

Refining Contextually Vulgar Word Choices in the Lyrics of Campursari Song "Gubug Asmoro": A Semiotic Analysis

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Abstract—Campursari lyrics have distinctive characteristics in refining word choices, even in contexts that may be considered vulgar. Likewise, the artists constantly adapt to the changing times. They understand that excessively harsh or vulgar word choices can undermine the beauty and wisdom they intend to convey. In this regard, the present study aimed to analyze word choices to refine the vulgar context in the lyrics of the Campursari song "Gubug Asmoro." The research method employed was descriptive qualitative with a semiotic analysis approach based on Charles Sanders Peirce's theory. Data collection techniques included observation and note-taking. The research data consisted of lyrics manifesting as words, phrases, and sentences representing gender imbalances. Data analysis techniques involved content analysis and focus group discussions. The findings of this study could contribute to the fields of linguistics, Campursari music, and language usage in song lyrics. The results documented the semantic and contextual variations in word choices used to refine the vulgar context in Campursari lyrics, aiming to understand how their usage could influence listeners' perception of art and culture. The semiotic analysis by Charles Sanders Peirce was incorporated to provide a deeper understanding of the connection between vulgar words, the context of traditional music art, and how social interpretations were formed through their usage. Thus, this research could contribute to the understanding of meaning construction and representation in the context of popular art and culture in Indonesia, particularly within the Campursari genre.

Index Terms—campursari, song lyrics, Charles Sanders Peirce semiotics, vulgar

I. INTRODUCTION

Humans use language as a tool for communication (Mahardhika et al., 2023; Kusumaningsih et al., 2023). One way to communicate through language is via the art form of music, which is expected to convey messages uniquely. The messages in music not only contain information but also evoke emotions. Hence, the composer's expression of feelings is conveyed through a song's musical arrangement and lyrics (Aprianti & Sugito, 2022; Harnia, 2021). In this regard, song lyrics are a form of creative text representation by the composer to express their imagination and emotions (Kusumaningsih et al., 2018).

Each person has diverse preferences for music genres based on their characteristics and preferences. The genre of *campursari* music began to develop in the late 1960s. However, since the 1990s, when Manthous recorded and distributed his songs to a broad audience, it gained more recognition as a music genre that combines diatonic musical instruments found in modern tools with the pentatonic scale found in *gamelan* (an Indonesian traditional musical ensemble) (Saepudin & Yulaeliah, 2021; Saman, 2021; Savitri, 2021; Setiawan et al., 2020). Javanese music genres,

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especially *campursari*, have long been popular among older Javanese people (Sunarya, 2019; Sundari, 2020). Javanese, used in the lyrics of *campursari*, serves as a window that allows listeners to connect with traditional values, local stories, and life philosophies embedded in the local wisdom of Java Island (Saputra et al., 2022; Rohmadi et al., 2023; Debi et al., 2023). The use of Javanese language not only creates the beauty of the melody but also expresses profound meanings, conveying messages about life, love, and wisdom, seamlessly blending within the everyday context of Javanese society. In *campursari* music, song lyrics contain implied and explicit meanings, which need to be analyzed thoroughly to understand the content because people often use words and their meanings interchangeably (Suyatno & Pujiati, 2023).

In today's music, lyrics that contain sexuality have become widespread in society (Mahardhika, 2023; Keenan-Kroff et al., 2023). They explore sexual freedom and may tell romance stories and explore physical desires (R. A. Kurniawati et al., 2020; Revathy et al., 2022). Some lyrics contain elements of pornography and sexuality that may seem indecent but are packaged with sweet language (Noor & Wahyuningratna, 2017). The presence of such vulgar words creates the potential for negative impacts on the cultural integrity and traditional values represented by *campursari* music. There is an inconsistency between social and cultural norms and the society's expectations regarding linguistic refinement in the artworks of music.

Hence, this research is necessary because the choice of words that may seem indecent but are packaged with lovely language in *campursari* song lyrics can influence music listeners. The choice of words, or any other form of language capable of conveying an individual's message or emotions (Saputra et al., 2023). Therefore, song lyrics can also convey messages to society without using overly vulgar language. The presence of vulgar words in *campursari* song lyrics can have serious repercussions on the cultural integrity and traditional values upheld by the community. Specifically, changes in cultural values and modern social norms may create a dissonance between the influence of traditional music and societal expectations regarding linguistic refinement. Correspondingly, choosing words or other forms of language that can convey messages or emotions without using overly vulgar words is crucial.

