

Visual Analysis Of Children Books Illustration As a Psychiatric Therapy

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Abstract: One of the most acute urban problems is the emergence of psychiatric problems caused by the acceleration of daily routine. These psychiatric problems not only suffered by adults, but also children. These children generally have a problem called B.L.A.S.T. (Bored, Lonely, Angry-Afraid, Sad, Tired). To overcome this problem, there are a number of ways, including reading. Since 1802, Benjamin Rush, the father of United States psychiatry, recommends reading as part of therapy for patients with mental disorders. This therapy also applies for children by adding more illustrations within the books. This study analyzed three illustrated books that read by children in Indonesia from ages 7-13 years. The Illustrations analyzed by Roland Barthes's semiotic approach, to get conclusions regarding how illustration have a positive psychiatric therapy impact on children. The finding and results based on semiotic approach that, books mentioned above have the potential to overcome of B.L.A.S.T. because it contains two functions, education and entertainment. This assumption supported by theoretical view of psychologist Jean Piaget, things that educate and entertain are two important elements as a therapy for many kinds of psychiatric problems.

Keywords: Children, Illustration, Psychology, Semiotics, B.L.A.S.T

1. Introduction

A city with all its routines and acceleration has impact on health, especially mental and psychological health. These problems can come from traffic jams, pollutions (especially noise), or work pressure, which impacts directly or indirectly on less quality breaks and leisure time.

These mental and psychiatric health problems not only occur to adults, but also affects children, who may also be exposed to psychological problems such as Anxiety Disorders, Attention Deficit or Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Depression, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Tourette, Bipolar Disorder, and many more.

Addition to the types of mental disorders mentioned above, there are also mental problems named B.L.A.S.T, stands for Bored, Lonely, Angry, Afraid, Stress, and Tired. B.L.A.S.T. is a phenomenon that refers to fragile mental

condition of children in the digital age due to the weakness of the most important social systems in their lives, namely the family. The term was popularized by the organization Save Indonesian Gold Generation 2045. Related to B.L.A.S.T., here is a brief description of each; Bored, this usually happens due to daily and school routines. Lonely, children are not close to their parents in quantity and quality. Angry-Afraid, because of the everyday situation, dissatisfied, and afraid to tell stories to their parents. Stress, feeling depressed due of the situation at hand. Tired, tired due to accumulated problems. Generally speaking, B.L.A.S.T. occurs due to the absence of parents role in educating children. Parental involvement is only limited to the facility provider and does not attempt to carry out the education process in the family. Parents, in this case, transfer responsibility to the school and feel that the school is the one who must fully develop the child in terms of cognitive, moral, and other abilities.

Solution to B.L.A.S.T in general is to raise awareness of parents to spend more time with their children. But it is not easy for every parent to have quality time with children. Therefore, reading a book is one of psychological solution has been scientifically recognized. In London, for example, an institution called School of Life helps people deal with emotional challenges in everyday life. Unlike other psychological therapies, the School of Life offers books as its therapy. Books such R.K. Narayan's *the Guide*, Jose Saramago's *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ*, Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King*, and Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* became therapeutic material for patients to read. This has been done by Benjamin Rush, the father of United States psychiatry, who recommended reading as part of therapy for patients with mental disorders in 1802.

Reading as a therapy considered not only for adults, but also for children. Children's books is considered a good therapy medium for children because of its colorful illustration, interesting storyline, and interaction between parents and children. In Indonesia, there are a number of publishers who focus on children and their psychology, two of which are the Erlangga publisher, who then opened a sub-publication named *Erlangga for Kids*, and Mizan, who opened a sub-publishing called *Pelangi Mizan*.

This research will examine books from Pelangi Mizan titled *Tiko dan Tidut*, and *Maleo dan Ujung Pelangi*, as well as one sample book from Erlangga for Kids entitled *Fino Gatal-Gatal*. Both books are dominated by images with bright colors, the story relatively short and simple, so it can be understood by children in the age range of 4 - 7 years. Visual analysis with semiotic approach will be conducted to examine the visual elements in order to be able to attract children. Furthermore, have an impact on mitigation of B.L.A.S.T. phenomenon to build a better younger generation in Indonesia.

