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The Meaning of Marriage: A Semiotic Point of View

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Abstract--Semiotics in its function as a theory, approach, or method, can be used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of signs including the sign of *marriage* which is universal, complex, and significant in nature. The aim of this study is to give another viewpoint on this sign of *marriage* through the utilization of semiotic analytical tools. The source of data in this study are various types of texts which discuss *marriage* signs both in the denotative level (signs at their primary process) and in the connotative level which in this case are *marriage* as a type of religious symbol (signs at their secondary process). The results of the analysis through the utilization of interpretative semiotic methods reveal that the meaning of marriage can be traced in two levels of signification namely at denotative and connotative levels which both show the same positive impressions which include love, commitment, respect, companionship, fellowship and unity in one flesh or in one spirit. This comprehensive meaning of *marriage* sign can be obtained through 4 types of inter-sign relations namely 2 types of relations according to the syntagmatic axis i.e. spatial relation and 2 types of relations according to the paradigmatic axis i.e. substitution relationship through commutation test.

Keywords--connotative, denotative, marriage, semiotics, sign.

Introduction

Semiotics is defined by Ferdinand de Saussure in his Course in General Linguistics as a science that examines signs as part of social life (Saussure, 1990). In principle, in this definition, Saussure states that semiotics is very

dependent on the rules of the game or social codes that apply in society so that signs can be understood collectively. As the science of signs, semiotics can explicitly be understood as theory that can be used to analyze various signs and their meaning (signification). As [Hidayat \(2010\)](#), states, semiotics also functions as an analytical tool or a way of breaking down a symptom so semiotics is also referred to an approach or also as a method. Regarding semiotics, he also states clearly that semiotics can be used across disciplines and shares similarities with philosophy and logic. In this case, it is evident that semiotics has been used by various fields of science including architecture, medicine, cinematography, law, anthropology, literature, and most specifically linguistics.

In its function as a theory, approach, or method, semiotics in obtaining a comprehensive understanding of signs has three analytical dimensions, namely the syntactic dimension related to the structure of the sign, the semantic dimension related to the meaning of the sign, and also the pragmatic dimension related to the effect of the sign ([Noth, 1995](#)). This classification by Morris can explain the level of research, namely at the level of structure, meaning, or the acceptance or effect of signs on society. Of course, the use of semiotic methods in research on signs must be based on a comprehensive understanding of the basic elements of semiotics consisting of signs (signifier/signified), sign axis (syntagm/system), sign level (denotation/connotation), as well as sign relations (metaphor/metonymy) ([Piliang, 2010](#)).

Marriage can be grouped as a sign that has a complex meaning because it can be interpreted denotatively and also connotatively. Literally, Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines *marriage* as the state of being united as spouses in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law. [Kalkan & Ersanlı \(2008\)](#), as cited in [Özyiğit \(2017\)](#), express a more comprehensive understanding about *marriage*, which includes the coupling of two people possessing different interests, desires, and needs as a special association given shape by social rules and laws which significantly affects individuals' development and self-realizations. [Canel \(2012\)](#), as cited in [Özyiğit \(2017\)](#), reveals functions of *marriage* which makes it universal and significant for societies as meeting the need for love and being loved, meeting the needs of individuals' biology, social, and psychology, bringing new generations to world, gaining the feelings of being safe and protected, having a place in society, the sense of cooperation, being confident about the future, feeling proud of each other and healthy functioning of sexual life.

Apart from the above, [Conner \(1982\)](#), grouped *marriage* as one out of 21 symbolic actions found in the Holy Scriptures, i.e. The Bible. He also revealed the interpretation of the sign or symbol of *marriage* as a union or covenant between God and His people as stated in the Book of Revelation 19:7 (NIV) "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready." In this passage of the Holy Scripture, what is meant by the Lamb is an entity called the Lord Jesus Christ based on an analysis of the lamb symbol by [Locker \(2002\)](#), entitled The Lamb of Revelation in the Light of Peircean Semiotics. Meanwhile, the bride refers to God's people according to the expression written in another verse (19:8) in The Book of Revelation,

especially the TSI dynamic version of the translation "His bride is a picture of all God's people who are sanctified through the work of Christ".