The present study aimed to describe the refinement of word choices found in the lyrics of the *campursari* song "*Gubuk Asmoro*". The lyrics were systematically identified to meticulously examine the selection of contextually vulgar words present in the song. Through a semiotic approach, the researchers uncovered hidden meanings and connotations in the use of language in the song lyrics. This research contributes to the understanding of Indonesian traditional culture and music by detailing the impact of using contextually vulgar words on the cultural integrity of *Campursari*. This analysis is essential to provide understanding for songwriters to convey messages or emotions without using overly vulgar words.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research conducted by Wulandari and Sentana in 2023 analyzed the lyrics of the song "*Wijayakusuma*" by Ardrito Pramono. They employed descriptive analysis and semiotics as the theoretical framework, specifically Charles Sanders Peirce's theory of the sign triangle, including 1) Denotatum: icon, index, and symbol; 2) Ground: qualisigns, sinsign, and legisign; 3) Interpretant: rheme, decisign, and argument. However, the researchers focused solely on the denotatum, specifically icons, indexes, and symbols. In this regard, the analyses identified 12 instances of denotatum, including 1 icon, 4 indexes, and 7 symbols. Overall, the findings revealed a meaning related to love and longing for the preservation of natural beauty. This investigation aimed to contribute to the development of semiotics and provide practical implications (Wulandari & Sentana, 2023).

In a previous study conducted by Manopo, Polii, and Meruntu in 2022, the focus was on the lyrics of the song "*Membasuh*" by Hindia Ft. Rara Sekar, based on Charles Sanders Peirce's typology of signs: sign, interpretant, and object. The research utilized a qualitative descriptive method employing a literature study approach with content analysis. The findings demonstrated that the song "*Membasuh*" contained three religious values in human life. *Firstly*, amidst a world increasingly filled with ungrateful individuals solely pursuing success, the song reminds the listeners of the importance of selfless giving. *Secondly*, the song serves as a reminder that lives are temporary, and everything humans possess is only entrusted and can be taken back by the Creator at any moment. *Thirdly*, the song highlights the principle of reaping what we sow in life. The Creator, or God, calculates everything we give, and our actions will be rewarded according to His plan at the appropriate time. Regarding literary education, it was expected that this research would contribute to teaching literature in schools, particularly by enhancing the understanding of semiotic theory, which can help students become more sensitive in interpreting signs (Manopo et al., 2022).

One similarity between the previous studies and the ongoing research was the application of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory and song lyrics as the research object. However, a difference was found in the conceptualization of the sign map from different perspectives. The first study aimed to describe the meaning of Ardrito Pramono's song "*Wijayakusuma*" based on Peirce's sign triangle, while the current research focused on different aspects.

A. Song Lyrics

According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian Dictionary), song lyrics are the arrangement of words in a song (Muhammad, 2023). They are crucial as they can convey personal experiences. In this regard, songwriters can use wordplay when expressing their experiences to create something intriguing for the listeners. Therefore, as

Setianingsih suggests, "the lyrics created and presented to the audience also bear great responsibility for the widespread dissemination of beliefs, values, and even certain biases" (Aritonang & Doho, 2019; Harnia, 2021).

B. *Campursari Music*

Etymologically, the term "*campursari*" originates from two Javanese words, "*campur*," meaning "mixed," "rough," "dirty," "intermingle," and "*sari*," meaning "essence," "the best part," "the most valuable part," or "flour." Hence, *campursari* can be defined as a blend of the most important or valuable parts of something (Ulya et al., 2021; Maryani, 2023).

In addition, the word "*campursari*" is derived from the words "*campur*" and "*sari*." "*Campur*" means combining musical instruments from traditional and modern instruments, while "*sari*" means attempting to create new rhythms. In the early 1970s, the term "*campursari*" began to gain recognition when the Surabaya RRI station introduced a new program consisting of songs accompanied by pentatonic and diatonic scale instruments. One type of Javanese art that combines modern and ethnic music is called a mixture (*campursari*) (Kobi, 2017).

C. *Vulgar*

In the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian Dictionary), the words "*vulgar*" and "*cabul*" are translated into English as "*vulgar*" (spelled the same) and "*cabul*" (KBBI-Daring, 2018). Accordingly, the KBBI defines *vulgar* as a characteristic that describes rough or impolite behavior or actions (KBBI-Daring, 2018). Based on the KBBI, this word originates from obscene acts, such as tarnishing a woman's honor, restricting or violating rights, or committing an indecent act (KBBI, 1989).

