



**BUDDHI DHARMA UNIVERSITY**

**THE STUDY OF MEME IN SEMIOTIC POINT OF VIEW THROUGH ROLAND  
BARTHES THEORY**

Presented as a partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Undergraduate Program

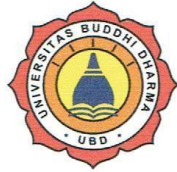
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## FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL APPROVAL

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1. The Study of Meme in Semiotic Point of View Through Roland Barthes's Theory

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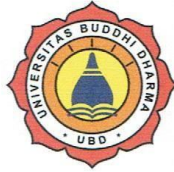
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## FINAL PROJECT APPROVAL



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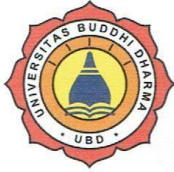
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**RECOMMENDATION FOR THE ELIGIBILITY OF THE  
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## STATEMENT OF AUTENTICITY

I declare that this thesis is my own writing, and it is true that I do not take any scholarly ideas or work from others. Those all cited works are quoted in accordance with the ethical code of academic writing.

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## ABSTRACT

The advancing technology nowadays are making it easier for people to use technology to communicate. Internet is becoming a popular place for people to interact with each other. In the internet, we have social media for people to meet in cyberspace. In one time, people invented Meme as a fun way to interact and communicate with others. They can use meme to an extend of most every daily basis that happen in real life. But sometimes people need to have a deep meaning with the meme to understand of what happen in the meme itself. In this research, researcher will analyse about meme and find a way to make it easier for people to understand what is meme. In this Study of Meme in Semiotic Point of View, this research will use Roland Barthes semiotic theory of Connotative and Denotative to find the meaning of the meme posted on Instagram account of @kegoblogan.unfaedah. It will have 19 samples of memes to discuss. The researcher will attempt to analyse the memes and spell out the literal meaning and the true meaning of the memes. The researcher uses qualitative methodology which is will use many words instead of number. After the researcher analyse the meme, the outcome will make people more understand of what meme is.

Keywords: *Barthes, Connotative Denotative, Meme, Semiotic*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Given the chance to finish this thesis, the researcher wanted to thank God firstly for the fortitude and the Courage he gave. Behind the research of this thesis, there are people who support the researcher so the researcher finishes the thesis within the time limited. The researcher wants to give gratitude to:

1. Dr. Sofian Sugioko, MM, CPMA., Rector of Buddhi Dharma University.
2. Dr. Lilie Suratminto, M.A., Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Buddhi Dharma University.
3. Ms. Riris Mutiara Paulina Simamora, S.Pd., Mhum., Head of English Department of Buddhi Dharma University.
4. Ms. Sonya Ayu Kumala, S.Hum., M.Hum as my academic as well as thesis supervisor for the guidance, patience, confidence, and all the help provided which are very helpfull to me.
5. Researcher's parent who have been very supportive with courage and the financial support.
6. To Kennedy and Henry that keep supporting me and keep me out of stress.
7. To my all friends that have been supporting me to finish this research.

Best regard, The writer.



