

# Empowering English Teachers through Semiotic-Based Textbook Cover Design Training: A Community Service Program at SMA PGRI 1 Denpasar

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## ABSTRACT

This community service program aimed to enhance the pedagogical and creative competencies of English teachers at SMA PGRI 1 Denpasar through a workshop titled "Designing English Textbook Covers Based on a Semiotic Analysis Approach." The program was divided into three phases: pre-activity, implementation, and post-activity. Initial needs assessment identified teachers' familiarity with semiotics and visual design. The workshop provided both theoretical insights into visual semiotics and practical training using Canva to create textbook covers that reflect semiotic principles. Post-activity evaluation included post-tests, feedback forms, and continued mentoring via WhatsApp groups. The results showed significant improvement in participants' ability to integrate symbols and signs meaningfully into cover designs, enhancing their instructional media skills. This program underscores the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration between linguists and educators in fostering media literacy and creative teaching. It serves as a model for similar initiatives in other schools and contributes to academic discourse on the application of semiotics in educational contexts.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of educational materials, particularly textbook covers, visual elements play a pivotal role in shaping students' engagement with the content. The design of a textbook cover is not merely decorative, it serves as a medium for conveying messages about the subject matter, themes, and

intended audience of the book. In line with this, a study on book covers conducted by Aisyah and Rinjai (2023) concluded that the visual elements on book covers, particularly illustrations, color selection, and typography, play a pivotal role in capturing readers' interest. Through carefully selected colours, images, and typography, a cover can shape perceptions by influencing how students interpret the material and their level of interest in exploring its contents. Since the cover is the first point of contact, it holds substantial influence over students' perceptions and motivations, potentially affecting their willingness to engage with the textbook. Therefore, those who involved in developing learning materials such as textbook (including teachers) should pay close attention to this aspect.

In the context of improving the quality of learning, the role of teachers is not limited to delivering material but also includes the ability to design and develop effective and engaging learning media. Teachers' competencies are categorized into four main domains, one of them is pedagogical competence. In this domain, one of the key indicators that teachers must possess is the ability to creatively develop the learning materials (Permendiknas No. 16 of 2007). When looked at that more closely, this skill is not only includes the content of the instructional material but also the supporting visual aspects, including the design of textbook covers. Therefore, training is needed to enhance teachers' creativity in designing instructional materials, especially in creating textbook covers.

To enhance teachers' creativity in designing textbook especially its covers, various design workshop programs have been introduced, aiming to support educators in developing learning materials. For example, a workshop did by Marjuni et al. (2024) focused on improving design and layout skills for electronic books among teachers and lecturers. The program aimed to broaden participants' knowledge, understanding, and technical abilities in e-book design and layout, particularly for those with little or no prior experience in graphic design. However, most of these workshops tend to focus on technical design aspects and general aesthetics, while little attention has been given to the theoretical or interpretive frameworks behind visual design choices. Specifically, there appears to be no workshop that focuses on the use of a semiotic analysis approach in this context.

As linguists, the researchers recognize the importance of introducing a new perspective in the development of instructional materials. A semiotic analysis approach can serve as an alternative framework, helping teachers to make decisions regarding the use of symbols, colors, and typography elements that not only enhance visual appeal but also contribute to conveying the subject. A relevant study by Ulfa (2021) found that the visual signs on English textbook covers carry significant meanings that reflect the contents and intended messages of the book, highlighting the relevance of semiotic analysis in cover design.

Thus, this activity serves as an opportunity for linguists to apply their expertise in the field of education through a community service program in the form of knowledge transfer. The workshop is designed to support senior high school teachers in enhancing their creativity in designing English textbook covers using a semiotic analysis approach. This training will be conducted by a community service team from the English language Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Pedagogy, Dwijendra University, aiming to help teachers understand and apply result from semiotic analysis in visual design. The implications of this activity include improving teachers' skills in instructional media design, fostering innovation, and encouraging collaboration and networking among educators.

The application will be used in the textbook cover design workshop is Canva. This platform is chosen since its low cost and have several features that can help teacher. Furthermore, Karim & Asrani (2024) stated Canva is a user-friendly graphic design tool, making it highly suitable for individuals without a formal background in design to produce visually appealing and effective materials. With its wide range of features, including templates, icons, fonts, and drag-and-drop functionality, Canva allows users to explore various design elements without the need for advanced technical skills. Its intuitive interface makes the design process efficient, even for those who have never used graphic design software before. In the context of the workshop, Canva empowers teachers to express creativity while aligning visual elements with the thematic content of the textbooks including its cover.

