

PEIRCEAN SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF NETZWERK NEU A1: CULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF GUTEN APPETIT

Regina Ameilia¹, Nurhafiza Yusro², Marisa Septiana Situmeang³, Rira Wahyu Manullang⁴, Dita Aulia Sihombing⁵, Fitri Ervina Tarigan⁶

¹⁻⁶Pendidikan Bahasa Jerman, Bahasa dan Seni, Universitas Negeri Medan

¹marisaseptianisitumeang@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Foreign language textbooks function not only as instructional media but also as cultural texts that construct specific representations of social life. This study investigates how cultural meanings are embedded in the Guten Appetit! theme of the Netzwerk Neu A1 textbook through the semiotic framework of Charles Sanders Peirce. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, the research analyzes visual illustrations and textual elements using Peirce's triadic model of representamen, object, and interpretant, as well as his classification of hypoicons (image, metaphor, and diagram). The results indicated that visual and verbal signs in the Guten Appetit! theme of the Netzwerk Neu A1 textbook represented German dining culture through icons, indexes, and symbols. These signs reflected social values such as politeness, orderliness, and communal interaction, showing that the textbook not only taught language but also conveyed cultural meanings to beginner learners. The findings contributed theoretically by extending the application of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory to the analysis of cultural representation in foreign language textbooks. Practically, the study showed that visual and verbal signs in simple themes such as Guten Appetit! conveyed deeper cultural meanings and could support learners' intercultural understanding in German language learning.

Keywords: cultural representation, German textbook, Netzwerk Neu A1, semiotic analysis

ABSTRAK

Buku teks bahasa asing tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai media pembelajaran, tetapi juga sebagai teks budaya yang membentuk representasi tertentu mengenai kehidupan sosial. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana makna-makna budaya tertanam dalam tema *Guten Appetit* pada buku teks Netzwerk Neu A1 melalui kerangka semiotik Charles Sanders Peirce. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis ilustrasi visual dan elemen tekstual menggunakan model triadik Peirce yang terdiri dari representamen, objek, dan interpretan, serta klasifikasinya mengenai hipoikon (gambar, metafora, dan diagram). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tanda-tanda visual dan verbal dalam tema *Guten Appetit* pada buku teks Netzwerk Neu A1 merepresentasikan budaya makan Jerman melalui ikon, indeks, dan simbol. Tanda-tanda ini mencerminkan nilai-nilai sosial seperti kesopanan, keteraturan, dan interaksi komunal,

menunjukkan bahwa buku teks tersebut tidak hanya mengajarkan bahasa tetapi juga menyampaikan makna budaya kepada pembelajar pemula. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi teoretis dengan memperluas penerapan teori semiotika Charles Sanders Peirce ke dalam analisis representasi budaya dalam buku teks bahasa asing. Secara praktis, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa tanda-tanda visual dan verbal dalam tema sederhana seperti *Guten Appetit* menyampaikan makna budaya yang lebih dalam dan dapat mendukung pemahaman antarbudaya para pembelajar dalam pembelajaran bahasa Jerman.

Kata kunci: analisis semiotik, buku teks bahasa Jerman, Netzwerk Neu A1, representasi budaya

A. Introduction

Foreign language learning did not only focus on mastering linguistic structures but also involved understanding the cultural values embedded in language use. Textbooks as learning media played an important role in representing cultural values through linguistic and visual signs. Cultural representation in learning media played a significant role in shaping students' perceptions and understanding of the target culture (Krisna, 2025). Furthermore, cultural signs in visual and verbal texts functioned as a means of transmitting social values that learners implicitly absorbed (Hermansyah, 2025). In the context of German language learning, textbooks such as *Netzwerk Neu A1* did not only present linguistic materials but also introduced the social and cultural practices of

German society, including dining habits and expressions such as *Guten Appetit!*. The representation of meaning in texts and images can be examined through semiotics. In semiotic studies, a sign is understood as something that represents something else and generates meaning in the mind of the reader or observer (Iga, 2023). Semiotic analysis aims to reveal the meanings behind signs presented in visual and verbal forms (Soleha, 2023). One of the most widely used semiotic approaches is the theory of Charles Sanders Peirce, which explains that meaning is formed through a triadic relationship consisting of representamen, object, and interpretant (Auryn, 2024). Representamen refers to the form of the sign, the object refers to the concept or reality represented by the

sign, and the interpretant refers to the meaning produced in the interpreter's mind (Siddik, 2022). In addition, Peirce classified signs into three categories: icons, indexes, and symbols, which allow researchers to analyze how meanings are constructed through resemblance, factual connection, and social conventions (Ahmad, 2025; Sekar, 2024).