Bryan Aggie Sunjaya



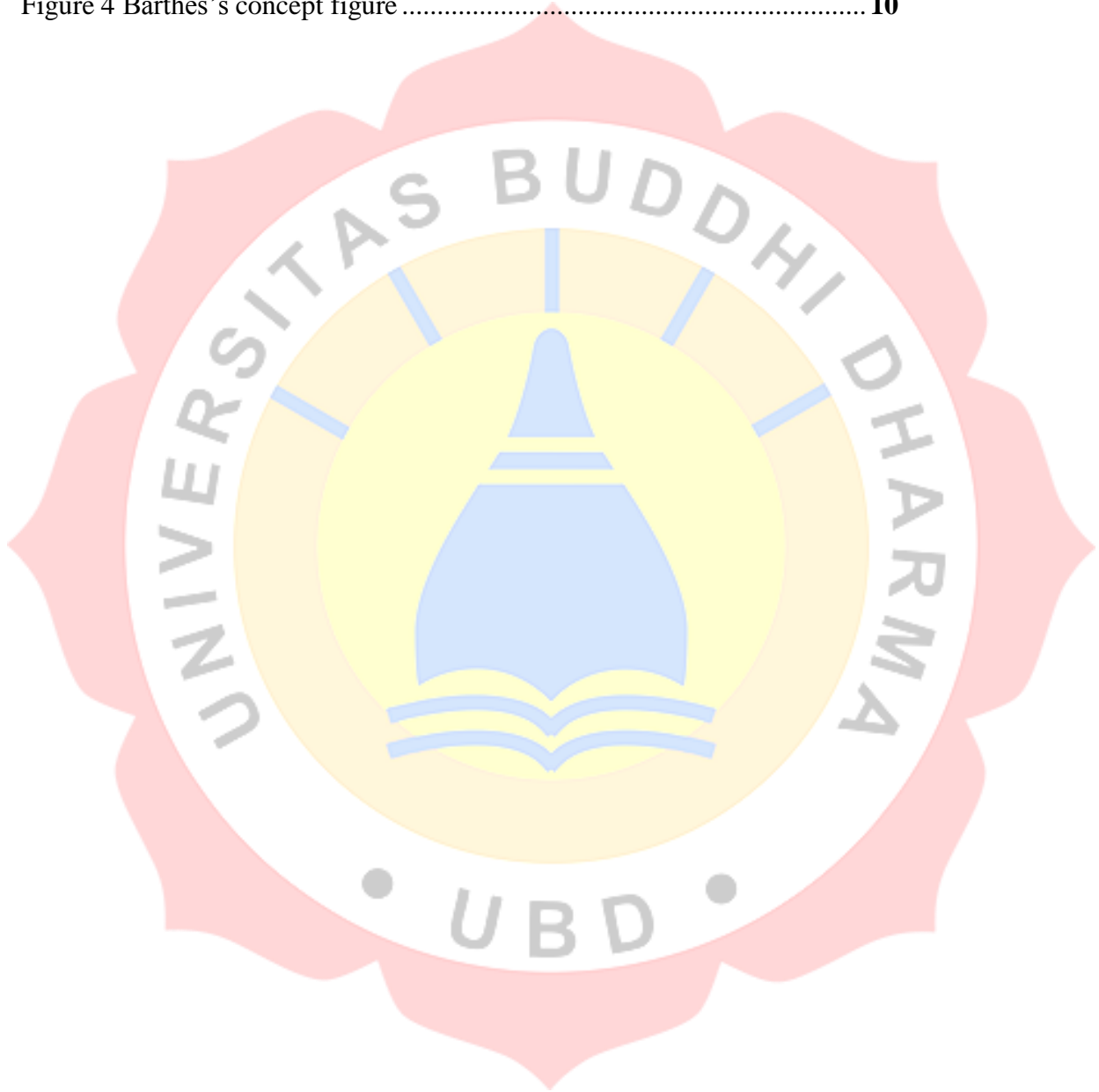
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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Human have a tool to communicate with other humans. It is called a Language. Language is used in many ways either to talk to each other, to tell information, to share expression, even to show emotion. So it does clear that language is an important subject to learn because humans are social beings.

Human also have emotion to express to others. We express it with words and body language as a visual output and talking with tone as an audio output. But sometimes not all words and talk is able to capture the emotion of the speaker means. In this digital era where the technology is advancing, now we can use Social media as a place where we express our self further than just talking face to face to the other person. We also can use other media to express our emotion. At the old times we use song to express ourself and to tell story like legend or myth, now we can use pictures and movies.

In this era now there are many social media used by human like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and many other social media available. You can use it to transfer information and also received it. You can use it to give other people stories, songs, pictures and many more including Memes.

Right now the popular things are mostly used by youngers are called “Meme”. According to *collinsdictionary* Meme is something such as a video, pictures, or phrase that a lot of people send to each other on the internet. Mostly meme include funny things that viral and popular on the internet but it can be anything virals. For example; if you see a pictures with a caption and the picture deliver some message, it is a meme. You can make jokes, sarcasm,

statement with pictures, funny quotes and many other things. The researcher choose meme as the data material because of the it is an interesting topic for the researcher and it's something that happen frequently in this era because of the technology advancement in social media.

