

A Barthesian Analysis of Semiotic Practices in an Indigenous School in Taiwan: A Case of a Bunun Primary School

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Abstract : This study explores the role of totems and decorative texts on an indigenous primary school campus in Taiwan, as well as how they affect the building of the cultural identity of indigenous students. By employing Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, this research aims to uncover the cultural meanings and social functions contained in these visual symbols, as well as their significance for building a cultural identity among indigenous students. The study uses a qualitative method, combining observations, interviews, and document analysis to explore how these symbols perform as carriers of hidden meaning and contribute to educational and cultural settings. The findings show that totems on the indigenous school campus reflect the ethnic group's cultural background knowledge, allowing students to study their cultural heritage and providing a sense of belonging. However, certain textual decorations also reflect the historical influence of the hegemonic government attempting to establish moral norms in the ethnic group. This coexistence of traditional ethnic totems and hegemonic textual admonitions in the school environment creates a complex identity landscape for students, leading to a multiplicity of cultural identities. It underlines the importance of culturally relevant symbols in enhancing students' cultural heritage and identity and presents the challenges posed by conflicting cultural messages within the educational context.

Keywords : Roland Barthes, semiotic, Indigenous, Bunun

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