

SIGNIFYING THE SIGNS IN BREAKUPS OF A COUPLE OF LOVERS IN SIX SELECTED BATAK TOBA SONGS

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ABSTRACT

This study is intended to investigate the interpretant of five selected Batak Toba Songs about breaking the promise which causes breakup of love relationship. The research question is answered by applying Pierce's theory of signs or semiotics. It is used as the theoretical framework to show the relationship between the Object (Referent), Representation (words), and Interpretant, also known as the (reference). The object of the song is the breakup, the representamen is the lyrics of the five songs. The lyrics of these five songs are examined using semiotic analysis, and the meaning is interpreted based on Ogden and Richard's semantic triangle (1946). The finding shows there are nine signs of Interpretant found in the lyrics, they are heartbroken, sadness, loyalty, curse, profanity, sweet memory, gratuitous act and despair. It shows that there are some specific vocabulary in Batak language, like *ripur*, *malengleng*, *matapor*, *magargar*, etc.

Key Words: semiotics, sign, triadic relation, Batak Toba songs

A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has a wide variety of arts and culture, one of which is in the province of North Sumatra with several tribes, namely the Toba Batak, Simalungun Batak, Karo Batak, Mandailing Batak and Angkola Batak. The Toba Batak tribe is very prolific in producing folk songs and many accomplished singers come from this tribe. The two basic components of a song are words and melody (Cox, 2000: p. 12). A song is one of the most important components in our life which often tells about life. A song might talk about personal experiences, memories or problems in society. Song lyrics often tell a complete story with sufficient detail, an everyday story that reflects traditional values. There are love songs with happy lyrics that focus on feelings of affection and connection, and sad love songs whose lyrics deal with breakups. The current study is researching breakups between lovers because one of the lovers is breaking the promise to marry. There are nine songs investigated in this article: *Mardua Holong* (Song one by Omega Trio), *Sapata* (Song 2 by Maria Calista Pasaribu), *Lao Ma Ho* (Song 3 by Arvindo Simatupang), *Rap Hita Nadua* (Song 4 by Joy Tobing), and *Jalo Ma Salendang Mon* (Song 5 by Trio Santana. These songs are numbered in sequence from one to five.

A song does not only consist of lyrics and music, but also all the contexts in which the song is created, experienced, produced and consumed. This context includes in which culture the song was created and who is the consumer. A song

is made up of lyrics and music, and is shaped by the specific lyrics that are meant to be accompanied by a musical instrument. A song always conveys a message and that message might be interpreted differently. A song seems vital to be studied as a technique of expressing sentiments because it gives a unique mix of vocabulary and a specific group of words that have a meaning in addition to being a special manner of expressing one's thoughts. The song's vocabulary is constructed in an unique way that sets it apart from common language. It's intriguing, and it's usually written in great, lovely language to captivate viewers and keep them interested. The song has a very long-lasting effect on the psyche. Details from songs and the numerous connotations they are associated with are also particularly resilient in people's minds. Songs must be used differently in different cultures to portray emotions.

There have been many studies conducted dealt with Batak songs, among them are about prayer, love and guidance (Silalahi, 2020) and; another study is by Aritonang and Luhukay (2015) investigated the living values in Batak Toba society; a study by Hugo & Ilona (2016) dealt with finding out the meaning of the lyrics 'Saur Matua Maho Inang' (the death of a mother in her old age when her sons and daughters have given her grandchildren which means that she has no more burden in this life). This study applies Ferdinand De Saussure Semiology as its theoretical framework.

People start writing songs for many reasons—the urgent need for self-expression, the desire to communicate something to others, a way to have fun and belong to a unique peer group, not to mention an extraordinary love of music, and so on (Cox, 2000). He went so far as to say that a song combines words and melodies within a specific time and rhythmic structure to express the feelings, thoughts, dreams, intentions or actions of a particular person--words give a story for melodic emotion, and melody enhances the meaning of the words. In other words, good music can make lyrics come alive and have new meaning for the listener. For example, at traditional Batak weddings, many people dance (*manortor*) so happily when they hear Batak songs being sung and accompanied by music. On the other hand, when people listen to sad songs, they might shed tears and feel sad.