There is a related researches to this study via online media and printed media. Semiotic Analysis of Four Popular “Memes” in Memecenter.com from *I Kadek Agus Mahendra Putra, Sang Ayu Isnu Maharani, I Made Netra* in *English Department ,Faculty of Arts – Udayana University* (2017). They said in their conclusion “Different memes have different functions, and they could also describe the current situation when they are used in the post”. And so it is said that meme also can be used as in a semiotic point of view which also mean that meme can be used for as such a variety and different way for the youngers in this era.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

It is really possible that people use media social to communicate with each other and they will mostly found memes in the social media because it is a fun way to communicate and also it is a good place for them to learn something new. The writer wanted to analyze and explore the Meme’s semiotically to increase the awareness that memes are not only for Humour but also can be used in a lot of ways and purpose such as giving informative and useful information in social media used by youngers such as *Instagram* and many other social media platform.

## **1.3 Research Question**

The writer would like to find out the answer of the following question :

1. How do the meaning of Meme based on Roland barthes theory?

## **1.4 Goal and Function**

In this study, the researcher has his goal and function as follows:

### **1.4.1 Goal**

The goal of this study is to explore the Meme's in Semiotic context and find the memes meaning through Barthes theory in denotative and Connotative.

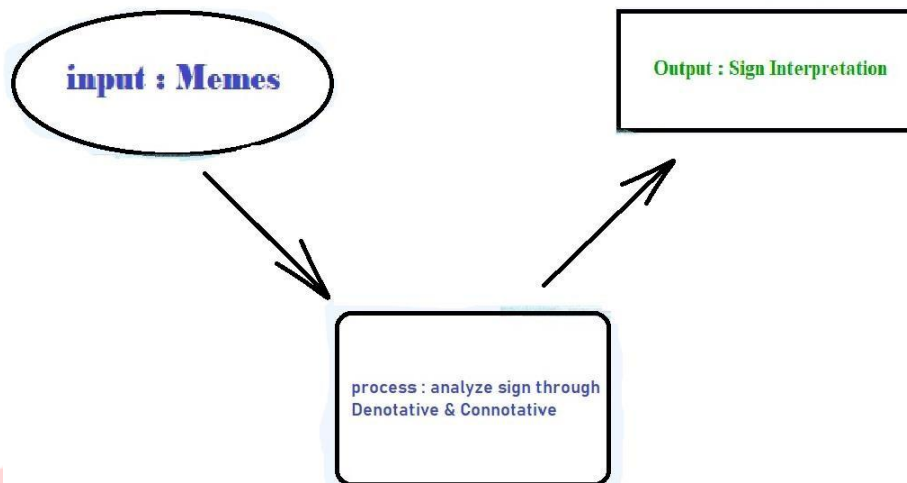
### **1.4.2 Functions**

1. Creating references for the future research on analysing the Memes.
2. For the people to know that memes not only for the use of humour but also can have a lot of meaning.
3. For the Linguistic learner so they can analyse the meaning of memes and the purposes in a depth meaning.
4. For the Teachers so they can use memes as a material in teaching English and making examples from it.

## **1.5 Scope and Limitation**

Scope of this study is semiotic study. The limitation of this study is: the researcher will be using Semiotics theory of Roland Barthes in Denotative and Connotative meaning only. The researcher will identify the memes, utilize its meaning and analyze it.

## 1.6 Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1 : Conceptual Framework**

The first step, researcher will input the selected memes to be analyzed in Barthes theory. The second step, research will process the data that have been inputed and analyze it through denotative and Connotative meaning. The third step, the researcher will acquire the meaning of the data that have been processed.



