



***The Nuruls* from a Linguistic Perspective as a Popular Youth Culture in Indonesia**

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Article info

Received Date: 22 October 2024

Accepted Date: 23 December 2024

Published Date: 31 January 2025

Keywords:

Pop Culture, semantics, meaning, semiotics

Abstract*

In today's digital era, the expansion of language has been rapidly developing, allowing the representation of a word to shift or even for the meaning of that language to change. Moreover, in a language, the concepts of open and closed word classes are recognized, where open word classes are those that will continuously change and expand, while closed word classes are those that are unlikely to ever change or grow. Currently, among young people, the term "The Nuruls" has become popular. This term is derived from the concept of a person's name, even though linguistically, the word "Nurul" comes from Arabic, meaning "Light." Interestingly, the word "Nurul" is preceded by the article "the," which originates from English. The combination of morphemes "the" and "Nurul" creates a unique meaning among young people, indicating a significant shift in meaning. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine the semantic shift observed in the phrase "The Nuruls" and to identify the markers that represent this phrase. This study employs a semiotic approach to explore the meaning shift in the phrase "The Nuruls." The research uses a descriptive qualitative method, which is employed to describe the data descriptively, and the analysis will also be presented in a descriptive manner.

1. Introduction

Language is a system of symbols that connects the world of sounds and the world of meanings and is closely related to pragmatics (context) (Chaer, 2015). Language, therefore, can be considered a communication process that begins with the production of sound and ends with the interpretation of meaning, both implicit and explicit. Although language can generally be understood this way, it is undeniable that language will continue to evolve over time. For instance, changes may occur in its morphological system or even in its semantic system. In this digital era, language undoubtedly serves as the primary tool for social media users in communication, business, and other areas. The massive use of language on social media inevitably gives rise to new linguistic phenomena. Some examples include youth slang that has emerged, such as "kerkel" (kerja kelompok/group work), "TBL" (Takut Banget Lo/ Oh-so-

scared), "mantul" (mantap betul/very good), etc. (Zubir, 2023). Zubir's analysis shows that slang develops through morphological processes, such as the abbreviation "kerkel," which is more popular among teens than the phrase "kerja kelompok." Such phenomena do not happen just once or twice. These linguistic phenomena recur frequently on social media, making it undeniable that these new language forms eventually become part of popular culture.

Popular culture refers to the ideas, practices, objects, and phenomena that are prevalent and widely accepted in mainstream society at a particular time (Kumar, 2022). It encompasses a broad range of elements, including music, fashion, movies, television, social media, slang, and trends, that shape and reflect the everyday lives of people (Crosman in Kumar, 2022). Pop culture is dynamic, constantly evolving as society changes, influenced by technological advancements, globalization, and shifts in social values.

One of the defining characteristics of pop culture is its accessibility. Unlike high culture, which is often associated with art forms appreciated by a select group of society, pop culture is enjoyed by the masses. It is spread through media platforms such as television, radio, the internet, and, more recently, social media, making it a powerful force in shaping public opinion, identity, and behaviour.

Pop culture not only entertains but also provides insights into societal issues, norms, and values. Through music, films, memes, and other media, pop culture reflects the zeitgeist—the spirit of the times—by addressing topics such as politics, race, gender, and social justice. It influences how people perceive themselves and others, and it plays a significant role in how individuals construct their identities.

As a global phenomenon, pop culture transcends geographical boundaries, creating a shared language and experience among diverse cultures. Iconic figures, trends, and media from one part of the world can quickly spread and be adopted in another, contributing to a globalized cultural landscape.

The relationship between culture and language is deeply intertwined, as both elements play fundamental roles in shaping human identity, communication, and social interactions. Language is more than just a tool for communication—it is a vehicle through which cultural values, norms, and beliefs are expressed and transmitted across generations. Conversely, culture provides the context within which language operates, influencing how words are used, meanings are constructed, and communication is understood.