Several studies have been carried out to explore deeply the meaning of *marriage* from various points of view including [Özyiğit \(2017\)](#), entitled The Meaning of Marriage According to University Students: A Phenomenological Study. Other research was also conducted by [Dewi \(2019\)](#), to reveal the relationship of marriage perception and married readiness in women's adolescents in Makassar City. From a theological point of view, other studies have also been carried out by [van Eck \(2020\)](#), who argues that the contemporary mainline understanding of marriage (theology of marriage) especially in the local South African denominational context is not based on the Bible but rather on a cultural construct.

Referring to the universality and significance of *marriage*, this study aims to give another view point on this sign of *marriage* through the utilization of semiotic approach. This is purposed at giving a comprehensive understanding of *marriage* through the analytical dimensions of semiotics specifically in terms of syntactic and semantic dimensions. The analysis is done through the basic elements of semiotics which covers sign as individual (signifier/signified), sign axis (sintagma/sign system), the sign levels in terms of denotative and connotative meanings, as well as sign relations in terms of metaphor and metonymy ([Manzoli et al., 2007](#); [Karjono et al., 2017](#); [Hafsah, 2017](#)).

Concept and Theoretical Framework

Concept

There are three concepts described in this study, namely the concept of semiotics, symbols, and also *marriage*. Semiotic is generally understood to be related to everything about signs. These signs based on Saussure's theory consisting of two inseparable faces, namely the *signifiant* (signifier) and *signifié* (signified). In this case, the meaning of the sign is produced from the relationship of the two elements which is known as the dyadic relationship. It is also possible to produce sign meanings from three types of relationships (triadic), which in this case are known as Peirce's semiotics. As cited in [Hoed \(2010\)](#), Barthes through his famous book *Mythologies* develops the understanding expressed by Saussure in terms of utilizing semiotics to understand culture. According to him, all symptoms in culture are signs consisting of markers, namely symptoms that are mentally perceived by humans as acoustic images and signified, namely meanings or concepts captured from the signifier. Furthermore, Barthes calls signifier as expression (E) which contains disclosure and signified as content (C) or concept. For Barthes the relationship between E and C occurs in humans in more than one stage. The first stage is the basis (referred to as the primary system) which occurs when the sign is perceived for the first time. This process is then continued in the secondary system which is an advanced process for developing E and C. The development of E is referred to in linguistics as a synonym and the development of C is referred to as a connotation ([Schrøder, 1989](#); [Johnson et al., 2000](#); [Story & Bradbury, 2004](#)).

Symbol according to Peirce is a sign which refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the symbol to be interpreted as referring to that object. The "law" that Peirce mentions in his definition is what is usually referred to as social convention, a specifically human, culture-related capacity to establish and socialize an arbitrary, perceptually unmotivated, spatio-temporally displaced connection between sign and its meaning (Sadowski, 2009). In line with this, Noth (1995), defines symbols as a class of signs and has three categories, namely symbols as conventional signs, symbols as iconic signs, and symbols as connotation signs. Symbols also have three subtypes, namely verbal symbols, graphic symbols and other pictorial symbols (such as logos or trademarks), flags and emblems. Regarding religious symbols, Neville & Smith (2001), states that they relate to all kinds of religious signs of the divine which includes myth and religious narratives, theological ideas, religious acts, architectural and artistic symbols, devotional objects and the like. Generally, symbols refer to religious object and can bear religious meaning.

Marriage in its primary system of sign refers to the act of unification of two people as spouses in consensual and contractual relationship recognized by the law. As mentioned by Özyiğit (2017), *marriage* as the institution of family have maintained their universality although its dimensions and contents have changed during human history and they are still the core unit of societies. *Marriage* as the sign in its first stage (the basis) is acknowledged as the institution in which intimacy and fellowship exists and also children are raised in safety and that allow individuals to have sexual intercourse and provides an emotional development opportunity (Yavuzer & Karataş, 2012), as cited in Özyiğit (2017). Meanwhile, in its secondary system or in terms of connotative dimension, *marriage* as proposed by (Conner, 1982), refers to symbolic action as a union or covenant between God and His people. The bride is a picture of all God's people who are sanctified through the work of Christ. Based of Barthes' view, this is the process of content (C) development known as connotation or having connotative meaning.

