

A Semiotic Study of the ‘Ruby-chan’ TikTok Trend and the Global Re-writing of Japanese Idol Culture

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Abstract

Social media has become a significant part of global society, serving not only as a communication tool but also as a platform for disseminating knowledge and entertainment. One of the most widely used platforms today is TikTok, which allows trends to spread rapidly through short-form video content. One viral trend featured a certain part from the Japanese idol song Ai♡Scream! with its popular tagline “Ruby-chan? Hai! Nani ga suki?” by the limited-time unit AiScReam. The song embodies elements of Japanese culture, particularly idol culture and kawaii aesthetics. However, as the trend spread globally, a process of recontextualization and cultural transformation occurred. This study aims to analyze how the original meaning of the content shifted, using Barthes’ semiotic theory. The data consists of five purposively selected TikTok videos accompanied by public comments. The results reveal that the original meanings—centered around cuteness and idol-style intimacy—were transformed into forms of parody, memes, and humor within global digital culture.

Keywords: *Japanese idol, recontextualization, Roland Barthes’s semiotic, TikTok, trend*

1. Introduction

The variety of Social Media platforms may give the users option to use them in every way social activities may be done (Bishqemi & Crowley, 2022); to reach people and interact with each other, sharing their thoughts via content publication (Koç, 2023). Nowadays the Social Media platform becoming the biggest news distributors (Presuel et al., 2019), that influences users not only as a consumer but for actively contribute to generate the news or content themselves (Manic, 2024).

The most significant social media, such as *TikTok*, *Instagram*, and *YouTube*, which had differences in characteristics, followed the demand of their users that wanted for messages (content) to be personalized (András & Papp, 2022). The three then built a system called algorithm that presents contents to users based on the system’s analysis about the user’s preferences and interests that could be studied by it in how frequent the social media accessed by the user and how they interact in a content (Presuel et al., 2019).

The increase of social media usage in this age, had and will make lots of content genres, which in Algorithm's work would be the abundant genre content be distributed to the right person in a specific way. There is no similar *page* (a personal place to presents contents in chain) for every user; content page would be different according to the users's preferences based on the algorithm's analysis. Though, in some case, in social media terminology there is named "viral content" , which meaning is at certain point where the content be liked by a lot of users, symbolized by the amount of "hearts" or "thumbs up" that had gained, and lots of users commented there, may made that content shows up in a certain user's page even though the genre was not that user's preference ((Hasanah et al., 2022); (Igben & Acchugbue, 2024). In other words, the content spreaded vastly, went through lots of users' page.

A social media platform that provide contents which is nowadays getting more popular than a certain other platform with similar characteristic, is *TikTok*. They both have a page that present a content in a form of short video, for *Instagram* they called their new form of video content as short as *reels*. Based on a Bishqemi & Crowley research (Bishqemi & Crowley, 2022), *Tiktok* and *Instagram* were compared, and the result said that the individual and total views were much higher for Tiktok rather than Instragram; "*TikTok* algorithm pushes out content more effectively than the Instagram algorithm does". *Tiktok* gave their users enough span of time to share stories in a form of short video for the other user to gain insight or entertainment of it (DONG & XIE, 2022). The short video then, said by Manic (Manic, 2024), not only exist for users to satisfy themselves with information or entertainment, but to engage them in a content and made higher possibilities of shares and comments which may help that short video to reach the other user's page. These kind of way then, will make the content spread faster, including a fever called "viral trend". As fever as said, it is a phenomenon within a community which re-generates a certain content either in a same or different way, but still use the same source, like the audio or the gesture (Galea, 2024), that happens in a rapid way and slowing down over time. It is said that a quick viral effectivity fade faster than the slower paced content (Sangiorgio et al., 2025). But even so, as the content went viral, then something about the content catch the public's attention more, and it is something that could be studied.

A content that generated in social media by the users, which they generate it for sharing experiences, would always have a language in it as a media to deliver their

meaning (Olojede et al., 2018), and language would always have a culture background ((Sagatova, 2022); (Pratama et al., 2022)). This means that every content have some culture attached on it, either are subtle or vivid; the way its written, the visual, the audio, those media are all able to be studied further as a cultural study, and TikTok has all of those. A primary sample that i used for this research, is one of the Tiktok's viral trend at the time, which Tiktok users' more familiar with a tag line “Ruby chan? Hai! Nani ga Suki?”

The sample that taken for this research was from a viral trend on Tiktok that picked a specific part of a Japanese music titled “愛♡スクリ～ム!” or in English version, “Ai♡Scream!”. This viral audio comes from a limited-time Japanese idol unit, *AiScReam*, that originated from an anime franchise, Love Live. In term of language, it is in Japanese and it may be studied further as it has another cultural object; idol in Japan. Not only that, as their music and performance went viral on *Tiktok*, some user generate a content that used the very same music or the edited one and even re-generate their gestures, thus then formed a new meaning for the trend; these are the reason for why this research use *Ai♡Scream* trend as the study object.