Culture, according to Sagala in Sumarto (2019); Kumar (2022) is a concept that evokes interest and relates to how humans live, learn to think, feel, believe, and strive for what is deemed appropriate according to their culture. In other words, culture reflects behaviors and social phenomena that describe the identity and image of a community. From this understanding, culture can be seen as an idea or concept that emerges in society as a representation of an individual's or a group's identity.

Culture shapes language in many ways, from the structure of grammar and vocabulary to the nuances of meaning in everyday conversation. The way people talk about certain concepts, such as time, relationships, or emotions, can vary significantly across cultures, reflecting the values and priorities of each society. For example, some languages have specific words to describe complex emotions or social relationships that may not exist in other languages, illustrating how culture molds linguistic expression.

Language also serves as a marker of cultural identity. It binds people together within a community, creating a sense of belonging and shared experience. Through language, individuals can express their cultural heritage, traditions, and worldview, making it a key element in

maintaining cultural continuity. In multicultural societies, language often becomes a means of navigating between different cultural identities, highlighting the dynamic relationship between language and cultural adaptation.

Furthermore, the transmission of culture relies heavily on language. Stories, rituals, historical knowledge, and customs are passed down through generations via spoken or written language, allowing cultural practices to endure. As societies evolve, so too does language, reflecting shifts in cultural values and new social realities. In today's digital era, the act of sharing has become essential to our everyday experiences and plays a crucial role in shaping digital cultures, impacting how we communicate, interact socially, and produce culture (John, 2017). The linguistic behavior and social practices become interesting issues in recent social studies (Ren, 2024).

In this article, it is clear that cultural issues are significant because language is inherently tied to culture. As explained earlier, the emergence of linguistic ideas on social media, especially among teenagers, eventually becomes popular culture acknowledged by society as part of a new or popular culture. One of the most prominent aspects of popular culture among teenagers today is *The Nuruls*.

The Nuruls is a phrase that has recently gained popularity among certain teenage groups in Indonesia. *The Nuruls* is not only recognized as a new phrase used by today's youth but also represents a new cultural concept that has emerged. This issue piqued interest and became the motivation for writing this article. Thus, the purpose of this article is: (1) To examine the linguistic aspects of the phrase "The Nuruls," and (2) To explore the social cognition representation related to this phrase. Using morphological and semantic analysis, this phrase will be linguistically analyzed. Through Pierce's trichotomy of meaning, this phrase will be examined in terms of its representation in society and how a phrase can represent popular culture within the community itself.

2. Research Methods

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. The descriptive method is applied to describe the process of analysis as well as the results of the analysis conducted. Furthermore, the qualitative analysis approach is employed because the analysis does not involve numerical or quantitative calculations. Qualitative research is a type of research that explores and understands the meaning derived from a number of individuals or a group of people in relation to a social issue (Cresswell, 2014). The data used in this study includes the phrase *The Nuruls* and TikTok videos. The object in qualitative research is a natural object or natural setting, which is why this research method is often referred to as a naturalistic method. The analysis will be carried out using morphosyntactic theory to describe the structure and linguistic form of the phrase "The Nuruls," followed by representation analysis using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis.

3. Discussions

The results and finding in this research are described into two approaches. The first approach is the morphosyntactic approach and the second is semiotic approach. To see the comprehensive explanation and findings look at the description of the results below.

3.1 Morphosyntactic Review of the Phrase "The Nuruls"

From a morphosyntactic perspective, the phrase *The Nuruls* can be analyzed from two viewpoints. The first viewpoint considers the morphemes that compose the phrase. A morpheme is the smallest unit in morphology that cannot be further divided and still carries meaning. If we examine the morphemes, the phrase "The Nuruls" contains three morphemes: two bound

morphemes and one free morpheme. A bound morpheme is a morpheme that cannot stand alone with meaning, whereas a free morpheme is one that can stand alone with meaning (Verhaar, 1992). In the phrase *The Nuruls*, the bound morphemes are represented by "the" and "-s," while the free morpheme is represented by "nurul."