Community service is one of the real contributions of universities in helping to solve problems in the surrounding environment, including in the field of education. Through the Community Service Program (PKM), lecturers and students can directly contribute to improving the quality of education and teacher competence. Specifically, SMA PGRI 1 Denpasar shows a strong commitment to improving the quality of its educators through various efforts, such as forming an internal quality consultant team, independent training, and improving teachers' capacity in developing teaching media.

In addition, as part of the Indonesian Teachers Association (PGRI) of Bali Province, this school has access to various professional development programs for teachers organized by PGRI, which aim to improve teachers' competence and professionalism. Since this is the first training program for creating textbook covers based on semiotic research, SMA PGRI 1 Denpasar is chosen as the initial place to implement the activity and is expected to become a model that can be applied in other schools in the future. Therefore, the implementation of PKM that focuses on textbook cover design training based on semiotic analysis is very relevant and aligns well with the vision and needs of SMA PGRI 1 Denpasar.

## 2. METHODS

The implementation of this community service program will be divided into three main stages: Pre-Activity, Implementation, and Post-Activity. Each stage is designed to ensure that participants receive both theoretical understanding and practical skills related to visual semiotics and textbook cover design.

### 2.1 Pre-Activity Stage

This stage focuses on preparation, coordination, and preliminary analysis of participants' needs.

#### a. Needs Assessment

A preliminary informal interview conducted to English teachers at SMA PGRI 1 Denpasar to identify their familiarity with semiotic theory, visual media design, and their current practices in developing or selecting English textbook materials. This approach aligns with the concept that effective educational interventions must begin with the identification of participant needs (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). Informal interviews conducted to explore specific challenges in textbook presentation and cultural representation.

#### b. Institutional Coordination

Coordination conducted with the principal and English department to schedule activities and prepare necessary facilities such as multimedia classrooms, LCD projectors, and internet access. Establishing strong institutional support is key to the success of teacher development programs (Guskey, 2002).

#### c. Preparation of Workshop Materials

The team design workshop materials based on relevant literature in semiotics and educational media, including:

- Slides on semiotic theory (Chandler, 2017)
- Examples of textbook cover analysis
- Worksheets and handouts
- Pre-test and post-test instruments
- Design tools (Canva, PowerPoint)

### 2.2 Implementation Stage

The core activities conducted over a full-day interactive workshop (6 hours), divided into two sessions.

#### Session 1: Theoretical Foundation

##### Topic: Understanding Visual Semiotics in English Textbook Covers

This session introduces participants to key concepts of semiotics such as signs, signifier/signified, denotation/connotation (Saussure, 1983), and the triadic model of sign (icon,

index, symbol) by Peirce (1931–1958). Participants explored how these concepts influence interpretation in visual design and how cultural messages are embedded in textbook covers (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Group discussions and case studies of existing English textbook covers help participants decode meanings and evaluate their communicative effectiveness.

### **Session 2: Practical Design Workshop**

#### **Topic: Designing Semiotic-Based English Textbook Covers**

Participants engaged in hands-on practice using digital tools like Canva or PowerPoint to design covers that reflect appropriate themes, audience, and cultural context. Working in small groups promotes collaborative learning and peer feedback, which are proven to increase teacher engagement and retention of new knowledge (Desimone, 2009). Each group presented their cover, followed by constructive feedback using a semiotic analysis framework.

### **2.3 Post-Activity Stage**

#### **a. Evaluation**

A post-test and a feedback form administered to evaluate participants' learning outcomes and satisfaction. Reflection is an important part of adult learning theory, helping teachers internalize and apply new knowledge (Kolb, 1984).

#### **b. Certificate and Documentation**

Participants received certificates of completion. Activities documented through photos and videos as a basis for reporting and further academic publication.

#### **c. Follow-Up and Dissemination**

A follow-up mentoring group (WhatsApp or Google Classroom) created to sustain learning and allow further consultation. Participants encouraged to apply semiotic principles in other visual learning materials. Results may be published or showcased through school social media.

## **3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The implementation of this community service program was divided into three main stages: Pre-Activity, Implementation, and Post-Activity. Each stage was designed to ensure that participants receive both theoretical understanding and practical skills related to visual semiotics and textbook cover design.

### **3.1 Pre-Activity Stage**

This stage focuses on preparation, coordination, and preliminary analysis of participants' needs.

