# Student's Understanding of Islamic Religion Course Material With a Basic Semiotics Approach to Improve Reading Skills

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## Abstract

This study aims to dig up information on how students understand Islamic religion courses by using a basic semiotic approach to improve security in reading skills in Islamic religious course content. We conducted a series of debriefings with students from Sam Ratulangi University in the city. We obtained the data and analyzed it under a phenomenological approach which involved, among other things, interpretation of data grouping data and concluding to gain an understanding of validly answering study questions. Based on the results of interviews and analysis as well as gold, we can conclude that the understanding of Islamic religious course texts among student participants in general Islamic religious courses is categorized as good where students use a basic symbiotic approach to understand Islamic religious texts even though they have little understanding of Islam—considering that the majority of students at Sam Ratulangi University are not many who adhere to Islam. These findings will provide a new understanding and support studying students' academic skills using a basic semiotic approach.

*Kata kunci:*
*Pemahaman,*
*Mata Pelajaran Agama,*
*Pendekatan Semiotika,*
*Pemahaman Bacaan.*

## Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggali informasi bagaimana mahasiswa memahami mata kuliah agama Islam dengan menggunakan pendekatan semiotika dasar untuk meningkatkan kemantapan keterampilan membaca dalam konten mata kuliah agama Islam. Kami melakukan serangkaian pembekalan dengan mahasiswa Universitas Sam Ratulangi di kota tersebut. Kami memperoleh data dan menganalisisnya dengan pendekatan fenomenologis yang melibatkan, antara lain, interpretasi data pengelompokan data dan menyimpulkan untuk mendapatkan pemahaman tentang menjawab pertanyaan penelitian secara valid. Berdasarkan hasil wawancara dan analisis serta emas dapat disimpulkan bahwa pemahaman teks mata kuliah agama Islam di kalangan mahasiswa peserta mata kuliah agama Islam umum dikategorikan baik dimana mahasiswa menggunakan pendekatan simbiosis dasar untuk memahami teks agama Islam meskipun mereka memiliki sedikit pemahaman tentang Islam—mengingat mayoritas mahasiswa di Universitas Sam Ratulangi tidak banyak yang memeluk Islam. Temuan ini akan memberikan pemahaman baru dan mendukung mempelajari keterampilan akademik siswa dengan menggunakan pendekatan semiotika dasar.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Understanding is one of the cognitive domains since it is a degree of competence that needs pupils to comprehend the meaning of concepts, circumstances, and facts that they are familiar with.[1] This is evident when pupils can explain anything they read or hear using sentence patterns or provide instances of what has been illustrated. This shows that students have understood a lesson. In other words, they can provide a more detailed explanation or description of the material presented using their own words. Strong understanding will last long and be embedded in students' thinking.[2] Most of the students' understanding was tested with questions whose answers were memorized, although not all questions were like that. Seeing the reports every year, there are still many problems with low student understanding, which can be seen from student learning outcomes, namely the daily test scores that do not reach the MCC set by the school. The achievement of MCC is significant because MCC serves as a guide for teachers and educational institutions in assessing the competence of students participating in the learning process. The MCC is learning completeness determined by the education unit concerning Graduate Competency Standards (SKG). According to Pikkarainen,[3] a measure forms the basis or method of determining something used to determine student completeness.

Student understanding can be achieved through teacher intermediaries who carry out learning activities, such as incorporating study group class management (study groups) into the learning process. One method of classroom management that can be relied upon to enhance students' comprehension of the material is study groups.[4]

Classroom management of study groups, also known as "study groups," can be thought of as a series of efforts to manage the classroom centered on creating study groups. Depending on the student's abilities, teachers can put students into good study groups. Students with high, medium, and low abilities in comprehending the subject matter form study groups in class management study groups. This way, teachers can easily organize and instruct their students on interacting with one another, collaborating on lesson problems, and comprehending the material.[5] Found that teachers in economics

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[1] Anahuac Valero Haro et al., 'Argumentation Competence: Students' Argumentation Knowledge, Behavior and Attitude and Their Relationships with Domain-Specific Knowledge Acquisition', *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* 35, no. 1 (2 January 2022): 123–45, https://doi.org/10.1080/10720537.2020.1734995. Aslan, 'Peran Pola Asuh Orangtua Di Era Digital', *Jurnal Studia Insania* 7, no. 1 (2019): 20–34, http://dx.doi.org/10.18592/jsi.v7i1.2269. Hilmi Mizani et al., 'Understanding Islamic Education Model for Children of Early Married Families in South Kalimantan', *Talent Development & Excellence* 12, no. 2 (2020): 4365–74.

