanced the cause of De Saussure's theories by proposing the P-semiotic paradigm in the triadic typology of representamen (the sign or signifier) in interpretant and an object (signified). The representamen is the sign's form while the interpretant is the audience's perception of sign while the object (signified) is the actual meaning or what the sign refers to or represents (Eluke 210 – 214).

In a related manner, McArthur declares and states clearly:

The study and analysis of signs and symbols as part of communication, as for example in language, gesture, clothings and behaviour in present-day semiotics arises from the independent work of two linguistic researchers, one in the U.S, the other in Switzerland. Charles S. Peirce (1934 – 1914) used the term to describe the study of signs and symbolic systems from a philosophical perspective while Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 – 1913) coined semiology as part of his interest in language as a system of signs (835).

From this stance, McArthur notes that semiotics or semiology forms an integral part of the communication network which language is a chief tool or instrument. Other forms of non-verbal expression or communication such as body languages, paralanguage, signs and symbols could be considered as parts and parcels of semiotic concerns. Semiotic investigations or analyses bother on how signs and symbols can be used for effective communication.

As a scientific study of signs, signaling systems and symbols used for communication, semiotics has a multidisciplinary dimension, which interfaces with some other areas of human endeavours. This age long nexus between semiotics and other fields of study gave rise to a study of a plethora of subfields of semiotics such as marketing/commercial semiotics, legal semiotics or semiotics of law, visual semiotics, social semiotics, cultural semiotics, pictorial semiotics, semiotics of dreaming, design semiotics, musical semiotics, organisational semiotics, theatre semiotics, semiotics of photography, urban semiotics, artificial intelligence semiotics, zoo semiotics, finite semiotics, cognitive semiotics among many others (Eluke 210–228).

There are some notable semioticians who have contributed immeasurably and immensely to the study of semiotics as they include John Locke, Rudolph Garnap (1891-1970), Umberto Eco (1932 – 2016). Saint Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430), Charles W. Morris (1901-1979), Thomas A Sebeok (1920-2001), Paul Bouissac, Julia Kristeva, Yuri Lotman, Roland Barthes and many others (ibid).

In his work, “Ancient Semiotics”, Giovanni Maneth reviews some earliest or ancient manifestations of semiotics in Europe or the Western world. According to Maneth:

... the aim, here, therefore, is to investigate both semiotic practices from their origins (as divination and medicine) and the theoretical considerations of signs which were developed in the ancient world and which have come down to us through the literary, philosophical, medical, historical and rhetorical tradition. We might thus rediscover a thread which may be traced through classical world from its origins to the fourth century AD, revealing a conception of the sign which is significantly different from that proposed in the twentieth century (13).

From Maneth's viewpoint, the earliest manifestations of semiotic studies during classical era were through human acts of divinations and medicine practised then. There are evidences in Mesopotamian divination, Greek divination, Greek medicine, Plato (427 – 346 BCE), Aristotle (384 – 333 BCE), Stoics, Epicurus (342 – 271 BCE), Philodemus Circa 110-40 or 35 BCE, Latin Rhetoric, Augustine (AD 354-430 (Maneth 13-28).

The core of this research problem is how do everyday semiotic signs shape, influence, and facilitate human communication and meaning-making in various contexts or areas? In an answer to this poser, we need to understand the following:

- i) How do signs and symbols convey meaning in different cultural, social and situational contexts?
- ii) How do individuals interpret and negotiate meanings of everyday signs and symbols?
- iii) What rule do semiotic signs play in shaping perceptions, attitudes and behaviours?

By addressing this core problem, researchers can gain insights into the complex dynamics of human communication and develop strategies to improve communication effectiveness in various domains.

The grounds which necessitated this research enquiry include the following:

- **Multimodal Analysis:**
Few studies explore the intersection of multiple sign systems (e.g., text, image, sound) in everyday communication and signage.
- **Cultural Comparisons:**
More research is needed on cross-cultural differences in interpreting and using semiotic signs.
- **Contextual Factors:**
Investigating how context influences the meaning and effectiveness of semiotic signs.
- **Dynamic Meaning – Making:**
Explaining how signs and symbols evolve over time, and how users adapt to changes.
- **Application to Diverse Fields:**
Applying semiotic analysis to fields like healthcare, education, or environmental communication.