Theoretical Framework

Both semiotic according to Saussure (and further developed by Barthes) which is structural in nature and semiotic according to Peirce, which studies individual signs, known as semiosis have similarities. They both see that there is a process in the meaning of signs, which does not only stop at the "primary process" (E-R1-C in Barthes and R-O in Peirce), but continues with the process of interpretation, which can be identified as a "secondary process" (connotation on Barthes and interpretation on Peirce). The difference is that Barthes' concept is more closed, while Peirce's is more open because the process of semiosis which according to Peirce is not limited or does not stop. In this sense, Christomy (2010), asserts Peirce's continuous interpretation as something that was quite "frightening" because it does not rule out the possibility that interpretation could wander everywhere. In summary a relatively static structure on the semiotic version of Saussure and a very dynamic interpretation process in the semiotic version of Peirce is known as dialogical thought.

In association with the above understanding, (Piliang, 2010), based on the classification of C.S. Morris revealed 3 dimensions in semiotic analysis, namely the syntactic dimension, the semantic dimension, and the pragmatic dimension. The syntactic dimension is concerned with the study of the sign itself individually or in combination. The semantic dimension is the study of the relationship between signs and their significance or meaning. While the pragmatic dimension is the study of the relationship between signs and their users (interpreters), especially those related to the concrete use of signs in various events and their effects or impacts on users. Apart from that, Piliang (2010), also emphasized that in conducting research using a semiotic approach, a comprehensive understanding of the basic elements of semiotics is needed, which consists of signs (markers/signifiers), sign axis (syntagms/systems), levels of signs (denotation/ connotation) and sign relations (metaphor/metonymy).

Piliang (2010), further reveals that in the context of language structuralism, signs cannot be seen only individually, but in relation to and in combination with other signs in a system. Sign analysis based on this larger system or combination (sentence, book, book) involves so-called combining rules, which consist of two axes, namely the paradigmatic axis, which refers to the vocabulary of signs or words (such as a dictionary), as well as the syntagmatic axis, namely the way of selecting and combining signs based on certain rules or codes so as to produce a meaningful expression. The way of combining signs is usually based on certain codes that apply in a language community. A code is a shared set of rules or conventions in which signs can be combined to allow messages to be communicated from one person to another.

In line with the above concept regarding the relationship between signs, specifically Chandler (2007), proposes several analytical tools that can be used in examining the relationship between signs based on the syntagmatic axis and the paradigmatic axis. Temporally, syntagmatic relationships refer to intertextual relationships with markers that are present in the text, while paradigmatic relationships refer to intertextual relationships with markers that are absent from the text. Such an approach is known to be very good to be used as an approach to textual analysis that focuses on structural analysis. Some analytical tools in the paradigmatic dimension include replacement tests (the commutation test), opposition, markedness, deconstruction, and alignment. The syntagmatic analysis of the text, both verbal and nonverbal, involves an analysis of the structure and relations between its parts. Structuralism semiotics attempts to identify the basic constituent segments in the text, namely the syntagma. The study of syntagmatic relationships reveals text conventions. The use of certain syntagmatic structures in the text has an influence on meaning. Some syntagmatic analysis tools include spatial relations, sequential relations and structural reduction (Robles & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2003; Stutzer & Frey, 2006; Allan, 2007).

Methodology

The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach by utilizing interpretive semiotic methods. According to Piliang (2010), the semiotic method is basically qualitative-interpretive, namely a method that focuses on signs and texts as

objects of study and how researchers interpret and understand the code (decoding) behind these signs and texts. Specifically, the methods included in interpretative semiotic methods are text analysis methods that analyze signs as a group or combination, namely a collection of signs that make up what is called a text. Each text has a paradigmatic and syntagmatic axis determined by certain codes or rules so as to produce meaningful expressions.