[2] Ali Derakhshan, '"Should Textbook Images Be Merely Decorative?": Cultural Representations in the Iranian EFL National Textbook from the Semiotic Approach Perspective', *Language Teaching Research*, 24 February 2021, 1362168821992264, https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168821992264.

[3] 'Competence as a Key Concept of Educational Theory: A Semiotic Point of View - Pikkarainen - 2014 - Journal of Philosophy of Education - Wiley Online Library', accessed 9 February 2023, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1467-9752.12080.

[4] Katja Brundiers and Arnim Wiek, 'Do We Teach What We Preach? An International Comparison of Problem- and Project-Based Learning Courses in Sustainability', *Sustainability* 5, no. 4 (April 2013): 1725–46, https://doi.org/10.3390/su5041725.

[5] Sue Ollerhead, 'Teaching across Semiotic Modes with Multilingual Learners: Translanguaging in an Australian Classroom', *Language and Education* 33, no. 2 (4 March 2019): 106–22,

subjects did an excellent job of managing study groups in the classroom, forming good study groups based on each student's abilities, managing classrooms well, and arranging student seats well. However, the authors still noticed symptoms like the inability to explain and conclude again in their own words or sentences about the studied topic. Students still need to meet the minimum level of completeness because they need help to respond to the questions and express their thoughts on the subject.[6]

Supporting the success of learning text comprehension in general subjects such as the Islamic Religion Course, there are various learning approaches, one of which is the semiotic approach.[7] Wang,[8] says that linguistics is part of semiotics. Although there is still debate about its status in science, semiotics is seen by some experts as a part of linguistics whose goal is to help understand various signs, symbols, images, and texts. Furthermore, Eco[9] reveals that language is part of semiology and has an autonomous status. Through semiology, language can be examined from a linguistic and non-linguistic perspective. Likewise, Agawu,[10] says that semiology makes it possible to provide a more in-depth understanding of reading because it aims to reveal elements that are implicit, hidden, and hidden connotations. Therefore, semiotics will significantly assist students in understanding lecture texts by connecting facts and discourse, explicit intentions, and implicit thoughts in social and individual behavior.[11] We can understand that semiotics is a scientific study of signs often found in various texts. Semiotics view scientific occurrences in academic activities and scientific culture as signs because it analyzes the systems, norms, and conventions that enable these signals to have meaning.[12]

Furthermore, De Carlo explained that learning in higher education is a teaching system that requires reading a lot of signs and texts that are arranged based on implicit codes that complement each other so that understanding them requires efforts to express

https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2018.1516780. Purniadi Putra et al., 'The Students Learning from Home Experiences during Covid-19 School Closures Policy In Indonesia', *Jurnal Iqra' : Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan* 5, no. 2 (5 September 2020): 30–42, https://doi.org/10.25217/ji.v5i2.1019. Amat Suroso et al., 'Challenges and Opportunities towards an Islamic Cultured Generation: Socio-Cultural Analysis', *Linguistics and Culture Review* 5, no. 1 (28 June 2021): 180–94, https://doi.org/10.37028/lingcure.v5n1.1203.

[6] Bonnie Shapiro, 'Structures That Teach: Using a Semiotic Framework to Study the Environmental Messages of Learning Settings', *Eco-Thinking* 1 (2017), https://journals.lib.sfu.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/983.

[7] Aslan Aslan et al., 'Teacher's Leadership Teaching Strategy Supporting Student Learning During The Covid-19 Disruption', *Nidhomul Haq : Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 3 (21 November 2020): 321–33, https://doi.org/10.31538/ndh.v5i3.984. Sardjana Orba Manullang et al., 'Understanding Islam and The Impact on Indonesian Harmony and Diversity':, *Al-Ulum* 21, no. 1 (25 June 2021), https://doi.org/10.30603/au.v21i1.2188.

[8] Mingyu Wang, *Linguistic Semiotics*, vol. 3, Peking University Linguistics Research (Singapore: Springer, 2020), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-3246-7.

[9] Umberto Eco, 'Social Life as a Sign System', in *Fashion Theory*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2020).

[10] V. Kofi Agawu, *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music* (Princeton University Press, 2014).

[11] Csilla Weninger and Tamas Kiss, 'Culture in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Textbooks: A Semiotic Approach', *TESOL Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2013): 694–716, https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.87.