Several previous studies have applied Peircean semiotics to analyze the representation of signs and cultural meanings in various media. Alfian (2024) showed that cultural signs in media can represent social values such as customs, morality, and beliefs. Azis (2024) explained that semiotic analysis uses the triadic relationship of representamen, object, and interpretant to interpret symbolic meanings in signs. Similarly, Ayubi (2024) emphasized that Peirce's semiotic approach allows visual signs to be analyzed not only through resemblance but also through symbolic meaning and cultural interpretation. Auli (2024) also indicated that signs within narratives can generate social meanings reflecting values and attitudes within a society. In addition, Dwi (2021)

demonstrated that socio-cultural values can be represented through language systems and cultural practices. Although numerous studies have applied Peircean semiotics in films, literary works, and visual symbols, research focusing on cultural representation in foreign language textbooks remains relatively limited. In particular, beginner-level textbooks such as *Netzwerk Neu A1* have rarely been analyzed in terms of the visual and verbal signs that represent everyday cultural practices. Themes such as *Guten Appetit!* are often considered merely vocabulary or daily expressions, even though they may contain broader social and cultural meanings related to food culture.

Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the structure of signs based on Peirce's triadic model consisting of representamen, object, and interpretant in the *Guten Appetit!* theme of the *Netzwerk Neu A1* textbook. In addition, this research sought to identify icons, indexes, and symbols representing food culture in the learning material and to explain how visual and verbal signs in the textbook represent cultural meanings. This study differs from previous research in terms of its object and

focus. Most previous studies applying Peircean semiotics examined films, literary texts, visual symbols, or socio-cultural phenomena. In contrast, this study specifically analyzes semiotic signs within a German language learning textbook, particularly the *Guten Appetit!* theme in *Netzwerk Neu A1*. Therefore, this research does not only examine signs as visual communication phenomena but also as cultural representation within the pedagogical context of foreign language learning. The findings of this study are expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the fields of semiotics and foreign language education. Theoretically, this research expands the application of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory in analyzing cultural representation within foreign language learning materials. Practically, the results of this study may serve as a reference for educators and textbook developers in designing learning materials that integrate cultural representation with linguistic instruction.

B. Research Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design

using a semiotic analysis approach based on the theory of Charles Sanders Peirce. The qualitative method was chosen because the study focused on interpreting the meanings of signs found in visual representations rather than measuring numerical data. According to Margarete Sandelowski, descriptive qualitative research aims to provide a comprehensive summary of events or phenomena in everyday terms. Therefore, this approach was considered appropriate for analyzing images and vocabulary related to food presented in the textbook. The data source of this study was the German textbook *Netzwerk Neu A1*, particularly the theme *Guten Appetit!*. The research data consisted of visual elements in the form of images and vocabulary sections (*Wortschatz*) related to food in the German language. The data were selected purposively by considering the relevance of visual and verbal elements to the theme of food. The selected data included images of food and vocabulary describing food in German.

The data were collected through a documentation technique. The researcher systematically identified

and selected relevant pages from the “*Guten Appetit!*” theme. During this process, textual and visual elements related to food were carefully observed and documented as research data. The collected data were then analyzed using Peirce’s semiotic framework. Each sign was examined through the triadic relationship of representamen, object, and interpretant. The analysis began by identifying the form of the sign, followed by determining the concept referred to by the sign, and finally interpreting the meaning generated from this relationship. In addition, the signs were classified into icons, indexes, and symbols to explain how meaning was constructed through resemblance, causal relationships, and cultural conventions. Through this semiotic analysis, the study interpreted how visual and verbal elements in the textbook represented food in German culture. The analysis aimed to reveal how cultural meanings were embedded in language learning materials through the representation of food in the textbook.

C. Research Result and Discussion

Link Textbook Netzwerk Neu A1

Guten *Appetit* Theme

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/13st87C7a0nMaiflxggm0uYLLM6ICD/view?usp=drivesdk>



Picture 1. Representation of breakfast (Frühstück) in the *Netzwerk Neu A1* textbook

1. Frühstück (Breakfast)

- a. Sign: The sign in this data was an image of a woman sitting at the dining table with various foods and drinks.
- b. Object: The object represented in the image was the activity of breakfast (Frühstück), which referred to eating in the morning before starting daily activities.
- c. Interpretant: The interpretant of this sign showed the breakfast habits in German culture. Breakfast usually consisted of bread, dairy products, fruit, and beverages such as juice or tea. The diverse breakfast menu reflected the balanced eating habits of German society and represented an important part

of the morning routine before beginning daily activities.

