A Semiotics Analysis of the Interior Design of an Indonesian Elementary and Junior High School Classroom

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Abstract

This study interrogates the relationship between the interior design of a classroom and the teaching-learning process of primary and junior high school students. The investigations of the learning processes are rarely associated with classroom designs as their key variable in achieving the learning objectives. In fact, from a semiotic perspective, interior design has a hidden dimension related to human character formation.

It employs Saussure's structural semiotics and Peirce's pragmatic semiotics to uncover the hidden dimension based on survey data from 260 primary and secondary schools across several regions and cities in Indonesia. It also carries out interviews with 100 students and 50 teachers, including school principals.

The findings reveal that the classroom interior design refers to the Western modernism paradigm, which is systemic, formalistic, and static method on the one hand, and meets the state supervision system through regulations and semiotic devices in the classroom on the other. As a result, schools have become ideological institutions that tend to stifle students' and teachers' creativity. This study contributes to the future development of the education system by investigating student classroom designs.

Keywords: Classroom semiotics, Systemic classroom, Ideological school, Indonesia, Student-teacher relation

Introduction

Although it is used as a place of learning, classroom interior design is rarely taken into consideration in studies on the learning processes. It is natural for learning process studies to be generally concerned with issues concerning the education system, curriculum, teaching methods, policies, and teacher competencies instead of taking classroom design as an issue. For example, curriculum studies by Harmanto et al. (2018) and Akuba et al. (2021), learning methods studies by Harjali (2017) and Nur'Afifah and Man (2018), certification policy studies by Malkab et al. (2015) and teacher competence studies by Tirayoh and Rawis (2019), Kurniawati et al., (2012) and Setiawan et al. (2018) examines such aspects. At the same time,

in daily learning activities, teachers, school principals, students and other related parties never discuss classroom design. This statement is supported by surveys conducted on a number of teachers and students in Indonesia that will be presented in the following section.

Unfortunately, studies of classrooms and their relations to learning activities are also uncommon. If any, studies that discuss classroom interior design with learning tend to place the classroom solely as a physical structure unrelated to the formation of students' character. In such studies, a classroom is not taken as a collection of signs concealing hidden dimensions related to specific messages, meanings, and values associated with the teaching and learning process. For example, Sativa (2010), Taveriyanto and Prihanto (2013), and Manara and Halimah (2015) study classroom interior design in terms of technical design aspects such as size accuracy, ergonomics, lighting, and student comfort.

Empirical evidence indicates that the design of the school's study space or classroom is consistent and unchanged from generation to generation. The interior design and layout of the objects are similar across all schools at all levels (elementary to high school). As previously stated, no studies have been conducted to investigate the issue. It is unclear when the design of the classroom interior is decided and the meaning or value it contains.

In this context, this study examines significant aspects that are concealed behind the physical entity of a classroom interior design by using Indonesian school classrooms (elementary and high school) as a case study. The study aims to interrogate the relationship between the interior design of a classroom and the teaching-learning process of primary and junior high school students. The objectives of this research are

- 1. To identify the intrinsic value and meaning of Indonesian classroom structure, to explore the influence of extrinsic value and meaning outside the classroom that shape classroom structure and learning processes, and
- 2. To understand how the value and meaning of Indonesian classroom structure shape to the development of student characters. Furthermore, these findings can be used to assess the educational process's progress in Indonesia.

Literature Review

In recent years, there has been a growing number of publications focusing on the relationship between classroom interior design and the student learning process. However, most studies in this field have only focused on how the object of the classroom can be utilised to improve student learning activity. For example, one study by Nindita (2018) has examined that the light condition in the classroom is important to develop student behavior. In her analysis, she has found that the size of a window influences the student's passion for learning.

Nindita explains:

"When students are separated by building walls from the outside world, without having the opportunity to see the movement of the sun, the weather, and so on, it turns out that they feel anxious & uncomfortable in the classroom. The result is decreased concentration and passion for learning." Nindita, 2018:48.

Along the same lines, Handoyo & Hadiansyah (2017) argue that to increase students' engagement in the learning process, the classroom lighting should be arranged in harmony with the objects in the room. In addition, indoor lighting must also integrate artificial light with natural lighting. The combination of the two will create a comfortable atmosphere for student learning.