The data sources in this study are various types of texts that discuss *marriage* both in denotative meaning (signs at their primary process) and in connotative meaning which in this case are religious symbols (signs at their secondary process). For the denotative text, the data was taken from the results of the latest studies regarding the meaning of *marriage* especially according to university students since the period is defined as the emergent adulthood stage and it is of critical importance to establish and maintain romantic relationships during this transition period (Arnett, 2000). Meanwhile the connotative text data was taken from the Scripture in this case the Bible, which is related to the symbol of *marriage*, especially in the texts of the book of Revelation. The reduced data are then analyzed by utilizing the relations between signs at the level of the syntagmatic axis, namely the intertextual relationship with markers that are present in the text or the paradigmatic axis which refers to intertextual relationships with markers that are absent from the text.

Result and Discussion

The Staged System of the *Marriage* Sign

In accordance with Barthes's thought in Piliang (2010), there are two levels of signification that make it possible to produce meaning which is also multilevel, namely the denotation level and the connotation level. Denotation is the level of signification that explains the relationship between the signifier and the signified, or between the sign and its reference at the level of reality, which produces an explicit, direct and definite meaning. The meaning of denotation, in this case, is the meaning of what appears. Denotation is a sign which marker has a high level of convention or agreement. On the other hand, connotation is the level of signification which explains the relationship between the signifier and the signified in which the meaning operates is not explicit, indirect and uncertain (meaning it is open to various possibilities). It creates a second layer of meaning, which is formed when signifiers are associated with various psychological aspects, such as feelings, emotions or beliefs. Connotation can produce a second layer of meaning that is implicit, hidden, which is called connotative meaning. Based on the above understanding, the following are 2 levels of signification, namely the level of denotation and the level of connotation connected with the sign of *marriage*:

Table 1
The Two Levels of Signification of the *Marriage* Sign

Marriage Sign of Denotative Level
it provides a more organized life, a spouses have the chance to meet their more relaxed sexual life and ensures social and psychological needs such

the continuation of their family (Ondaş, 2007), as cited from (Özyiğit, 2017).

taking responsibility, and sharing organized and happy lives as cited from Özyiğit (2017)

marriage primarily signifies commitment, love, fellowship, trust, giving promises and family (Curran et al., 2010)

an individual who accepts marriage as a life-long notion is thought to considerably solve his problems and increase his individual happiness in marriage, because divorce is not an option for that individual (Amato & Booth, 2001, as cited in (Hall, 2006)

Love, romance, respect, trust, commitment, compassion, loyalty, indulgence, self-sacrifice, patience and sharing are among the qualities expected to exist between couples (Günay & Bener (2012); (Canel, 2012) as cited in Özyiğit (2017)

as being in safe, cooperation and companionship. “companionship, coupling, and biological functions of marriage” (Özgüven), as cited in Özyiğit (2017)

The reason for university students to marry is “to share a life together.” Durmazkul (1991)

90% of females thought that marriage would meet the love, respect and reliance needs of individuals Mermmer as cited in (Özyiğit, 2017)

the desire not to be alone and the sense of belonging can be thought to be an essential need for final-year university students because the basic institution which naturally meets their need not to be alone and to belong to a group is family (Baymur, 1978, p. 67, as cited in Kir (2011)

Hence, for a majority of young people, the institution of marriage is accepted as a substantial way to take part in society and make a life with an independent will. As a result, marriage is accepted as an important tool in gaining status in society.