#### **a. Needs Assessment**

A preliminary informal interview was conducted to English teachers at SMA PGRI 1 Denpasar on Thursday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025 to identify their familiarity with semiotic theory, visual media design, and their current practices in developing or selecting English textbook materials. This approach aligns with the concept that effective educational interventions must begin with the identification of participant needs (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). Informal interviews were conducted to explore specific challenges in textbook presentation and cultural representation.

#### **b. Institutional Coordination**

Coordination was conducted on Thursday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025 with the principal and English department to schedule activities and prepare necessary facilities such as multimedia classrooms, LCD projectors, and internet access. Establishing strong institutional support is key to the success of teacher development programs (Guskey, 2002).



Picture 1. Institutional Coordination at SMA PGRI 1 Denpasar

### c. Preparation of Workshop Materials

The team designed workshop materials based on relevant literature in semiotics and educational media, including:

- Slides on semiotic theory (Chandler, 2017)
- Examples of textbook cover analysis
- Worksheets
- Design tools (Canva, PowerPoint)

### 3.2 Implementation Stage

The community service activity organized by the English Language Education Study Program of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Pedagogy, Dwijendra University. It was held on Wednesday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at SMA PGRI 1 Denpasar. The activity featured a workshop entitled “*Designing English Textbook Covers Based on a Semiotic Analysis Approach*”. This activity is followed by the English teacher of SMA PGRI 1 Denpasar, Lectures of English Language Education Study Program and the students. It aimed at enhancing the pedagogical and design skills of English teachers. The event began with an opening prayer, followed by a welcome speech delivered by the principal of SMA PGRI 1 Denpasar, Putu Sanurwati, S.Pd. After the welcoming speech by the principal, the event was continuing by signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) and Implementation Agreement (IA), marking the official collaboration between the Faculty of Teacher Training and Pedagogy, Dwijendra University and SMA PGRI 1 Denpasar.



Picture 2. Signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) and Implementation Agreement (IA)

The workshop held by lecturer from English Language Education study program specifically linguistic field, Ni Wayan Swarniti, S.S., M.Hum. Workshop entitled “*Designing English Textbook Covers Based on a Semiotic Analysis Approach*” provided valuable insights into the application of semiotic theory in educational material design, fostering innovation and critical thinking among participants.



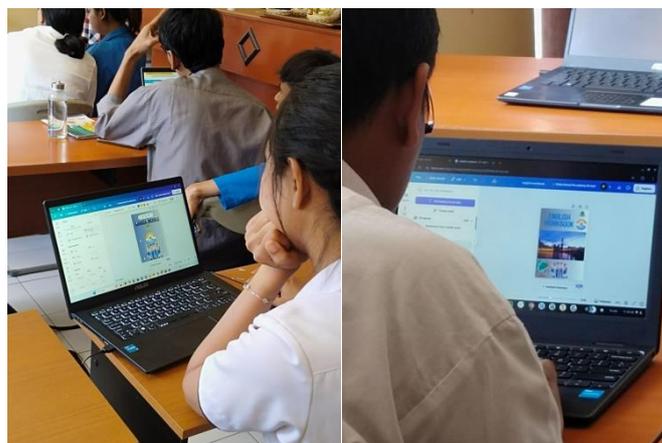
Picture 3. Workshop Understanding Visual Semiotics in English Textbook Covers

In the second session, it was continued with the practice of designing textbook covers directly guided by the English Language Education study program lecturer, Komang Satria Wirasa, S.S., M.Hum and assisted by Ni Made Dwi Utari Pusparini, S.Pd., M.Li with the title “Designing Semiotic-Based English Textbook Covers”. Participants followed the training well using their respective devices.



Picture 4. Workshop Designing Semiotic-Based English Textbook Covers

In this session, participants immediately practiced to design the cover of an English textbook using semiotic theory. Participants were very enthusiastic, the discussion went smoothly and interactively. Many of the participants asked about the appropriate symbols used in their respective textbooks that could represent the content of the textbook itself. Participants have a high interest in the world of technology, especially technology that can help them in facilitating their work as a teacher.



Picture 5. Process of Designing Semiotic-Based English Textbook Covers

Many of the participants got good results after attending this training. They can easily use the right symbol or sign according to the semiotics theory related to this symbol and sign. The symbols

and signs that participants use on the cover design of the English textbook can represent what topics are discussed in the book. This will make it easier for readers to capture what topics will be discussed in the textbook.