This research studies about denotative, connotative, and myth meaning of a particular Japanese content and its' public comments by the theory of Barthes' semiotic, first by studying meaning of the original performer of the content which was *AiScReam*, then later use the understanding to examine the probability of recontextualization by analyzing the available *AiScReam*-related TikTok content generated by other users accompanied by public comments; are those related content have the same exact meaning in denotative, connotative, and hence resulting to the same myth construction, or is any differences. Later on, the differences are the indicator of even a slight chance of meaning recontextualization by TikTok user re-generate or commenting the content in their own perspective and preferences.

There are numbers of research related to the denotative, connotative, or myth concept adopted from Barthes' semiotic theory, but for a research containing of how a TikTok trend evolute and had recontextualization within the perspective of three concept sign-meaning of Barthes' is still limited.

2. Method and Theory

2.1 Method

This study conducted in qualitative descriptive approach to analyze how a viral trend on *TikTok* reflects and transforms aspects of Japanese culture, particularly idol culture and language usage. The primary data in this research is a viral *TikTok* audio featuring the phrase “*Ruby-chan? Hai! Nani ga suki?*”, derived from the song “*Ai ∞Scream!*” performed by the limited-time Japanese idol unit *AiScReam*, a subproject of the *Love Live!* franchise. The study focuses on how users on *TikTok* reinterpreted and regenerate this audio in their own content, forming several viral trends in a period of time.

The data collected through sampling by observing and documenting various *TikTok* videos that use the viral audio during its peak trend period; late March until around May of 2025 where the trend gain more and more attention of *TikTok* users by how high the engagement level of likes and comments of each viral “*Ai ∞Scream!*” song related content, showing how this trend’s growth toward wider users’ preference. Within range of the peak trend period then five of *TikTok* video contents were found, accessed and collected by the researcher within thirteen days namely on 1st until 13th of June 2025, and the selected were purposively based on engagement level (likes, comments, shares) and the degree to which the content video recontextualized the original audio (Fayziev & Turgunov, 2025); from identical meaning to partly identical then to recontextualize and lastly to meaning mutation. While needed, screenshots, transcripts, and behavioral patterns were recorded and categorized to identify emerging themes.

The analysis were performed through semiotic reading using Roland Barthes’ semiotic theory, focusing on denotation, connotation, and myth in the visual and auditory elements of the content. Additionally, patterns in the recontextualization of the audio were examined to observe how meaning evolves across cultural and social interpretations within the *TikTok* platform.

2.2 Theory

This study used Barthes’ theory of semiotics (Barthes, 1964) as the primary analytical tool. Semiotic, is a study of signs or symbols that could have meaning as they may represent object, feeling, idea, and things that beyond the sign or the symbols itself (Tresnasari, 2019). Barthes’ semiotic however, outlines how signs carry both denotative

(literal) and connotative (associated or implied) meanings, and how these signs, when circulated in media, construct myths—culturally sustained ideologies embedded in everyday symbols. This framework were used to interpret how TikTok users reproduce the AiScReam's audio, not only as a literal linguistic act but as a cultural performance embedded in J-pop idol imagery and Japanese *kawaii* culture. The following are the key components of Barthes' theory used in this research:

A. Sign

In Barthes' semiotics, a sign is the fundamental unit of meaning, composed of two inseparable elements: the signifier and the signified. The signifier refers to the physical form of the sign, such as a word, image, sound, or gesture—essentially what we perceive. The signified, on the other hand, is the conceptual idea or meaning that the signifier points to in the minds of the audience. The relationship between these two components is what creates meaning.

This component helps to break-down signifier and signifier that could be examined within the content chosen. Later the content will be analyzed by denotation and connotation concept showed by the signifier either within the video content or the video comment.

B. Denotation

Denotation represents the literal or direct meaning of a sign, without involving any cultural or emotional interpretation. It is the surface-level understanding that tends to be widely recognized and agreed upon.

For the object of research, this component helps to understand the lyrics of the song itself and literally know the initial meaning of the lyric trend. For example (see table 1 below, number 3 and 4), as the singer asked for a favorite flavor in the line “Nani ga suki?” then answered by the the line of “Chokominto yori mo a-na-ta” shows that the singer preferably tells who is their favorite person instead, which is *you*, the fans. This could be a sign of flirting, but as the intial singer themselves were in an idol group, hence it was considered as their way to love their fans within the song.

For the sample of research, this component helps to understand co-text of what the user doing in their video content. For example on point 4.3 A below, the user generated a content that denotatively show she was doing the song and performance of the

AiScReam's. Later on if needed, this component will be used for supporting myth construction of the content comments.

C. Connotation

Connotation goes beyond the literal meaning and brings in the layers of social, emotional, and cultural associations attached to the sign. This level of meaning is subjective and shaped by the viewer's context, background, and cultural understanding.

For the object of research, this component helps to understand the meaning by Japanese cultural aspect that merged with personal experience. For example (see table 2 below), a person could understand by themselves while watching a person do a cute pose while talking in cute high-pitched voice, meaning they are currently acting cute especially for a specific reason, and this was what Ruby-chan character did on the performance stage; to be the cute-persona idol, which in Japan known as *kawaii*.