[12] Raffaele De Luca Picione, 'The Semiotic Paradigm in Psychology. A Mature Weltanschauung for the Definition of Semiotic Mind', *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 54, no. 3 (1 September 2020): 639–50, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-020-09555-y.

their functions (in the text). Semiotics or often called semiology, is a science that examines sign systems. The word semiology is used by semioticians oriented toward Saussure, while the word semiotics is used about the work of Peirce and Morris.[13] Similarly, Siregar and Yahaya,[14] define semiology as a discipline that studies the life of signals in society. Meanwhile, the word semiotics, coined by Peirce in the nineteenth century, refers to "the formal doctrine of signs." The concept of sign forms the basis of semiotics; in this case, not only language and communication systems are composed of signs, but the world itself to establish a real relationship between signs and humans.[15]

Language is the entire human sign system. Casirer agrees that linguistics is a branch of semiotics. According to Tresnasari,[16] semiotics seeks to investigate how humans make meaning of objects. In this scenario, interpreting signals differs from communicating (to communicating). Objects with meaning contain information and comprise an organized system of signals.

Regarding language as an object of semiotic study, many experts argue that language is the most developed sign system.[17] Therefore, the study of language from a semiotic perspective is necessary to explain the principles of sign formation in interpreting language in depth. De Costa & Norton,[18] also stated that linguistics significantly contributed to the development of semiotics. These two language elements are relevant to juxtaposed in tertiary institutions' learning activities.

Semiotics is not a novel method for understanding religion in higher education. This study aimed to learn how this method affects everyday learning in university learning systems. Semiotics can theoretically be applied to studying religious texts because it is a science of signs. First and foremost, religion is frequently portrayed as a manifestation of God.[19] Second, the Qur'an and other religious texts comprise a collection of clues that need to be deciphered during the interpretation process. Thirdly, the texts of the Bible are typically regarded as a collection of signs that convey divine messages. Fourthly, religious research can be viewed as a collection of clues. Issues in this area include the formation of orthodoxy, the closedness and openness of the reference corpus in theology or religious law, and so forth. The question of sign and significance has been considered since the beginning of the church's history because it is

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[13] Gbenga Ibileye, 'ENG 936 SEMIOTICS', 2021.

[14] Iskandarsyah Siregar and Samsur Rijal Yahaya, 'Semiotic Exploration of Roti Buaya as a Cultural Ornament', *British Journal of Applied Linguistics* 2, no. 1 (2022): 06–13.

[15] Robert Innis, *Karl Bühler Semiotic Foundations of Language Theory* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2013).

[16] Ningrum Tresnasari, 'Non-Verbal Communication In Anime "Diamond No Ace" Episodes 1 And 2 (Barthes Semiotics Approach)', *IZUMI* 9 (1 December 2020): 128–36, https://doi.org/10.14710/izumi.9.2.128-136.

[17] Bodo Winter, 'Sensory Linguistics', *Language, Perception and Metaphor. Amsterdam & Philadelphia (Benjamins)*, 2019.

[18] Peter I. De Costa and Bonny Norton, 'Introduction: Identity, Transdisciplinarity, and the Good Language Teacher', *The Modern Language Journal* 101, no. S1 (2017): 3–14, https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12368.

[19] Ray Land, Julie Rattray, and Peter Vivian, 'Learning in the Liminal Space: A Semiotic Approach to Threshold Concepts', *Higher Education* 67, no. 2 (1 February 2014): 199–217, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-013-9705-x.

so significant in religions such as Christianity. Meuleman cited Eugenio as saying that Aurelius Agustinus is the true founder of semiotics.[20]

Johnson[21] thought that the created world bears the mark of God's will. Based on this viewpoint, it is possible to comprehend that Augustine does not restrict the function of signs to the linguistic realm, which contains signs, symbols, and parables in biblical texts. Instead, he applies signs to religious aspects, particularly the liturgical realm. In Islam, the Qur'an also discusses semiotics. The Qur'an uses "verse," which means "father," hundreds of times. The primary meaning is "mark." The letter from Fussilat: 53, which translates to "We will show them Our signs in the firmaments," is interpreted as "in all corners of the earth and their souls until it is clear to them that it is a revelation that was conveyed to the Prophet Muhammad." In the Qur'an, the word "sign" can also mean "example" or "proof." For instance, in the Surah Hud: 103: Allah's punishment for Pharaoh and his people who went astray is a lesson for those afraid of being punished in the afterlife.[22] In principle, semiotic analysis can be applied to the Koran as a whole and the Islamic religion as a whole. Religious experience is a "conative" "meeting," in other words, a pure and direct experience. We experience a meeting between "I" and "the other" in a "conative" experience. Language phenomenology would describe this experience as direct, pure, and unconscious.[23]