The discipline of semiotics has been known for approximately two thousand years which is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign (Eco, 1979: 7). Words, images, actions and objects can all be studied as signs, as long as they have been recorded in some way and can be studied (e.g. in writing or on video). Semiotics is considered a theory of the production and interpretation of meaning. Meaning arises through the use of acts or objects that serve as 'signs' in relation to other signs. Eco (1979: 8) says semiotics studies all cultural processes as processes of communication. It also examines semiotic practices specific to cultures and communities to create different types of texts and meanings in the context of culturally significant activities. Semiotics begins with the premise that all aspects of a culture can be viewed as systems of signs, including verbal and visual languages, movements, postures, and gestures, buildings and furniture, clothes, accessories, and menus. All of these elements are subject to semiotic analysis.

According to Peirce in (Noth, 1990) a sign is anything which determines something else (its interpretant) to refer to an object to which itself refers (its object) in the same way, the interpretant becoming in turn a sign. Peirce sees the sign, its interpretant and object in terms of a triangle. Each element is dependent on the other and can only be understood in relation to the others. The sign refers to something other than itself – the object, and is understood by somebody: in other words, it has an effect in the mind of the user - the interpretant. For the sake of simplicity, we can consider the sign to be the signifier, such as a spoken or written word, an action, smoke as a sign of fire, etc. A sign or representamen is something that someone uses to stand in for another in some way (Danesi, 2004). On the other hand, it is best to think of the object as whatever is being signified, such as the thing to which the spoken or written word refers, or the fire being represented by the smoke.

He defines an object as anything that can be thought of, and he defines a sign (or "representamen") as anything that designates an object. According to him, an interpretant is the mental result of a sign as well as its "signification" or "interpretation" (CP 8.184). As a sign in and of itself, the interpretant has the potential to form a triadic relationship with both the sign it signifies and its own interpretant. In other words, the triadic relationship between a sign, an object, and an interpretant can continue repeatedly (CP 2.303).

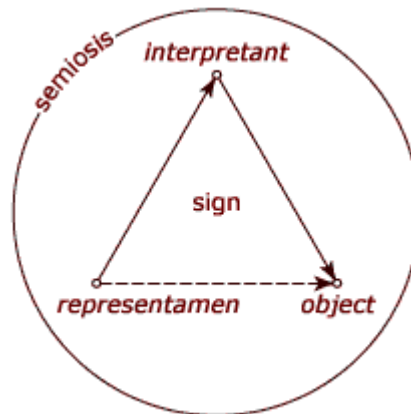
Cavallaro (2007) states that signs become meaningful when they are decoded according to cultural conventions and rules which people employ both consciously and unconsciously. Wierzbicka (1992) questions to what extent meaning is transferrable and says further that complex meanings codified in separate words may differ from language to language because each language may choose separate words for the amalgamation of simple ideas.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The semiotic method invented by Peirce and applied in this study's descriptive qualitative design by Umberto Eco (1976: 59). Semiotics is a method for examining anything that produces signs as well as a science with its own body of knowledge and hypotheses (Sebeok, 2001, p.5). Since these songs contain Batak vocabulary and describe its culture, Peirce's theory of signs is used as the theoretical framework and the relationship between the Object (Referent), Representation (words), and Interpretant, also known as the (reference). The lyrics of these five songs are examined using semiotic analysis, and the meaning is interpreted based on Ogden and Richard's semantic triangle (1946). The word used in every culture must be specific (Wierzbicka, 1997). According to Umberto Eco (1976), the triangle represents Peirce's triadic relation (1931) which is not reducible to a set of dyadic relations between a sign and an object or between an object and an interpretant (CP 1.345).

The research question formulated in this article is: What are the Interpretants of the breakup represented in five selected songs? Data from the eight songs are analysed and categorized according to the signs they contain to determine the messages about breakups they convey. The lyrics are then chosen and categorized in accordance with Peirce's triadic relationship described in

Umberto Eco (1979, p. 59): Object, Representation, and Interpretant. The object of this study is breakups of relationship; the representamen is the lyrics and the interpretant is the signs found out based on the triadic relation of object, representamen, and interpretant.



