

## SEMIOTIC INTERPRETATION OF COLOR IN JAVANESE TEDAK SITEN CEREMONY TEXT

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to find the true meaning of color used in Tedak Siten Javanese ceremony text. The study was conducted by using descriptive method. The data of the study were photos, video and also interview section with the informans. The data analysis were taken by observing, interviewing and listing the data into some classification. The data were analyzed based on the theory that proposed by Charles Saunders Peirce's Semiotic Triangle and Roland Barthes. The findings identify that there were seven kinds of color which used in Tedak Siten, they were black, purple, blue, green, red, yellow, and whiter. There are no rules for the colors arrangement. According to both of theories black symbolized equality, purple symbolized wealth, blue symbolized trustworthy, green symbolized lucky, red symbolized love, yellow symbolized happy and white symbolized pure.*

**Keywords:** *Semiotic, Color Symbol, Tedak Siten, Javanese Culture*

## INTRODUCTION

Color plays an important role in our lives. A single color can have many different meanings in different culture. Color is a concept that helps us recognize the nature of various objects and define them more precisely, because each color has a strong motive or characteristics to define various objects (Hartman, 2004).

Javanese ethnic as one of the largest ethnic groups in Indonesia has diverse cultures. Javanese culture has values of nobility, every tradition, in the Javanese community has deep and noble philosophical meanings. One of the important traditions in Javanese community is *Tedak Siten*. *Tedak Siten* is part of the customs and traditions of the Javanese people, as in Javanese belief, that human life is influenced by four elements there are earth, fire, wind and also water. *Tedak Siten* ceremony was held to honor the earth (Utomo, 2002). This ceremony introduces the child for the first time on the ground or learning to walk, with the hope that the child will be strong or able to stand on his own feet when he is living a life full of challenges. Usually the ceremony is carried out in the morning in the yard right on the day of his birth.

Now, the implementation of the tradition of Javanese *Tedak Siten* has too many meanings in color symbol. Based on this differences, the writer focuses on symbols that are based on Peirce semiotic theory also the Barthes theory

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 1. Semiotics

Semiotics is the study involving with everything that be able to be taken as a sign (Chandler, 2007). Semiotics involves the study not only what we refer to as “sign” in everyday speech, but of anything which “stands for” something else, in semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. (Chandler, The Basics Semiotics, 2007). The concept of meaning is inseparable from certain ideological perspectives or values and cultural concepts that become the reality of thought in the community in which the symbol was created. The cultural code which is one of the factors of construction of meaning in a symbol becomes an important aspect to know the construction of the message in the sign. As one of the studies of thought in cultural studies, semiotics certainly sees how culture becomes the basis of thought for the formation of meaning in a sign.

### 2. Charles Sanders Peirce Semiotic’s Theory

Charles Sanders Peirce is one of the pioneers in the study of modern semiotics, Peirce defines that semiotics is the relationship of signs, objects, and meanings, these signs present objects or are referred to in the mind of the interpreter. Peirce also shares it more specifically in more complex formulas, namely Index, Icon, and Symbol. ( Rustan, 2012). Semiotic Theory of Peirce's Trichotomy/Triadic Model, This theory provides a comprehensive understanding that in understanding symbols can't only understand how one interprets but must understand the background, through this trichotomy theory

#### **a. Representamen**

A sign, or representamen, is something that stands for something in some respect or capacity. Perceptions captured by the senses or also referred to as representamen. It is a very developed sign. That sign which it creates and call the interpreter of the first sign. representamen can be anything, as long as it functions as a sign; that means, represents something else. In this study the example of representamen is the color it self like, black, purple, blue and ect.

#### **b. Referent**

A reference to what a word or symbol stands for. The referral is the concrete being referred to, so the actual chair would be the referent of the word chair. The referent of words such as table or building is pretty clear, but some referents are more abstract, like for the words happiness or danger. The word is handy in grammar-land, when you are trying to figure out what words are being used in a sentence. The example of referent in this study is the object, like *Jaddah*.

#### **c. Interpretant**

Interpretant is the further interpretation of the object by the recipient of the sign. In other words interpretant is an interpretation of the reality in the sign. Where from the three concepts are logged again into several parts, each of which means the terms of logic. The process of semiosis marks according to Peirce (Noth, 1990) is not limited in nature, so that interpretants can become a new representamen which then proceed to become a new semiosis and will continue. The example of interpretant is the meaning, like equality.

For the example, In this study the writer wants to examine Icon based on *Jawaddah* (seven *jaddah*) with various colors, such as red, white, black, yellow, orange, blue and purple which are icons of the *jaddah* object, so that they become an index of *jaddah* which shows interpretation itself so as to produce a relationship between *jaddah* and subjective which forms a symbol for subjective circles that signifies knowledge about *jawaddah*.