The "conative" aspect of "reflective language," in which experience has been abstracted into patterns of sensory data, enters when we begin to realize and discuss these experiences. A semiotic approach to expressing religious experience follows from these phenomena and issues. According to Budhy Munawar, Ludwig Wittgenstein stated, "We need to bring back words from metaphysical games to everyday language games." Semiotic analysis of language, including religious language, can revive metaphysical reality.[24] Because the issue of the validity of language is a necessity that must be understood, the language of religion has its logic, which is a way for religious people to talk about their religion. How, then, does the semiotic approach fit into Islamic cultural studies, the creation of religious texts, and Islamic thought specifically? The application of semiotic thinking in the field of Islamic religious studies, particularly as Arkoun attempted in his reading of al-Fatihah, and in the fields of Islamic philosophy and theology, as Newton did in his work "Allah Transcendent:" will be the focus of this paper, which will elaborate, describe, and critically analyze the latter. Studies in Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Cosmology's Structure and Semiotics.[25]

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[20] Vlad Petre GLăVEANU and Alex Gillespie, 'Creativity out of Difference: Theorising the Semiotic, Social and Temporal Origin of Creative Acts', in *Rethinking Creativity* (Routledge, 2014), 25–39.

[21] Elizabeth A. Johnson, 'Is God's Charity Broad Enough for Bears?', *Irish Theological Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (1 November 2015): 283–93, https://doi.org/10.1177/0021140015598583.

[22] Zainuddin Soga et al., 'The Application of The Semiotics of Qur'an Toward The Story of The Chosen Servants in Surah Maryam', *Jurnal Diskursus Islam* 9, no. 2 (2021): 320–35.

[23] Azra Ghandeharion and Leili Badrlou, 'Iranian Advertisements: A Postcolonial Semiotic Reading', *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences* 39, no. 2 (1 May 2018): 334–42, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.kjss.2018.05.008.

[24] Andrew Stables, ed., *Be(Com)Ing Human: Semiosis and the Myth of Reason* (Rotterdam: SensePublishers, 2012), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-997-8.

[25] Ian Richard Netton, *Allah Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 1995), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203061008.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This study aims to comprehensively understand students' material for the general subject of Islam through a semiotic approach to improve reading skills at Sam Ratulangi University, Manado City. To answer the problem of understanding and improving reading skills in religious lecture material by relying on artistic knowledge,[26] we have visited and interviewed students in several faculties within Sam Ratulangi University, Manado. In addition, we interviewed several students who take general subjects of Islamic religious education, especially those who use various reading skills to understand the teaching material, which is generally in the text.[27] After conducting interviews with students, we analyzed the data we obtained under a phenomenological approach. We coded the data, evaluated it, and developed it until we interpreted it to get relevant answers.

Essential symbiosis for understanding content, sign pictures, and everything related to the education of religious education material. We designed this study in a descriptive qualitative manner where we wanted to understand a phenomenon that we saw how students' strengths were in trying to construct knowledge and reading constructions with an artful approach.[28] We design this study in a descriptive qualitative manner where these findings must be treated as possible to achieve the principle of validity in answering the main problem. This includes data collection methods followed by analysis and final reporting. The data for this study we got from the first two sources, namely interviews; the second was a search for data from several data sources electronically, and we designed it in the structural content of the review literature.[29]

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**Result**

**Table 1. The result of Basic Semiotics recorded during interviewing students**

| Basic Semiotics | Intensity use in academic | the signifier resembles | signs take the form of words | Interpret text |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Iconic signs; Crescent and Star; "Halal"; calligraphic; language and* | *a student will learn more from the real thing than from a substitute; Star and Crescent,* | *a picture in learning material, lecturer expressions; Arabic inscriptions and* | *a sign is anything that can convey the meaning of learning materials; the* | *Students read symbols to communicate their ideas; the word of God;* |

[26] Patricia Leavy, *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches* (Guilford Publications, 2022).

[27] Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011).

[28] Ali Dabbagh and Mahmood Reza Atai, 'Exploring Cultural Conceptualisations and Metacultural Competence in Local EAP Textbooks: A Semiotic Approach', *Journal of Asia TEFL* 19 (12 April 2022): 141–62, https://doi.org/10.18823/asiatefl.2022.19.1.9.141.