Marriage Sign of Connotative and Denotative Levels

⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

⁸ Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.) (The Book of Revelation 19:7-8)

²² Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing^[b] her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care

for their body, just as Christ does the church—³⁰ for we are members of his body. ³¹ “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”^[c] ³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (Ephesians 5:22-33)

Various texts related to denotative meanings are taken from the results of research on the meanings of university students' attributes to *marriage*. In accordance with the opinion of [Arnett \(2000\)](#), this period is an important period which is called the emergent adult stage or the transitional period in which it is of critical importance to establish and maintain romantic relationships. From the data, it is very clear that the meaning produced by each text is the explicit, direct, and definite meaning about *marriage* expressed by the research participants, in this case university students. In general, the relationship between the signifier and the signified or the sign and the referent evokes positive emotions or in other words that young people's perception of marriage is positive. Some of the positive impressions expressed were that *marriage* provides a more organized live, provides a more relaxed sexual life, signifies commitment, love, fellowship, trust, giving promises and family, romance, respect, compassion, loyalty, indulgence, self-sacrifice, patience, companionship, and tools in gaining status in society.

Marriage sign of connotative level is indicated by various texts taken from several verses from the Holy Scriptures, in this case the Bible regarding *marriage*. At this level of signification, the relationship between the signifier and the signified operates in a meaning that is neither explicit nor direct. The relationship that is connotative or indirect between the signifier and the signified is shown by the wedding text of the entity mentioned as the Lamb and his bride, who wears bright and clean fine linen on her wedding day. Specifically regarding the signifier bride's wedding dress, it is directly related to its signified as the righteous act of God's holy people. Another texts which are taken from Ephesians 5:22-23 show *marriage* signs of mixture between connotative and denotative levels. In this case, the relationship between signifier and signified is connected with a metaphorical relation, namely the sign interaction model, in which a sign from one system is used to explain the meaning for another system ([Salvatore & Freda, 2011](#); [Robards et al., 2012](#); [Waldron et al., 1996](#)). In this sense, the *marriage* relationship, namely husband and wife, is considered as a system, then this system is used to explain another system, namely the meaning of the relationship between Christ and his people (the Church).

Inter-signs Relations in Marriage According to the Sign Axis

Language, in the context of structuralism cannot be seen only at the individual level, but in relation to and in combination with other signs in a system ([Piliang](#),

2010). Sign analysis based on the system or combination involves the rule of combination which consists of two axes, namely the paradigmatic axis, refers to vocabulary and syntagmatic axis refers to the method of selecting words based on certain rules or codes so as to produce meaningful expressions. Based on this understanding, the data contained in table 1, namely *marriage* signs at denotative and connotative levels, can be analyzed based on the relationships and combinations between signs by utilizing the syntagmatic axis and the paradigmatic axis.

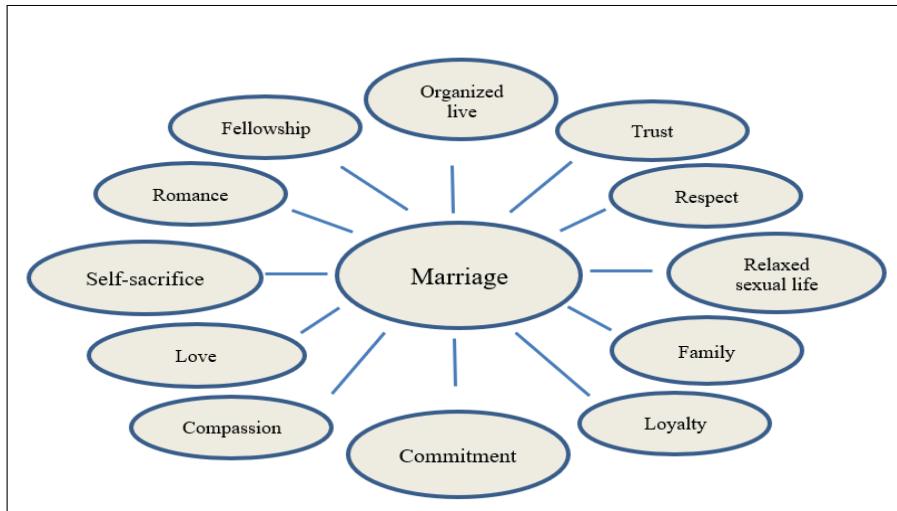


Figure 1. The Spatial Relations of Marriage Signs at the Denotative Level

Figure 1 shows the relationship between texts regarding *marriage* at the denotative level which can be described through the syntagmatic axis, which in this case is the spatial (center/periphery) relationship. In this type of relationship, *marriage* functions as a center of information that has a relationship with other signs at a combination system so as to produce a meaningful expression, namely the meaning of *marriage* according to young people (university students) which gives positive impressions to *marriage*.