### **3. Roland Barthes's Theory**

Roland Barthes put forward a theories which based on his work, *Elements of Semiology* (1964) developed his theory become more complex, namely ; Connotations, Denotations and Myth's. Roland Barthes noted that Saussure's model of the sign focused on denotation at the expense of connotation (Allen, 2003). Barthes uses the term connotation to show these levels of meaning (Pawito, 2007). Denotation meant by Barthes is how objects can be interpreted as the initial meaning or original meaning, at the connotation stage meant by Barthes itself is a process where meaning is formed based on perception or giving meaning (Pawito, 2007).

#### **a. Denotation**

Denotation can be interpreted as the meaning of the day or the real meaning, the process of traditional significance as this denotation refers to the use of language with meaning in accordance with what is spoken and denotation is a first stage (Sobur, 2013). In the other words denotation is the level of signification that explains the relationship of signifier and signified to reality that will produce explicit, direct and definite meanings. The example of denotation is the direct meaning of something, like black color is still black color.

#### **b. Connotation**

Connotation is the second stage, the connotation function is when the sign has been given a value or interpretation by the user or the values instilled by the subject. (Fiske, 2014). In the other words connotation is the level of signification that explains the relationship between signified and signifier in which operates meaning that is indirect, not explicit and uncertain. The example of connotation is depends on the Javanese perception in seeing every condition where the black color is used in this case the Javanese are very identical to the traditional wedding ceremony , you can see Javanese traditional wedding clothes using black for the basic color, black is also well-known to be the color of the clothes of shamans or smart people.

#### **c. Myth's**

Barthes proposed that a myth is a chain of semiotic events which, when experienced or seen by members of society creates a subconscious meaning. Barthes also suggested the role of myth which gave its role in the background of perception itself became a developing understanding to interpret a phenomenon in a study. The example of myth is black symbolizes strong equality and wisdom, shamans in each village use black because they are considered to have a lot of experience and are considered to be able to lead, then black symbolizes equality, meaning that if a person dies then he will buried in the ground

### **4. Tedak Siten Ceremony**

*Tedak* means to step, to set foot. *Siten* (Siti) means soil, earth. *Siten* choking means to set foot on earth. (Vrancken, 2019). This ritual illustrates that the little child is ready to start a successful life, with God's blessing and with the guidance from his or her parents. The ritual usually organized in the morning in the front yard of the house. Except the parents and the family, some elderly people also present to give their blessing to the child. The required *sajen* / offering symbolizes a prayer to God to receive His blessing and protection, to receive blessings from the ancestors, to get protection from evil and to ensure that the ritual ceremony can be held in a good and safe atmosphere. After the preparations have been done, the family (the parent, the child, and the relatives) and invitees gather together at the place of the ceremony.

*Selamatan*: A traditional religious feast. The word *Selamatan* expresses the notions of thanksgiving, blessing, and grace. The *Selamatan* is partly a way of expressing family and neighborhood solidarity -

very important in Indonesia - and partly a way of seeking or keeping the protection of unseen powers. Through the sharing of ritual food, prayers, and fellowship in a *Selamatan*, the Javanese frequently perform a ritual that demonstrates their belief that they can and should maintain order and constrain dangerous disorder. There are some steps of *Tedak Siten* ceremony;

- a) The baby is guided to climb on a seven steps ladder made of *Arjuna*, sugar-cane and then guided to step down the ladder. Passing the *Arjuna* sugar-cane ladder ritual is a symbol that he/she should walk in life with confidence and determination, like the heroic *Arjuna* character (a noble warrior character of a *Wayang* puppet play).
- b) The baby is guided to walk on a pile of sand. He should do *ceker-ceker* or to scratch the sands with both feet like a rooster. This ritual shows that the baby will have to work and to earn something to fulfil his/her need.
- c) The baby is guided into a decorated chicken's cage by his/her mother (sometime the mother accompany the baby inside the cage) and be locked inside. There are several items inside the cage, such as writing- books, jewelleries, golden accessories- ring, necklace, bracelet, rice, cotton and other useful items. The parents let the baby chooses oneitem. If the baby takes the writing-book to play, then he/she could be working in an office or be a professor. The cage (as well as the mother inside the cage) represents the guardians of the child when entering life.
- d) Following the above rituals, the parents throw *udik-udik*, a mixture of coins, yellow rice and flowers to the people who are attending the ceremony. This ritual represents a wish for the baby to have a prosperous life and to be generous to help other people. At the end, the baby is dressed neatly with beautiful and new dresses. This represents a good and prosperous life, and he / she can make parents happy to live.

All the stage of *Tedak Siten* ceremony above show to us that so many stages must through by the baby and the parent also whole family who believe all the prayers in the rituals.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted by using descriptive method. A descriptive research attempts to describe evidence happened in the research. Descriptive research is research which is used to describe and analyze phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and people individually and group (Sukmadinata, 2012). Descriptive research aims at defining a situation or phenomenon as it is. Based on the description above, it can be concluded that this type of research use qualitative research because analysis of the data is in the form of written words or verbally and consider other people's opinions that can be referred to interviewees.