THE EARLIEST MANIFESTATIONS OF SEMIOTIC STUDIES

As presented in the last paragraph of our introductory section, there are so many ways in which semiotic studies were investigated in the ancient or classical era or eurocentric world views. In this section, this paper reviews some of these earliest manifestations as enunciated in the works of Giovanni Maneth.

Mesopotamian Divination

There is a foregrounded use of signs in Mesopotamian divinatory tablets from the third millennium BCE. The most significant aspect of Mesopotamian divination is that it is centred precisely on a distinctive and individual notion of the sign, which is a scheme of inferential reasoning that allows conclusions to be drawn from particular facts. The kind of sign model adopted by Mesopotamian divination is very close to what has come down to us from Greek thought at the height of the semiotic maturity, the model of implication that allows us to infer something hidden or non-present from something perceptible or present (if, p then q). The structure of the sign is expressed in terms of the relationship between prepositions and not between individual lexical units or between a 'signifier' [significant] and a 'signified' [signifie] as the Saussurean model. This results in the fact that nonverbal signs and events immediately take in predominant importance in that they can be best expressed in the form of a proposition (Giovanni Maneth 13 – 14).

Greek Divination

This is a direct consequence of the oral nature of Greek culture; inspirational divination formed the dominant divination model in ancient Greece. Inspirational divination is the form of divination in which the gods speak to humanity through a prophet who is selected as his or her voice, as in the famous example of oracle divination practised by the Pythia at Delphi. It is thus, hardly, to chance that in ancient Greece, there was no formation and constant presence of a priestly class specializing in the interpretation of both writing and divinatory signs was, in contrast, the case of Mesopotamia.

Divination forms the first indigenous area of ancient Greek culture in which it is possible to talk about the use of signs. The term 'Semeion' which we encounter for the time in this field, is a generic term which indicates a divinatory sign of any kind, including an oracle response, which is usually a verbal text (Maneth 14).

Greek Medicine

The other major area of operation of semiotically oriented thought which precedes and is independent of strictly philosophical research is largely Greek medicine. In this field, it may be seen not only the integral presence of semiotic processes, but also the first real theoretical constructs around the sign, and inference. Later, when semiotic theorizing passed directly into the field of philosophy and rhetoric, many traces of its medical origins remained. These may be seen first in the examples used to illustrate the sign both by philosophers and writers of treatises of rhetoric, (examples which were often taken from medicine and sometimes from physiognomy. More significant traces remained in the choice of a formal logical model of the sign in the form, 'if p, then q' which was, as we have seen, the model used in divination, and which was taken over into medicine with contents but the same form (Maneth 15).

Plato

The great Greek cultural tradition concerning signs and language finds in Plato its first true heir. However, in Plato, we cannot yet find a theory of the sign completely separated from the theory of language, as it is the case with Aristotle and the later schools of philosophy. On the contrary, certain aspects of Plato's theory of language had an important semiotic character. Besides and independently of this aspect, in works of Plato, we can find a use of semiotic terms (such as 'semeion') in relation to different domains: the domain of divination (*The Republic* 382; *Timaeus*, 71a-17b; *Phaedrus* 244 BC); domain of writing (*Phaedrus* 247c – 276a; *The Sophist*, 262a, where the noun is defined as a vocal sign 'semeion tes phones); and the domain of philosophical facts such as memory, where the mind is described as a waxer tablet on which signs produced by the perception ('on aistheseon semeia' are imprinted (*Theaetetus* 191a-195b) (Maneth 16).

Aristotle

In Aristotle's work, we find a theory that has had a lasting influence on his history of semiotic thought. The first important factor in Aristotle's consideration of the question relating to signs is the separation; and consequent separate treatment of the theory of language from the sign (that is, properly non-verbal sign). This may seem surprising to modern scholars and merits careful attention, precisely because modern semiotic theories assume "a priori" that the terms which make up verbal language are signs. Indeed, according to one particular brand of structuralism, they are the signs par excellence, and many scholars have actually gone so far as to propose that the terms of verbal language can provide a model for all other types of sign. On the contrary, Aristotle distinguishes the elements which go to make up a theory of language with the name of 'symbola' while the other elements of a theory of non-verbal signs the terms 'semeia' or "texmeria" (Maneth 18).

