



Semiotic Analysis on Saga Traditional House in Saga Village (Saussure's and Peirce's Perspective).

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ABSTRACT. Menganalisis makna tanda pada rumah tradisional sangat penting karena bahasa merupakan bagian dari sistem semiotik dalam masyarakat. Hal ini juga merupakan upaya untuk melestarikan nilai-nilai budaya lokal. Penelitian ini mengkaji makna tanda pada rumah tradisional Saga. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif yang bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi, memahami, dan menafsirkan makna setiap tanda yang terkait dengan pengalaman manusia yang kompleks, perilaku, budaya, dan fenomena sosial. Temuan utama penelitian ini adalah bahwa makna simbol terkait dengan perlindungan sosial, kepemimpinan, otoritas, kepemilikan, kesejahteraan sosial, pelestarian dan kecantikan perempuan, kekuatan budaya, ketahanan, dan pertahanan. Selain itu, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pelestarian makna simbol menjadi sarana komunikasi sosial antara komunitas lokal dan nenek moyang. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan bahwa untuk meningkatkan pemahaman makna bahasa, penting untuk memasukkan pemahaman konseptual makna semiotik pada fitur sosial dan budaya ke dalam kurikulum linguistik.

Kata kunci: *semiotik; penanda; petanda; simbol; referensi; referen.*

ABSTRACT. Analyzing the meaning of sign on a traditional house is essential as language is part of the semiotic system in society. It is also an effort to preserve the local cultural values. This research investigates the meaning of the sign on the Saga traditional house. The methodology employed is descriptive qualitative that aims to explore, understand, and interpret the meaning of each sign associated with complex human experience, behaviors, cultures, and social phenomena. The principal finding of this research is that the meaning of signs is related to social protection, leadership, authority, ownership, social welfare, women's preservation and beauty, cultural strength, resilience, and defensiveness. Moreover, this research demonstrated that the preservation of the meaning of the signs becomes the medium of social communication between the local community and the ancestors. This research recommends that to improve the comprehension of language meaning, it is crucial to incorporate the conceptual understanding of semiotic meaning on social and cultural features into the linguistics courses.

Keywords: *semiotic; signifier; signified; symbol; reference; referent.*

INTRODUCTION

The conceptual meaning of semiotic is a discourse that has been extensively researched and discussed within the academic community which is line with language function and meaning. Halliday (1978) documented that language is a semiotic system that emphasizes the language functions which is primarily dedicated to make meaning. This system becomes part of human life in the social, cultural, political, businesses, education, and health (Oviogun & Verdee, 2020), that is used for delivering and proposing the language meaning in human communication. Moreover, language is semiotically a set of symbols or arbitrary symbols (Monaghan et al., 2014; Danesi, 2022), a systematic tool used to deliver the language meanings and functions, ideas, and feeling expression through symptoms, signal, icon, indexes, symbol, gestures, and names (Tseng, 2018; Oviogun & Verdee, 2020). These types of sign are found in any language and used to achieve the fundamental purpose of communication that is delivering the intended meaning (Danesi, 2022). Since every language has its own system, Febriani et al. (2024) stated that it is an inherent feature of all languages that they contain symbols that serve the purpose of conveying meaning. In this instance, Wicaksono and Heriyanti (2023) stated that language is used as a means of communication in society and can also be conveyed through verbal and non-verbal signs, both explicitly and implicitly.

The study of signs and meanings is known as semiotics. According Saussure, semiotics is a system of arbitrary signs which is related to semiological relations, the signified and signified (Yakin & Totu, 2014). Similarly, Galleguillos (2022) documented that "the sign is equivalent to a relation between the signifier, an acoustic material



image, and the signified, a mental abstract concept, united by a bond of association which has an essential feature: arbitrariness" (p.25). Moreover, in accordance with the Saussure concept, a signifier is a marker which is defined as a representation of mental images, sound pattern, and emotional state (Mattozzi, 2019), meanwhile signified refers to the concept of signifier (Chandler, 2022). This means that signifier is the physical form of the sign, such as a word, sound, image, or gesture. It is the material or perceptible aspect of the sign that we can see, hear, touch. Whereas, signified is the conceptual framework or mental concept that the signifier represents. It is the meaning or idea that is associated with the signifier. Signifier and signified can be separated as "the signifier is that which marks, while the signified is that which is marked" (Ramdani & Sakina, 2023, p. 52).