The subject of this research focused on symbol of *jaddah*'s color in Javanese *Tedak Siten*. In *Tedak Siten* ceremony *jaddah* are arranged from darker colour to brighter color, and the baby must step from the darker plate to the brighter plate. From tthis acse the writer make *jaddah*'s color symbol as the subject, the

writer will finding out the meaning of the colors as found in those *Tedak Siten* ceremonies

This research used qualitative to gain the data from the source. And the data were taken from the video of the Javanese *Tedak Siten* ceremony, the result of observation and also the result of interviews from some Javanese elders which mastering about Javanese culture. The data obtained are analyzed by using descriptive qualitative with the following steps; (1) the writer observed the activities or the Javanese *Tedak Siten* ceremony itself, which focused on the goddess ritual process and also taking a picture and video of those scenes as a documentation. (2) Classify the data into each type of sign according to Pierce's semiotic triangle and Barthe's connotation, denotation and myth theories. (3) Interviewed some Javanese elders to strengthen the data based on interview guide and conclude the opinion about color meaning from Roland Barthes Theory.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### ***Findings***

1. There are seven different colors used in the traditional *Tedak Siten* ceremony, which are also included in the four dominant colors that are often used and symbols for the Javanese namely black, purple, blue, green, red, yellow, and white.
2. In this traditional *Tedak Siten* ceremony the color can be realized with the color symbol used in one of the important processions at the *Tedak Siten* event. The color element is found in seven *Jaddah* which have different colors, arranged according to a sequence that has often been done from generation to generation. Each color in the *Jaddah* has a philosophical value and is believed also as a prayer and hope for its feet.
3. The color element is very often found in a traditional ceremony or culture, almost all cultures have colors that become their respective characteristics. Javanese people hold fast to cultural ceremonies.
4. Procession or small element in culture must have its own philosophical meanings and values which will have an impact on the life to come. Each color has a universal meaning and meaning that has been given a value by mixing mythical values and cultural values

### ***Discussions***

Discussion was derived from the research finding, theories and relevant studies. This step was completed with the important theories and relevant studies. This research refers to the theories from Charles Sanders Pierce's Theory and Roland Barthes Theory (1964). Color elements have very unlimited variations. According to its nature, the color elements consist of young colors, old colors, bright colors, dark colors, dim colors, and brilliant colors. Color features consist of hot colors, cool colors, soft colors, striking colors, light colors, heavy colors, sad colors, and happy colors. (Soekarno, 2008). This finding is similar to the previous study by Yose Julis Situmorang, 2014. Semiotic Analysis on Color Symbols in Tobanese Batak

Ulos, The objective of the study is to learn kind of color symbols found there as the object of discussion.

In regards to the second problem of the study, based on the researcher's observation, the researchers get 7 kinds of color used in Tedak Siten ceremony, namely; black, purple, green, blue, red, yellow, and white. From this research the writer found two different meaning of color symbol in Tedak Siten ceremony

According to Pierce's theory all of those color has a meaning from the source of informans or it seems like same with universal meaning of color, but from the other side, the writer also found different meaning from Roland Barthe's theory because in Roland Barthes Theory , the meaning of the color conclude from the myth's section because of it all from the many opinions of source, for the example black is a symbol of mourning, death and sadness. Black also represents the emotions and rebellious desires that often arise in a teenager. In English, the word black which means black is often used in a phrase that has a meaning that does not seem good or negative, in the other side the interpretation of black for the mythical stage for Javanese is equality, black symbolizes strong equality and wisdom, shamans in each village use black because they are considered to have a lot of experience and are considered to be able to lead, then black symbolizes equality, meaning that if a person dies then he will buried in the ground, the color of ash and soil will turn black, so the point is that humans will remain ashes and soil as well.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

### ***Conclusions***

The color element is crucial for the culture, in this traditional Tedak Siten ceremony, the color of election is important in one of the ceremonial processions, which is believed by every Javanese person to have a high philosophical and life value. In this study there are seven different colors used in the traditional Tedak Siten ceremony namely; black, purple, blue, green, red, yellow, and white

The color symbol in this Tedak Siten can be seen from the object used, namely the Jaddah with seven different colors, each color arranged in an arrangement that is already set and believed to have meaning for generations.

Every culture must have a color that is used as a symbol, and each color must have meaning, but each individual can interpret and judge a meaning from the point of view of each. Sometimes the understanding of meaning itself can be different between universal meanings and meanings that embrace the theory of Barthes. According to Pierce's semiotic triangle theory, the meaning of color is judged from the universal meaning, as Black is often interpreted as something mystical, whereas according to Barthes' theory, black denotation remains black, connotation black is often used by shamans, but black myths symbolize equality, because according to Javanese culture a shaman is the person with the most experience and they are considered to have a lot of experience and are considered to be able to lead, then black symbolizes equality

### ***Suggestion***

It is essential to conduct other research relating to semiotic interpretation, not just on symbol but from the other aspects. By understanding the theory it's very important to help the reader to distinguish and look for the true meaning of a color, because sometimes differences in perception and culture will greatly make

the meaning obtained is very different.

The student of English Department should develop and increase their knowledge about the importance and cultural differences that will produce different results, the need for the ability to think and curiosity to make sense of something, like reading or having a conversation with other people

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