The Stoics

Like Aristotle, the Stoics focused their research on two very distinct areas of thought. First, we

can find elements of semiotic interest in their theory of language, which involves an analysis of the relationship between language, thought and reality; and then also, in their theory of the prepositional 'signs' which is related to their theory of logical inference. The semiotics – linguistic theory of the Stoics has its roots and develops within the terms of an ontology centered on the idea of 'particular' which is seen as a material object with definite shape, features, and are defined as the sufficient and necessary condition for its existence (Maneth 19).

The Epicurus

Epicurus, as the Stoics, sees the sign as representing the standard procedure for the passage from the known to the unknown. Indeed one of the key points of Epicurean epistemology was the semiotic principle of making connectives about factors which are by nature imperceptible to the senses from visible phenomena. The fundamental elements of Epicurean physics (that is, the existence of actions and of the void, the forms and reasons for celestial phenomena) are established by means of semiotic inferences starting from perceptible phenomena. Epicurus rejected the deduction reasoning typical of Aristotle and the Stoics judging of to be empty and devoid of use, but he accepted and believed in the importance of analogic inference (Maneth 21-23).

Philodemus

After Epicurus, the theory of sign was widely developed by later Epicureans. A first century BCE treatise, the “*perisemeion kai semeioseon*” (*On Signs and Semiotic Inference*) by Philodemus, demonstrates the depth and range which theory of the sign reached in the Epicurean school. The treatise is not a systematic exposition of the Epicurean theory of the sign, rather it records (in four distinct parts) the Ptolemy which raged between the Epicureans and an opposing philosophical school that for some scholars is represented by the Stoics (De Lacy and De Lacy 1978; Sedley 1982), for others by the Academics (Asmis 1996), for some others, it is impossible to be determined. The discussion of inference by signs at the centre of debate, on signs involves a host of important elements from semiotics, logic and epistemology, which are variously intertwined, as are the position of the contenders in the debate (Maneth 23).

Latin Rhetoric

In the passage from the Greeks world into the Roman world, semiotic paradigm moved away from the field of philosophy, in the strict sense, into the area of judicial rhetoric, where it assumed a central position. In contrast to the Greeks, the Romans were more interested in matters which tended principally to the pragmatic, and, although they reorganized and appreciated the potentiality of the semiotic paradigm, they immediately channeled it into what were for them the more attractive ends of political and judicial debate, a debate which was conducted with instruments supplied by rhetoric.

In Cicero, as with the other Roman writers on the subject, rhetoric no longer occupies second place after logic, but in contrast, it is philosophy which becomes an ancillary science whose role is to contribute towards the making of a fine orator. The consideration of signs rests at the heart of “*inventio*”, that is, the parts of discourse where proofs must be found to convince the court of the guilt or innocence of the accused. In rhetoric, proofs have a special force; they start

off from reasoning and become part of the procedure used to convince (“Fidem Facete”) Maneth 24-25).

In modern semiotics, also known as semiology, it is the study of signs and sign-using behaviour. It was defined by one of its founders, the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, as the study of the “life of signs with society”. However, Saussure treated language as a sign-system, and his work in linguistics supplied the concepts and methods that semioticians applied to sign systems other than language. One of such semiotic concepts in Saussure's distinction between the two inseparable components of a sign: the signifier – a set of speech sounds or marks on a page and the signified – a concept or idea behind the sign. Saussure also distinguished “parole” or actual individual utterance from “langue” – the underlying system of conventions that makes such utterances understandable; it is this underlying “langue” that interests most semioticians. The interest in the structure behind the use of signs linked semiotics with methods of structuralism which sought to analyse such relations. Saussure's theories were, thus, also considered fundamental to structuralism (especially structural linguistics) and to post structuralism.

Ancient semiotic reasoning rooted in the works Aristotle, Plato and all others enumerated in the foregoing, laid the groundwork for understanding signs, symbols and meaning-making. This practices influence modern-day communicative devices in the following ways:

Advertising

Advertisers use signs and symbols to convey complex messages, tapping into consumer's subconscious associations (e.g. Logos, branding).

Digital Communication

Emojis, GIFs, and memes rely on shared cultural understanding of signs and symbols to convey tone and meaning.

Politics

Politicians use rhetoric, imagery and symbolism to shape public opinion and creative narratives.

Some areas of application include: marketing – understanding how signs and symbols influence consumer behavior; public relations – crafting messages that resonate with diverse audiences; education using visual aids and story-telling to convey complex ideas and lastly, digital communication – leveraging emojis, GIFs, and memes to enhance online interactions.

