

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of the Study

Language is a communication system that is agreed and used by people to interact in life. Language contributes in every aspect of human's life. It makes language included as the culture's part or in short language is the culture's product, which means that the correlation between language and culture had was a strong one. It makes language and culture are two things that can not be separated from the society.

Language can also be found on signs and vice versa for language and symbol were related to each other. We make symbolics action thousand of times. Such as : Shaking, smiling , winking, clapping, and many more. Moreover, we can also find many kinds of sign everywhere, shops, street, railway station, or even ceremonial events. It can conclude that we were surrounded by sign and it can not be separated from our life. Like language does, sign is also a part of culture because most of culture aspects use sign to express the terms.

Mostly, in expressing the ideas and qualities, all ethnics use signs. Semiotics concerns with everything that could be taken as signs. Semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as signs in everyday speech, but also of anything which

stands for something else. Nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign (Chandler, 2007:21).

Semiotics which also called as semiology, is the study of signs and signs-using behavior. It also studies about how sign conveys the meaning and all of the relations between them; way of function the relationships with other sign, dispatch and acceptance by users. In semiotics, a sign is something that can be interpreted as having a meaning, which is therefore able to deliver the information to others interpreting or decoding.

Sign could work through any kind of the visual sense like the things that can be seen and the meanings can be understood clearly, such as a word uttered with a specific meaning or maybe unintentional like a symptom which usually used by doctor to their patient. Sign usually takes the form of images, words, or gesture, or even objects. Briefly, every sign stands for something.

In the process of interpreting text of art and literature, the researcher has to construct the meaning. Text of art and literature are not only books, but it could also dance, ceremony, tradition, and folklore (Endraswara, 2013:37). In Batak Toba culture, there are many traditional ceremonies. Considering the use of signs within the culture, *mangongkal holi* ceremony is one of the examples.

Mangongkal holi could be defined as a bataknese family that digging up again the bones of their dead parents, then move it to a better place and reunite the bodies in a statue or bigger place. *Mangongkal Holi* defined as digging up the bones of people who have died. In Batak language, *holi* means bone, also named as *saring-saring* or the skull of people who have died (Tinambunan 2010:129).

One of the examples was a Bataknese wanted to dig up their father's bones when their mother died as the mother's last request and move it to their ancestor statue. This cultural ceremony of *mangongkal holi* started with digging up the bones from cemetery that is used as a temporary cemetery. After that, the bones will be placed to a new place, commonly it made from cement and known as *Tambak* or *Tugu Marga*.

Mangongkal holi ceremony is important because it is not only about the digging up the bones and move it to a place that is considered as a better place but also to maintain Batak Toba tradition. During the ceremony, there are so many symbols, ways, and activities that are related one to another and have different meanings. Bataknese believe that every event happens in life should be celebrated with difference ceremony. Bataknese also believe that death is not the end of human life's journey. Otherwise, it is the beginning to reach the perfection. As By doing this ceremony, the family will reach *hasangapon* (glory) to all the *marga* (clan) or descent.

One of the ceremony examples that can help the family to reach the perfection was *mangongkal holi*. In *Mangongkal Holi* ceremony, symbol is used to express the purpose, feelings, gratitude, respects, and prayers. For example: *Ulos Panampin* (cloth). *Ulos* is a woven cloth in form of stole. *Ulos* does not has magical meaning. *Ulos* symbolizes the hope of human to God that represents love, in *mangongkal holi* ceremony *ulos* is used to take in the bones and it also shows the sincerity s of *Tulang* to a daughter that bring about *mangongkal holi* ceremony. *Ulos* will be given by *tulang* to daughter to take in the bones. It is a symbol that *tulang* shows his love to *tulang* and the ceremony will be held with the hope to God. So, cloth is the symbol of sincerity as described in *umpasa* below:

Tulang :

Ijuk pangihot ni hodong

Ulos pangihot ni holong

Meaning :

Tulang give *Ulos* as the binder of love between *Tulang* and daughter. Because *bataknesse* will not give *Ulos* to others if there is no love between



FIGURE 1.1 The bones were place in white cloth after being cleaned up

Mangongkal holi is a death ceremony that usually executed by the family that has enough money and energy because *mangongkal holi* will consume both money and energy in a big quantity. But it does not mean that this ceremony may did by the wealthy family only. This ceremony can be done by any kind of family as long as they have enough money,time, and energy. Moreover there are *bataknesse* who do not execute this ceremony because of economic problem.