[29] Nafiseh Hekmati Pour et al., 'Spiritual Self-Care in Adolescents: A Qualitative Study', *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health* 34, no. 2 (1 April 2022): 49–57, https://doi.org/10.1515/ijamh-2019-0248.

| *its cultural, religious texts, ashnam, asbab al-nuzul, the Qur'an, and the Prophet* | *Rub el Hizb, Khatim, and Shahadah.* | *numerals; Belief in the Oneness of God, etc.* | *Crescent and Star; Islam; means submission and peace. ta'abbudi, shari'ah, or God's commands, the Qur'an nor the Hadith.* | *Christian beliefs, through ijtihad (namely the thoughts of scholars and scientists), "Islam teaches a principle known as amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, which means amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, which means amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, which meaning follows Islam order.* |

Source: Data Processing, 2023

In addition to research findings on the use of a semiotic approach in understanding Islamic religious lecture material, the results of data analysis include the following: The question that arises is whether religious language texts in lecture material in the academic environment of Sam Ratulangi University, especially Islamic religious courses are sourced from Al -Qur'an, included in the scope of semiotics.[30] Before answering this question, it is necessary first to understand the issue of religious language texts, such as studying the understanding of the holy verses of the Koran. This is a classic issue discussed throughout the history of Islamic civilization, especially between Ash'ariyah and Mu'tazilah thinkers. According to the Asy'ariyah group, one of the characteristics of nature is the word of God. Based on this, they concluded that the Qur'an is the eternal word because it is part of the essence of God's Essence. They maintain that the Qur'an still has two aspects: the eternal aspect and the qadim, or the word of God in essence, which they call "the word of the existence of the qadim." Second, the ancient word mentioned first is a copy (mimesis) in the Qur'an we are reading. Then the understanding can be done with a religious language approach with the help of understanding such as basic semiotics.[31]

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[30] Land, Rattray, and Vivian, 'Learning in the Liminal Space'.

[31] Deborah Justice, 'English as a Sacred Language in German Evangelical Worship Music', in *Handbook of the Changing World Language Map*, ed. Stanley D. Brunn and Roland Kehrein (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 2441–53, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02438-3_160.

On the other hand, the second group thinks the Qur'an is new and created because it does not include the characteristics of the original essence. One academician said that we read the Qur'an as if it is *"God's word and includes actions rather than characteristics. Therefore, the Qur'an does not belong to the category of attributes of Essence" but instead to the category of attributes of God's actions*".[32] The distinction between these two categories is as follows: the area of interaction between God and the world is the area of characteristics of action. In contrast, the area of attributes of essence is the specificity of God's existence in His Essence (unrelated to the world). The author does not debate the polemics that have arisen in this analysis, but the information above at least provides an introduction to the issues with the Qur'anic texts. Another student also said *that "it is possible to comprehend that the concept of kalam (the word of God) is distinct from the concept of light by adhering to the mindset outlined above and the paradigm*".[33] The lingua franca in question is equivalent to what Saussure referred to as langue, or language in the context of historical reality—in this instance, culture.[34]

Language abstraction and articulation at the sociocultural level are referred to as langue, while parole is an individual expression of language. The attempt to subdue religious texts stands in the way of Semiotic's method of linguistic analysis because it is God, not humans, who become free. The foundation of this issue is the hypothesis that the divine-human relationship is one of separation or even contradiction. *"We offered a rational explanation for this issue by drawing parallels between Christian beliefs about Isa's birth and the revelation of the Qur'an" (P. 03).*[35]

In response to Jesus, Islamic religious thought takes an opposing position, rejecting any character other than pure and holy human nature. Texts emphasize Isa's servitude to God, and the fact that he was born to a woman without a father did not alter his human nature in any way. Isa's issue is comparable to Adam's in this instance. Even though their constituent parts differed, it is not an exaggeration to say that the Qur'anic revelation and Jesus' birth were one structure, not two.[36]

The texts' divine nature does not necessitate unique methods for their analysis because of their divine origin. As long as there is no divine intervention, the belief that these texts are divine and insist on their divine nature will result in humans being unable to comprehend them using any method. So that religious texts become inaccessible to common human comprehension. A specific divine power is required to break the divine code. While the functions of the treatise, balagh, guidance, nur, and so on disappear from religious texts, it is as if God is whispering to Himself and His essence. As a result, the idea of kalam, which is ahistorical and historical light, is distinct. If we follow de

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[32] Interview dengan Ahmad (disamarkan), Manado, 10 January 2023.

[33] Interview dngan beberapa mahasiswa di Universitas Sam Ratulangi, Manado, 10 January 2023.

[34] Taisto Witt, ''If i Cannot Have It, i Will Do Everything i Can to Destroy It.' the Canonization of Elliot Rodger: "Incel" Masculinities, Secular Sainthood, and Justifications of Ideological Violence', *Social Identities* 26, no. 5 (2 September 2020): 675–89, https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2020.1787132.