For the sample of research, this component helps to understand context of what the user did in generated the content. For example on point 4.3 A below, by how high the engagement level of the content, she becoming viral while copying AiScReam's voice and act; the trend has formed, visibly by how next sample of research did similar thing and went viral nevertheless (see point 4.3 B below). Later on if needed, this component will be used for supporting myth construction of the content comments.

D. Myth

The final layer in Barthes' model is myth, which refers to the broader ideological or cultural messages carried by signs. A myth naturalizes certain meanings and makes them appear common, universal, and unquestioned.

To support the semiotic reading, the study also references media culture theory and digital cultural flows, particularly how cultural elements are decontextualized, recorded, and repurposed in digital platforms ((Appadurai, 1949); (Jenkins, 2006). This supports the understanding of how Japanese cultural signs are reshaped in global social media landscapes.

For the object of research, this component helps to understand the public opinion about the song and stage performance by the comments available. See on table 3, that there are two major public opinion which were considered by the researcher as hatred and

praise comments; the hatred was concerned more about the real person and not the persona, while the praise more concerned as otherwise. The differences occurred because of both understanding has their own perspective that make sense in each own side, making them irresistible for denying it.

For the sample of research, this component helps to understand the public opinion and awareness of the trend by sampling two or three on-top comments on each content to be representation; is the trend acceptable by public, given the change of its' initial meaning? By this main question the myth of Barthes' theory was required.

By the use of Barthes' semiotics theory, especially on these four key components, the re-constructualization could be potrayed clearly, initially by study the object of research first which is the Ai♡Scream! Song either denotatively or connotatively then study the evolution of the song content meaning by examine five pusposively sampled TikTok video content accompanied by public comments within Barthes' myth theory. This study also considers aspects of language and identity, particularly the function of katakana in Japanese to represent foreignness or stylized language.

3. Literature Review

The behaviors of the Tiktok's users seemingly interesting to be studied. Three research that took *Tiktok*'s user behavior as their sample, first was that conducted by Ovalia, et al. (Ovalia et al., 2024), that took some Indonesian content creator's content as samples that have blasphemous comment within, which conclude sarcasm, insult, hate speech, and blasphemey. They analyzed the comments which categorized as one of the blasphemous language in semiotic way, presented the data in a table, including form, meaning, and function. To strengthen the data, they attach images that screenshoted the content and comments. The research then resulted to Indonesian user's certain manner to a certain content, which was the researcher said as "This suggests an injustice in the use of freedom of expression, where some individuals use the platform to spread hatred and intolerance." This research evoke interest to develop a similar kind of study, as what will be provided here in this research.

Second research that has Tiktok's users as one of their sample, was Fayziev & Turgunov's research (Fayziev & Turgunov, 2025). They studied the "*naturally occurring textual content*" from *Tiktok* and some other platform, which showed that the community

somehow show a behavior of reshaping an existed word for it's meaning (Interpret in another way), which they call this process as "recontextualization". The semantic shift within a word may occurred, and this phenomenon intrigued the researcher to study the term and application of recontextualization more further.

Third research that have similar object study sampled, was conducted by Huttayavilaiphan (Huttayavilaiphan, 2024) that studied some Thailand *Tiktokers* that presented some of Thai's culture in a medium of bilingualism. They compared the data they sampled, which mostly the samples use Thailand language and English, but some samples use a tertiary language such as Korean, or Chinese, or Norwegian. This research found a significant role of bilingualism and multilingualism to facilitate intercultural dialogue and reach diverse audiences. They said that *TikTok* as social media platform gave contributes to shaping cultural narratives and identities. These findings then be the sole information about how *TikTok* influences the users to be a content generator, while they may present it in cultural nuances too, with language as the main tool to convey those ideas, and how English as the international language could help within the process of convey the meaning.

Those three previous study conducted in qualitative research, inform lots of essential findings that assist much of the part of this research. Firstly they gave a lot of contribution by give the idea to study more about social media: the user's broad behavior, role of language, and recontextualization. Secondly, they gave a conceptual image of conducting a research and what theoretical framework should this research took. And thirdly, by Ovalia, et al.'s research, it gave away a step to construct the written material for this research. The overall three previous study that taken were given much contribute to decide important things in this research, and with that i wanted to disseminate the ground understanding within the three in this research.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Japanese Cultural and Language

A. Japanese Idol Culture

As a part of entertainment industry, Idol cultural has been developed in some countries and gains a lot of popularity among their people in nation or even international. But even so, the term of 'idol' itself emerged first in Japan. In a research conducted by Wu

(Wu, 2023) about Idol, Japan as the pioneer of the term, states that "Idol means things or people to admire that have enthusiastic pursuits. By those people then shared their growth process with fans. Existence itself is the sole requirement as a charismatic character." The people that time, when the first idol was born, around early of 1970's, were in post-war condition, to a point where that the idol existence were ought to bring restoration to Japan (Masayoshi, 2016). The existence of the idols then spreading across Japan and even to neighbor nation like Korea and China, brought not only impacted positively into a nation's economic but also brought a higher rate of happiness in national range (Wu, 2023).