Besides the lighting aspect, some researchers reveal that the flexibility of classroom design also contributes to the development of student engagement. Fernanda et al. (2012) demonstrates that student interaction is stimulated by room design. According to Fernanda et al., learning rooms must be arranged flexibly to create dynamic interactions. For example, the position of the chair can be moved according to the interaction needs in the classroom. Moreover, Manara & Halimah (2015) argue that the flexibility of classrooms should be

arranged according to temporary needs. In their analysis of the relationship between classroom design and student interest in physics lessons, Manara & Halimah has found that classrooms for this subject must be arranged specifically compared to other subjects, such as by maximizing visualization with various supporting media. Therefore, Sidharta et al. (2018) argue that the choice of classroom interior design will influence student learning achievement. The interior design that can support student activity shapes the students' abilities to capture the lesson material in class (Sidharta et al., 2018).

Furthermore, Kwee & Gandha (2019) emphasize that a classroom with static and rigid characteristics is incompatible with students' needs. Kwee & Gandha conclude that:

"The ideal classroom condition in the 21st century is a classroom that is flexible and has a personal design. For example, each room has its own function, so students can choose which room can be used to conduct activities. The ideal classroom should create a pleasant atmosphere. For example, children's classrooms can utilise dynamic colors in the play and learning area, whereas adult classrooms can combine wood and white materials to create a comfortable ambience"

Kwee & Gandha, 2019: 1345

On early childhood education, several studies have investigated the influence of classroom interior design on the learning process. For example, Desmariani et al. (2022) identify that the right classroom arrangement can enhance student enthusiasm and motivation for learning. In addition, they also suggest that the arrangement of the classroom is an important variable in developing student emotional intelligence. At the kindergarten level, Astrini (2005) & Prasetya (2012) examine that providing many activity areas is more important to the development of students instead of focusing only on the interior element. Meanwhile, for a student with special needs, Hakim & Lissimia (2021) demonstrate that the domination of color in the classroom makes the student more enthusiastic in the learning process. According to him, room design with dominant colors also helps the brain development of students with special needs.

Recent studies have shown a correlation between classroom interior design and student learning success. Classroom interior design has a significant function and role in fostering learning comfort, creativity, emotional intelligence, and developing students' cognitive aspects. However, what is not yet clear is how Indonesian classroom interior design shapes the formation of students' character. This study, therefore, set out to assess the relationship between classroom interior design and students' characteristics in the learning process.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the assumption that everything created by people has value and meaning. Objects are choices with various considerations based on the established objectives. As Hidayat (2012) suggests, human creation, in any form, is not designed in 'empty space'. Using this perspective, the study of the classroom design should provide a fundamental contribution as it identifies the values and meanings of the classroom design and its impact on the formation of students' character.

In reality, space is an entity whose existence cannot be separated from people as they constantly interact in space. People interact with space either directly or indirectly. When they interact with one another, there is a reciprocal relationship between people and spaces. In a house, space is also known as a room, kitchen, living room, dining room, study room, and family room. In this case, space is transformed into a representation of human narrative events in abstract or concrete ideas (Barker and Jane, 2000; Danesi, 2004).

Moreover, Barker and Jane (2000) explain:

"Space refers to an abstract idea, an empty or dead space filled with various concrete, specific, and human places. Thus, home is a place where we meet our families with regularity, whereas email or letters establish contact between absent persons across space"

Barker and Jane, 2000: 516.

In line with this vein, Danesi (2004) argues that interaction that occurs in the room or building has narrative power. He views a building as a structural system that can be read as a story. Danesi explains:

"Movement through the space within a building also has narrative texts with specific meaning. Buildings are thus "read" as narrative texts with specific meanings. This is why one listens with great interest to a tour guide's story as he or she takes us through a historically significant building"

Danesi, 2004: 232

As the scope of the narrative events expands, so does the naming of space. For example, people know the terms hamlets, villages, markets, cities, and countries. Within this context, spatial issues are becoming increasingly complex with implications for the theme of power (Kusno, 2011), the struggle for cultural identity (Kusumawijaya, 2006), human marginalization (Mangunwijaya, 2009), the bourgeoisie, market formation, and religious values (Johnson, 2020).

Building on the work of Castell (1972), Lagopoulos (2009) discusses three fundamental aspects of space related to economic, social, and ideological concerns. Lagopoulos explains that:

"The social structure is composed of three fundamental 'instances': the economic system, which is determinant in the last instance, the political system, and the ideological system. These social systems are manifested in space, and thus, the spatial organisation is defined by them and their interrelations. The spatial manifestation of the ideological system consists of a system of signs, in which the signifiers are the spatial forms and the signifieds are the ideology corresponding to these forms."

Logopoulus, 2009:170

It is obvious that space is understood as more than a physical entity. The study of spatial structure (proxemics) identifies that space, which includes distance, motion, direction or orientation and object layout, is imbued with cultural, social, ideological, philosophical, and even spiritual values as there is a hidden dimension in space (Lipman and Hall, 1970). On a technical level, designers are also aware of this concept. For example, Panero & Zelnik (1996) emphasize the importance of anthropomorphic considerations in interior space design.