Peirce's Triadic relation

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Object of the nine songs is breakups of a couple of lovers. The Representamen and Interpretant are found out by going through the song lyrics. There are nine signs of Interpretant found in the lyrics, they are heartbroken, sadness, loyalty, curse, profanity, sweet memory, gratuitous act and despair. The followings are the lyrics that represent the signs.

1. Sign of heart broken

The Representamen for the Interpretant 'heartbroken' is represented in the followings:

dang hurippu songoni dibahenho holong hi gabe meam-meammu (Song 1)

(I never imagine that you treat my sincere love as your toy)

Sae ma ito, sae ma sude, sae ma holan ahu nagabe korbanmu

Everything has ended, let me be your only victim

marisuang ari dohot tikki i holan alani cinta palsu mi

Time becomes worthless because of your fake love

Dang hurippu songon on.... Paninggalhon mon di au (Song 3)

Jalo ma ito Jalo ma salendang mon (Song 5)

Get your scarf back

Na ni lehon mi tu au Hupa hulak i asa sai ma ho Sian bagas rohakki (Song 5)

That you gave me once, I returned it in order that You are gone from my heart

The Interpretant of heart broken is represented in Song 1, 3, and 5. The lover feels shocked with the breakup (1 and 3) and accuses that she/he is not serious in loving as if it were only a game. The relationship ends with disappointment and begs that she/he won't do the same thing to others (it is enough that she/he is the

only victim) because it really hurts. Song (5) indicates heartbroken by returning the scarf which has been given before as a sign of love which leads to say that there is no use to continue the relationship and everything has come to an end and wants to forget everything about the love relationship.

Song number 1 entitled “*Mardua Holong*” (meaning that you have two lovers, not only me) has showed the content of the lyrics that it is about treachery. Song 3 ‘Lao Ma Ho’ (You please go away) indicates the anger after hearing that the lover is a woman, known from the verb ‘muli’ used in this song. The verb used for a man when wants to get married is ‘mangoli’ and the noun is pamuli boru (to marry off a daughter), and pangoli anak (to marry off a son). This word has been paired in that way as an arbitrary linguistic form.

The case in Song 5 is a specific thing in Batak culture because the sign of their love is a scarf given by the woman lover, not by the man lover.

2. Sign of sadness

The Representamen for the Interpretant poignance is represented as follows
Arian nang borngin sai busisaon rohakhi (Song 1)

Day and night, I feel restless
Gabe malengleng, jala ditostos marsalaon (Song 2)
I am wailing and my heart gets black and blue

Di tongani bornginon (Song 3)
In the middle of the night
Hundul ma sasada au ito..... Sai manetek iluki
I sit alone and shed tears
Dukkon di dokko naeng muli nama ho
After you told me that you are going to get married
Dang na tarlupahon au denggan ni pargaulanta i ujui
I cannot forget the sweet memory of our relationship

Malala ate ateki... Magopu rohaki di bahen ho (Song 3)
My heart melted and broken because of you

Hacit na i Hacit ni dirohakki pambahean mi (Song 5)
My heart hurts so much because of your deed

The Interpretant for sadness tells a deep pain and suffering to the body and soul (1,2, 3 and 5) indicated by: cannot sleep day and night, shed tears, being restless all day long, remembers all the sweet memory of their relationship. Song 2 uses words ‘malengleng’ (a grief, a crying with pain and anger and ‘*ditostos marsalaon*’ and my heart becomes black and blue meaning that it is hard to stand for the breakup and cannot be compared with any other pain.. Song 3 uses the word ‘*malala*’ (the analogy for this situation is like a porridge which can no longer become rice) and the word ‘*magopu*’ (it is like a glass broken to small pieces to which cannot be done anything). These are specific words in Batak culture denoting deep sadness.