COMMUNICATION

The strand of communication intended, here, is the non-verbal kind which encompasses signs, signaling systems, symbols, icons, indexes, paralanguage, body language, gestures, gap/space and other paralinguistic features that are employed for the purposes of information transmission, expression of thoughts, emotions and feelings from one source or individual to another. Non-verbal communication remains a veritable tool for expression of thoughts and advancing causes of meanings in human language or communication.

In this study, the researcher is keenly interested in the evaluation of some semiotic signs as a fulcrum of non-verbal communication for information sharing and dissemination. Colours, national flags and currency notes fall under this purview. Communication can be said to be

effective when all interlocutors understand the message exactly the same manner it emanated from the initiator or source through the encoding to decoding processes without any identifiable encumbrance or noise as case may be. In this case, there are some signs or symbols which suggest different meanings or interpretations when used in different contexts (Eluke 211).

There is a link between signs and symbols as means of effective communication. There is a correlation between the concepts and cultures where they imply. Leonid Tchertov opines:

In comparison with nature, there are other ways of creating and transmitting information that develop in culture. Based on nervous and mental mechanism, regulating the behaviour of organisms in the eternal environment, proto-information of non-biological origin is formed – a complex of socially and culturally developed norms and skills that form the non-hereditary naming” of a group (in terms of Litman 1992). Such cultural information is generating in joint subject – object and inter-subject actions. In the process of inter-subjective communication, the sign level of semiosis is formed, as a way of synthesis information flows linking the subject of activity to its object and other subjects (106).

To place some signs or symbols in proper cultural contexts, this makes their meaning to become much more obvious and facilitates effective communication among interlocutors in the communication value chain.

In most cases, signs and symbols are used interchangeably. This is readily because of the thin line distinction between them. Semiotics includes the study of signs and sign processes, indication, designation, likeness and communication. These are some of the ways semiotics could manifest in linguistic or language analysis and communication. From the Peircean model, a sign has three subsets, icons, indexes and symbols. In this regard, a symbol remains a component unit of a sign.

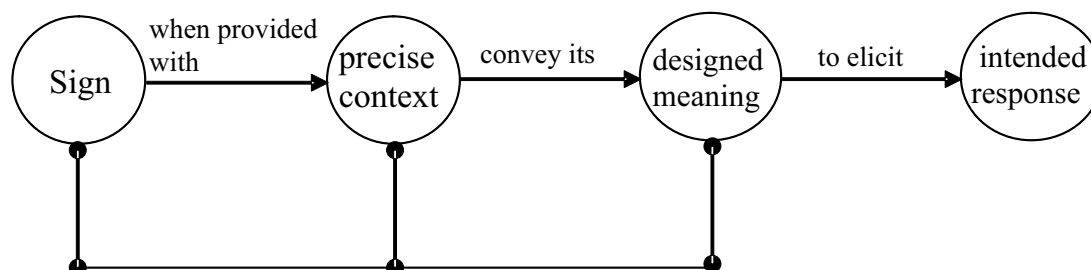
METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is three-pronged in its design to generate data for analysis. It adopts the qualitative, interpretative and theoretical approaches for elucidation of generated data. The selected data are got through observations, literature review and illustrative sampling.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the semiotic theory (ST). This theory was birthed by the works of notable semioticians such as Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. The theory helps to study how signs are used to convey meanings and to shape perceptions of life and reality. The ST model consists of three concepts (i.e. sign, context and meaning), a construct (i.e. semiosis) and the proposition that signs which convey precise context can trigger appropriate response from an intended recipient as presented below:

Figure 1: Semiotic Theory



(Source: <https://study.com>academy>)

In this model of semiotic theory, the first concept is a sign. According to De Saussure, a sign is composed of both form it takes in physical reality (signifier) and how it is interpreted by viewers (signified). The sign can manifest in many ways such as sounds, smells, body language, etc. The second concept is the context which refers to these aspects in a conversation or interactions that provide relevant and specific meaning to the exchange that is occurring. The third is the meaning which is the relationship between the recipient of a sign and their personal experience of the world around them.

The identified semiotic signs (symbols) in this study bear the burdens of arbitrariness and conventionality. This is because there is no one-to-correspondence between the signifier and signified but conventionality provides the meanings or interpretations which arise from such semiotic relationships.