The human body is meticulously measured from head to toe to achieve a precise ergonomic position and comfortable interaction in the space to be designed. In this matter, Vitruvius' human conception has gained a significant foothold and the calculation, which is mathematical in some ways, leads to cultural, and even philosophical values believing that people and space cannot be separated.

It is possible, therefore, that the student learning process is influenced by classroom interior design. The interaction in the classroom is shaped not only by the relationship between teacher and student but also by how the classroom structure provides the space for students and teachers to interact. This study addresses these issues by investigating how classroom interior design affects the student learning process.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach to investigate the social aspects of classrooms. Within this framework, the qualitative approach uses the researcher as a key tool. From collecting data in the field to reflecting on the discovery of meaning as an estuary of interpretation, a researcher has a significant role. Therefore, the nature of the study is inductive, interpretative, and naturalistic (Welch and Patton, 1992; A. Michael Huberman, Matthew. Miles and Huberman, 1994; Crozier, Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 2012; Creswell, 2013). In this research, we used data from surveys, ethnographic interviews, visual clarification, focus group discussions, internet data, and literature confirmation (Silverman, 2017). Based on this perspective, this research employs several activities for collecting and analysing data, namely:

In the first phase, we administered questionnaires to 260 schools in several regions in West Java, Indonesia, namely Sumedang, Cianjur, Sukabumi, Bogor, and Bekasi. This survey was conducted to learn their perspectives on the relationship between classroom design and teaching and learning activities. All schools filled out the questionnaires.

In the second phase, we conducted observations, interviews and focus group discussions with 100 students and 50 teachers. The elementary school in Bogor and the junior high school in Bekasi were chosen as representative of the research area. We visited the schools one after the other rather than all at once due to their distance from one another. It is also crucial to note that teachers in Indonesia are state workers. Because of the politics and bureaucracy of the schools, this position makes many teachers reluctant to disclose their identities or the identities of their schools. As a result, their names were made anonymous for this study. During the observation activity, we also collected visual data by taking photographs of classroom interior design and learning activities.

From this phase, we obtained two types of data: verbal and visual data. These data will be used in the second stage of the research, which is data interpretation. Visual data that consists of student classroom photos will be the focus of analysis. Meanwhile, verbal data that contains the result of observation, interview, questionnaire, and focus group discussion are used as supporting data to analyse the value and meaning of classroom interior design.

In the third phase, we conducted analysis and interpretation of data by using the semiotics method. Semiotics is used to analyse data. Semiotics is chosen as an analytical tool because it is understood that the classroom design is a collection of signs that hold messages, meanings, and values. Semiotics is a field of study that provides practical methodological tools for interpreting signs. Semiotics has evolved from its initial function as a method for diagnosing disease symptoms (Danesi, 2004) to be used in a wide range of fields, including language, literature, culture, art, design, film, and architecture, as well as areas other than those related to people such as animal semiotics (zoo semiotics) and natural phenomena (Hilman, 1992). Semiotics used in this study refers to Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). Saussure and Peirce were semiotics pioneers in the twentieth-century (Zoest, 1992).

To identify the structure of space, Saussure's semiotics was employed (Saussure, 1965; Lagopoulos and Boklund-Lagopoulou, 2020). According to Saussure, a sign is a relationship between various elements in a structure, which, in this case, is the linguistic structure. Based on this understanding, the learning spaces of the elementary and junior high school students are analysed as a relational network of their constituent elements as research objects. The space element in question in the context of the study of spatial structure includes the layout of objects in space, social interactions with people and space, distance, and the various movements that are possible in that space (Lipman and Hall, 1970). Several relationships can exist between the various elements, including similarities, differences, hierarchical, coordinative, and binary opposition relationships.

In Saussure's semiotic study, the relationship of various elements of space necessitates the discovery of specific meaning patterns (Lagopoulos and Boklund-Lagopoulou, 2020). However, these meaning patterns are formed only within the boundaries of the structure. The object of the study is understood as an autonomous entity in Saussure's semiotics without

reference to a larger context. For a more comprehensive analysis in a broader context, Saussure's semiotics was combined with those of Peirce (1998, 2001) semiotics (Short, 2007). Peirce was a semiotic figure who lived at the same time as Saussure. However, unlike Saussure, Peirce's theoretical construction of semiotics is based on mathematical logic because Peirce was a philosopher in this field.

According to Peirce, the sign is a relationship of three aspects: representamen, interpretant, and object. A representamen (R) is something that represents something else (manifest or concrete). The meaning that comes to mind in someone's mind is referred to as the interpretant (I). The concept of something (how something is represented as a sign) is referred to as an object (O) (Peirce, 1998; Short, 2007). In a triangular relationship, he describes these three aspects as follows.