The second viewpoint is that *The Nuruls* is a phrase composed of two words from different languages. A phrase, as a combination of two or more words, produces a new meaning. According to Katamba (2006, p. 55), a phrase can be referred to as a compound word consisting of at least two words or two root morphemes.

In the phrase *The Nuruls*, it can be classified as a noun phrase, meaning that *The Nuruls* is considered a noun referring to a particular object or entity. If we break down the phrase, two words appear: "the" and "nuruls." Syntactically, "the" functions as an article in English, serving as a definite article. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "the" is a determiner that refers to a specific object or person at a given time. Therefore, it can be concluded that "the" in the phrase *The Nuruls* refers to an entity labeled as "Nuruls."

Further morphosyntactic analysis can be observed in the word "nuruls." As previously mentioned, "nuruls" appears after "the," and "nuruls" certainly has its own meaning. "Nuruls" comes from the name "Nurul," with the addition of the inflection "-s" at the end. In English, the inflection "-s" marks a plural form, affecting only its grammatical meaning (Katamba, 2004). Therefore, "nuruls" refers to multiple entities labeled as "Nurul," suggesting that there is more than one entity bearing this label.

Additionally, "Nurul" is a common name in Indonesian culture, typically used for females. The word "Nurul" is derived from the Arabic word "nur," which means "light." According to Cambridge of Arabic – English dictionary, word "nur" means "*the brightness that shines from the sun, from fire, or from an object, allowing you to see things*". Definition of this word is also carried out by almaany.com. The name "nur" itself can be given both to men or women, but different thing happened when the word formed "Nurul" that commonly used only for women.

3.2 Representation of *The Nuruls* Among Teenagers in Indonesia

The term "*The Nuruls*" has become widespread among teenagers in Indonesia. This is evident from the abundance of content discussing this group on social media platforms such as X, TikTok, and Instagram. This phenomenon has gone viral among social media users in Indonesia. Therefore, to capture the essence of this cultural phenomenon, the objects of study in this research are not only lexical units but also in the form of nonverbal units. The nonverbal semiotic resources are formulated as inter-related systems of meaning (Feng & O'Halloran, 2012). Based on a digital exploration, several pieces of content depict the characteristics of *The Nuruls* themselves.

Figure. 1 The picture of *the nuruls* represented on Instagram

(Source: Instagram @infipop.id)

Figure 1 is a visual content uploaded by an Instagram user with the account name @infipop.id. Referring to the analysis of the semiotic triadic (Peirce, 1991), the formation of a sign's representation can be viewed based on three elements: representamen, object, and interpretant. These three elements are essential for constructing the complete meaning of a text (Pramaskara, 2022). Thus, semiosis process is somehow unlimited (Saifullah, 2019). The process of semiosis occurs simultaneously. Hoed (2011) stated that the interpretant can transform into a new representamen, which then undergoes an infinite process. The sign elements found in the post consist of two types: typographic elements and visual elements. The typographic element consists of one part, while the visual element consists of eight parts. More detailed analysis of the image in Figure 1 is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Description of the Triadic Sign Analysis in Figure 1

Representamen	Object	Interpretant
 (typography element)	Text " <i>The Nuruls' Starter Pack</i> "	This typographic element indicates the theme intended to be conveyed in the post. According to the Oxford Languages dictionary, the phrase "starter pack" is defined as: "a set of articles or equipment providing the essential items and instructions for taking up a particular activity or process for the first time." In Indonesian, this definition

can be understood as a set of tools that serve as basic materials for engaging in a specific activity. The social media user aims to present the characteristics of "The Nuruls" through their post.

(Visual element)



A photo of a woman wearing cardigan or jacket made of knitted wool yarn.