2. Research Method

This is a qualitative research with Roland Barthes's semiotic theory approach. As a first step, main characters will be sorted for analysis. The following matrix sort two main characters for each book titles for more focused and in-depth analysis:

Book Titles	Character 1	Character 2
<i>Tiko dan Tidut</i>	<i>Tiko</i>	<i>Tidut</i>
<i>Maleo dan Ujung Pelangi</i>	<i>Maleo Senkawar</i>	<i>Enggang Gading</i>
<i>Fino Gatal-Gatal</i>	<i>FIno</i>	<i>Kiki</i>

Next step is analyze each characters with Roland Barthes's semiotic theory related to illustration theory. The following theory will be presented the concepts of B.L.A.S.T., Roland Barthes's semiotics, illustration theory and Jean Piaget's therapeutic theory.

2.1. Roland Barthes Semiotics

Barthes in his book entitled *Elemen-Elemen Semiologi* (2012) and *Mitos-Mitos Budaya Massa* (2007) looks further at the concept of signs at a connotative level, previously Saussure saw only at the denotative level. Roland Barthes sees language as a system of signs that reflects the assumptions of a particular society in a period of time

Barthes believes that between signifier and signified are not formed are formed arbitrary. Before, Saussure only emphasizes denotative aspects, Barthes perfected Saussure's semiology by developing a signifier system at connotative level. Barthes also sees another aspect of signifier as a myth in the society.

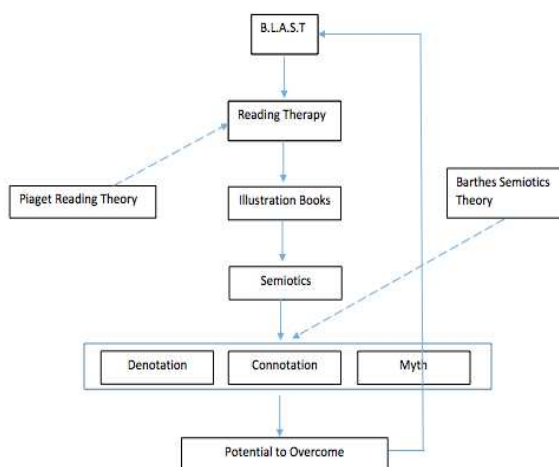
1. Signifier	2. Signified	
3. Denotative Sign		
2. Connotative Signifier		3. Connotative Signified
4. Connotative Sign		

Tabel 1. Barthes sign map

In the sign map developed by Barthes, the Denotative sign (3) is formed from the relation between signifier (1) and signified (2). However the denotative sign also becomes a Connotative marker (4). Denotation in Barthes's view is the first level whose meaning is closed. The denotation level produces straightforward, direct, and definite meanings. Denotation is the true or literal meaning, which is mutually agreed upon socially, whose reference to reality.

Connotative sign is a sign that is built through indirect and uncertain relations meaning that it is open to interpretations. In Barthes's semiology, relations in denotative signs are explained as first-level systems of significance, while

connotative signs are second-level systems of significance. Denotation can be said to be a fixed objective meaning, while connotation is a subjective and varied meaning.



Furthermore, the framework of Barthes connotation is identical to the operation of ideology, which he refers to as a myth. Barthes argues that myth is language, a communication system, and a message.

2.2. Illustration

Illustration is a message in a form of picture that can break down the story, in the form of images and writings, namely graphic forms of compelling information. With illustrations, the message becomes more memorable, because readers will more easily remember images than words (Artini Kusmiati R., Sri Pudjiastuti, Pamudji Suptandar, 1999: 44).

Several functions of illustrations are; explaining ideas, educate audiences, telling a story through various genres, promoting ideas or event, documenting an event, and present various expression (Sofyan Salam, 2017:15).

2.3. Jean Piaget's Theory of Therapy


In his work entitled *Psychology of Intelligence* (1951), cognitive psychologist Jean Piaget wrote about psychiatric problems, especially in children's cognitive development. Piaget did not find the term B.L.A.S.T, but at that time he mentioned general psychiatric problems. In his experiments with ten children between the ages of 5 - 10 who were suspected of experiencing a lack of quality time with their parents, Piaget found that these children showed positive reactions gradually when given stories and readings that

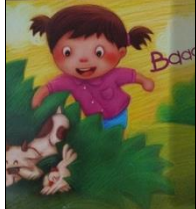
were educational and entertaining. Educating here is interpreted moral message from the story directly and indirectly. An entertaining story or reading can cause an optimistic impact or at least have a comedy side.





Also in color, Piaget found that relatively bright colors such as; yellow, orange, green, and pink, had more positive effects for children. The ten children will experience worse psychiatric problems if given stories and readings that predominantly contain absurd, tragedy, with images that are dark or not bright.