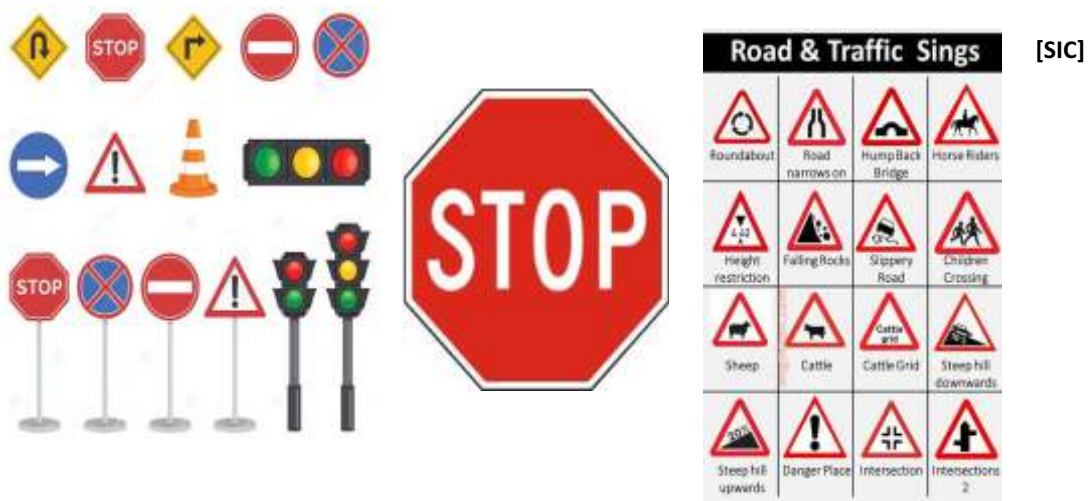
ANALYSIS OF EVERYDAY SEMIOTIC SIGNS

In this section, the researcher explains different areas of human activities where signs are in greater usage for purposes of communication. These areas include language, science, transportation, hospitality industries, oil exploration and refining, commercials, engineering and many others.

Symbols in English				Punctuation Marks in English	
	Plus		Minus		(,)
	Divide		Multiply		(.)
	Percent		Equal		(/)
	Pi		Square root		(;)
	Plus-minus		minus-plus		(" ")
	Parentheses		Brackets		(?)
	Not equal		Greater than		(!)
	Less than		Sum of		(...)
	Beta		Alpha		(:)
	Integral		Empty set		([])
	Infinity		Asterisk		({ })
					(')
					(%)
					(&)
					(>)
					(<)
					(@)
					(=)
					(#)
					(_)
					()

There are signs (semiotic symbols) in use for mathematical and grammatical purposes. The symbols speak volumes whenever they are deployed in mathematics and grammar. There is a blend of conventionality in the arbitrariness of the signifiers and the signified as represented by the symbols and their interpretations respectively. However, Daniel Eluke (7) considers the usefulness or relevance of these markers (symbols) in both spoken and written communications in the English language. When misapplied, there is a tendency to cause misinformation or miscommunication that can engender rifts and crises in communication and information dissemination.

Traffic Signs



The red signifies STOP, yellow (caution) and green means go or proceed. These simple signs in form of colours convey these meanings through arbitrariness and conventionality within the contexts where they are deployed or used. Again, the smiling face is universally recognized as a sign of happiness or friendliness. The checkmarks, often, used to indicate approval, completion or correctness.

Road signs are a great example of semiotic signs in action. The STOP sign (Octagonal shape with “STOP”). They convey “halt”, or “danger” while the warning signs (yellow triangles): indicate potential haphazard or caution areas. The directional signs (blue or green rectangles): provide information about routes, distances or destinations. These signs use a combination of COLOUR (red-danger/stop) yellow – caution, green – go); SHAPE (triangles – warning, circles – prohibition, rectangles – information); SYMBOLS, (arrows, icons, and text convey specific messages).

They rely on shared cultural understandings and conventions to communicate quickly and effectively.

Wet Area Signs



This is another great example of a warning sign. These signs, also use a combination of SYMBOL (a car with squiggly lines, underneath, indicating a slippery surface); COLOUR (typically yellow or orange signaling caution) and MESSAGE (warns drivers of a potentially hazardous areas, advising them to slow down or exercise caution). This sign uses visual elements to convey a clear message, relying on drivers prior knowledge and experience. In Nigeria, you might see similar signs warning potholes, rough roads or other hazards.