In addition, Pierce's conceptual of semiotics emphasizes on the concept of logical thinking processes developed by humans. This means that signs can be comprehended as the manifestations of human sentiment, a collaborative effort between thoughts and the social cultural context (Afisi, 2020; Lawes, 2019; Liru & Kasimo, 2024; Nilasari et al., 2018; Yabarmase, 2022). Likewise, Parker (1998) documented that Pierce's conceptual of semiotics is an academic discourse that explores the meaning of sign based on certain disciplinary contexts. Based on the perspective, Peirce's sign theory develops a conceptual framework which is known as process of triadic connection comprising of representamen, object, and interpretant (Atkin, 2010; Sebeok, 2001; Tania et al., 2022; Ramadhan et al., 2018). Similarly, Chandler (2022) documented that representamen as the sign vehicle, the object is the referent, and the interpretant is the sense made of the sign. Additionally, Pierce's theoretical framework encompasses a "triangle of meaning," comprising three interwoven components, namely signs, objects, and interpretant (Aziz, 2021; Yadiyanti, 2021; Arviani et al., 2021). Aames (2018) explained the relationship of the triangle of meaning in which interpretant explains the relationship between sign and object, where a sign can indicate its object. Thus, signs are media employed for the purpose of representing objects, object is an entity represented by signs consisting of icons, indexes, or symbols, and interpretation is an understanding or meaning formed through human experience or cognitive processes in accordance with existing rules, social context, culture, and history (Fauzan, 2023; Wijaksono & Heryanti, 2023).

Furthermore, the existence of this concept in society can be attributed to the fact that language functions as a system of signs within the broader social and cultural context of human life. This system serves as the foundational element of human language in societal life (Jakobson, 2008; Berger, 2014; Ramdani & Sakina, 2023; Yakin & Totu, 2014) as language is comprehended as system of social cultural semiotic (Latjuba, 2016). This system manifests through various forms, including words, images, sounds, movements, and even physical objects. Efendy et al. (2023) stated, those systems represent things, perspective or ideas, circumstances, situations, feelings, and conditions.

A number of studies applying the theoretical framework of semiotics have been conducted, particularly semiotic analyses of traditional houses. Some of them are the form of the traditional bamboo house in the Makassar cultural: A cultural semiotic study (Maknun et al., 2020), Analysis of functions and semiotic meaning of Traditional Acehese House Ornaments (Helmi, 2023), Reading meaning of architectural work in an living heritage (Suprapti & Iskandar, 2020), and Symbolic meaning of typical Minahasa House Construction in Cultural Context of Tondano Javanese Society in Tondano-Minahasa (Heryati et al., 2019). The primary of focus of those studies is analyzing the meaning of the traditional house construction as architecture is part of human cultural background. In this instance, those studies attempted to analyze the meaning of each part of the traditional houses. Moreover, there are a number of previous researches concentrating on the exploration the symbolism and meaning of elements of traditional house. For example, An Analysis of Semiotic of Traditional Houses of Nias (Dakhi et al., 2024). The result of this study showed that elements of the house reflects the harmonious between human, nature, and spirituality. However, this study did not employ the semiotic theory proposed by Saussure, which distinguishes between the signifier and the signified, without incorporating Pierce's semiotic triangle. The distinguishing factor between this research and the previous research lies in the nature of the research object and the theoretical framework employed by the researcher. In this particular instance, the object of the previous research is traditional house construction, and theory employed was only Saussure's concept of semiotic.