Haecke (Haecke, 2020) said, Japan back in time have its own idol phenomenon, *aidoru genshō*, that some scholars highlight three essentials characteristic of it. The first one, that the idol have an image that somehow related to a character either from *manga*, *anime*, or video games, which is shaping the idols to what the public wants. Whoever do the shaping, in this idol phenomenon called as *jimusho*, and this is the second characteristic of the phenomenon. Jimusho, or a management team for the idols are responsible about the training like singing, dancing, and all related to the performance of the idols in stage. Everything about idol were generated by Jimusho. And for the third characteristic of the phenomenon, is that Jimusho picked up their talent in a range of 'fairly untalented' and 'having talent just above average' which back in the time, people tend to see the interesting points in their idols whose are struggle and may see their growth afterwards. In this modern age however, an idol is not strictly managed by some other external input. We may see lots of idols nowadays have their own personality showed when off stage, even when they have their fans around them.

Idol phenomenon, as what had mentioned previously, we may imply that even though modern people are open to the idols' real persona, when on stage the fans still wanted their idol to be in their idealized idol; their artificial image. One of the idol group that apply this point, which are personas that emphasize cuteness, approachability, and emotional sincerity, is the viral limited-time idol unit AiScReam, associated with the Love Live! Franchise. We may see on TikTok, the "Ruby-chan? Hai! Nani ga suki?" trend, which comes from one of their music, reproduces these characteristics through exaggerated gestures, high-pitched tone, and stylized clothing, even when reenacted by non-Japanese users. This reperformance shows how the idol cultural aesthetic has been

globalized and adapted through platform-specific media. To further the understanding, this is an external link to show the on stage of the group, video by subthepp on Tiktok, <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSk8oN1Gd/>. And these below are the lyrics in Japanese, *romaji* or in alphabet, and an Interpreting to English that derived from *genius.com*, popular as a media in form of website for provide lyrics.

Table 1 AiScReam's Viral Song in Lyrics

Number of line	Lyric in Japanese	Lyric in Romaji	English interpretation
1	ルビィちゃん？	Ruby-chan?	Ruby-chan?
2	はい！	Hai!	Yes~?
3	何が好き？	Nani ga suki?	What do you like?
4	チョコミント よりも あ- な-た	Chokominto yori mo a-na-ta	Chocolate mint, but I like you more!
5	歩夢ちゃん？	Ayumu-chan?	Ayumu-chan?
6	はい！	Hai!	Yes?
7	何が好き？	Nani ga suki?	What do you like?
8	ストロベリーフレイバー よりも あ-な-た	Sutoroberii fureibaa yori mo a-na-ta	Strawberry flavour, but I like you more!
9	四季ちゃん？	Shiki-chan?	Shiki-chan?
10	はい！	Hai!	Yes?
11	何が好き？	Nani ga suki?	What do you like?
12	クッキー and クリーム よりも あ-な-た	Kukkii and ku- riimu yori mo a- na-ta	Cookies and cream, but I like you more
13	みんな？	Minna?	Everyone?
14	はい！	Hai!	Yes?
15	何が好き？	Nani ga suki?	What do you like?
16	モチロン大好き 愛スクリム	Mochiron daisuki aisukuriimu	Of course, I love you, Aiscream

B. The Use of Katakana

Katakana is a type of written word in Japanese ((Nurohmah, 2019); (Limantoro & Atma, 2024)) which usually used as loaned words from English and another foreign words (Stokes, 2023). In paper by Walker (Walker, 2010), Katakana intended to exist as pronunciation guide for Chinese character loan words. The evolution of its usage, was resulted by the "unclear purpose" in modern age after being dominated by hiragana, a standard Japanese written type, for Kanji pronunciation. Therefore, Katakana that

originally used for guiding Chinese character, now Katakana used for representing written western loan-words, and even onomatopoeic expressions and specified terminology (Harun & Biduri, 2024).

The Kana, Hiragana and Katakana, were emerged in 9th century for representing Japanese's sound. It's usage were different at the time, and in this age, their usage evolved. This then be one of a cultural background for Japanese language, that if one want to write an English word in Japanese, they should write it in Katakana type rather than the Hiragana. Their usage are different. For a better understanding, a part of the viral song would be attached below:

ルビィちゃん？(Ruby-chan?)

はい！(Hai!)

何が好き？(Nani ga suki?)

チョコミント よりも あ-な-た (Chokominto yori mo a-na-ta)

The strokes of each character are different, therefore to distinguish the difference, some of the characters are highlighted. The bold stands for Katakana, the blue highlight stands for Kanji, and the non-bold stands for Hiragana. For Hiragana and Kanji, they basically denotes eachother, so if in Hiragana, as the standard writing, there is a Kanji that could represented a same sound, the Kanji may replace the Hiragana. The kanji 何 stands for the form of Hiragana なに (nani), and 好 stands for the form of Hiragana す (su) if it followed afterward by the Hiragana き (ki), because it might be read as よ (yo), こ (ko) and even more, depends of the character written afterward of the Kanji. For the bolded one that stands as Katakana, ルビィ or in English 'Ruby', even though in this context "Ruby" refers to a Japanese woman name, but its origin was from English, so it is written in Katakana, and does the "chocomint", too, which written in Katakana as チョコミント. The thing that need to be put attention to, is the way that the majority of Japanese people tend to leave a final sound in most of English word. For instance, chocomint, they would add an "o" sound in the end, which is not only to fill the gap in the song, but it is the cultural point in Japanese language.

