

## 081. Semiotic analysis of *Fresh* movie poster

Serda GÜZEL<sup>1</sup>

**APA:** Güzel, S. (2023). Semiotic analysis of *Fresh* movie poster. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Arařtırmaları Dergisi*, (32), 1367-1373. DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.1252905.

### Abstract

Movie poster has a commercial aim and it advertises a movie. The researcher selects the movie poster of *Fresh* in order to examine semiotic sign. This study tries to analyze implicit and explicit meaning through semiotic signs on the movie poster. The data is obtained from the movie poster, “*Fresh*” that is taken from internet website. The qualitative approach is used in this study. This analysis focuses content analysis in other words qualitative analysis because the study tries to explore the signs found in the movie poster of *Fresh*. Based on this, the researcher examines the sign in the movie poster of the “*Fresh*”. This study uses Saussure’s sign theory (2011) Wierzbicka’s color theory (1996) and Dyer’s verbal and visual aspect of theory (1986). It can be noted here, there are two aspects in movie poster *Fresh*. These are verbal and visual aspects. This article tries to examine how movie poster *Fresh* can construct and convey the meaning by means of the verbal and non verbal aspects. This research indicates that verbal and non verbal aspects convey meaning. This article explores that how signs used in movie poster inform the audience about the topic of the film. This study points out that the verbal and non verbal aspects can produce and realize implicit an explicit meaning. The researcher suggests that the next studies can cover the limitations of this study. The next researcher can use semiotic theories in order to analyze visual communication media, art photography or printed material.

**Key words:** Semiotic, movie poster, *Fresh*, sign

### *Fresh* film afişinin göstergebilimsel analizi

#### Öz

Film afişinin ticari bir amacı vardır ve afişler filmlerin reklamını yapar. Arařtırmacı, göstergebilimsel öğeleri incelemek için *Fresh* filminin film afişini seçmiştir. Bu çalışma, film afişindeki göstergebilimsel özellikler aracılığıyla örtük ve açık anlamı çözümlenmeye çalışmaktadır. Veriler, internet sitesinden alınan “*Fresh*” film afişinden elde edilmiştir ve nitel yaklaşım kullanılmıştır. Bu analiz, *Fresh* filminin film afişinde bulunan göstergeleri incelemeye çalıştığı için içerik analizine bir başka söylemle nitel araştırma tekniğine odaklanmaktadır. Arařtırmacı, “*Fresh*” filminin afişindeki göstergeleri incelemektedir. Çalışmada, Saussure’ün dil bilim ve göstergebilim teorisi (2011), Wierzbicka’nın renk teorisi (1996) ve Dyer’in sözel ve görsel teorisi (1986) kullanılmaktadır. *Fresh* film afişinde iki öge olduğu ifade edilebilir. Bunlar, sözel ve görsel yönlerdir. Bu makale, *Fresh* film afişinin sözlü ve sözel olmayan yönleriyle anlamı nasıl oluşturabildiğini ve aktarabildiğini incelemeye çalışmaktadır ve araştırma sözlü ve sözel olmayan göstergelerin anlam oluşturduğunu göstermektedir. Makale, film afişinde kullanılan göstergelerin izleyiciyi filmin konusu hakkında nasıl bilgilendirdiğini ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Bu çalışma, sözel ve sözel olmayan yönlerin örtük açık bir

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, İstanbul Arel Üniversitesi, Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi, Mütercim ve Tercümanlık Bölümü, İngilizce Mütercim ve Tercümanlık ABD (İstanbul, Türkiye), serdaguzel@arel.edu.tr, ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5212-9891. [Arařtırma makalesi, Makale kayıt tarihi: 03.01.2023-kabul tarihi: 20.02.2023; DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.1252905]

anlam üretebileceğine ve gerçekleştirebileceğine işaret etmektedir. Araştırmacı, daha sonra yapılan incelemelerin bu çalışmanın sınırlılıklarını kapatabileceğini öne sürmektedir. Bir sonraki araştırmacı, görsel iletişim araçlarını, sanat fotoğrafçılığını veya basılı materyali analiz etmek için göstergebilimsel teorileri kullanabilir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Göstergebilim, sinema afişi, *Fresh*, gösterge