## Chapter II

### Theoretical Background

#### 2.1 Review of Previous Study

The writer of this study read some others study and make it his references. It is taken not only in the library but also available on the internet / websites. The first one is “Memes as speech acts, Social Semiotics (2017)” by Lezandra Grundlingh from Department of Afrikaans and Theory of Literature, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa. She used Bach & Harnish speech act theory (1979) to analyze that memes can be used as a pragmatic approach even though it is always not an effective approach but it is possible that memes can be created for the purpose of fulfilling specific illocutionary acts.

The second “A Discourse Analysis of Memes” by Neneng Zubaidah and Irena Ardelia from State University of Jakarta (2018). Using Fowler theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (1970) they concluded that the memes for the internet not only be used for humour purposes but also for another purposes. There is a meme who persuade people to being nice, to keep peace in this world. There is also a meme that being sarcastic. It depends on the maker of the meme that memes can be used to imply positive though or negative though.

The third one is “Meaning of lifestyle meme in English pragmatic - semiotic Analysis” by Christine Permata Sari from Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta. She uses Charles Pierce Theory of *sign, symbol, and indeks* (1967). She found that both caption and picture limit the Scope of the interpretation of the meme.

The previous study above contain similarity research about meme and the meaning of the meme implies and shows us in our daily life. This research is also analyze the sign and the meaning of the meme semiotically. Despite the similarity in the previous study, there are also the difference in this research. In this research, the researcher will use Roland Barthes Theory of semiotic to find the literal meaning of the meme and the real meaning behind it.

## 2.2 Semiotics

According to Saussure (1857-1913) in öth Winfried (1990) : “it is Conceivable that a science that study the life of signs in the society. It would be part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology. I shall call it Semiology (from greek semeion sign “sign”). Semiology would show that constitutes sign, what laws govern them.”

The term of semiotics was also explained by Hippocrates (460 – 370B.C.), the founder of Western medical science, as the science of symptoms. The symptom, Hippocrates claimed, was a semeion the Greek word for a physical “mark” or “sign.” Unravelling what a symptom stands for, how it manifests itself physically, and why it’s indicative of certain ailments or conditions is the essence of medical diagnosis (Danesi, 1946).

Based on what explained before, semiotic is a branch of linguistic that studies about mark and sign Symptom. The symptom appears in daily basis life that surround us in society. To interpret the meaning it have 3 steps. First, knowing the refference of the symptom. Second is to show the intepretation of the symptom. The third analysing the symptom.

### **2.2.1 Sign**

Sign is an informative unit that can be used to communicate to others. You can find sign anywhere in your daily basis life. A lot of people do their life around the sign, example when you see the traffic lights turn red, you stopped driving or riding. “A sign is that which we now perceive and, besides, consider to be connected with something else, by virtue of our or someone else’s experience” Winfried (1990). Semiosis is thus based on association of perceptions, and the sign is an instrumen of human cognition. In the process of reasoning, signs fulfill of useful and necessary tools since they serve as an “abbreviation” of the more complex semantic concept which they represent : “All human reasoning is performed by means of certain signs or characters. Indeed, it is neither possible nor desirable that the things themselves or even the ideas of them always distinctly observed by the mind. So, for reason of economy, signs are used for them”, Dascal (1987).