The 1989 edition of KBBI does not have a definition for the word "*vulgar*" when searched. Nonetheless, both words were found in 2018, indicating that "*cabul*" has been part of the Indonesian vocabulary for a long time. According to dictionaries compiled, the word "*vulgar*" in the Indonesian language originates from the English language (Kusumaningsih et al., 2019).

D. *Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotics*

The term "semiotics" originates from the Greek word "semeion," which means "sign", or "seme", which means "interpreter of signs." In this context, signs convey information that can be communicated and function as substitutes for other concepts or ideas. Hence, it is crucial to provide a brief explanation of semiotic theory due to its significant role in interpreting the lyrics of this song (Aritonang & Doho, 2019).

The semiotic analysis of Charles Sanders Peirce was employed to analyze the data (Wulandari & Sentana, 2023). Peirce utilizes the theory of the meaning triangle, which consists of the sign, the object, and the interpretant, to analyze the content. This theory of the triangles of meaning mutually supporting each other is known as triadic (Kurniawati, 2019). Hence, the three-dimensional system (triadic or triad) is the fundamental principle that shapes Peirce's theory (Puspitasari, 2021; Yakin & Totu, 2014).

Peirce categorizes signs related to their grounds into the following categories: qualisigns—qualities that exist in the sign, such as harsh, loud, weak, soft, and melodious words; sinsigns—the actual presence of an object or event in the sign, such as a sequence of words of blurry and turbid water in a river indicating rainfall upstream; and legisigns—norms contained within the sign, such as traffic signs. Based on their objects, Peirce divides signs into icons, where the relationship between the signifier and the signified coincides with natural form; in other words, icons are connections between signs and objects or similar referents, such as portraits and maps. On the other hand, indices indicate a causal or cause-and-effect relationship between the sign and its object or signs that directly refer to reality, such as signs that can also refer to denotatum through convention; these are conventional signs commonly referred to as symbols. Therefore, symbols indicate the natural relationship between the signifier and the signified. Their association is based on societal agreement, not their own decision. Then, based on the interpreter, signs (representations) are divided into rhemes, which allow people to interpret based on choices; for example, red eyes can indicate that a person has just cried, suffers from an eye condition, or has insects in their eyes, or has just woken up or wanted to sleep, and decent signs, which are signs that correspond to reality, for example, if accidents frequently occur on the road, flags are placed along the road indicating caution (Sobur, 2006; in Kurniawati, 2019).

Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics considers meaning based on the sign and emphasizes the importance of interpretation (interpretant) (Puspitasari, 2021). Peirce's semiotic theory offers a constantly evolving perspective on meaning and interpretation. The process of interpreting signs is often not straightforward, as it involves multiple layers of meaning yet to be deciphered (Wulandari & Sentana, 2023). Correspondingly, not all signs possess precise meanings, as some can have various interpretations. Consequently, semiotic research also requires skills to identify things indirectly visible as signs.

The researchers presented the analysis results of lyrics of the campursari song "Gubuk Asmoro" based on Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis using the formulation of the meaning triangle model: sign (representamen), object, and interpretant.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

The present study employed a qualitative research method, specifically a descriptive approach, to provide an overview of a phenomenon. Furthermore, qualitative research involves studying the meaning and interpretation of the world, often based on concepts not typically accompanied by numerical data (Stokes, 2006, p. 15; as cited in Juwitaningrum et al., 2020).

The researchers incorporated the semiotic analysis proposed by Charles Sander Peirce to examine a song titled "Gubug Asmoro." Hence, the objective of this study was to investigate the process of refining the choice of vulgar words in the lyrics of the Campursari song "Gubug Asmoro," composed by Jithul Sumantri (Nathaniel & Sannie, 2018; Putri, 2022).

A. Data Source

The data sources involved in this research are as follows:

(a). Primary Data

The lyrics of the *Campursari* song "Gubug Asmoro" obtained from the internet.

(b). Secondary Data

Information obtained from relevant literature sources, including internet articles and books that supported the primary data in examining the refinement of word choices in the lyrics of the *Campursari* song.

B. Data Collection Techniques

(a). Documentation

The researchers collected supplementary data to strengthen the primary data obtained from data sources such as documentation or archives. In this regard, data was collected by exploring various sources anticipated to contain the required information for this study. The researchers did not conduct interviews with relevant parties because, within the semiotics framework, the document in the form of song lyrics was analyzed in-depth based on the researchers' interpretation using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis technique.