## Introduction

In global world, film is seen as a big industry for people in order to explore feelings, emotions and opinions. In this sense, film is the sophisticated and powerful art in post modern world (Giles,2003). Film is a type of motion picture and it contains form, visual lines, sound and texture (Bignell,2002). Posters are considered as the most powerful media and it advertises something and it delivers some information to the public (Scannell,1998). From this perspective, people use language for communication and they transmit message through language (Sobur,2009). Language contains verbal and nonverbal in other words visual aspects. Verbal and nonverbal signs transmit explicit and implicit meaning and ideology (Hawkes,1977). Semiotic focuses on how messages are transmitted through signs. Messages divided into verbal and nonverbal messages (Culler,2001). Verbal messages are formulated in written form and non verbal messages and they are formulated as symbols, images (Chandler,2002).Based on this, in postmodern world film is seen as one of the enormous industry for people in order to transmit their feelings, and ideologies (Bignell,2002). Regarding this, movie posters are used by the film production companies in order to transmit implicit and explicit information / ideology/ meaning about the film context (Scannell,1998). It can be noted here, film poster generally includes verbal and non verbal messages. In movie poster, words, clauses, long sentences are not seen. Sign, color, symbol and paintig are frequently seen in the movie posters (Toolan,1988). Movie poster is seen as marketing method of the films. As it is implied above, the movie poster language is generally informal, simple. The short sentences are used and emotive language is used in the movie poster in order to draw attention of the audience (Swales,1990).Based on this, a study about sign is named semiotic. According to Saussure, signifier and signified are important terms for semiology (Saussure,2011). Signifier focuses on sound and object, signified focuses on concept of the object. The relationship between signifier and signified is seen as a signification and it is called sign (Saussure,2011). Regarding this, visual semiotics is subclass of semiotics. Visual semiotics focuses on visual images and visual messegas and they reflect their implicit and explicit meaning in the text (Peirce,1994). From this perspective, this study focuses on the semiotic signs of the *Fresh* movie poster. Verbal and visual signs are examined in this study. The *Fresh* movie poster has semiotic signs such as the meaning of color and the verbal and visual aspects.

Semiotic study does not only study written or spoken language. It also analyzes the visual features of the texts (Peirce,1994). Based on this, the *Fresh* is a horror movie and the visual features play a significant role for transmitting the meaning of the thriller or horror movie posters. As mentioned before, the movie *Fresh* is a horror movie and it told the story of a trumatized woman who is abused and tortured by obsessive man. Verbal and non verbal signs are used in the movie poster in order to explore feelings of woman who has experienced pysical and psychological trauma. The study focuses on *Fresh* movie poster and it includes picture and text, signs such as verbal sign, non verbal sign and the color sign.

In this study, researcher examines semiotic signs, implicit and explicit messages, verbal and visual signs in movie poster “*Fresh*”. The study tries to reveal the explicit and implicit meaning by means of semiotic

sign, color meaning verbal and visual features of movie poster. The Fresh movie poster is examined by means of Dyer's visual and verbal concepts (Dyer,1986) and the concept of color is examined by means of Wierzbicka's theory of Color Term (Wierzbicka,1996). Paralinguistic elements such as gesture, facial expression, image and appearance are seen as visual signs (Dyder,1986). From this point of view, gender, size, body, manner, eye contact, pose, clothers body movement are considered as non verbal communication in the text (Bignell,2002). Verbal and visual signs identify things and feelings, associations as well as they construct and shape our social representations (Eco,1979). As it is indicated before, signs and symbols can be seen eveywhere in daily life such as public spaces, bus stations, train stations, in books and mobile phones (Sobur,2009).

### Research questions

- 1 What are the semiotic signs in Fresh movie poster?
2. What implicit and explicit messages and ideologies are transmitted by verbal and visual signs in "Fresh" movie poster?