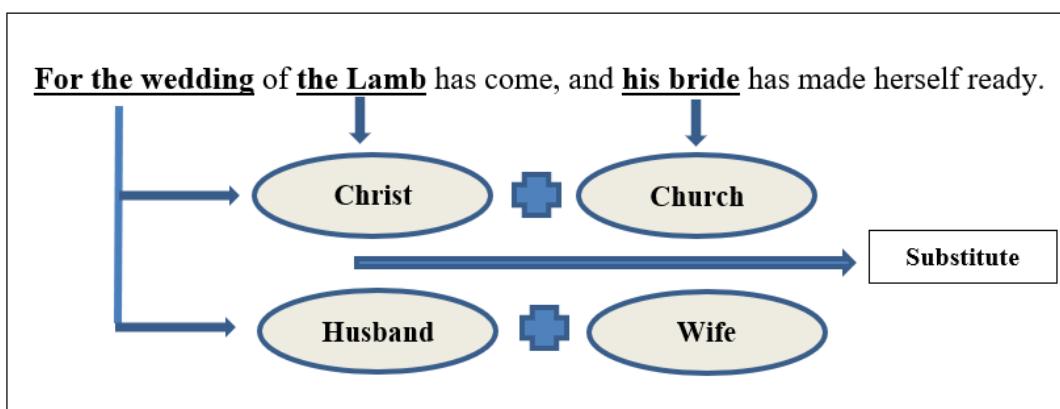


Figure 2. The substitution relation of marriage signs at the connotative level

Figure 2 shows the relationship between signs at a connotative level that is figured out through a type of paradigmatic relationship which in this case is a substitution relation through the commutation test. In this type of relationship, the connection between signs is not seen in terms of a combination between signs in marriage code but through choices. As proposed by Saussure and Barthes in (Piliang, 2010), as of the clothing system, there are elements of clothing that cannot be worn at the same time, for example suits, jackets, vests. The commutation test or substitution test in Semiotics is an analytical tool for evaluating the substitution effect of the signs being tested. The pattern above shows that the process of substitution between the Lamb and Christ and the bride and the Church actually produces the complete meaning to be achieved by the texts of the two different books, namely the Book of Ephesians and the Book of Revelation. Likewise, the substitution between Christ and the husband and the church and the wife also produces a complete meaning for the text in the Book of Ephesians. Through this relationship pattern a meaningful expression is produced for a sign of *marriage* that the relationship between husband and wife can be aligned with the relationship between God (Christ) and his congregation (church).

In association with the substitution relation as shown in figure 2, the relationship between signs in the *marriage* code can also be described through a type of spatial relationship (center-periphery relationship), especially related to the signs found in the Book of Ephesians which is a combination of signs at the denotative and connotative levels. This spatial relationship can be seen in the following figure 3.