This study specifically seeks to explore, describe, and analyze the types of signs both inside and outside traditional houses. Additionally, this study utilizes the semiotic theories developed by Saussure and Peirce as Yakin and Totu (2014) stated that both theories explain and seek meaning behind signs and symbols, although the terms semiology and semiotics were respectively proposed by Saussure and Peirce. The object of this research is the types of signs found in traditional houses in Saga which is located in Saga Village, the district of Detusoko, Ende Regency, Flores, East Nusa Tenggara Province. The purpose of this article is to explore and describe the meaning of

each type of symbol found in traditional houses, as well as to reveal the representation of the meaning of these symbols in relation to local social and cultural values. This research will contribute to the fields of cultural and semiotic studies, while concurrently raising awareness regarding the significance of preserving traditional cultural heritage. Thus, there are two research questions employed in this research. The first is what are the types of sign found in traditional Saga house?. The second is what is the meaning represented by each type of symbol found in traditional Saga house?.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed qualitative research method which are generally used linguistics, philosophical, humanities studies (Cresswell,2003; Yahya,2023;Mohajam,2018). This method is functioned to facilitate comprehensive data collection and aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the data collected (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Moreover, this method is functioned to ascertain factual data and characteristics associated with particular social and cultural phenomena which are described in the form of sentence and paragraph construction, discourse and identity (Sipayung et la.,2021), rather than on statistical patterns or numerical analysis. In addition, descriptive qualitative research methods have been widely applied in the field of linguistic research (Nassaji, 2015). For example, this method is utilized to analyze the meaning of the signs in certain social and cultural communities (Franzia et al.,2015; Lakawa, 2019; Mally et al.,2025). Thus, this approach entails the provision of meticulous descriptions of phenomena, encompassing the interpretation of signs and symbols within a given community.

Furthermore, the data sources employed in this research comprised of various types of signs, including symbols, icons, and indexes taken from the Saga Traditional House. The data collection process was carried out in two steps. In the initial stage, the researchers conducted direct observations. At this stage, researchers observed decorations, carvings, and utterances, while collecting related photographs and recording audio and video. Next, the researchers conducted interviews with several local cultural stakeholders, such as cultural leaders (*mosa laki*), village head, several of the oldest villagers, and owners of traditional houses. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain the comprehensive notes, and the literal and non-literal meanings of each type of sign collected.

The researchers reduced the data by grouping and coding it based on the conceptual understanding of the types of signs. At this stage, the researchers also grouped the recorded data according to the types of signs involved. The researchers' primary focus was on relevant data. Subsequently, the researchers analyzed the data based on two theoretical approaches. Initially, the researchers examined the data through the lens of Saussure's semiotics conceptual framework, which distinguishes between the signifier and the signified. Secondly, the researchers employed the Peirce Semiotic Triangle of Meaning approach to analyze the data. The researcher elucidates the significance of each sign type, drawing upon the insights derived from the interview data. In the final stage, the researcher formulates conclusions based on the most prevalent types of signs and the relationship between the meanings of the types of signs and the local social and cultural background.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An analysis of the symbols found in traditional houses reveals a deep connection between architecture and cultural identity. These symbols, which are often embedded in the structure, carvings, traditional proverbs, and layout of the house, are not merely decorative, but serve as carriers of ancestral beliefs, social values, and cosmological principles. In this section, researchers grouped the data based on the types of signs. Subsequently, the data will be analyzed using Saussure's semiotic conceptual framework and Peirce's semiotic triangle of meaning.

1. Symbol (Convention and Habit)	2. Icon (Similarity and Resemblance)
	
Gong	Gawi



Table 1. Data collection: Types of sign found on Saga Traditional House

A. Saussure's perspective

Ferdinand de Saussure was a Swiss linguist and philosopher who is considered one of the founders of the discipline of semiotics. His most important contribution was the development of the semiotic theory of structuralism, which includes the analysis of the structure of signs and language. Saussure's semiotic approach is based on the distinction between signifier and signified. He argued that signs in language (as in visual communication) consist of the relationship between these two elements. The signifier is the physical appearance of the sign, such as word, image or sound, while the signified is the concept or meaning associated with the signifier.