### Objective of the research

The study focuses on Fresh movie poster that includes picture and text, signs such as verbal sign, non verbal sign and the color Sign. In this study researcher examines semiotic sign and messages, verbal and visual sign in movie poster "Fresh". The study tries to reveal explicit and implicit meaning by means of semiotic sign, color meaning and verbal and visual features of movie poster. The Fresh movie poster is examined by means of Dyer's visual and verbal concepts (Dyer,1986) and the concept of color is examined by means of Wierzbicka's theory of Color term. (Wierzbicka,1996). The researcher tries to analyze semiotic signs in "Fresh" movie poster also the researcher tries to explore the implicit and explicit messages/ and ideologies in the Fresh movie poster by means of verbal and visual sign in the selected movie poster. The verbal and visual signs are conveyed through the selected movie poster. The ads line, movie title, movie producer, tagline, release data, and movie logo can be seen as verbal signs. On the other hand, the background illustration of the poster, colors and the character position in the poster can be seen as visual signs in selected movie poster. To summarize, the study tries to analyze communication codes, textual and visual elements in the selected movie poster.

### Research method

Fresh movie poster is the data of this research. The data is analyzed by means of theory of semiotics. This study tries to explore the hidden messages and ideologies in the "Fresh" movie poster. This study uses qualitative method because selected movie poster includes verbal and visual signs. Visual is seen as picture, verbal is seen as text. Visual messages are analyzed by means of the terms such as color, shape, verbal messages and they are analyzed by means of text on the selected movie poster. The study uses Dyer's concepts (1986) in order to analyze the verbal and visual sign. Saussure's Sign Theory (2011) is used in order to explore the signified and signifier in selected movie poster. Wierzbicka's theory of color (1996) term is used in order to analyze color sign in the selected movie poster.

### Data analysis

As it is mentioned above, verbal and visual signs and their implicit and explicit ideologies and messages are analyzed by means of Dyer (1986), Saussure (2011), Wierzbicka (1996).The selected movie poster is

selected according to these steps, the movie's original language must be English. Signs must be depicted in the selected movie poster, in order to analyze verbal language, there must be a word (words) written text/s in selected movie poster. *Fresh* has a disturbing content in other words bloody images or signs, violence are frequently seen in the movie. That's why, this movie is selected as the subject data in order to understand signs that identified in a horror movie. Based on this, the raw data (Movie poster *Fresh*) is analyzed by means of Dyer (1986), Saussure (2011) and Wierzbicka's (1996) theory of color. The researcher examines verbal and visual signs in the selected movie poster.