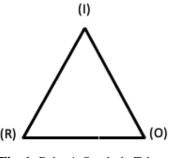


Fig. 1: Peirce's Semiotic Triangle Source: Short, 2007

There are relationships between the three categories of signs as derivatives from each side of the triangle, which comprise Peirce's taxonomy of semiotic trichotomy (Peirce, 1998; Short, 2007). This study only elaborates on the object (O) side of the triangle, which is icons, indexes, and symbols. An icon is a symbol that resembles the reality it represents. For example, a photocopy machine is an iconic sign because it resembles the original. An index is a sign that points to or refers to another concept. Another example is company logos that refer to or depicts the identity of the company in question. Symbols are signs that represent concepts that are agreed upon by the society. For example, nodding your head is a symbolic sign to indicate agreement (Peirce, 1998; Short, 2007).

Various signs that are related to the structure of the classroom that had been analyzed using Saussure's structural semiotics were identified and categorized using Peirce's theoretical construction of semiotics to enable unrestricted interpretive space. However, it should be noted that various referential sources as the basis for argumentation were optimized to keep objective interpretations. In addition, to support our analysis, we also used verbal data from the surveys and interviews that have been collected previously. Figure 2 below presents the overview of data collection and analysis.

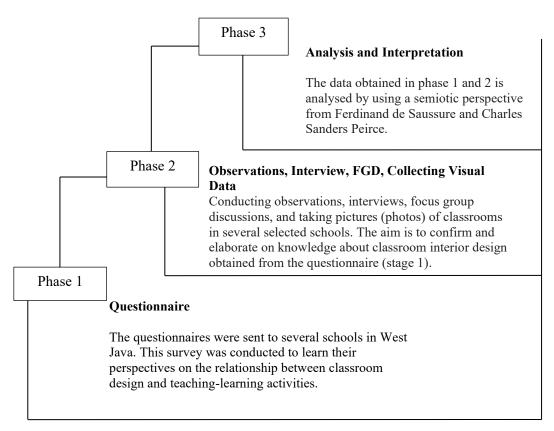


Fig. 2: Collecting and Analysing Data Activity. Source: Author

Findings

Systemic Classroom Design

The Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 24 of 2007 on Standards for Facilities and Infrastructure for Elementary Schools/Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (SD/MI), Junior High Schools/Madrasah Tsanawiyah (SMP/MTs), and High School/Madrasah Aliyah (SMA/MA) contains physical data on basic and secondary school facilities and infrastructure. The physical conditions in classrooms are described as follows:

- a. The classroom serves as a space for theory learning activities, a practice that does not require special equipment or practice with available special tools.
- b. The number of classrooms must be equal to the number of study groups.
- c. The classroom has a maximum capacity of 28 students.
- d. The minimum classroom area-to-student ratio is 2 m^2 per student. The minimum classroom area for study groups of less than 15 students is 30 m². The classroom's minimum width is 5 m.
- e. Classrooms should have adequate lighting for reading and allow views of the outside.
- f. Classrooms should have adequate doors that can be properly locked when classrooms are not in use so that students and teachers can leave the room immediately in case of danger.

In general, the physical requirements are the same for all the school levels, except for point (c): the maximum capacity of each student at a junior and senior high school is 32 students. The following table details the equipment required in a classroom:

Table 1: Classroom Facility Type, Ratio, and Description

			ducation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 24 of 2007								
No	Туре	Ratio	Description								
1	Furniture										
1.1	Student chair	1 per student	Sturdy, firm, and can be easily moved by students. The size should be suitable for students' age group and supports the correct sitting posture. The design of the seat and backrest should make students comfortable in learning.								
1.2	Student desk	1 per student	Sturdy, firm, and can be easily moved by students. The size should be suitable for students' age group and supports the correct sitting posture. The design should allow students' feet to move freely under the desk.								
1.3	Teacher chair	1 per teacher	Sturdy, firm, and can be easily moved. A good size for sitting comfortably.								
1.4	Teacher desk	1 per teacher	Sturdy, firm, and can be easily moved. Large enough to work comfortably.								
1.5	Cupboard	1 per classroom	Large enough to store all of the class's equipment. Safe and can be locked.								
1.6	Longboard	1 per classroom	Minimum size of 60 cm x 120 cm.								
2	Educational Media										
2.1	Whiteboard	1 per classroom	Minimum size of 90 cm x 200 cm. It should be placed in a location where all students can see it clearly.								
3	Other Equipment										
3.1	Trash can	1 per classroom									
3.2	Hand washing stations	1 per classroom									
3.3	Wall clock	1 per classroom									
3.4	Power socket	1 per classroom									

Source: Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia No. 24 of 2007

The requirement for class equipment is similar between the junior and the high schools. Only difference between them and elementary school is the chairs and desks for first to third grades and fourth to sixth grades, as well as the addition of teaching aids as part of the educational equipment.