C. The Meaning of "-Chan"

In Japan, based on a research by Sekiguchi & Ikeda (Sekiguchi & Ikeda, 2025), there is an informal system applied in Japanese organization where people give eachother

a specific honorific based on the year of entry that a member had joined the group, and the system divide the relationship in three : as a *senpai* or senior (the earlier joined member), as *doki* or peers (collague that joined in the same period), and *kouhai* or junior (the later joined member). Not only this system shaped to give moral and ethical attitude to the members, but also to understand a cultural value that a *senpai* seen as a leader or guarder and the *kouhai* as follower and obeyer, and their roles expected to fulfill symbiosis mutualism of support and respect to both respective party. This kind of seniority may built a family-like enviroment in work and maintain order to still be structured while harmony got constructed. In family itself works this kind of seniority, but generally much leisure, where the younger may called their older family member with a specified honorific suffix, *-chan*, and it is symbolize as a closeness as a family.

Japan, In terms of honorific, generally if someone called someone older, or still not familiar, or on polite-formal term, in the end of their name there will be an addtional honorific suffix, *(-san)* (Šoucová, 2005). The name that person would called usually were their familial name and not their given name. For example, if a person passed through their classmate which was not a close friend to them, for instance the classmate's name was Majika Karen, then the person would likely to address Karen as Majika-san. Another case of this honorific state, that if a person have their co-worker as their friend, they may called them either their familial name or given name, either adding *(-san)* or other, because there is no rule attached in relationship of collagues or friends.

The suffix *(-chan)* itself is a honorific that as if someone who called the person with that honorific is treating them like a child (Bois et al., 2011). It is as if reflecting a close relationship between the speaker to the object, either they are family related or a close companion. This means, the younger may called their elder with this suffix and this reflects to how close the relationship between them. But In general, suffix *-chan* fitted for girls or woman that younger, and for boys or men that younger generally a speaker called their name with a suffix, *(-kun)* (Dewi & Wedayanti, 2022).

The viral trend of "Ruby-chan", honorific suffix *(-chan)* reflecting the speaker closeness to Ruby, then to eachother, by denoting it. The three are in a same group idol, so they are companions, regardless their age. The image that *Jimusho* or the agency had made for them were also the reason to these behaviors; to show the fans that they have a close relationship.

4.2 Barthes' Semiotics In The Viral Trend

As the lyrics that had provided above in point 4.1, we may infer that the lyrics are repeated somehow, and this what it makes public interested. As we know that the lyric uses Japanese to convey their meaning, which some people may not know the actual meaning. So with repeated lyrics, it helps audiences engage themselves in the music and being more likeable by public (Nunes et al., 2015).

A. Sign and Denotation

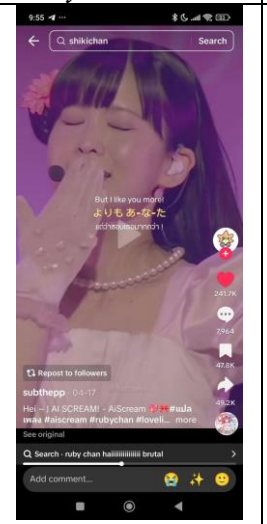
The context of the viral trend, that there are three idols in a group that perform in a stage, calling to each other, asking what flavor do they like. They then answered with a certain flavor they like but somehow later on they mention *you*, the fans, as their favorite.

In the lyrics, some part of it share a same word class, and some phrase found by researcher were repeated. The word classified by: (1) *Ruby-chan*, *Ayumu-chan*, *Shiki-chan*, and *Minna*, as a sign and denotatively as the subject being called to be asked what is their favorite flavor, (2) *Hai!* as a sign and denotatively as the response of the subject that has been called, and this phrase has repeated in the trend lyrics for four times, (3) *Nani ga Suki?* as a sign and denotatively stands for the question that need to be answered, and this phrase were repeated in the trend for four times, (4) *Chocominto*, *Sutoroberii fureibaa*, and *Kukkii and kuriimu*, as a sign and denotatively as the answer of the question, (5) *Yori mo a-na-ta*, as a sign and denotatively as the ultimate or the real answer of the question, and this phrase were repeated in the trend for three times, and (6) *Mochiron daisuki aisukuriimu*, as a sign and denotatively as the fans and the three idols' answer for the question, which is the name of the idol group itself.