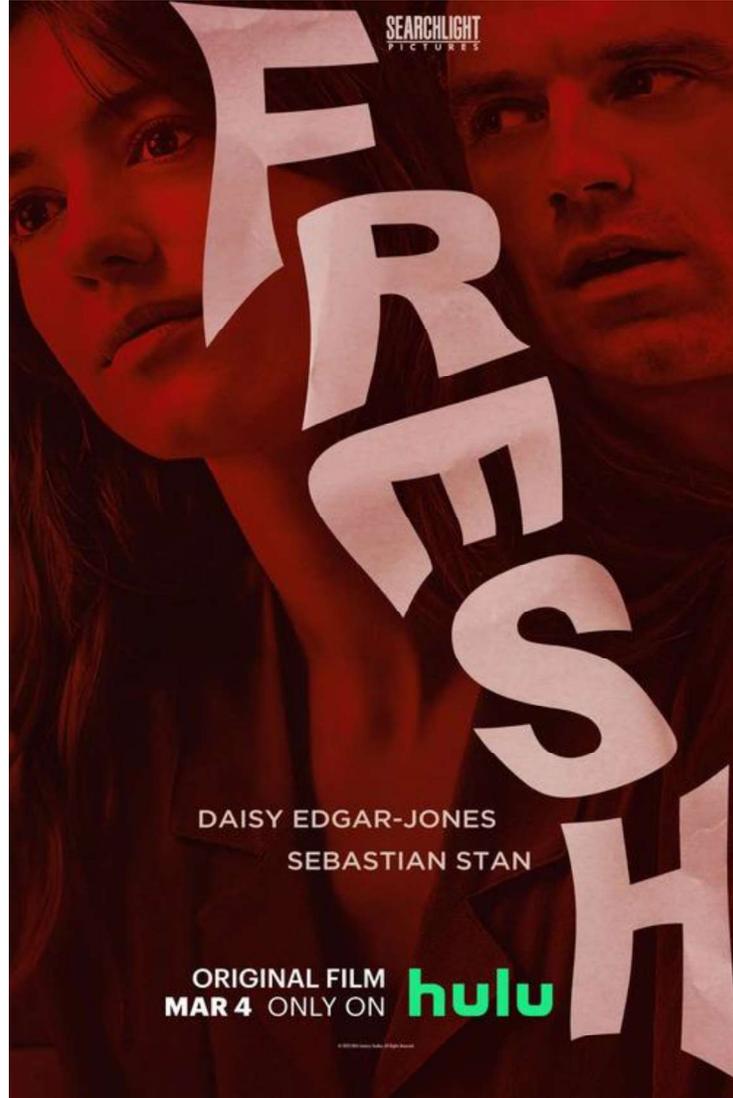


Figure 1. The cover of the movie: *Fresh*  
Source: <https://www.kino.dk/film/f/fr/fresh>

### **Verbal aspect analysis:**

Daisy Edgar – Jones, Sebastian Stan: Verbal Signs

Message: The main characters are written in order to inform the audience about the who are the main characters in this film. The two main characters are written in order to pay attention of the audiences and they are written in order to get public attention. The two main characters' names indicate that the movie has a good quality by means of these players. Based on this, the film's cast is important for the film's success.

### **Fresh: Verbal Sign**

Message: "Fresh" is the title of the film poster. Thematic or assertive title are not used in this movie poster. The topic title is used in this movie poster. From this perspective, this title does not convey a specific message and it only maintains information or raw data about the movie. The capital letter, bold, and white color are used in the text. This usage indicates that main title is the main focus of the movie poster. These textual preferences are used in order to draw audience's attention and this textual preference tells the audience what the film actually is.

### **Searchlight pictures: Verbal Sign**

Message: The masthead of the poster, informs the audience about who produced the film. This Verbal sign indicates that the movie is produced by Searchlight Pictures. This verbal sign indicates that the "Searchlight picture" is one of the America's Film producers and distributors. The company's name is written in capital letters in order to establish and construct credibility and power. The font of text is smaller than the other texts, this linguistic behaviour points out that the distributor or producer of the film is not important or vital information for the audience.

### **MAR 4: Verbal Sign**

Message: MAR 4 is written in order to convey information about the release date of the film and it is written in capital letters in order to establish audience's attention.

### **Original film on only on Hulu: Verbal Sign**

Message: Hulu is a video demand website. It operates in the United States. This verbal sign is written in order to provide information about the Hulu. In order to construct power and hegemony in the context of commercial text, the name of the website is written in the movie poster. Based on this, specific release date and the website are written in order to catch the audience's attention.

### **Visual aspect analysis**

The researcher focuses on the color, shape, position and background of the selected movie poster in this part.

## Color

In this stage, the color used in selected movie poster is examined. Color is a type of communication and it conveys pre defined meanings (Cobley,2010). There are three dominant color in this selected movie poster. These are red, white, black and green. The hidden messages and ideologies are transmitted through colors (Wierzbicka,1996). Sensory social color of the selected movie poster is analyzed in this stage. These visual colors may be served as subliminal stimuli in the selected movie poster (Culler,2001). Based on this, meanings are constructed by means of visual colour (Danesi,2004).Red is used in selected movie poster. Red emphasizes blood, passion, lust and anger. It can be noted here, the color red is considered as indexical signification and it is linked to danger and fear because it is associated with blood. Based on this, red is a subliminal stimuli of experiencing pain (Itten,1970). White is used in this selected movie poster. The verbal signs are conveyed via white. White is often associated with the transparency, purification, purity, cleanness, virginity (Danger,1987).Black is used in this selected movie poster. Black is considered as the darkness, mysterious and death (Giles,2003). Based on this, black is used in this selected movie poster in order to establish the dark and mysterious part of the movie. Green is used in this selected movie eposter. Green is associated with envy and it is not only associated with environmental issues and patterns and it has also negative sense and it is also the color of poison (Giles,2003). The commercial company name is written in green. Dark green is associated with ambition, greed, and jealousy (Bignell,2002).