There is no legal basis or set of rules governing the arrangement of classroom equipment, such as how students' desks and chairs should be arranged, how many meters the distance between students' seats from one another should be, where the teacher's cabinets and desks should be placed, and so on. It is similar to the installation of the garuda as the national symbol, as well as photos of the president and the vice president. The installation of state symbols in the classroom is merely an appeal, as stated in the Circular Letter of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 11 of 2019 on the Installation of State Symbols in Education Units. This circular letter was created in response to the Letter of the State Secretary Number B-1172/M.Sesneg/Set. TU. 00.03/10/2019 on the Official Photographs of the President and Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia for the Period 2019-2024, dated October 15, 2019.

However, this study found that primary and secondary school students' classroom designs have been systematically and uniformly organized throughout all the schools. The classroom's interior designs or layouts can be described as follows:

- 1) Student desks are organized in columns to the side and rows to the back
- 2) A whiteboard is mounted on the front wall
- 3) Photos of the president, Garuda, and the vice president hung above the whiteboard
- 4) The teacher's desk is usually placed in the front, in one of the corners (right or left side of the whiteboard)

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Fig. 3: Classrooms and Learning Environments for Elementary, Junior High, and High School Students. Source:Authors

Figure 3 shows visual data that were selected regarding spatial design in several schools (as agreed with the informants, the school's identity was not included). As shown in the Figure 3, the interior design of students' classrooms is the same at all levels and has been applied for a long time. According to the historical data, such design has existed since the founding of the modern school in the Dutch East Indies Colonial Period, as shown in Figure 4.





Fig. 4: Classroom Interior Design and Learning Atmosphere during the Dutch East Indies Colonial Period Source: Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia,1996

Regarding the initial design of the classroom interior, it is also essential to mention the comparative data in the film documentary *Sang Pencerah* by Bramantyo (2010) about the figure

of Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan (founder of Muhammadiyah). In one scene (figure 5), Ahmad Dahlan established a *madrasa* (Islamic school) in his house. Dahlan's classroom was designed differently than the typical classroom design at that time. Unlike the usual classroom in that period, Dahlan arranged the classroom by placing desks in a row from front to back. Dahlan took this design from a school for Dutch and Javanese *priyayi* (nobles) children where he was a teacher. Some people, including religious leaders in Java, believe Dahlan betrayed the nation and religion by designing the classroom in such an arrangement. Dahlan had been accused of having been heavily influenced by the Dutch.



Fig. 5: The Scene Depicts Kyai Haji Ahmad and His Students Arranging the Classroom at His *Madrasa.* Source: *Sang Pencerah* (Bramantyo, 2010)

The basic structure of classroom interior design in Indonesian primary and secondary schools is consistent with Dahlan's. The study survey found that the parties involved in the world of education, as well as the general public, have accepted the design of this classroom without critically questioning it.

Following is a resume of the written interviews with 50 teachers (table 2) and 100 students (table 3). They answered our questions about their understanding of classroom interior design in their schools.



 Table 2: Survey Results on Teachers' and Principals' Knowledge, Understanding, and Attitudes towards Classroom Interior Design

No	Description	Percentage		
1	Accepting the classroom interior design as a requirement	100%		
2	Questioning the classroom interior design	20%		
3	Understanding the rules and regulations governing classroom interior design	0%		
4	Understanding the significance of classroom interior design	0%		
5	Assuming that the classroom interior design has a meaning	28%		

 Table 3: Survey Results on Students' Knowledge, Understanding, and Attitudes towards Classroom

 Interior Design

No	Description	Percentage
1	Accepting the classroom interior design as a requirement.	100%
2	Questioning the classroom interior design	0%
3	Understanding the rules and regulations governing classroom interior design	0%
4	Understanding the significance of classroom interior design	0%
5	Assuming that the classroom interior design has a meaning.	16%

Discussion

Classroom Design as Representation of Ideology and Power

Based on the data described, it is noted that the classroom interior design of the Indonesia elementary and junior high school has been standardized. According to structural semiotics (Saussure, 1965; Lagopoulos and Boklund-Lagopoulou, 2020), the design of such interior spaces has evolved into a system (*langua*). The following sketch describes the standardization of the space's design in greater detail (figure 6):



Fig. 6: Standard Sketch of Elementary and Junior High School Classrooms Source: Authors

Objects that are arranged (as shown in the sketch above), such as student and teacher desks, whiteboards, and pictures of state symbols on the upper front wall, are elements that are related to creating a unified systemic structure. According to Saussure (1965) and Lagopoulos and Boklund-Lagopoulou (2020), the layout contains several types of relations, as shown in Table 4 below.