Construction Site Signs



The construction site signs are crucial for safety. The hard hat sign is a symbol of a hard hat, often with a message like “Hard Hat Area” or “Safety Helmets Must Be Worn”. Caution sign – a yellow triangle with an exclamation mark, warning of potential hazards, Construction Ahead sign – a sign with a construction worker symbol or text, alerting drivers to road work or hazards.

These signs use symbols (hard hats, exclamation marks, and worker icons) to convey safety messages; COLOURS (yellow – caution, red – danger/prohibition), often grab attention and TEXT (clear messages reinforce the sign's meaning). Lastly, construction site signs aim to protect workers and visitors by communicating hazards and safety rules clearly.

Refinery Signs



They are critical for safety and operations. The “NO smoking sign” often depicted with a cigarette symbol crossed out, indicates a no smoking zone or area. “Danger – Flammable Materials”, typically features a flame symbol and warning text, highlighting fire risks and “Authorized Personnel Only” restricts access to trained staff, often with a symbol of a person and a lock. These signs use symbols (cigarettes, flames, and locks which convey specific safety messages); COLOURS (red – danger/prohibition, yellow – caution) and TEXT (clear messages reinforce the signs meaning. Refinery signs prioritise safety, warning of hazards and restricting access to authorized personnel.

Hospital Signs



The hospital signs are designed for clarity and urgency. They include: “Red Cross Sign” – a symbol of medical help or emergency services, “Directional signs” – (e.g. Emergency Ward 3) – guide patients and visitors through the hospital and caution signs (e.g. “Radiation Area”) – warn of potential hazards or restricted areas. These signs use SYMBOLS (red cross is universally recognized as a medical symbol); COLOUR (red – emergency, green – safe/exit, blue – information) and TEXT (clear, concise language for quick understanding).

Hospital signs prioritise clarity and visibility, often using simple language and recognizable symbols to communicate critical information.

Market Signs



Identifiable market signs are vibrant and informative. There are price signs – display prices of goods often using numbers and symbols (e.g. N5000/kg), product signs – advertise specific products (e.g. fresh fruits”, vegetables), directional signs – guide customers to stalls or sections “toilet”, promotional signs – highlight deals or discounts (e.g. “Discount Sale”, Buy One Get One Free”). However, these signs use COLOURS (bright colours attract attention, differentiate products or convey mood), TEXT (clear, concise language), SYMBOLS (icons or messages represent products or services (e.g. a fish for sea food). Market signs aim to inform, attract and guide customers.

CONCLUSION

From the outset of this research, we are poised to establish a feasible fact which is that semiotic signs are veritable tools of communication, especially, non-verbal communication. This strand of communication hinges on the use of non-vocal means to express meaning through visuals or signs and symbols. An aspect of linguistics that deals with this is semiotics. This is the systematic or scientific study of signs and signaling systems (including symbols) which are used for communicative purposes. The evolution and revolution in scientific investigation of language as a semiotic system started from the works of Ferdinand de Saussure and amplified by the inputs of Charles Sanders Peirce. These duo are reputed to be purveyors of modern semiotics. In this study, we reviewed the earliest manifestations of semiotic studies in Europe through antiquity to Creco-Roman traditions and many more others.

The common signs (symbols in use for communication in everyday discourse and different contexts are re-evaluated and their relevance re-echoed as veritable tools of communication. When properly studied and analysed, the signs and symbols speak volumes in this stead. They aid interlocutors or participants to understand their environments or contexts

with much ease. Communication becomes easier and effective when road users, refinery workers, students, merchants and lots more, understand signs and symbols that are in use at their different places of operations.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE/SCHOLARSHIP

This study, significantly, contributes to knowledge or scholarship in multiplicity of ways as the following:

- understanding cultural meaning by uncovering the underlying cultural values, norms, and power dynamics encoded in signs and symbols.
- improving communication by informing effective communication strategies in various contexts (e.g. advertising, education and health care).
- enhancing critical thinking by developing critical thinking skills to analyze and interpret signs and symbols in various contexts.
- informing design and technology by guiding the design more of effective signs, interfaces and technologies that communicate complex information.
- preserving cultural heritage by documenting and analyzing signs and symbols as part of cultural language and identity.

Finally, the fields which can benefit from this study include: communication studies (sign systems, rhetoric and persuasion), Anthropology (cultural symbols, rituals, and practices), design (creating visual communication and interfaces) and linguistics (language as a sign system and exploring multimodality).

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