B. Sign and Connotation

The idols that are in an image of a *kawaii* (cute) or *kuuru* (cool). In the subthepp's content video that previously had been mentioned above (see point 4.1 A), the video showed the three idols' gesture which they done it in different style. For Ruby-chan, she showed more *kawaii* and childish side, the signifier was in her high energy and high-pitches voice with some cute gestures. For Ayumu-chan, she showed more moderate *kawaii* side with lower pitch voice but still in high energy for made some extensive gesture as similar as Ruby-chan. Shiki-chan then, she showed more of her *kuuru* side rather than

kawaii by made her voice low yet with appealing gestures. Below here is the comparison of their gestures based on their performance that recorded and published by subthepp on Tiktok (the link had been provided above):

Table 2 AiScReam's Gesture on Stage		
Ruby-chan	Ayumu-chan	Shiki-chan
		

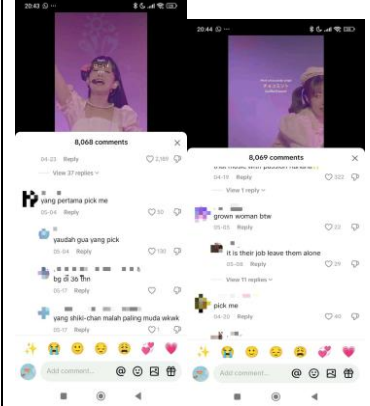
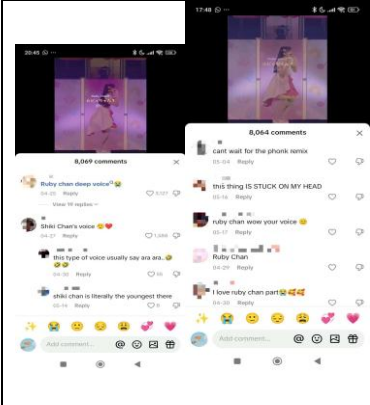
As an idol, whose image are determined by the *Jimusho* or the company agency, the three were an ideal idols that had fulfil the idols' image by done the performance, and this was the concept, or in Barthes' semiotic called as the signified. The entertainment industry were not only there to entertain, but to hold the consumer to stay being the jimusho consumer, let them spend their money more (Wang, 2022), by characterizing their idols based on what consumer likes.

C. Myth

The public's point of view toward this viral AiScReam's performance was variated not only to one, but more. By what had showed in the table 2 above, the three idols' gesture were mostly intended to appeal the fans, by done some *kawaii* movement, like put a hand to the mouth and sent a flying kiss that done by Ayumu-chan, put both hands under the chin while showed a childish expression that done by Ruby-chan, and put a finger toward their own lips that done by Shiki-chan. These gestures and their voices within the performance let the public's opinion surged with diversity. In the video that published by subthepp on *Tiktok*, the comment section showed some opinion in

Indonesian and English, and those opinions then categorized by the researcher in two; a group of users that said the idols were cute, and with these comments showed that they praised and hence they value what the idols had done on stage (Morton et al., 2020), and a group of user's that said the idols were *pick me girl*, a girl that obsess to gain attention for the opposite sex, and with these comments showed that they mocked and hated the idols had done on stage (Feree, 2024). The researcher would presented the data in the table below.

Table 3. Myth Constructed of AiScReam's Performance

Screen Captured Comments	The Comments	Category and The Sign Interpretation
	"yang pertama pick me" (the first one (Ruby-chan)) is pick me). "pick me" "grown woman btw"	Hatred comments. The two first user's attach "pick me", which in Barthes' myth, or in public understanding, means someone that exaggerating a behavior to get attention, especially to other gender. The other one satirely commented, that such behavior is not appropriate in a certain age.
	"Shiki Chan's voice [panting] ❤️ " "ruby chan wow your voice[blush-smile]" "I love ruby chan part [cry]"	Praise comments. The first two comment weren't clearly said their meaning, but in Barthes' myth, the first comment add a love emoticon was said it all, and for the second comment they said 'wow' with a blush-smiling emoticon, which were neutral feedback (may be differently interpreted). While the third one, the word "love" and the emoticons, even though one was a crying, it is infered as a happy crying, and thus it means as a praise.

The existence of this AiScReam's performance gained a lot of attention of TikTok users, therefore lots of them re-generate the viral video, either the cute voice, cute gesture or even re-generate the meaning and indirectly evolve the trend, which like humors,

memes, and pranks, even though the trend intended to be kawaii. This then varied more of public's opinion toward the viral AiScReam's viral trend.

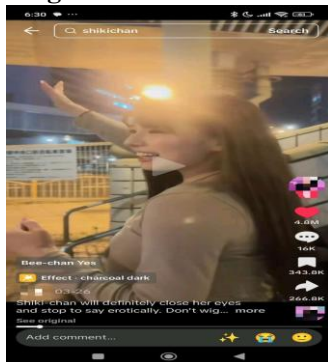
4.3 Trend Mutation and Recontextualization on TikTok in Barthes' Semiotic

Approach

Five content videos from TikTok were gathered to be studied. Each would had information of their own respective of upload date, total loves, comments, and shares first before being studied. For making it brief, the researcher abbreviate 'thousand' to 'K' and 'million' to 'M'.

A. The Trend Cover

Image 1. AiScReam's Performance Cover



A content video that uploaded on 26th of March, <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSk9c7JLS/>, had reached 4 M likes, with 16,4 K of comments and 263 K of shares. In the video, there is a woman that sung and acted cute copying AiScReam's performance, along with the notable voice shifting that matched with the respective three idols that previously mentioned (see point 4.2 B).