It is interpreted as a depiction of clothing commonly worn by The Nuruls, namely a cardigan jacket

(visual element)



An illustration of a woman wearing a *bergo* hijab.

Interpreted as a depiction of the hijab commonly worn by The Nuruls, which is an instant hijab known as 'bergo hijab

(Visual element)



A photo of a helmet known as 'Bogo helmet.' The term comes from the brand 'Bogo,' which offers helmets with retro and classic design characteristics

This element shows the characteristic of The Nuruls, who only use one type of helmet, which is the Bogo helmet

(Visual element)



A photo of *Seblak* (a traditional dish from West Java made from crackers, vegetables, and various other fillings in a spicy, seasoned broth)

This element illustrates that Seblak is a food favored by The Nuruls

(Visual element)

A photo of coffee served in a plastic cup.

This element illustrates a drink commonly consumed by The Nuruls, which is coffee."



(Visual element)

A photo of a dish named 'Mie Gacoan,' which is a type of fried noodles with a spicy flavor served with shredded chicken and fried wontons. This element shows another type of culinary dish favored by The Nuruls, apart from Seblak, which is Mie Gacoan."



(Visual element)

A photo of a café named 'Bajawa.' This element indicates a place frequently visited by The Nuruls, which is the café 'Bajawa.'"



(Visual element)

A photo of a motorcycle from the brand Honda called 'Scoopy' with a retro design. This element illustrates that The Nuruls generally often ride this type of motorcycle, indicating that they favor motorcycles with a retro design."



Figure 2. The picture of the nuruls represented on Instagram

Starter Pack
THE NURULS



(Sumber: Instagram @ruangevent)

In Figure 2, an Instagram user with the account name @ruangevent aims to present the characteristic image of *The Nuruls* with various attributes attached to it. The signs displayed in this data consist of one typographic element and six visual elements. A more detailed analysis of Figure 2 can be found in the table below:

Tabel 2. Description of the Triadic Sign Analysis in Figure 2.

Representamen	Object	Interpretant
(typography element) Starter Pack THE NURULS	Text “ <i>Starter Pack The Nuruls</i> ”.	This typographic element shows the theme intended to be explained in the post, which is a set of objects or basic materials related to The Nuruls
(Visual element) 	An illustration of a woman wearing bergo hijab.	This element illustrates that The Nuruls generally enjoy wearing instant hijabs for their daily activities.
(Visual element) 	Picture of a retro-designed Honda motorcycle.	This element illustrates that The Nuruls usually ride this type of motorcycle, indicating their preference for retro-designed motorcycles.
(Visual element) 	Picture of a hoodie jacket.	This element shows the type of clothing that The Nuruls enjoy wearing, namely a hoodie jacket.
(Visual element) 	Picture of a cup of coffee.	Interpreted as a depiction of a drink favored by The Nuruls, which is coffee.



(Visual element)



(Visual element)



A retro-designed helmet known as “Bogo helmet.”

This element shows the type of helmet used by The Nuruls, which is the Bogo helmet.

Picture of a dish called “Mie Gacoan,”. It is a type of fried noodles with a spicy flavor served with shredded chicken and fried wontons.

This element shows another type of cuisine favored by The Nuruls besides Seblak, which is Mie Gacoan.

Figure 3. *The picture of the nuruls represented on X*

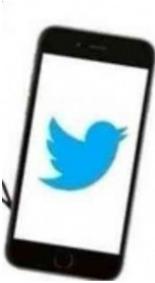


(Source: X @FARigohena)

Figure 3 is an illustration of *The Nuruls* uploaded by an X user with the account name @FARigohena. Unlike the previous two data sets, the image in Figure 3 does not include any

typographic elements to indicate the theme. The signs are presented solely through visual modes in the form of illustrations of various objects. A more detailed analysis of Figure 3 can be found in the table below:

Tabel 3. Description of the Triadic Sign Analysis in Figure 3.