2. der Orangensaft (orange juice)

- a. Sign: A glass filled with orange colored juice.
- b. Object: Orange juice that was consumed during breakfast.
- c. Interpretant: Orange juice was a very common beverage in German breakfasts because it was considered to provide energy and vitamins in the morning.

3. das Müsli

- a. Sign: A bowl containing cereal mix placed on the table.
- b. Object: A mixture of oats, grains, and dried fruits that was eaten with milk or yogurt.
- c. Interpretant: Müsli was a very popular breakfast food in Germany and other European countries because it was practical and nutritious.

4. der Joghurt

- a. Sign: A container of yogurt placed on the dining table.
- b. Object: A fermented dairy product that was eaten directly or mixed with müsli and fruit.
- c. Interpretant: Yogurt often became part of a light breakfast

in Germany, especially for people who preferred healthy and quick meals.

5. die Milch (milk)

- a. Sign: A bottle of milk placed on the dining table.
- b. Object: Milk as a drink or as a mixture for foods such as müsli.
- c. Interpretant: Milk played an important role in breakfast because it was commonly used for cereal or consumed directly.

6. der Käse (cheese)

- a. Sign: Slices of cheese placed on a plate.
- b. Object: A dairy product in the form of cheese.
- c. Interpretant: Cheese was often eaten with bread or Brötchen during breakfast.

7. die Marmelade (jam)

- a. Sign: A jar of jam placed on the table.
- b. Object: Fruit jam used as a spread for bread.
- c. Interpretant: Jam was commonly eaten with bread or Brötchen during breakfast.

8. das Ei (egg)

- a. Sign: A boiled egg placed in a special egg holder.
- b. Object: A boiled egg served as breakfast food.

- c. Interpretant: Boiled eggs were commonly eaten for breakfast in Germany because they were practical and nutritious.

9. das Brötchen (bread roll)

- a. Sign: Several small bread rolls placed in a basket or on a plate.
- b. Object: A typical German bread roll eaten during breakfast.
- c. Interpretant: Brötchen represented a central element of traditional German breakfast and was usually eaten with butter, cheese, or jam.

10. der Tee (Tea)

- a. Sign: A cup of tea placed on the breakfast table.
- b. Object: Tea as a hot beverage consumed during breakfast.
- c. Interpretant: Tea is commonly drunk as a warm drink accompanying breakfast.

11. die Banane (banana)

- a. Sign: A banana placed on the breakfast table.
- b. Object: A banana as a type of fruit consumed during breakfast.
- c. Interpretant: Bananas are commonly eaten as part of breakfast because they are nutritious and easy to eat.



Picture 2. Representation of lunch (Mittagessen) in the *Netzwerk Neu A1* textbook

1. Mittagessen (Lunch)

- a. Signs: The signs in this image were pictures of food and drinks that resembled real objects.
- b. Object: Plates, napkins, and condiment bottles indicated the presence of a dining activity. Words such as Mittagessen, das Wasser, and die Cola functioned as linguistic symbols in the German language.
- c. Interpretant: The image in the *Netzwerk Neu A1* textbook under the theme Guten Appetit! presented a lunch table (Mittagessen) with various foods and drinks such as potatoes, vegetables, meat, apple juice, water, cola, vinegar, oil, salt, and pepper. From Peirce's semiotic perspective, the

representamen was the visual illustration of the dining table along with the vocabulary presented. The object referred to the cultural practice of lunchtime in German society. The interpretant was the learners' understanding that dining culture in Germany involved a neatly arranged table, balanced food, and social interaction during meals.

2. Kartoffeln (potatoes)

- a. **Sign:** The word Kartoffeln that appeared in the Mittagessen image.
- b. **Object:** Kartoffeln referred to potatoes, which were one of the main ingredients in German cuisine.
- c. **Interpretant:** The interpretant of the sign Kartoffeln showed that potatoes played an important role in the dietary pattern of German society. Potatoes were often prepared in various dishes such as boiled potatoes, fried potatoes, or baked potatoes and were usually served with vegetables and meat at lunchtime.