(b). Reading Technique

The researchers read the *campursari* song lyrics of "Gubug Asmoro" as found on the internet.

(c). Note-taking Technique

The researchers identified *campursari* song lyrics of "Gubug Asmoro" that contained elements of female sexuality exploitation, then recorded those lyrics as data.

C. Data Analysis Technique

In this research, data analysis was conducted by dividing all the song lyrics into several verses, and each was analyzed using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics theory, which categorizes signs into three types: icons, indexes, and symbols. Icons represent the connection between a sign and an object or referent based on resemblance. Indexes indicate a natural relationship between a sign and its object through a causal or cause-and-effect relationship or by directly referring to reality. Symbols denote a natural association between the signifier and the signified (Puspitasari, 2021).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

Verse 1

Yen liwat aku kelingan

"When I pass by, I remember"

Gubuk kae biyen tak nggo leren

"That hut I used to take shelter in"

Ning cagak kebak tulisan

"The post is filled with writing"

Warno abang tondo isih perawan

"With the red color, which indicates virginity"

(a). Interpretation of the Fourth Sentence in the First Verse

Sign	Object	Interpretant
<i>Warno abang tondo isih perawan</i> "With the red color, which indicates virginity"	Red is a symbol denoting blood; in this case, red signifies that the woman is still a virgin.	Interpreting the above verse, the researchers inferred that the poet recalls a long-standing memory of a hut that reminds him of a woman who is innocent, pure, or a virgin having her first sexual encounter.

The poet chooses the word "abang" because, in its context, it corresponds to the color red, or "abang" in Javanese. This color, as a symbol of virginity, is intended to express the purity or innocence of a woman who is still a virgin.

Speakers understand the state of virginity because a woman has never engaged in adverse actions; being a virgin is considered purity. It additionally means being clean from everything considered bad or negative (Sari & Baskoro, 2020; Putri, 2019).

Verse 2

Jenenge gubuk asmoro

"The hut's name is *gubuk asmara*"

Biyen kae aku andum tresno

"Back then, I used it for sharing love"

Tanpo bantal tanpo koso

"Without pillows, without mats"

Bot-abote ke taman asmoro

"Just the weight of being intoxicated by love"

(b). Interpretation of the Second Sentence in the Second Verse

Sign	Object	Interpretant
<i>Biyen kae aku andum tresno</i> "Back then, I used it for sharing love"	"Berbagi cinta" is known as engaging in sexual intercourse between a man and a woman.	The interpretation of the above verse suggests that the poet expresses deep, romantic, and poetic feelings within the song's context, making it suitable for conveying the essence of profound love through sexual intimacy between the male and female characters in the lyrics.

The poet chooses the phrase "*andum tresno*" because, through the lyrics of the song, they are expressing deep, romantic, and poetic feelings for engaging in sexual intimacy. Thus, it is suitable for conveying a profound sense of love between the characters in the lyrics.

(c). Interpretation of the Fourth Sentence in the Second Verse

Sign	Object	Interpretant
<i>Bot-abote ke taman asmoro</i> "Just the weight of being intoxicated by love"	Sharing love between a woman and a man.	In analyzing the above verse, the researchers interpreted that the poet is describing a condition influenced by deep feelings of love, which brings about happiness.

The poet chooses the phrase "*taman asmoro*" (garden of love) in the context of the lyrics of the song "*Gubuk Asmoro*." The poet writes the lyrics "*taman asmoro*" (garden of love) and "*dimabuk asmara*" (intoxicated by love) to depict a condition influenced by deep feelings of love, which brings about happiness—the meaning of falling in love, especially for those in a romantic relationship, intoxicated by love and merge into one soul (Ramadhan et al., 2023).

Verse 3

Gubuk kae nyimpen wadi

"That hut holds a secret"

Nganti besok ora bakal lali

"From the past until now"

Gubuk kae kebak Crito

"The hut is full of stories"

Wayah wengi nganti gagat rino

"Through the night until the dawn"

(d). Interpretation of the Fourth Sentence in the Third Verse

Sign	Object	Interpretant
<i>Gagat rino</i> "Until the dawn"	Sexual intercourse that lasts from night until dawn.	The researchers interpreted that the hut holds an unforgettable story in which they engaged in sexual intercourse that lasted from night until dawn.

The poet chose the phrase "*wayah wengi nganti gagat rino*" because it means "through the night until the dawn." Likewise, the phrase "*gagat rino*" was used because it describes the sexual relationship from night until dawn.