No	Description	Relationship Type	Explanation			
1	The position of the teacher's desk in front of the rows of student desks lined up against it (face to face)	binary opposition	binary opposition relationship			
2	Each student desk is arranged in several rows and columns	equivalent	similar level relationship			
3	The president's, the vice president, and the garuda pictures are affixed to the front wall above the whiteboard	symbolic	symbolic object relationships that also send symbolic messages			

Table 4: Relationships Between Objects in Classroom Interior Design

The layout of the objects in the classroom represents the teacher's relationship with students and other objects, as well as the message and meaning behind it. First, in the binary opposition relationship of teacher versus student, the teacher is meant to be a teacher only when there are students in front of him/her, and *vice versa*. This type of relationship is analogous to the anthropological kinship structure (Panoff and Levi-Strauss, 1974). For example, father means a father simply because of children. The subject is submerged in the structure of this situation (system). In other words, the system has control over both teachers and students. The difference is that the teacher is positioned in front of the students who are arranged from back to front.

Saussure's semiotics is known to have been influenced by Stoic philosophical thought. It identifies that in a binary oppositional relationship, such as good-bad, high-low, or malefemale, one element of the pair occupies the main position. The former concept has a higher position or degree in this context. As a result, in the systemic order of classroom design, the teacher's position is more important or has a higher degree than the students. This semiotic position is also directly proportional to the Indonesian people's overall perception. For example, in Sundanese society, the teacher is someone who must be obeyed and imitated.

Second, the equivalent relationship between students demonstrates that all students in the system have similarities. The seating arrangement is also fixed. When a student occupies a particular desk, he or she usually does not move to another position because they all have to face forward, towards the teacher and the whiteboard. Whether they are sitting in front, on the left, or the right of the whiteboard, it is all the same. It can be said that the design of the classroom places students rather than students placing themselves. Students do not have the freedom to express themselves individually and as a result, students have been lost once more in the system. In some cases, students are not even permitted to change seats at will. According to the interview, several students confessed that if they change seats or move their chairs or desks, they will be reprimanded and even punished. This situation is ironic because classroom design flexibility meets the demands of an ecological, dynamic, and complex learning process (Thomas, 2010). In the end, one or two students who are considered superior will emerge from the formalistic and static equality relation. However, this assessment or determination of superiority is based on systemic rules as exemplary students are those who always obey the rules.

Third, there is a semiotic relationship between state symbols (the president, vice president, and the Garuda pictures). As previously stated, these three state symbols are hung on the classroom front wall above the whiteboard. According to the finding, none of the schools have them placed on the back or side walls. This is significant because the image of the country's symbol has nothing to do with learning content. As a result, the relationship between the image and the design elements in the student's classroom can be described as a symbolic-systemic relationship. In the context of structural semiotics, the meaning is identical with the process of meaning which is nomenclature and arbitrary before becoming a convention (Saussure, 1965; Lagopoulos and Boklund-Lagopoulou, 2020).

As it has been discussed, the regulation requiring the installation of the state symbol is also temporary in the sense that it is only instructed by a circular letter from the state secretariat and not permanent law. This is directly proportional to the overall classroom interior design,

which also lacks a statutory foundation. The interior design of the classroom occurs or has been passed down culturally from generation to generation and has become a paradigm in the modern education system. This finding pushed the study into a more complex realm of meaning, which are culture and the ideological values that underpin it.

At this level, the binary opposition relationship of teachers versus students, as patterned through their seating plan, can be interpreted as an indexical sign (Peirce, 1998; Short, 2007) referring to a situation in which power-knowledge (Foucault, 1995) and ideological power (Althusser, 1984) are distributed. As a figure to be imitated, a teacher is the owner of knowledge who has to stand in front as the focal point of students' attention. In that position, the teacher becomes the center of attention. In this context, the teacher's desk is transformed into a podium in which unidirectional communication takes place. In this setting, the teacher is positioned as the "messenger" and the owner of the final truth in the classroom while students are the "recipients." The position of students who have to look at the teacher can be read semiotically as the indexicality of the ideological orientation, which is forward-looking. Looking forward and forgetting the past are characteristics of the modernism paradigm, which serves as the foundation of modern Western civilization. This can be extrapolated because the modern education system in Indonesia, as has also been shown previously, stems from the West. The achievement of "progress" or moving forward to achieve progress is one of the keywords in the modernism paradigm. According to this view, history is a linear progression, and the past (tradition) must be abandoned. Furthermore, according to Lyotard, Bennington and Massumi, (1984), Barrett, (1990), Giddens (1991), Morgan (2014), Vattimo and Snyder (1989), Griffin (2008), O'Donnell (2009), and Suryajaya (2016), modernism has the following characteristics:

- Rationality as the basis of a paradigm
- Cut the past time chain (anti-tradition)
- Separating space from time (synchronic)
- Future and progress-oriented (progressive and anti-tradition)
- Homogenous and ignoring heterogeneity
- Formalistic, systemic, and text as an autonomous center
- In art: art is an institution that is free from social and political problems; art is for art; the meaning of art is merely the unity of form and content (neglecting context)
- An individual is a center (anthropomorphism)

The next indicator is the relationship between the students, which is also reflected by their sitting positions. It has been explained that the structural arrangement of students' seating sends a message of togetherness. However, this togetherness is systemic in the sense that students are placed in an equal system. As a result of this situation, the relationship between students becomes formalistic or systemic. According to Hall (1990), the distance between individuals when interacting can represent their social-human relations. As follows, Hall divides the relationship between distance and the dimension of humanity that lies behind it:

Positio	on	Ir	ntimate		Personal			social						public					>	Position	
A			love		friend		b	u	sir	ne	ess										В
		0	1	2	3	4	5	e	57	7 8	39	10)	11	12			30	рм		

Fig. 7: Diagram of Distance and Dimension Behind It Source: Summarized from Hall (1990)

Based on the diagram, referring to the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 24 of 2007 stating that each student must have an area of 2 m^2 , the sitting position between students can be categorized as personal distance. According to the visual data (Figure 2), the average student seating distance is less than a meter. This indicates that their human distance is

intimate and a close relationship should be forged at this distance. In reality, this is not the case because students are constrained by certain rules (rules in class), such as a prohibition on looking at each other's answers, not reading aloud, eyes to the front of the class, and so on. According to the findings, this rule can be found in all schools (though it is not usually written) and the teacher always pays attention to it throughout the lesson. As a result, the relationship between students, as well as the relationship between students and teachers, is formalistic-systemic.

According to Foucault (1995), these formalistic relationships are part of a disciplinary project. Discipline is a "technology" that has been designed to train the body to obey. One of the keywords in this context is supervision. Again, the interior design of the classroom plays a central role in this context. This design allows for supervision from the teacher to the student and between the students. Students are shaped into individuals who strive to be better than others. This is consistent with the modern educational system's emphasis on individual development rather than collective development. Compare this to the design of a traditional classroom and learning environment, as shown in Figure 8 below:



Fig. 8: Learning Atmosphere in Traditional Educational Institutions (Islamic Boarding School) Source: Authors

As shown in the Figure 8, the teacher and the students sit in parallel positions. The teacher is in the middle of the class and the distance between students and teachers, as well as between students, is similar within close proximity. There are no rules prohibiting students to copy their friends' answers or other restrictive practices. Moreover, discussions take place throughout the lesson and the educational orientation is centered on the development of group character rather than individual competition.

In terms of classroom supervision, the interior design of classrooms has encouraged the occurrence of a pattern of supervision, both directed at students by teachers and directed between students. In this regard, it is critical to conduct additional research on the presence of state symbols, specifically the pictures of the president, vice president, and garuda. As previously stated, the presence of these symbols in structural semiotics is arbitrary because it has no relationship with the substance of learning. Why should this be done is the question people should ask.

Furthermore, the placement of these symbolic objects serves a dual semiotic function or there are two layers of messages and meanings behind them. The objects themselves have become symbolic markers in the first layer, signs whose meanings have been mutually agreed upon or as *legisigns* (Peirce, 1998; Short, 2007) by the people. The president is an indexical sign that represents and designates the state. In any situation or role, this sign is inextricably linked to the bearer. For example, Joko Widodo is a president who represents the country despite holding additional titles outside of his official duties. Because of this, the president is

also a symbol of the state, and the garuda is an additional symbol. They are stated explicitly and regulated as a state symbol in the 1945 Constitution (Article 36A).

When these signs are placed in a space, in this case in a school classroom, their interpretation moves into the meta-semiotic stage (the sign behind the sign). This is referred to as the second layer of meaning as the presence of symbolic objects that represent the state in this layer serves not only to represent the state but also to explain why the state should be presented. According to (Lipman and Hall, 1970), placing pictures at the top of the front wall sends a semiotic message about surveillance. In other words, the messages and meanings underlying these symbolic objects no longer refer to the state, but rather to state control, specifically state power. It represents the state's interest in the world of education and the need for it to be present to supervise.