[35] Wawancara dengan Ahmad (disamarkan), Manado, 10 January 2023.

[36] Ulrika Mårtensson, 'Prophetic Clarity: A Comparative Approach to al-Ṭabarī's Theory of Qur'anic Language, Rhetoric, and Composition', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 22, no. 1 (1 February 2020): 216–68, https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2020.0417.

Saussure's framework, language signs are social facts, focusing linguistic research on language as a process.[37]

The texts that have been revealed are typically regarded as a collection of signs that convey divine messages. The religious discourse can be examined using a series of indicators. Philosophically, religious texts are humane texts because they relate to language and civilization in a specific historical range, precisely the period of their formalization and production.[38] As a result, these texts are historical because their meaning is inseparable from the language system. The culture that the text is regarded as a part of. From this perspective, *"we see language and its cultural context are means of finding meaning through references and interpretations".[39]* Religious texts' meaning does not necessarily indicate that it was established during the text openness phase if the meaning is historical. This is because language does not remain static as an authoritative reference for interpretation; instead, it evolves and changes in tandem with culture and reality. In addition, if the texts have contributed to the evolution of language and civilization, or if they are langue in Saussure's model, then the evolution of language will once more shift the meaning of the text from its original meaning to a metaphor.[40]

**Discussion**

Students have demonstrated the significance of the semiotic approach at Sam Ratulangi University, City of Manado, and comprehension of the text of general lecture material in the field of the Islamic religion. From a philosophical perspective, religious texts are human texts because they are related to language and civilization during a specific period, precisely during their formalization and production. As a result, the existence of these texts makes them religious and historical texts because their meaning is inseparable from the language system of the culture that the text is considered a part of. From this perspective, language and its cultural context are means of finding meaning through references and interpretations. The meaning of religious texts does not necessarily mean that it is established during the process of uncovering the text if the meaning is historical. This is because language evolves and changes in tandem with culture and reality as a reference for authoritative interpretation and interpretation. In addition, language development will once more move the text of meaning and shift it from true meaning to metaphor if the texts have contributed to the development of language and civilization or if these texts are languages in Saussure's model.

For instance, it is stated in verse 65 of Surah al-Baqarah that the Children of Israel once broke the command of the Prophet Musa. When they were told to worship Allah on Saturdays, they went fishing in the sea because that day was unlike other days when

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37 Md Abdullah Al Mahmud and Golam Gaus al-Quaderi, 'Qur'anic Pictures of the Universe: The Scriptural Foundation of Islamic Cosmology by Osman Bakar', *Bangladesh Journal of Integrated Thoughts* 16, no. 26 (2020), https://doi.org/10.52805/bjit.v16i26.225.

38 Eemeli Hakoköngäs, Otto Halmesvaara, and Inari Sakki, 'Persuasion Through Bitter Humor: Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Rhetoric in Internet Memes of Two Far-Right Groups in Finland', *Social Media + Society* 6, no. 2 (1 April 2020): 2056305120921575, https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120921575.

39 Wawancara dengan Ahmad (disamarkan), Manado, 10 January 2023.

40 David Crow, *Visible Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics in the Visual Arts* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022).

they fished in the open sea. Frequently a lot. They were finally cursed by Allah, "Be you despicable monkeys." This is interpreted by some commentators as a parable, implying that because they do not listen to advice or warnings, they are similar to the hearts of monkeys. However, contrary to popular belief, they merely became monkeys without children, ate or drank nothing, and lived only for three days.

A process by which different signifiers combine to form new signifiers to produce significance. In hermeneutic discourse, a text's meaning will always change depending on the context in which it is read. In this regard, we can examine the participant's answers with the meaning. One participant said that "*there are two types of meaning we could be distinguished when studying religious texts: specific and general meaning" (P. 05)*. In this instance, he is not trying to distinguish between the concepts above and those first proposed by scholars of the usual fiqh and ulumul Qur'an. In the text, the ideas "typical" and "amm" represent two sides of the same meaning. The particular semantic aspect directly references the cultural-historical reality of producing texts.