In Barthes' denotative level, the signifiers above surged in the video may be inferred that the user made a sing and dance content in TikTok based on AiScReam's performance. In connotative level however, AiScReam's performance became a trend where the three idols' voice and act copied by the user and went viral with it.



Image 2. Myth Constructed in the Performance Cover

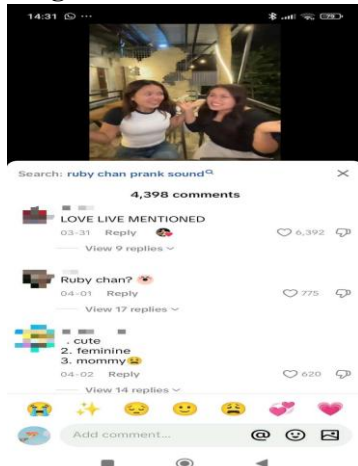
To see the public reaction and understanding toward the trend, Barthes' myth were used. In the comment section of the content video, there were words uttered in English by some users that may represent public's response(s).

"i love japanese people with the voice like this"
"ruby chan [excited], ayumu-chan [shy], shiki-chan [flat]"

The first opinion clearly state their likes for the user content, which generally said the japanese voice are beautiful in a way. The second user then, tried to mimic the user's gesture and voice tone in a text. Those two's comments then represent the public's understanding about the flow of the trend, which is done in it's origin way; sing and dance cover.

B. The Take-Turns

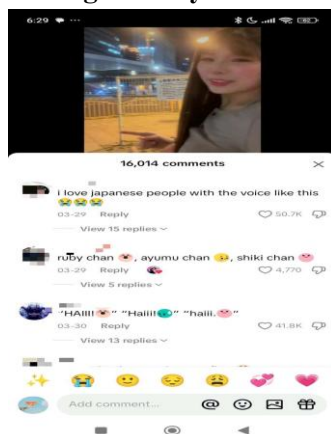
Image 3. AiScReam's Gesture Cover



A content video that uploaded on 30th of March, <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSk93DGyJ/>, had reached 1 M likes, with 4,4 K of comments and 96 K of shares. In the video, there are three women that used a specified part of AiScReam's song, the "Ruby-chan? Hai!" part, take-turns to took video of eachother while doing some gestures but not as similar as the AiScReam's.

In Barthes' denotation level, the signifiers above surged in the video may be infered that the user made a dance content in TikTok with AiScReam's viral song. In connotative level however, AiScReam's song became a trend where the gestures were freely generated by the user and went viral with it.

Image 4. Myth Constructed in the Gesture Cover



To see the public reaction and understanding toward the trend, Barthes' myth were used. In the comment section of the content video, there were words uttered in English by some users that may represent public's response(s).

"LOVE LIVE MENTIONED"

"Ruby chan? [excited]"

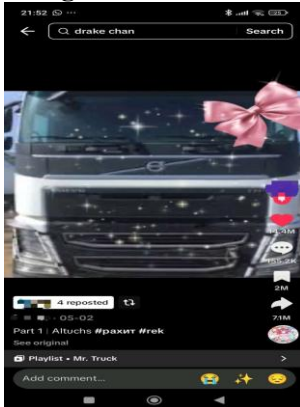
"1. cute 2. feminine 3. mommy [tired]"

The first comment said that the content mentioned Love Live which is the anime that the idols comes from. The second comment expressed how the sound of "Ruby chan" in the audio would looked like in a text with an excited emoticon. The third comment stated their opinion about the people that take-turns in the content. Those three comments then represent the public's understanding about the flow of

the trend, which is it modified in gestures, and they mostly agreed with the change as showed in the engagement level of users that were high in this video content.

C. The Shouting Cover

Image 5. AiScReam's Shouting Cover



A content video that uploaded on 8th of April, <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSk93gotM/>, had reached 5 M likes, with 89 K of comments and 1,2 M of shares. In the video, there is a woman that sung AiScReam's viral song, which specified on the "Ruby-chan? Hai!" part (see table 1) but with full force or shouting in some part.

In Barthes' denotative level, the signifiers above surged in the video may be inferred that the user made a sing content in TikTok based on AiScReam's viral song, but in different way. In connotative level however, AiScReam's song became a trend where the lyrics were freely sung in every way possible by the user and went viral with it.

Image 6. Myth Constructed in the Shouting Cover



To see the public reaction and understanding toward the trend, Barthes' myth were used. In the comment section of the content video, there were words uttered in English by some users that may represent public's response(s).

"people in headphones are yall alive?"

"Ruby-chan:

[Insert an image that shows a person raised an eyebrow]"

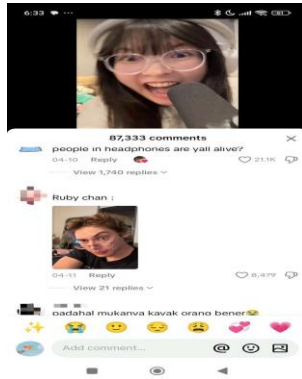
"padahal mukanya kaya orang bener [cry]" (their righteous appearance and their act are so different[cry])

The three comments represent the public shock about the content, not expecting a change in the kawaii viral trend. Even though the three comments in literal way were criticized the user, but those were written in a humor tone, which the public treats the content as a humor too. The trend then have some recontextualization and the public agree toward this

change of the trend, showed in the engagement level of users that were high in this video content.