According to Foucault (1995), this symbolic control mechanism is identical to the panopticon model, an 18th-century Swiss prison design in which a watchtower stands in the center of the prison area. Even when there is no supervisor on the tower, inmates who interact in the prison area always feel watched (the presence or absence of a supervisor is the same as inmates always feel watched). This monitoring model instills obedience in the inmates and it became the genealogy for the birth of the discipline in Foucault's (1995) study.

It should be obvious that students are not inmates. However, in exercising discipline, the student body becomes the target of this supervisory power as students are disciplined under supervision. By displaying state symbols in classrooms, what is meant by discipline is not only understanding school rules, but also submission to state power. It is also important to note that the teachers must also be disciplined in this manner and also become the subjects of supervision. In this context, its impact on teachers appears to be more severe as they become submissive and terrified. Some of the teachers even refused to give their names during the interview because they were afraid this study will be published and will have a repercussion on them.

As a result, schools are transformed into ideological institutions that produce graduates and teachers who are loyal to the state. Teachers and educational institution alumni are good citizens. Classrooms also become an ideological configuration, a place where the self (learner) is ideologically formed (Althusser, 1984; Leask, 2018). Of course, the supervision and discipline model are beneficial in terms of producing good citizens. However, as Zamroni (1993) demonstrates, schools are ineffective in disseminating democratic values. Furthermore, students' freedom of expression becomes limited and their creative energy is not fully utilized and may even be hampered. Learning should encourage students to think critically. Discipline should not be directed at obedience, but at creativity (Jurow and McFadden, 2011; Cargas, Williams and Rosenberg, 2017; Gormley, 2020).

The layout or interior design of a classroom supports its function. The seating arrangement, the distance between students and teachers, the distance between students, the placement of whiteboards, and classroom accessories demonstrate that classroom interior design contains hidden messages and values with ideological nuance. It means that in Indonesia's modern education system, the interior design of students' classrooms is both a tool and part of an ideological strategy. These hidden values are not directly felt by the learning participants as evidenced by the survey results in Tables 3 and 4 (students, teachers, and school principals). The way ideology works has no explicit impact and it cannot occur quickly. On the other hand, it works persuasively by appealing to the unconscious side of individuals and society. Ideology is tempted and interpellated by this mechanism that works well when exemplary predicates are given to obedient students and teachers. The interior design of the classroom becomes a means of submission in this context. Every day, students and teachers are placed in a room that has been pre-arranged in such a way that they are unable to change it freely. In the classroom, student-teacher meetings are systemic meetings that will create habits of obedience rather than "creative courage" in the long run. Teachers and students cannot think freely in the interior design of the study room, which is an important condition for the development of creativity (Kaufman and Gregoire, 2016). In fact, creativity is the pinnacle of the learning process (Heraty, 1983).

Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from this study.

- 1. The relationships between elements in the interior design of state primary and secondary school students' classrooms form a semiotic sign that represents a systemic education model. This model creates formalistic and rigid learning interactions between students and teachers.
- 2. Semiotically, the development of Indonesian classroom interior design is influenced by two factors. First, the influence of the modernism paradigm has shaped the organisation classroom. Based on this paradigm, classroom interior design is organised systemically by setting formal distances between objects. As a result, the relationship between teachers and students is patterned and must follow the classroom layout. In other words, the body of teacher and student is a disciplined body. This disciplinary body is considered productive for creating progressive modern humans in achieving scientific progress. Second, the power of state ideology. The state has an interest in the education of its citizens. In this sense, the citizens must be disciplined in obeying the state. Consequently, schools become ideological institutions that supervise students. Schools teach not only the ideal values of science but also the ideology of power.
- 3. This systemic and ideological interior design of classrooms has shaped the character of students (as well as teachers). They tend to abide by or obey the system. The teacher loses his critical power in front of the principal, the principal in front of his superiors, and so on. It influences how teachers work in Indonesia, which tends to be bureaucratic and administrative. Moreover, the interior design of the classroom affects the student's critical thinking, which is difficult to achieve optimally. In this system, individuals are not important. What is important is the system itself. Semiotically, the Indonesian classroom interior design forms a *langue* (language system), not a *parole* (individual expression). The presence of visual markers of photos of the president, vice president and the Garuda (the state symbol) semiotically represents that the state controls the entire learning process in the classroom. With this control, the character of students and teachers is formed.
- 4. Students and teachers generally do not understand and have no knowledge about the values and meaning behind their classroom design. This condition confirms that the classroom interior design is designed as part of the state's power-ideological operations by the parties who are the targets.

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