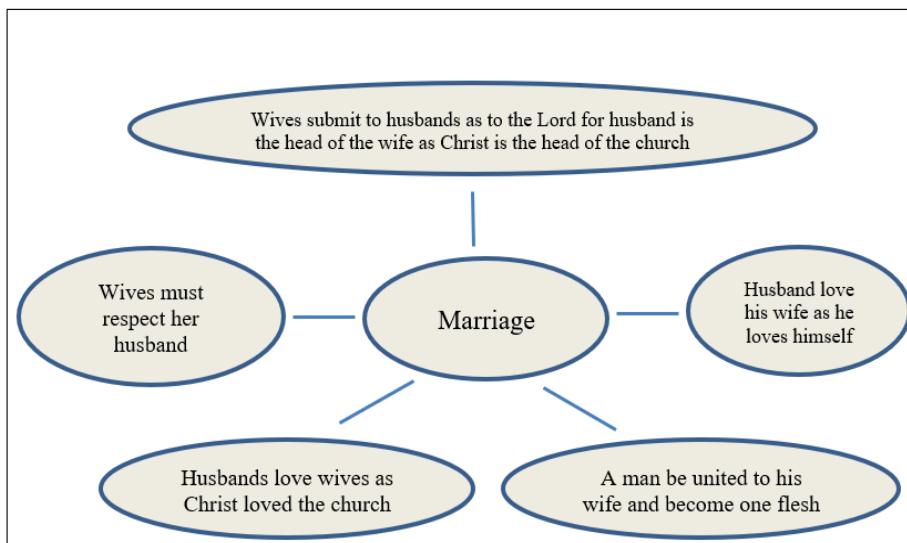


Figure 3. The Spatial Relations of Marriage Signs at Denotative and Connotative Levels

At the denotative level, namely *marriage* in the sign system of human with humans relation (husband and wife), the relationship between signs in the Book of Ephesians shows a positive meaning. In this case, the *marriage* as the center of

information has periphery relations with another signs such as submit, respect, love, and unity. This is similar to the meaningful expression generated by the relationship between signs in figure 1, namely the meaning of *marriage* according to university students. Some of the positive impressions from the results of the analysis in figure 1 including love, commitment, respect, companionship, fellowship can have a mutually substitutive relationship with the positive impressions obtained in the relationship between denotative signs found in the Book of Ephesians which include love, respect, submit and unity. Even the sign associated with having more relaxed sexual life in figure 1 can also have an associative or substitutive relationship with becoming one flesh in figure 3. This type of substitutive relationship of figure 1 and figure 3 can be described clearly in figure 4.

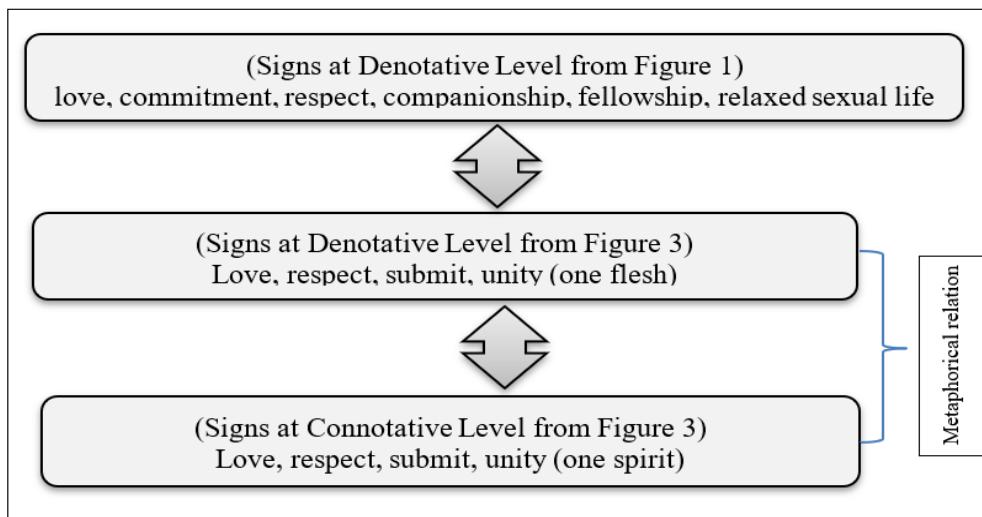


Figure 4. The substitution relation of marriage signs at denotative and connotative levels

As shown in figure 3, at the connotative level, the sign system that shows the relationship between God (Christ) and the bride/people/church also produces a positive meaningful expression by connecting the *marriage* as the center of information with the periphery sign, namely submit, love, respect, and unity. In term of submit sign the church as the bride submit herself to God (Christ) because Christ is the head of the church of which Christ is the Savior. Another periphery sign connected to the *marriage* as the center of information is love, in this case Christ's love to the church as he gave himself to the church to make her holy and clean through his sacrifice on the cross. Unity as periphery sign which also connected with the *marriage* sign at a connotative level refers to the everlasting unity between Christ and the church but it is not in terms of physical connection because Chris as God is spirit in nature.