Representamen	Object	Interpretant
(Visual element) 	An illustration of a woman wearing an instant hijab and glasses.	This visual element illustrates that The Nuruls wear instant hijabs and glasses.
(Visual element) 	Picture of milk coffee from the brand 'Janji Jiwa' served in a plastic cup.	This visual element shows the type of drink commonly consumed by The Nuruls, which is coffee.
(Visual element) 	Picture of Seblak (a traditional dish from West Java made from crackers, vegetables, and various other fillings in a spicy, seasoned broth).	This element illustrates that Seblak is a food favored by The Nuruls.
(Visual element) 	An illustration of a mobile phone with the Twitter app logo.	This element illustrates that The Nuruls are users of the Twitter social media platform.

In general, the three pieces of data above illustrate the characteristics of the youth referred to as *The Nuruls*. These characteristics can be categorized into three classifications: 1) clothing, 2) food and beverages, and 3) transportation. The first category is clothing. All three data sets show a commonality: the use of instant hijabs, specifically the *bergo* style. In addition to hijabs, Figures 1 and 2 depict *The Nuruls* frequently wearing loose jackets, such as hoodies or knitted cardigans. Thus, it can be concluded that *The Nuruls* are seen as having a simple, practical, and comfortable sense of fashion.

Not only clothing, another authentic characteristic of *The Nuruls* are the food and drinks they often consume. Based on societal interpretations represented in the above data, it can be concluded that *The Nuruls* enjoy spicy foods. This is evidenced by the visuals of *seblak* and *mie gacoan* presented in all three data sets. Additionally, all three data sets feature coffee as a drink consumed by *The Nuruls*, indicating a preference for coffee that can be found in youth cafés. This suggests that *The Nuruls* also represent a lifestyle of Indonesian youth who enjoy chilling and having good times in cafés.

The next category closely related to *The Nuruls* is their preferred type of transportation. All three data sets showcase a similar type of vehicle, namely automatic scooters from the Honda Scoopy brand. The distinctive feature of this vehicle is its retro design. To complement this retro look, *The Nuruls* are also depicted wearing *Bogo*-style helmets. This indicates a specific taste among *The Nuruls* for retro-designed items.

3.3 Meaning and Representation of *The Nuruls*

The representation of *The Nuruls* by society does not align directly with its intended meaning. When viewed from its literal meaning, *The Nuruls* refers to "the light" in plural. This implies that *The Nuruls* symbolizes women with good qualities, represented by light, which embodies goodness, illumination, and benefits for others. Because the name originates from Arabic, it reflects the Islamic aspect of *The Nuruls*. This religious aspect is not only seen through the name but also through the hijab, which is one of the symbols of *The Nuruls* themselves. However, from a social representation perspective, *The Nuruls* portrays women who are simple, enjoy contemporary foods, and are hijab-wearing women who feel free to engage in enjoyable activities. Society, commonly as social media users, collectively agrees on the interpretation of *The Nuruls*. This interpretation comes from a multimodal analysis, both through lexical evidence and based on the images studied. Although Bateman and Wildfeuer (2014) stated that modes of communication, such as verbal language and images, both tend to be abstract, they can complement each other and even present representations that align with social cognition in society.

The emergence of memes in the form of 'starter packs' demonstrates that society shares a common concept regarding the characteristics of *The Nuruls*. This phenomenon shows that *The Nuruls* is a group of teenage girls who share similar characteristics in various aspects, including lifestyle and appearance. The images studied share similar characteristics in representing *The Nuruls*. Given that images can be both literal and metaphorical (Kennedy, 1982), the images related to *The Nuruls* have undoubtedly represented society's perception of this new social group.