Table II. Analysis of the meaning of signs in Saussure's perspective

No	Signifier	Signified
1.		Gong. The gong is an important indicating that a piece of land.
2.		Rate. <i>Rate</i> is the sacred resting ground of the ancestors
3.		Nio. <i>Nio (kelapa)</i> in English means coconut which is placed on the roof of the house.
4.		Kolo Kamba. <i>Kolo Kamba</i> in Indonesian means <i>Kepala Kerbau</i> .
5.		Mimi. <i>Mimi/Susu</i> is a woman breast.

6.  **Gawi.**
Gawi dance is one of the traditional dances of the Lio tribe.
7.  **Lako.**
Dog which is known home guardianship.
8.  **Manu Lalu.**
The chicken is often used as a symbol or sign indicating that a house belongs to *Mosalaki*.
9.  **Flower.**
Bunga is Indonesia for flower. The presence of woman in the household.
10.  **Sa'o Limbu.**
Sa'o in Indonesian means *Rumah*, a building for people to live in.

B. Peirce's perspective

The semiotic theory developed by Charles Sanders Peirce constitutes a foundational element in the study of signs and meaning. In contrast to Ferdinand de Saussure's dyadic approach, which focuses exclusively on the signifier and the signified, Peirce proposed a triadic model comprising the representamen (sign), the object, and the interpretant.

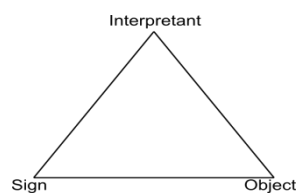


Fig. 1: Peirce's semiotic triangle
Source: (Amtrano et al., 2016).

Sign is the physical form of the sign, such as a word or image. An object is defined as a signifier of another entity, which itself serves as the primary signifier. The object is the thing or concept represented by the representamen. The interpretant is the understanding or meaning that arises in the mind of the recipient of the sign as a result of the interaction between the representamen and the object. Peirce conceptualizes a sign as a representation of an object or concept to an individual, characterized by a specific mode of representation (Hoopes, 2014).

Peirce explained that a sign is something that represents something else for someone in a certain way. This model emphasizes that meaning is not fixed, but rather is the result of a construction formed through a continuous process of interpretation, called semiosis. In the process of semiosis, the resulting interpretant can become a new representamen, which then refers to another object and produces a new interpretant again, forming an endless chain of meaning. This theory provides a strong conceptual foundation in understanding how meaning is created, mediated, and negotiated in various communication contexts, both verbal and nonverbal.

In this study, the author uses Peirce's theory to analyze the symbols found in traditional houses. This theory can help the author understand the meaning contained in the symbols that have been studied previously. By using this theory, the author can find out the denotative and connotative meaning of a symbol.