Through figure 4 it can also be explained that those signs of connotative levels which explain the meaning of marriage in relation to God's relationship with the congregation (church) can also be described as having a substitutive relationship with signs at the denotative level which explain the meaning of *marriage* in terms

of the relationship between humans. This substitution pattern can be applied because the signs associated with *marriage* mostly evoke positive emotions. This is also supported by the results of research involving participants' opinions regarding the meaning of *marriage* as mentioned by [Özyigit \(2017\)](#). The slight difference found regarding the relationship between the sign of *marriage* at the connotative level and the sign of *marriage* at the denotative level is that the sign of unity at the connotative level leads to unity between God and humans, which in this case is purely in terms of spiritual union.

Conclusions

In its function as a theory, approach, or method, semiotics can be used as an analytical tool to explain clearly the comprehensive understanding of the *marriage* sign. In its universal nature, namely, as a core unit of societies *marriage* has an urgency to be understood further from various perspectives and one of them is based on a semiotic understanding that can work comprehensively and deeply not only at the denotative meaning level but also at the connotative level. This study was conducted by utilizing the basic elements of semiotics consisting of signs (signifier and signified), sign axis (syntagm and sign system), sign level (denotation and connotation), and sign relations (metaphor and metonymy). Meanwhile, at the research level, the analysis is carried out at the syntactic level by looking at the sign structure and also at the semantic level, namely at the sign meaning level. Further research can be carried out at a pragmatic level to look further at the effects of signs on society, even though the data used partly consists of people's opinions, especially young people, regarding *marriage*.

The collected data related to the *marriage* sign is classified based on the level of the sign which consists of denotation and connotation and mixture of denotative and connotative levels. Data at the level of denotation (first layer of meaning) were obtained from various texts related to denotative meanings which are taken from the meanings of university students' attributes to *marriage* and also various texts related to denotative meanings which are taken from some verses in Scripture specifically from the book of Ephesians. From the data, it is very clear that the meaning produced by each text is the explicit, direct, and definite meaning of *marriage*. In general, the relationship between the signifier and the signified or the sign and the referent evokes positive emotions such as love, commitment, respect, companionship, fellowship, and relaxed sexual life. Data on the connotative level as well as the mixture of denotative and connotative levels were obtained from the verses of the Holy Scriptures as described in the book of Revelation and the book of Ephesians. Specifically, the data which is a mixture of the two layers of signs were obtained from the book of Ephesians where the two levels of signs are connected metaphorically.

In terms of inter-signs relations in *marriage* according to the sign axis, 4 types of relations are obtained to explain the sign of *marriage* comprehensively, namely: 1. relations according to the syntagmatic axis, in this case spatial relations (center/periphery) related to the meaning of *marriage* according to university students which give positive impressions toward *marriage*, 2. relations according to the paradigmatic axis, in this case the substitution relationship based on the commutation test. This relationship produces a meaningful expression which

explains that the relationship between husband and wife can be aligned with the relationship between God (Christ) and his congregation (church), 3. the relation according to the syntagmatic axis which is the spatial relationship for signs related to marriage at the denotative and connotative levels found in the book of Ephesians. At the denotative level, in the case of the sign system of human relationship (husband and wife) *marriage* signs show positive meaning which indicates through peripheral signs of submit, respect, love, and unity (in one flesh). Likewise, for signs at the connotative level that shows the relationship between God (Christ) and the church also produces a positive meaningful expression through the same peripheral signs of submit, respect, love, and unity (in one spirit), 4. relations according to the paradigmatic axis in this case the substitution relationship model shows that all signs which are related to *marriage*, both at the denotative connotative levels evoke positive emotions so that they can be linked through a sign system that replaces one another but still shows the same meaning, namely positive impression toward *marriage* as indicated by the sign submit, respect, love, and unity (in one flesh or in one spirit).

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