On the other hand, the general aspect is the dynamic aspect, which is subject to change with each reading. Put another way, and the difference is between the universal general meaning and the partial temporal meaning. Through metaphorical interpretation, the partial can evolve into the universal.[41]

Text and context—where both have dialectics intertwined—cannot be separated when trying to comprehend the meaning of a word. Texts do not originate in a vacuum; texts, in general, are responses to events that occurred in a particular time and place. The context or background of the texts we read gives them their shape. We will be trapped in language blur if comprehension focuses solely on the text and disregards the context in which it was created. So, if we know who the speaker is and who the listener is, we can say that the meaning of a new word is true. Discourse experts examine the context before analyzing words or sentences based on this statement. Like the word "ashnam," which means "idol," it is both a marker and a sign that points to a particular referent. The meaning or sign of ashnam was very clear from the time of Prophet Abraham until the time of Prophet Muhammad when he preached during people's lives. Ashnam meant "idols, statues, or the like," the meaning of denotation, according to Barthes.[42]

However, in the current context, *the meaning of Islam may not be limited to that; it may also refer to position, wealth, and so on, all of which can distance humans from God or even associate them with Him* (P. 07). The situation and context in which the word ashram is used determine its meaning. The same applies to words like nur, jannah, nar, Satan or the devil, and so forth.[43] It is clear from the preceding explanation that the meaning of religious texts is historical and that the meaning generated is dependent on the language system and culture of the text. The recipient of the language and the sociocultural reality

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[41] Yue Guan and Charles Forceville, 'Making Cross-Cultural Meaning in Five Chinese Promotion Clips: Metonymies and Metaphors', *Intercultural Pragmatics* 17, no. 2 (1 April 2020): 123–49, https://doi.org/10.1515/ip-2020-0007.

[42] Asadul ISLAM and Buşra İNCİRKUŞ, 'Semiotic Analysis of the Animation Film Soul', *ARTS: Artuklu Sanat ve Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi*, no. 7 (2022): 85–104.

[43] Giorgia Aiello, 'Visual Semiotics: Key Concepts and New Directions', *The SAGE Handbook of Visual Research Methods*, 2020, 367–80.

surrounding it is also a text that can determine the flexibility of meaning. The text's historicity is not limited to space and time (asbab alnuzul). As a result, religious language texts can be understood in terms of their lexical meanings, historical context (asbab al-nuzul), and the reader's sociocultural background.[44]

So that the meaning of the text is only partially understood but evolves in tandem with human progress. Closing a text runs the risk of being perceived as irrelevant. The meaning of the text will always remain the same if the final meaning attached to it is determined. Readers no longer have a reason to return to the text and work on it, so it becomes irrelevant. It is intellectual arrogance to close the text. The reader asserts that his knowledge is comparable to that of God. As a result, the original text loses its independence and becomes dependent. One participant said that "*in Islam, the ones who have the authority are God, the Qur'an, and the Prophet*" (P.07). That is, if a person asserts his or her viewpoint is the most accurate. Indirectly, he or she has "equated" with the actual authorities, as Arkoun has done by applying a semiotic analysis methodology to the Koranic texts. Arkoun claims that religious writings differ from others in that they attempt to convey a final sign (transcendental sign). Arkoun claims that the word Allah, as a signifier, occupies a central semantic position in the letter al-Fatihah, for instance.[45]

Rules and procedures for wudu' in Islam appear irrational at first glance. Nevertheless, other markers cannot replace the worship-related markers arbitrarily.[46] Because some forms of Islam's obligatory worship are ta'abbudi (cannot be rationalized) and others are ta'aqquli (can be rationalized). However, most mandala worship is ta'abbudi, meaning Allah has established the rules and procedures through His Prophet Muhammad SAW. From a semiotic perspective, the majority of the shari'ah, or God's commands, contain a particular set of signs and ways of expressing themselves. However, the interpretation of the convention was based on local culture and tradition. The Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the ijtihad are the three primary sources of Islamic law. If the sign does not have an explicit meaning or code from the first source, then the meaning and code must be found in the Prophet's Sunnah.[47] According to (P. 07), Mu'adz bin Jabal's understanding of Hadith, *if both are not found, then the meaning and code can be obtained through ijtihad (namely the thoughts of the scholars and scientists), namely dismantling and deconstructing specific codes following the existing culture At the moment*". Then the analysis of understanding utilizing a semiotic approach is justified because this has a place for the interests of the life of the Muslim community itself.[48]

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[44] Muhammad Yusuf Kasim and Hasyim Haddade, 'Understanding Text and Context for Productive Reading: An Analysis of Abu Zaid's Hermeneutics of the Qur'an', *ADDIN* 15, no. 2 (2022): 153–96.

[45] Amirhussein Gazar and Mohammad Ali Tajari, 'Investigating Application of Literary Methods for Interpretation and Translation of Religious Text', SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY, 30 January 2020), https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3528371.

[46] Agus Maimun, Agus Indiyanto, and M. Mujab, 'Educating Islamic Values through Wiwitan Tradition', *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 14, no. 2 (2020): 359–86.