3. Results and Discussion

The discussion will be carried out with per figure analysis from three titles with two main characters each;

Visual and Charater Names	Denotation	Connotation
 <i>Fino</i>	Round eyes; color dominance is white, red, cream, light blue, with brown hair; body shape is curvy, generally round, bold, and blunt; mouth shows the impression of laughing.	Round is simple form; colors dominated by bright colors; body shape does not give a sharp, "dangerous" impression for children; laughter has effect of friendly, happy, and delightful.
Myth	Psychologically, Fino has an impact as character representing calm, optiism, happiness and security	

Visual and Charater Names	Denotation	Connotation
 Kiki	Round eyes; color dominance is on light purple, cream, light blue, with brown accents on hair; the shape of the curve of the body is generally round and blunt; mouth shows the impression of laughing.	Round considered a simple form without many angles, colors dominated by bright colors; body shape does not give a sharp impression that is "dangerous" for children; the impression of laughter has the effect of being friendly and happy.
Myth	Psychologically, Kiki's character is similar to Fino, giving the effect of calm, optimism, happiness and security.	

	Animals in the form of birds; round eyes; dominance colors is yellow, blue, light purple, and white; the shape of the curve of the body is generally round and blunt; mouth shows the impression of laughing.	The image of animals considered friendly to children because of their relatively complex nature; the inherent color is relatively bright; there is no dangerous "sharp" impression; the impression of laughter has a friendly, happy and happy effect.
Myth	Psychologically, the figure of Maleo Senkawar as a bird gives an impact on freedom and passion. There is also the impact of optimism, security, and happiness from the colors and gestures shown	
	Animals in the form of birds; round eyes; dominance color is yellow and dark blue; mouth doesn't show the impression of laughing, but still friendly.	Image of animals considered close to children because of their close to nature; color that is partially dark so that it distinguishes itself from the main protagonist (though not necessarily antagonist); no dangerous "sharp" impression; not laughing shows a flat and calm attitude.
Myth	Psychologically, the figure of Maleo Senkawar as a bird gives an impact on freedom and passion. There is also the impact of optimism, security, and happiness from the colors and gestures shown.	
	Animals in the form of mice; the eyes look small, the dominance of colors is light brown, pink and yellow; body shape tends to round and blunt; mouth shows the impression of smiling	Image of animals close to children; inherent colors are dominated by bright colors; body shape there is no dangerous "sharp" impression; smiling gives a happy impression.
Myth	Psychologically, the character of Tiko as a mouse gives an agile and dynamic impression. With bright colors and a smile gesture, the image of being sleeping, Tiko has an effect on calm and passion at the same time.	
	Animals in the form of mice; the eyes look small, the dominance of colors are light brown, pink, blue, green, and yellow; body shape tends to be round and blunt; mouth shows the impression of smiling.	Animals considered close to children; inherent colors are dominated by bright colors; there is no dangerous "sharp" impression; smiling gives a happy and positif impression.
Myth	Psychologically, the character Tidut as a mouse gives an agile and dynamic impression. With bright colors and dynamic gestures, Tidut has an impact on optimism, passion and security.	

Results above then related to myth and reinforced by theory of illustration, including two of its functions that

relevant, educating and entertaining. These two functions have the potential to overcome the problem of B.L.A.S.T. This supported from the perspective of cognitive psychologist from Jean Piaget, that education and entertainment are two important therapy elements for many psychiatric problems.

4. Conclusion

After being analyzed by Roland Barthes's semiotic approach, it can be concluded that illustrated books titled *Tiko dan Tidut*, *Maleo dan Ujung Pelangi*, and *Fino Gatal-Gatal* have a good psychological impact on children after by reasons as follows: (1) The dominant color is bright, which psychologically gives the impression of optimism and passion. (2) The shape of the body is round and not sharp, psychologically gives a sense of security and harmless. (3) Animal figures psychologically keep children away from complex traits (4). Impression of laughing and smiling psychologically gives pleasure and happiness. Points above form a myth that encourages children to produce meanings about happy things and overcome depression, gradually they can overcome BLAST

In addition, based on illustrations theory, the books mentioned above have the potential to overcome B.L.A.S.T because they have two basic functions, education and entertainment. This is reinforced by the therapeutic theory of Jean Piaget, that things that educate and entertain are two important elements as a way of overcoming various mental problems.

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