It cannot be denied that the representation of *The Nuruls* has sparked both pros and cons, especially among young people or teenagers. The label of *The Nuruls*, which emerged among the youth, is not readily accepted by everyone, as there are those who dislike it due to its negative connotations for some teenagers. The labeling of *The Nuruls*, along with everything associated with the phrase, is seen by some as diminishing the status of girls among teenagers. As a result, some oppose and refuse to be labeled as *The Nuruls*, even though they may exhibit characteristics aligned with the label.

Although this is a relatively recent issue, it can be said that *The Nuruls* is a unique phenomenon among society, especially among teenagers. *The Nuruls* has subsequently become a representation of modern young women. Directly, this social group asserts its position in society through the distinctiveness they possess. Furthermore, the name *The Nuruls* has become a label for a community with specific characteristics, from clothing, food and beverages consumed, to the vehicles they used.

4. Novelty

Pop culture is a dynamic and rapidly evolving field of study, reflecting societal values, trends, and collective identities. This study introduces a new perspective by examining how pop culture phenomenon such as viral memes, serves as bridges or barriers between generational cohorts. Unlike the other studies, this research aims to describe things behind the viral community called *The Nuruls*. This community is unique because it was formed unintentionally, emerging from shared activities and characteristics among teenage girls in Indonesia, which led them to become a new social group in modern society.

Unlike the other studies, this research uses multimodal perspective in order to capture a deeper understanding towards the phenomenon. By using morphosyntactic and semiotic approach, this analysis aims to explore how the phenomenon commonly known as *The Nuruls* is represented in Indonesian society, particularly among young people. Morphological theory is employed to identify the word formation patterns of *The Nuruls*, while semiotic theory is used to obtain a comprehensive interpretation of the visual imagery in memes associated with this social group referred to *The Nuruls*. The findings of this research reveal that the identity of the youth labeled as *The Nuruls* shares similar characteristics, not only in the clothing they wear but also in the activities they engage in. These results provide a valuable contribution to understanding how social dynamics emerge through the phenomenon of *The Nuruls* in this era. Considering that no prior studies have explored this topic, this research gives a fresh perspective in the field of popular culture studies.

5. Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, it is concluded that the origin of this term comes from two languages which are English and Arabic. The first morpheme is “the” followed by “nurul” with addition of suffix *-s* to show its plurality. Meanwhile, the word “nurul” itself is actually mean “light” in Arabic. The use of Arabic name in Indonesian sociocultural context shows that *The Nuruls* are muslims. Besides, three memes are also discovered to identify social cognition related to *The Nuruls*. The memes were taken from two popular social medias, X and Instagram. To conclude, all of the datas show the representation of the nuruls as the pop culture on the social media. Therefore, In summary, the societal representation of *The Nuruls* does not entirely align with its literal meaning, which symbolizes goodness, illumination, and positive qualities rooted in Islamic values. Instead, it has evolved into a social label representing young, hijab-wearing women who lead a simple lifestyle, enjoy contemporary trends, and engage in enjoyable activities. This societal interpretation is shaped by collective agreement on social media, supported by both linguistic and visual analyses. Memes like "starter packs" highlight the shared understanding of *The Nuruls* as a distinct social group of teenage girls with similar lifestyles and appearances. Those memes also share similar representation of *The Nuruls*. It indicates that the social cognition regarding this phenomenon has become conventional. However, the label has sparked mixed reactions—some embrace it, while others reject it due to its perceived negative

connotations and potential to diminish their identity. Despite this, *The Nuruls* still represents a unique cultural phenomenon among teenagers, reflecting their distinctiveness and asserting their position in society. The group has become a symbol of modern young women, characterized by their clothing, food choices, and other lifestyle elements. This emerging social identity offers fresh insights into the dynamics of youth culture in contemporary society.

6. Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express the deepest gratitude to all those who contributed to the completion of this research. We would also like to acknowledge Universitas Pamulang for providing us with the resources and facilities necessary to conduct this study. Special thanks to the colleagues at the Sastra Indonesia Universitas Pamulang who helps us greatly to enhance our work.

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