[47] Maurizio Mottolese, *The Disclosure of Sense and Order: Rhetoric and Hermeneutic Modes of Kabbalistic Semiotics* (Brill, 2022), https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004499003_003.

[48] Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (University of Texas Press, 2019).

However, it is essential to keep in mind that ijtihad in this context relies heavily on a set of non-explicit signs from the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet to prevent the interpretation and understanding of these signs from subduing the position of transcendent and ideological messages and meanings. For instance, (P. 9) said that "*Islam teaches a principle known as amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, which means "upholding good and forbidding evil*.".[49] However, another participant said, "*neither the Qur'an nor the Hadith provides a precise explanation of how this principle is conveyed.* "The only difference is that both provide global signs or methods, specifically wisdom, mauidzah, and persuasive (rational) arguments.[50] Semiotics, on the one hand, has become a potential method in the promotion, advertising, commodities, and spectacle industry of Western capitalism, where the excesses of moral, ethical, and cultural deconstruction are kept for the sake of capital circulation and even veiled in it the messages of Western ideology, which has an impact on the eroding of the faith of Muslims and ultimately causes them to fall into the abyss of disbelief.[51]

This has been a lamentable fact and conclusion. This phenomenon is deeply felt, and although it is unknown what will transpire in the next 10 to 15 years, our children will undoubtedly be affected. *Al-Qur'an is a collection of independent texts that presents itself in a sign system that allows the reader to engage in conversation with it* (P. 10). Muhammad is the object of the Qur'an, which began as a subject. However, once it is codified and perfected, it becomes a passive document that is always awaiting the reader's presence to respond and interpret. When it comes to approaching and associating with the "artifact" of biblical texts, the existence of semiotics becomes crucial at this point.[52]

**CONCLUSION**

It can be concluded that the findings of a series of questions and answers with students at Sam Ratulangi University, Manado City, are that, among other things, we have gained an understanding of how they understand Islamic lecture material even though they are, on average, not Muslim. They use a basic semiotic approach to improve reading comprehension of Islamic religious texts and other symbols. These signs convey information so that it is informative and factual. The contribution of this study is that academics can make this semiotic approach a method of teaching religious knowledge and other content to audiences who are still unfamiliar with any content of teaching materials in the academic world. As previously discussed, a basic semiotic approach is used to try to understand context, state of information, color, taste, and the like through

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[49] Dyah Lyesmaya and Leonita Siwiyanti, 'The Role Professionalism Role Of Al Islam And Muhammadiyah Lecturer In Forming Islamic Character', in *INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON EDUCATION*, 2020, 484–88.

[50] Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam: The Qur'anic Principle of Wasatiyyah* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

[51] Ziauddin Sardar, *Reading the Qur'an: The Contemporary Relevance of the Sacred Text of Islam* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

[52] Muhammad Nazrul Islam and Franck Tétard, 'Exploring the Impact of Interface Signs' Interpretation Accuracy, Design, and Evaluation on Web Usability: A Semiotics Perspective', *Journal of Systems and Information Technology* 16, no. 4 (1 January 2014): 250–76, https://doi.org/10.1108/JSIT-03-2014-0019.

symbols, text, images, and so on. Based on the results of interviews with students taking religious education courses as general subjects, especially Islam, some of the participants were non-Muslims. However, they try to understand every text the lecturer gives with a semiotic approach, namely understanding based on context symbols, signs, and language symbols. Others are related to religious language. From the series of answers, they gave, we can understand that students have used approaches that need to be made aware of in the semiotic category.

We understand that the results of these findings certainly have limitations and areas for improvement in the method and data collection as well as the presentation of the results, which are still in the same study design, namely qualitative. In the future, a similar study can be carried out using mixed methods, both qualitative and quantitative, so that the findings are more complete and richer in data.

However, they successfully showed how something in a context is understood according to their understanding. Indeed, semiotics courses are not taught, but it is a skill in academics where they understand the signs and symbols of religious language so that they can give meaning to symbols and understand both theoretically and other literature. From what they do when they understand the text, we can understand that based on semiotics, students will easily compile an understanding of the context of the lecture material even though they do not understand the true theory of the Islamic religion but the message implied in the text is not so confusing to students if they are not Muslim with education obtained outside of academia. The example they mentioned during the interview was that they said they paid attention to what & the symbols in the text given with the sign they could distinguish that the text led to something. So the school's primary synthetics have been able to provide an essential skill in understanding the context of science, predominantly Islamic religious subjects, which are part of social sciences, and how Islamic religious content communicates relevant messages to be applied in student life.

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