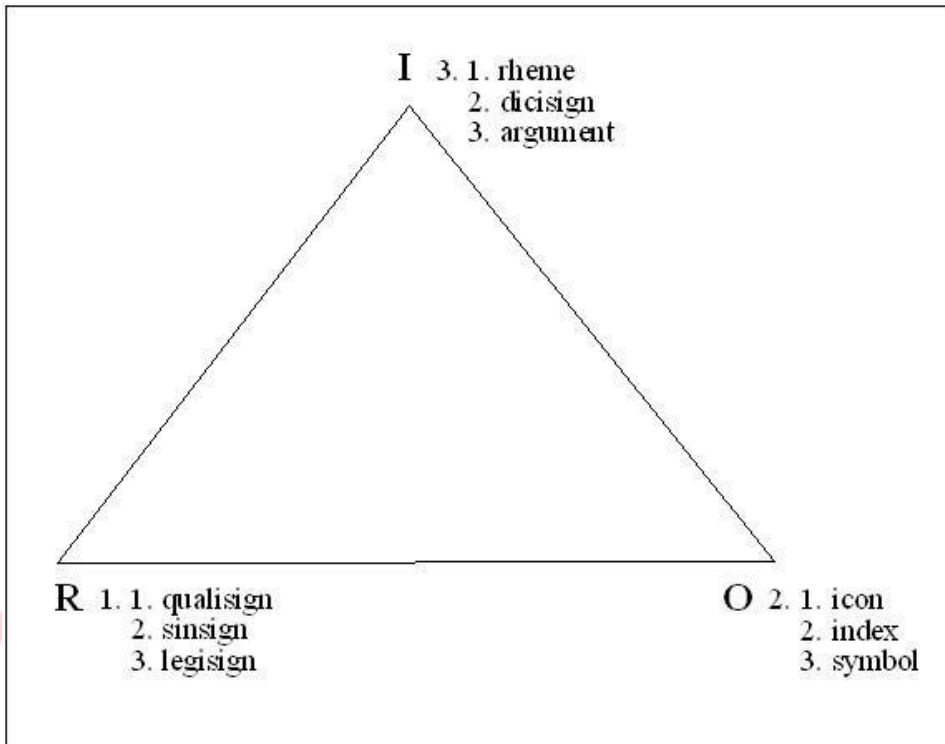
### **2.2.2 Charles Sanders Peirce**

A big major figure in a philosophical branch in the history of modern semiotic is Charles Sanders Peirce. In peirce understanding of Semiotic, peirce considering "word" to be the only one particular kind of sign, and characterized sign as any mediational means to understanding. Peirce further characterized the three semiotic elements as follows:

1. Sign (or representamen): that which represents the denoted object (cf. Saussure's "signifier").
2. Object (or semiotic object): that which the sign represents (or as some put it, encodes). It can be anything thinkable, a law, a fact, or even a possibility (a semiotic object could even be fictional, such as Hamlet); those are partial objects; the total object is the

universe of discourse, the totality of objects in that world to which one attributes the partial object.

3. Interpretant (or interpretant sign): a sign's meaning or ramification as formed into a further sign by interpreting (or, as some put it, decoding) the sign.



**Figure 2: C. S. Peirce Concept figure**

(source: <http://www.signosemio.com/peirce/semiotics.asp>)

### 2.2.3 Ferdinand de Saussure

Ferdinand Saussure said (1857 – 1913), signifier and the signified is composed by a sign. Both entities cannot be separated but rather as a mapping from significant differences in sound to potential different denotation. Saussure says the relation between real thing and sign is arbitrary and there is no actual relation between the word and the object it refers to (Mardy 2003)

# Sign



**Figure 3: Saussure concept of sign**

(source: <https://literariness.org/2016/03/20/linguistic-sign/>)

It means that Signifier is the word, image, sound, or the thing we point out, while signified is the real meaning or the thing we picture in our head.

## **2.2.4 Roland Barthes**

One of the leading theorists of semiotics, the study of signs is Roland Barthes (1915 – 1980). He is often considered a structuralist, following the approach of Saussure, but sometimes as a poststructuralist. For Barthes, most signs are mediated by language. Barthes usually reads non-linguistic signs (such as fashion) through linguistic signs . He views non-linguistic signs as carrying linguistic meanings. Indeed, in Barthes’s later work, even actions become mediated by language. Every act is at once an act (signified) and a sign of itself (signifier).

1. signifier	2. signified	
3. sign I. SIGNIFIER		II. SIGNIFIED (langue)
III. SIGN		(myth)

**Figure 4: Barthes Concept figure**

(source: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-semiological-scheme-of-myth-in-Barthes-Mythologies\\_fig1\\_311361585](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-semiological-scheme-of-myth-in-Barthes-Mythologies_fig1_311361585))

According to Barthes (1967:11), such a primary sign can become an element of a more comprehensive sign system. If the extension of primary sign becomes the expression of secondary sign system. In this case, the primary sign is one of the denotative while the secondary sign is one of connotative semiotics. Barthes noted the concept of signification into denotative and connotative.