Picture 6. Results of Designing Semiotic-Based English Textbook Covers

The activity concluded with a meaningful closing session, where participants reflected on the knowledge they had gained and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to develop their skills in a supportive environment. Certificates of participation were distributed, reinforcing a sense of accomplishment and professional growth.



Picture 7. Closing session

### 3.3 Post-Activity Stage

#### a. Evaluation

To evaluate the learning outcomes and overall satisfaction of the participants, a post-test was administered alongside the completion of a feedback form, which could be accessed online via the following link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1LXae2iqX5FowRooUEwIqTWWT7C1u6N8dwzNDhYZD2Ik/edit?usp=dialog>. This approach provided both quantitative and qualitative data to assess the effectiveness of the workshop. In addition, reflection was incorporated as a key component of this stage, in alignment with adult learning theory as proposed by Kolb (1984). According to Kolb, reflective practice plays a crucial role in enabling educators to internalize and apply newly acquired knowledge and skills in their professional context. This not only enhances their capacity to apply semiotic principles in instructional media but also fosters long-term professional growth and pedagogical innovation.



application of the knowledge gained during the training. Further amplifying the impact of the workshop and fostering a culture of continuous professional development among educators.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The community service program titled "Designing English Textbook Covers Based on a Semiotic Analysis Approach" successfully empowered English teachers at SMA PGRI 1 Denpasar to enhance their creativity and pedagogical competence in instructional media design. The program was structured through a well-organized sequence of pre-activity, implementation, and post-activity stages, ensuring a holistic learning experience. Participants gained theoretical knowledge of semiotic analysis and applied it practically using the Canva platform, resulting in improved visual communication and symbolism in textbook cover designs.

The enthusiastic engagement of participants and their ability to apply semiotic principles in their designs demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach. Moreover, the integration of adult learning principles, reflection sessions, and collaborative mentoring through a WhatsApp group extended the impact of the workshop beyond the training day. The activity not only strengthened the professional skills of the teachers but also highlighted the crucial role of linguists and higher education institutions in advancing educational innovation through community service. SMA PGRI 1 Denpasar, with its proactive commitment to teacher development, served as an ideal pilot site and is expected to become a model for similar initiatives in other schools.

To ensure the sustainability and long-term impact of the community service program on designing English textbook covers using a semiotic analysis approach, several follow-up actions are proposed:

##### 1. Establishment of a Mentoring Group

A dedicated mentoring group has been established via WhatsApp to provide a collaborative platform for participants. This group facilitates continuous interaction, peer support, and consultation related to semiotic-based textbook cover design. Lecturers from the English Language Education Study Program act as facilitators, offering feedback, answering questions, and guiding participants in applying semiotic theory to future materials.

##### 2. Ongoing Design Practice and Feedback

Participants encouraged to share new textbook cover designs in the mentoring group for peer and expert review. Scheduled feedback sessions help participants improve their skills over time. Selected cover designs may also be showcased on the department's social media or university website to motivate continued creativity.

##### 3. Follow-Up Workshop or Advanced Training

Based on participants' needs and requests gathered through post-workshop feedback, an advanced training session may be held. This session explores more complex semiotic concepts, advanced design techniques, or the integration of cultural and intercultural values in textbook materials.

##### 4. Monitoring and Evaluation

The community service team conduct periodic check-ins (e.g., after three months and six months) to evaluate how teachers have integrated the acquired skills into their teaching practices. A follow-up survey and informal interviews were conducted to assess outcomes, challenges, and additional support needs.

##### 5. Development of a Digital Handbook

A practical digital handbook or module summarizing key points from the workshop (semiotic theory, cover design guidelines, symbol interpretations, and Canva tips) were compiled and distributed to all participants. This resource served as a reference tool for continued independent learning.

##### 6. Expansion to Other Schools

The success of this program at SMA PGRI 1 Denpasar documented and used as a model for

implementation in other schools, particularly those under the Indonesian Teachers Association (PGRI) of Bali Province. The team will propose similar workshops in collaboration with other institutions, potentially leading to regional or provincial-level training programs.

#### 7. Academic Dissemination and Publication

The outcomes of this community service activity, including teacher reflections, design results, and pedagogical impacts, were compiled and published in a scientific journal or presented in a national conference. This initiative is intended to contribute to the academic discourse on visual semiotics in education and to strengthen the role of university-community collaboration.

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