This is sense driven behaviour in terms of marketing (Giles,2003). Global brand colors are used in this selected movie poster in order to evoke audiences' emotions and feelings. Based on this, colors have meaning and they give message and meaning fort he audience. The colors used in the selected movie poster can be seen as signifier.

## Shape of the selected movie poster

In this section, shape of the selected movie poster is examined. It can be noted here, Fresh has disturbing content. It includes bloody images, nudity, violence. The genre of this film is Thriller/ horror. There are two people (young man and woman) are depicted in this movie poster. Shadow of a man who looks at the woman signifies the film could be mystery for the audience. When they see the poster, the audiences want to know content of the film. In this regard, the marketing sells the movie. Based on this, the audience perceives the hidden message of the advertisement.

## Background of the selected movie poster

In this stage, the background of the selected movie poster is analyzed. The color red and black are background of the movie poster and these colors are associated with blood mark and scary, ,isolation and unwelcoming setting, in addition the background is gloomy and dark because there is no light in the movie poster. From this perspective, black and red background introduce the mysteriousness of the movie and this background connates the genre of the film, it is horror genre. As it is mentioned before, the color black refers darkness, evil and negative connatation. The images of woman and man and the color black give the sense of horror and evil. The woman and man dressed in black color and the setting is in low key lighting and this establishes fear in the selected movie poster. Based on this, the woman looks scared because she notices that she is being followed. To sum up, dark colours emphasizes negativity and darkness in the selected movie poster. The black color signifies the movie's tone.

## Conclusion

The verbal and non verbal language signs entitled “Fresh” movie poster is analyzed in this study. The verbal aspects related to verbal signs such as masthead, the title, the release data, Internet website (Hulu) and the non verbal aspects such as color, shape, background and sign are analyzed according to Dyer (1986) Saussure (2011) Wierzbicka (1996). It can be said that the selected movie poster uses the semiotic signs (verbal and non verbal signs) in order to convey implicit and explicit meaning and ideology. The verbal and visual signs are constructed in the selected movie poster and it serves as “subliminal stimuli” and this influences the selected movie poster’s ideological point of view and sense making practices and process. To conclude, the implied meaning and multiple levels of meaning are established by means of semiotic signs in this selected movie poster.

## References

- Bignell, J. (2002) *Media Semiotics: An Introduction*; second edition, United Kingdom: Manchester University Press
- Chandler, D. (2002). *Semiotics: The Basic First Edition*. London: Routledge.
- Cobley, P. (2010) *Semiotics*, New York: Routledge
- Culler, J. (2001). *The pursuit of signs*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Danesi, M. (2004). *Messages, signs, and meanings: A basic textbook in semiotics and communication* (3rd ed.). Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press. Inc.
- Danger, E.P. (1987). *The Colour Handbook. How to Use Colour in Commerce and Industry*, Gower Publishing Company, Vermont.
- De Saussure, F. (2011). *Course in general linguistics*. Columbia University Press.
- Dyer, G. (1986). *Advertising as communication*. Methuen: Methuen Co. Ltd
- Eco, U. (1979). *A theory of semiotics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Giles, D. (2003). *Media Psychology*, New Jersey: Routledge
- Hall, S. (2012). *This Means This, This Means That Second Edition: A User's Guide to Semiotics*. Laurence King Publishing
- Hawkes, T. (1977). *Structuralism and semiotics*. California: University of California Press.
- Itten, J. (1970). *The Elements of Color*, in Birren, F. (Ed.), Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, New York, NY.
- Peirce, C.S. (1994). *The Collected Paper of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Scannell, P.(1998). ‘Media – language – world’, in A. Bell and Garrett, P.(eds.) *Approaches to Media Discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 251–267.
- Sobur, A. (2009). *Semiotics*. Bandung: PT Remaja.
- Swales, M. (1990). *Genre Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Toolan, M. (1988). ‘The Language of Press Advertising’, in Ghadessy, M. (ed.) *Registers of Written English*. London: Pinter Publishers, pp. 52–64.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1996). *Semantics: Primes and Universals*. New York: Oxford University Press.