It means that denotative are the literal meaning that people known by the word, how the object looks like, and cannot be questioned. Connotative meaning is influenced by cultural interpretation and only be understood by the people in that culture itself. Which means with the different culture, people will have different interpretation. In the details for the Connotation, Barthes made a concept of Expression, Relation, and Content (E-R-C). The Expression means the signifier (sign). Relation is how the signifier and signified is related to each other. The Content is the real meaning of the object or subject.

In this Research, researcher choose to use Barthes theory of denotation and Connotation to find the meaning of memes and use the other theory as an additional support to barthes theory.

### 2.3 Theory of Meme

The word *Meme* is founded by Richard Dawkins in 1976 in his book *The Selfish Gene*. He said in his book: *'Mimeme' comes from a suitable Greek root, but I want a monosyllable that sounds a bit like 'gene'. I hope my classicist friends will forgive me if I abbreviate mimeme to meme. If it is any consolation, it could alternatively be thought of as being related to 'memory', or to the French word meme. It should be pronounced to rhyme with 'cream'*. (1976:193). So the original definition word of Meme is taken by the word *Mimeme* as in Dawkin said that *"something is imitated"*. The Theory of meme that Dawkin trying to say is that people suggest that ideas, behaviours, or skills are transferred between people through the process of imitation. So meme according to Dawkins is basically imitating some cultural diferences and replicate it.



## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Approach

There are 2 type of reasearch methodology which is quantitative research and qualitative research. According to Aliaga and Gunderson (2002) “Quantitative research is an inquiry into a social problem, explain phenomena by gathering numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods e.g. in particular statistics”. Quantitative data can be shows as “anything that can be expressed as a number, or quantified.”. Example of quantitative data are a circle diagram of a specific topic or a measurement scale of height or weight. Since the researcher will not collect and using any numerical data variables here, the researcher will not use this method. In qualitative data such cannot be expressed in number but the data that represent nominal scales as gender, socio economic status, religious preference are usually considered as qualitative data.

Qualitative research is “Multi method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.” (Denzim and Lincoln, 1994). In this study the researcher will attemp to interpret the meme’s meaning to the reader using semiotic point of view, therefore the researcher will use this research method.

#### 3.2 Data types

There are two types of data collecting method. The first one is primary data which is a original and fresh data collecting through experiments, survey, observation, interviews

and so on. At the other hand, secondary data collecting are those which have already been collected by someone else and which have already been passed through the statistical process. The secondary data can be found in any sources depends on the topic that is being conducted. Websites, journals, books, public records, and so on. (Khotari, 1990)

The data in this research uses secondary data as the data types. The researcher take the data from an *instagram* account. There are some additional data taken from the internet. The data taken are not new and it is obtained from another resource.

### **3.3 Data Source**

The data Source is taken from an *instagram* account of [@kegoblogan.unfaedah](#) In the last 2 month (20 may 2020 to 20 july 2020) with the an average comment 2.000 at the very least or more. The data taken limited to 19 memes with pictures only on *instagram* meme's account.

### **3.4 Data Collection Method**

Researcher used the secondary data as the reference object of this paper. The data sample taken from *Instagram* account [@kegoblogan.unfaedah](#). the steps that the researcher take as a procedure for collecting data are:

1. The researcher will view the memes at the *Instagram* account of [@kegoblogan.unfaedah](#)
2. The researcher will pay attention to the sign which appear in the memes.
3. The researcher collects the sign and analyze them using Roland Barthes theory of denotative and connotative

### 3.5 Data Analysis

The data that have been collected will be analyzed with semiotic theory of Roland Barthes (1964). Here are the steps the researcher does to analyze the data:

1. The researcher describes the meme by understanding the phrases in the pictures.
2. The researcher analyzes the denotative meaning in the memes using dictionary.
3. The researcher analyzes the connotative meaning in the memes using Expression, Relation, Content (E-R-C) in Barthes Theory.
4. The researcher gives Conclusion and Suggestion.