3. Sign of loyalty

Holong ni rohakki, na hot hian doi tu ho ito (Song 2)

My love is so strong on you

Manang matapor pe manang magargar doloki

No matter the hill gets collapsed and destroyed

Tung na so muba, tung na so mosei nian

My love to you will never change and break

4. Sign of curse

Sapatakki...o hooo..uuu asa purpur (song 2)

I curse that you have no descendants because they all die

5. Sign of profanity

Sampuran namamolus, sampuran namamolus (Song 2)

The water fall that passes by

Alogo mangullus, alogo mangullus,

The wind that blows

Haru husippon ma bulus, tu mula jadi nabolon

Please whisper to the Almighty God

The interpretant for loyalty is expressed in Song 2 stating the sincere and true love for the lover which cannot be destroyed by any disturbances and hinderances. The strength of love is compared with the collapse of a hill and landslide cannot influence her mind. It is so pity that sincere love and loyalty are rewarded with betrayal. The lover is gone and the relationship is ended. As there is no reward for sincerity, the curse is expressed (Song 2) that the Karma is a prayer that he/she will not have any children in the future because they all die. The disappointment makes him/her request a help to the wind and water fall, to whisper to Lord dealt with his/her curse. This is a negative way asking bad things from God to harm others; and of course, this is not a prayer but a profanity. A prayer is not a curse, and as a human being one cannot instruct God to do bad things for his sake.

6. Sign of acquiescence

Lao ma ho ito Lao ma ho ito (Song 3)

Please go away...please go away

Tuntun ma nasa lomom hasianku

Do as you wish my love

Unang be sai ingot ingot i sude pargaulan ta i

Never remember everything about our relationship

Horas ma ho manutun lomom hasian Nunga manetek daun holong ki tu ho ito (Song 5)

Be safe in doing what you want...I have given all my love to you

Song 3 and 5 state the acquiescence as the interpretant, she/he accepts her lover go away but in the condition of unwillingness. The phrase ‘*tuntun ma lomom*’ meaning do as you wish which can be inferred that he /she is actually full of anger and disappointment toward the breakup. Song 5 contains expression of

congratulation on his/her act of breaking the promise and ask to forget everything about the relationship. There is a contradiction on congratulating and asking to go away and forget everything.

7. Sign of Sweet memory

Rap.. hita nadua, rap.. tu pamuroan i (Song 4)
Nang ro pe ribbusi, ta taon do ito ditikki i
Sonang rohatta i, hundul di patca-patca i
Alai marsitomuan, da na lohot di rohattai

Songon aek tu boras i, rohatta i di tikki I (Song 4)
Hape tompu lao ho ito, gabe lupa ho ito disi
Sihol do rohakki, sihol do rohakki
Umbege soara mi ito, dung lao ho

Songon aek tu boras i, rohatta i di tikki I (Song 4)
Hape tompu lao ho ito, gabe lupa ho ito disi
Sihol do rohakki, sihol do rohakki
Umbege soara mi ito, dung lao ho

8. Sign of gratuitous act

Hape tompu lao ho ito, gabe lupa ho ito disi (Song 4)
Lao do ho manipil tu si doli na asing i... las ditinggal hon ko ma au ito (Song 5)

The Interpretant sweet memory is denoted in Song 4 which only talks about the sweet memory they have undergone during the love relationship. They were always together to go to the rice field to drive away the birds coming to eat the paddy. They walked in the drizzle, sat in the hut and enjoyed their closeness. They analogize the relationship with water and rice connoting that they become one when cooked, the water is no longer seen but has been unified. Still the relationship broke and can do nothing about it. There is only one phrase in the lyrics saying that you go away in a sudden. This song doesn't contain any negative expression concerning with the breakup. Song 5 denotes the gratuitous act by the lover who goes with another man without any reason or explanation.

9. Sign of despair

unang...unang be sukkun au ito ((Song 5)
molo taringot holong i
nunga suda sian rohakkon dungkon diose ho janji ta i

The interpretant despair is Song 5 stating that there is no need to ask about love anymore because there is no more left in his heart after her breaking the promise. It can be inferred that nothing can be improved anymore because the situation will not change so the decision is let it be. The future study can

D. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the breakup represented in the lyrics of five songs points to nine interpretants: heartbroken, sadness, loyalty, curse, profanity, sweet

memory, gratuitous act and despair. The future study can investigate more on the style of language, like the kinds of figurative speech used: metaphors, simile, personification, etc.

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