Verse 4

Catetan sak jero ning ati

"Notes within the heart"

Datan luntur soyo merak ati

"They will not fade; instead, they will bloom in the heart"

Aku kowe dadi garwo

"You and I become husband and wife"
Mergo leren ning gubuk asmoro
 "Because we took a rest in the hut of love"

(e). *Interpretation of the Third Sentence in the Fourth Verse*

Sign	Object	Interpretant
<i>Aku kowe dadi garwo</i> "You and I become husband and wife"	Becoming husband and wife through engaging in sexual intercourse in the hut.	The researchers interpreted that the story, always kept in their hearts, will not fade and bring increasing joy.

The poet chose the word "*garwo*," which indicates husband and wife, because it fits the context of the lyrics of "*gubuk asmoro*." The husband and wife referred to here are more than just a married couple; they are soulmates because a woman is created from a man's rib, making them unity.

(f). *Interpretation of the Fourth Sentence in the Fourth Verse*

Sign	Object	Interpretant
<i>Mergo leren ning gubuk asmoro</i> "Because we stopped (rested) in the hut of love"	The hut where they engaged in sexual intercourse/made love because they were falling in love.	The researchers interpreted that the hut was used as a place to express their love because they were deeply in love with each other. According to the lyrics, the sexual activity depicted did not involve the use of any bedding or pillows.

The poet chose the phrase "*taman asmoro*" to depict being intoxicated by love because it fits the context of the lyrics of "*gubuk asmoro*." It further represents the state of being deeply influenced by feelings of love and experiencing happiness.

B. Discussion

The findings indicate that explicit, vulgar language is evident in the song lyrics. Specifically, Charles Sanders Pierce's semiotics demonstrates a refinement process in selecting vulgar word forms in the lyrics. The following can be found in each verse of the song. The first case was found in the phrase "*warno abang*" because the poet chose the Javanese word "*abang*," which, in the context, corresponds to the color of red blood. This color, as a symbol of purity, is intended to express the innocence of a virgin woman. The second verse includes the phrase "*andum tresno*," which was selected to express deep, romantic, and poetic feelings for engaging in sexual relations. Furthermore, the phrase "*taman asmoro*" means being influenced by deep feelings of love, resulting in happiness, especially for those in a romantic relationship. The third verse includes the phrase "*gagat rino*," meaning "from night until dawn." The poet chose this phrase because the relationship depicted in the song lasted from night until dawn. The fourth verse uses the word "*garwo*," which means "spouses." The spouses referred to here are more than just husband and wife but represent soulmates, as women are believed to be created from the rib of men, making them unity. Moreover, the phrase "*taman asmoro*" means "intoxicated by love" to depict the state of being influenced by deep feelings of love, resulting in happiness. In contrast to the study "Pedagogical Values in Indonesian Lyrics of *Dangdut* Songs: Evidences of Language Vulgarism and Gender Exploitation" (2019), this analysis focused more on prominent themes of vulgarity that emphasized intimate relationships and female singers exposed these lyrics through bodily performances (Kusumaningsih et al., 2019).

V. CONCLUSION

Through Charles Sanders Pierce's semiotic analysis of the lyrics of the *campursari* song "*Gubug Asmoro*," which focused on the efforts to refine the choice of words in a vulgar context, this research could provide a profound understanding of the complexity of meaning and linguistic representation in traditional music art. The main findings reveal that *campursari* artists and their audience play an active role in shaping the meaning of words and their social impact in this artistic work. Pierce's semiotic method extends a more profound understanding beyond literal meaning. It demonstrates a refinement process in selecting vulgar words in song lyrics. Hence, language refinement can be found in every verse of the song.

This study contributes valuable insights into enriching the interpretation of *campursari* art by analyzing how artists manage word choices, particularly in the context of vulgar words. It benefits the enhancement of appreciation for the complexity and depth of *campursari* music art, providing a deeper insight into how artists can integrate artistic expression while considering local social norms and cultural ethics. Semiotic analysis also provides insights into the local values, culture, and morality embedded in artworks, creating a broader understanding of social dynamics. Beyond creating aesthetic experiences, the implications of this research highlight the power of music as a communication medium capable of conveying profound messages and meanings. Accordingly, *campursari* artists can apply the findings of this research as a guide for further considerations in creating their artworks, understanding that contextual interpretation plays a crucial role in shaping the meaning of words in song lyrics. Additionally, this research emphasizes

the importance of artists' consideration of cultural norms and morality in their creative process, creating an understanding that artistic creativity can remain in synergy with deeply held societal values.

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