3. der Apfelsaft (Apple Juice)

- a. **Sign:** The word der Apfelsaft and the image of a bottle of apple juice placed on the table.
- b. **Object:** A beverage made from apples.
- c. **Interpretant:** Apple juice was commonly consumed in Germany because the country had many apple-producing regions. In several areas, there was also a popular drink called Apfelschorle, which consisted of apple juice mixed with sparkling water. The presence of apple juice on the table reflected the habit of consuming fresh fruit-based beverages in German culture.

4. das Gemüse (Vegetables)

- a. **Sign:** The word das Gemüse and the vegetables served on the plate.
- b. **Object:** Vegetables as part of the meal.
- c. **Interpretant:** Vegetables represented an important element of balanced nutrition in German cuisine. They were typically served

as side dishes accompanying meat and potatoes, reflecting a balanced dietary structure within traditional meals.

5. der Essig (Vinegar)

- a. Sign: The word der Essig and the bottle of vinegar placed on the table.
- b. Object: Vinegar used as a food ingredient.
- c. Interpretant: Vinegar was often used to prepare salad dressing together with oil. In German culinary culture, salads with oil and vinegar dressing were commonly served as a side dish during meals.

6. das Öl (Oil)

- a. Sign: The word das Öl and the bottle of oil on the table.
- b. Object: Oil used for cooking or salad dressing.
- c. Interpretant: Oil, especially vegetable oil or olive oil, was commonly used in preparing salad dressings or cooking meals. Its presence reflected the influence of simple European cooking practices

that emphasized the natural flavor of ingredients.

7. das Fleisch (Meat)

- a. Sign: The word das Fleisch and the pieces of meat served on the plate.
- b. Object: Meat as a source of protein.
- c. Interpretant: Meat played an important role in many traditional German dishes. In lunch meals, meat often functioned as the main dish, usually served with potatoes and vegetables.

8. das Wasser (water)

- a. Sign: A glass of water placed on the dining table.
- b. Object: Water as a beverage consumed during a meal.
- c. Interpretant: Water is commonly drunk as a drink accompanying lunch or other meals.

9. die Cola (cola)

- a. Sign: A glass or bottle of cola placed on the dining table.
- b. Object: Cola as a soft drink consumed during a meal.
- c. Interpretant: Cola is commonly consumed as a

refreshing beverage
accompanying lunch or
other meals.

10. das Salz (salt)

- a. **Sign:** A salt shaker placed on the dining table.
- b. **Object:** Salt used as a seasoning to enhance the taste of food.
- c. **Interpretant:** Salt is commonly used during meals to add flavor to dishes.

11. der Pfeffer (pepper)

- a. **Sign:** A pepper shaker placed on the dining table.
- b. **Object:** Pepper used as a seasoning to add flavor to food.
- c. **Interpretant:** Pepper is commonly used during meals to enhance the taste of dishes.



Picture 3. **Representation of Coffee and Cake (Kaffee und Kuchen) in the Netzwerk Nue A1 textbook**

1. Kaffee und Kuchen (Kopi dan Kue)

- a. **Sign:** The sign in this data was an image of two children sitting at a table while enjoying food and drinks.
- b. **Object:** The object represented in the image was the activity of enjoying coffee and cake known as Kaffee und Kuchen. This activity usually took place in the afternoon as a time to enjoy light snacks.
- c. **Interpretant:** The interpretant of this sign indicated a cultural habit in German society where Kaffee und Kuchen functioned as a social tradition. This activity usually occurred in the afternoon as a moment to relax while enjoying coffee and sweet foods with family or friends. The tradition reflected the German cultural habit of valuing leisure time and togetherness.

2. der Kaffee (coffee)

- a. Sign: A cup filled with coffee placed on the table.
- b. Object: Coffee served hot in a cup.
- c. Interpretant: In German culture, coffee played a central role in the Kaffee und Kuchen tradition. Coffee functioned not only as a beverage but also as a symbol of social interaction and family togetherness. Many German families enjoyed coffee in the afternoon between 3:00 and 5:00 p.m. while having casual conversations.

3. der Kuchen (cake)

- a. Sign: A large cake placed in the center of the table.
- b. Object: Cake as a sweet food that was sliced and shared with everyone.
- c. Interpretant: Cake was the main element in the Kaffee und Kuchen tradition. Its presence symbolized hospitality and the habit of serving guests. In German culture, cakes were often homemade or purchased from a bakery (Bäckerei).

4. die Sahne (cream)

- a. Sign: A small bowl containing cream placed on the table.
- b. Object: Thick cream that was usually added to coffee or cake.
- c. Interpretant: Cream served as a complement to sweet foods in German culture. It was often used to enhance the taste of cakes or coffee, reflecting a preference for soft and sweet flavors.