D. The Mutation of Purpose

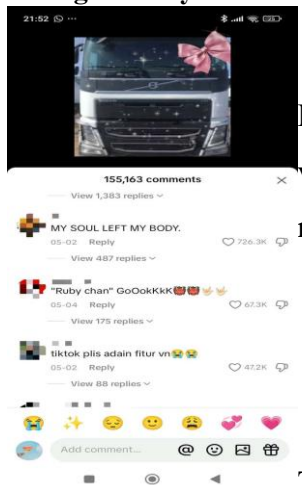
Image 7. AiScReam's Truck Meme



A content video that uploaded on 2nd of May, <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSk9T6gHK/>, had reached 14 M likes, with 155 K of comments and 7,1 M of shares. In the video, there were images of trucks, gasolines, locomotives, and charcoals with some editing and effects added along with the AiScReam's viral song but in a certain part of it were changed into the trucks' and locomotives' loud honk.

In Barthes' denotative level, the signifiers above surged in the video may be inferred that the user made a humor content out of AiScReam's viral song on TikTok. In connotative level however, the user made a meme trend content, a trend where images communicated through social media to bring fun and lighten a cultural or social issue (Rahmayani & Febriarini, 2021), of the performance, that instead of a real person, inanimate objects were the one who asked and answered what do they like to each other, edited with a cute pink bow, responded with a loud honk, and showed the picture of their favorite; the user made a meme and went viral with it.

Image 8. Myth Constructed in the Meme Trend



To see the public reaction and understanding toward the trend, Barthes' myth were used. In the comment section of the content video, there were words uttered in English by some users that may represent public's response(s).

"MY SOUL LEFT MY BODY."
"Ruby-chan" GoOokKkK [ogre][ogre][metal][metal]"
"tiktok plis adain fitur vn [cry][cry]" (tiktok please enable voice note feature[cry][cry])

The three comments differently state their thoughts yet same humor atmosphere. The first comment mentioned their shock, metaphorly states that their

soul had left from their body. The second comment expressed how the sound of "Ruby chan" in the audio would look like in a text with unstagnantly written words followed by ogre and metal emoticons to highlight the loud sound. The third comment stated if in any case TikTok could add voice note like WhatsApp to record their voice and share the shock and fun about the content to others in comment section. The trend then had recontextualized all the way from cuteness to memes that brings rather laugh than awe. Showed by how high the engagement level of users in this content then researcher may infer the public's agreement toward the trend mutation in its purpose.

E. The Sequel Of Purpose Mutation

Image 9. AiScReam's Prank Trend



A content video that uploaded on 17th of May, <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSkQfoRnP/>, had reached 1 M likes, with 9,5 K of comments and 137 K of shares. In the video, there were two men that used the viral AiScReam's song but in a certain part of it were changed into voices of horse's neighing and elephant's trumpet. One man took the video and take the role as the asker and one other man as the answerer, but after answering he pulled the asker's hair and showed an angry facial expression.

In Barthes' denotative level, the signifiers above surged in the video may be inferred that the user made a prank content out of AiScReam's viral song on TikTok. In connotative level however, the user made a prank trend content, which came as a practical jokes, of AiScReam's viral performance, that instead of being cute, the men were having fun in their own way and showed their expression freely (as mentioned in point 4.1 A where idols' should stay in Jimusho's character image when in stage).



Image 10. Myth Constructed in the Prank Trend

To see the public reaction and understanding toward the trend, Barthes' myth were used. In the comment section of the content video, there were words uttered in English by some users that may represent public's response(s).

"ga belajar dari kesalahan [cry][cry]" (not learn from previous mistakes [cry][cry])

"bisa"nya gak trust issue [cry]" (how come they didn't had trust issue [cry])

The two comments uniformly state a same thought, and that was about how the answerer whose angry weren't stop at the time after what treatment they received previously, which was a prank. In this matter then, the public were responded not in a negative way. Those, and showed by how high the engagement level of users in this content then researcher may infer the public's agreement toward the trend mutation in its purpose once more.

5. Conclusion

The viral trend of AiScReam's performance was indeed had some recontextualization, showed in chronically way from March until May of 2025 represented by the five videos above. The context were shifted from time to time, from cute to meme, and the public majority was welcomed the shifts by various comments. However, another Japanese cultural value recognized on the original content were not significantly changed, as the users main attention were the whole trend and not specified to a certain cultural issue, such as the usage of Katakana for Western and foreign language and the honorific suffix (-chan) that symbolize closeness, that had been studied in this research. But as a literature student, the cultural aspects is also important due to their career prospecr as a translator whose need to undersatnd each languages' culture. background

For further studies, this research may be a reference as starting point. The viral song lyrics mentioned as repeated and that was the reason for the song went viral; songs that repeated in lyrics, although public may don't understand due to language limitation, it is might be studied further to learn more about human behavior toward pattern, particularly in music.

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