Silalahi & Pardede (2019) conducted a research in Textual meaning and function of *juhut* giving in Batak Toba wedding tradition. They found that *Bataknesse* always asked for God"s blessing in all customary activities. In this research, they found out five functions of *Paranak* expression during the ceremony they were : a) Thanks to God because of the supplication of prayer b) happiness c) giving d) prayer and e) response to prayer. There were also five local

wisdoms that could be found in this research they were : a) mutual respect and expression of gratitude for God's blessings b) senses of belonging and loving one to another c) humble attitude.

The lack amount of people that are aware to the culture will give a negative impact to the young generation. Because it all started from the old generation, if they do not have a proper understanding about the culture, it will make them stop doing that because they do not feel attached to the culture. As the result, their children as the young generation will not know well or not interested in learning Batak Toba culture. Some even can not speak Batak Toba language. As an addition, we can find a group of people or community in the other countries which learnt about Batak Toba culture. It is possible that we could loss our culture if we do not do the revitalization.

Another research was done by Frederica et.al (2016) about materials of the Batak Toba *martupol* that was analyzed by semiotic approach. *Martupol* is a ceremony that should do by the family whose children want to get married. This ceremony was done before the wedding ceremony. *Martupol* is an engagement before the wedding for bataknese. But there was some bataknese that did not do this ceremony. In this research, the researchers found out 13 symbols that were in Batak Toba *martupol* they were : 1) *surat parpadanan*, 2) *dekke simudur-mudur*, 3) *boras si pir ni tondi* 4) *hepeng tuhor/sinamot* 5) *situak natonggi/hepeng ingot-ingot* 6) *ulos*, 7) *place*, 8) *jambar/juhut*, 9) *aeke sitio-tio*, 10) *mandar hela*, 11) *hula- hula*, 12) *napuran*, 13) *pinggan pasu*. These symbols were interpreted with Pierce's triadic semiotic.

So, inspired by the phenomenon and previous studies, this research was done in order to analyze the symbol on Batak Toba *mangongkal holi* ceremony. This study applied semiotic theory by Peirce to carry out the meaning of symbol in *Mangongkal Holi* ceremony.

A. The Problems of the Study

Based on the background of the study and the identifications of the study, then the problems are formulated as the followings:

1. What symbols, utterances, and gestures are used in Batak Toba ceremony *mangongkal holi* and what are their meanings?
2. How are the symbols, utterances, and gestures used in Batak Toba ceremony *mangongkal holi* interpreted by using Peirce's theory?
3. Why are the symbols used in Batak Toba ceremony *mangongkal holi*?

B. The Objectives of the Study

In relation to the problems of the study, the objectives in this study are formulated as:

1. To find out the symbols, utterances, gestures and their meanings used in Batak Toba ceremony *Mangongkal Holi*
2. To describe the interpretation of the symbols, utterances, gestures used in Batak Toba ceremony *Mangongkal Holi* by using Peirce's theory.
3. To explain the reasons for using the signs in Batak Toba ceremony *Mangongkal Holi*

C. The Scope of the Study

In Narrowing the study, it is limited to only focus on symbols, utterances, and gestures which were analyzed based on Peirce semiotic theory. In avoiding an overlapping and misleading discussion, this research was only focus on the cultural values rather than the religious one. This research was conducted to describe the semiotic meaning of each symbol in Batak Toba ceremony *Mangongkal Holi* by using Peirce's theory.

D. The Significances of the Study

The findings of the study were expected to give both theoretical and practical significances:

- 1) Theoretically, this study was expected to be useful as one of the references that can be used by English literature students in order to gain more and enhance their knowledge about semiotics that is related to culture, especially Batak Toba culture which was concerned on *mangongkal holi* ceremony.
- 2) Practically, the findings were expected to be useful for the researchers who are interested in doing further study on semiotics in order to be a reference or comparison.