5. der Keks (biscuit)

- a. Sign: Biscuits arranged on a plate.
- b. Object: Dry cookies or biscuits usually eaten with coffee or tea.
- c. Interpretant: Biscuits were practical snacks often served when receiving guests. In German culture, biscuits were commonly eaten while drinking coffee.

6. die Schokolade (chocolate)

- a. Sign: A bar or piece of chocolate placed on the table.
- b. Object: Chocolate as a sweet food commonly

consumed as a snack or dessert.

- c. Interpretant: Chocolate is often eaten as a sweet treat and can accompany coffee or tea.

7. der Zucker (sugar)

- a. Sign: A sugar container or sugar cubes placed on the table.
- b. Object: Sugar used to sweeten beverages or food.
- c. Interpretant: Sugar is commonly added to drinks such as coffee or tea to make them taste sweeter.



Picture 4. **Representation of Dinner (Abendessen) in the *Netzwerk Neu A1* textbook**

1. Abendessen (Dinner)

- a. Sign: An image of two people eating together at a dining table with various foods.

b. Object: The image represented the activity of dinner (Abendessen) with dishes such as bread, vegetables, soup, and processed meat.

- c. Interpretant: The image showed that dinner in German culture was usually simple and was eaten together at the dining table as part of the daily routine.

2. die Butter (butter)

- a. Sign: A piece of butter placed on the dining table.
- b. Object: Butter used as a spread for bread.
- c. Interpretant: In German food culture, butter was a common complement for bread, especially during breakfast and dinner. Butter provided a soft and savory taste to bread.

3. as Brot (bread)

- a. Sign: Several slices of bread placed in a basket in the center of the table.
- b. Object: Bread as a staple food eaten with various side dishes.
- c. Interpretant: Bread played a very important role in German culinary culture. Many types of bread were produced in Germany, and bread was

commonly eaten at breakfast and dinner.

4. die Tomate (tomato)

- a. Sign: Several tomatoes placed on a plate on the table.
- b. Object: Tomatoes as fresh vegetables eaten directly or used in salads.
- c. Interpretant: Tomatoes were often served as a complement to bread in simple German dinners.

5. die Gurke (cucumber)

- a. Sign: Slices of cucumber placed on a plate.
- b. Object: Cucumber as a fresh vegetable.
- c. Interpretant: Cucumber was commonly eaten as part of a salad or as a complement to bread.

6. der Salat (salad)

- a. Sign: A bowl of salad placed on the dining table.
- b. Object: A mixture of fresh vegetables served as a side dish.
- c. Interpretant: Salad was commonly served as a complement during dinner in Germany.

7. die Suppe (soup)

- a. Sign: A bowl of soup eaten by the people in the image.

b. Object: Soup as a warm food eaten with a spoon.

c. Interpretant: Soup was often eaten as a starter or a light meal in the evening.

8. die Wurst (sausage)

- a. Sign: Pieces of sausage placed on a plate.
- b. Object: Processed meat in the form of sausage.
- c. Interpretant: Sausage was one of the most famous foods in German culinary culture and was often eaten with bread.

9. der Schinken (ham)

- a. Sign: Slices of ham placed on a plate.
- b. Object: Ham meat that was usually thinly sliced.
- c. Interpretant: Ham was often eaten with bread or used as a topping for bread.

E. Conclusion

This study showed that the theme *Guten Appetit!* in the textbook *Netzwerk Neu A1* represented the eating culture of German society through various visual and verbal signs. Based on Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis, the signs that appeared in images and vocabulary could be classified into

icons, indexes, and symbols. Pictures of food and dining situations functioned as icons because they bore a direct resemblance to real objects. Meanwhile, table arrangements, meal times, and food combinations indicated factual relationships with the eating habits of German society, and thus could be understood as indexes. In addition, vocabulary and expressions related to food functioned as symbols, whose meanings were understood through linguistic and cultural conventions. The results of the study also showed that the textbook *Netzwerk Neu A1* did not only serve as a medium for learning vocabulary but also as a means to introduce cultural values such as politeness, orderliness, communal eating habits, and the eating patterns of German society through activities like Frühstück, Mittagessen, Kaffee und Kuchen, and Abendessen. Therefore, language learning in this textbook also supported cultural understanding for beginner German learners.

As a suggestion, future studies could examine cultural representation in other themes within German language textbooks or compare multiple textbooks to explore how cultural values are represented more

broadly in foreign language learning materials.

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