Table II. Analysis of the meaning of signs in Peirce's perspective

No.	Sign	Object	Interpretant
1.	The gong is an important indicating that a piece of land.		Gong is traditional musical instrument played by hitting it; this musical instrument is usually used in certain traditional ceremonies, large <i>canang</i> (sometimes hit as a sign of the opening of the ceremony and so on). The gong is an important indicating that a piece of land belongs to the <i>Mosalaki Pu'u</i> , a local traditional leader. This gong is only found in the <i>Mosalaki Pu'u</i> house and serves as a sign of authority and ownership over the territory. Besides being a traditional musical instrument, the gong also represents the social status and power of the <i>Mosalaki Pu'u</i> within the community's custom.
2.	<i>Rate</i> is the sacred resting ground of the ancestors		The <i>rate</i> , or ancestral grave site, holds profound significance in the traditional village of Saga. It is regarded not merely as a burial place, but as the sacred resting ground of the ancestors—believed to be the founding generation of the village. This space serves as a spiritual anchor for the community, symbolizing the deep connection between the living and those who came before. Honoring the <i>rate</i> is a way of preserving ancestral legacy, showing respect, and maintaining the continuity of tradition, identity, and cultural values across generations.
3.	<i>Nio (kelapa)</i> in English means coconut which is placed on the roof of the house.		<i>Nio (kelapa)</i> in English means coconut, the large nut of a tropical tree called a coconut palm. It grows inside a hard shell and contains a soft white substance that can be eaten and juice that can be drunk. In the traditional houses of Saga village, the placement of a coconut on the roof holds symbolic meaning. It is believed to bring health and well-being to the occupants of the house. This cultural practice reflects the local belief in natural elements as sources of protection and blessings for the household.
4.	<i>Kolo Kamba</i> in Indonesian means <i>Kepala Kerbau</i> .		<i>Kolo Kamba</i> in Indonesian means <i>Kepala Kerbau</i> . If we translate these words to English, the word will carry the meaning of the head of a buffalo. Based on the research that have been done, <i>Kolo Kamba</i> is a unique and powerful symbol found exclusively in the <i>rumah Mosalaki Pu'u</i> , the traditional house of the highest-ranking clan leader in Saga village. More than just an architectural detail, <i>kolo kamba</i> carries deep symbolic meaning tied to strength, resilience, and defence. Its presence reflects the belief that the <i>Mosalaki's</i> house, as the centre of authority and unity in the community, must be fortified—both physically and spiritually—against any form of external threat or disruption. This symbol communicates that the house, and what it represents, is not easily shaken or defeated. It stands as a guardian of ancestral values, customs, and leadership, reinforcing the idea that the <i>Mosalaki</i> is not only a social and political leader, but also a spiritual protector of the people. <i>Kolo Kamba</i> thus becomes a visual declaration of power, endurance, and the unwavering stability of traditional leadership within Saga's cultural system.
5.	<i>Mimi/Susu</i> is a woman breast.		<i>Mimi/Susu</i> is a symbol of a woman breast. It can be defined as either of the two round soft parts at the front of a woman's body that produce milk when she has had a baby. In Saga traditional houses in Flores, the <i>payudara</i> (breast) symbol holds important cultural meaning. Its presence indicates that a daughter lives in the house. This symbol reflects the role of women in Lio society, emphasizing fertility, nurturing, and the continuation of lineage. It serves as a visual sign of the family's

		composition and honours the presence and importance of female family members
6.	Gawi dance is one of the traditional dances of the Lio tribe.	 Gawi dance is one of the traditional dances of the Lio tribe, Flores, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). This dance has the meaning "ga" which means reluctant and "wi" which means interesting, so it can be interpreted as uniting or gathering together. Gawi dance is usually performed in the form of a spiral circle with musical accompaniment and lyrics without text. This traditional dance Gawi also carries a profound meaning symbolizing unity and togetherness within the community. The dance reflects values of solidarity cooperation and harmony among individuals in a unified and inseparable society.
7.	Dog which is known home guardianship.	 The word <i>Lako</i> means dog, an animal with four legs and a tail, often kept as a pet or trained for work, for example hunting or guarding buildings. The symbol also has another meaning that we can learn from it. Their presence often brings a sense of security to their owners, as dogs will protect them from various potential dangers or threats coming from outside.
8.	The chicken is often used as a symbol or sign indicating that a house belongs to <i>Mosalaki</i> .	 This symbol <i>Manu Lalu</i> can be translated in to Indonesian, means <i>Ayam Jantan</i> or rooster in English. A rooster is an adult male chicken. <i>Manu Lalu</i> holds a special meaning as a marker of the homeowner's social status and important role within the local customary structure. Therefore, the chicken becomes part of the cultural identity associated with the house of a <i>Mosalaki</i>.
9.	<i>Bunga</i> is Indonesia for flower. The presence of woman in the household.	 <i>Bunga</i> is Indonesia for flower. Flower can be defined as the colored part of a plant from which the seed or fruit develops. Flowers usually grow at the end of a stem and last only a short time. This carving can be found in the traditional house of Saga village. From many of the houses there, not all of the houses have this carving. The reason is that, this drawing symbolizes the presence of woman in the household. These intricate flower motifs are not merely decorative; they represent femininity, beauty, and grace. Through these carvings, the community expresses appreciation for the nurturing and aesthetic qualities associated with women. They serve as a tribute to womanhood and a reminder of the vital role women play in preserving harmony, culture, and life within the household and society.
10.	<i>Sa'o</i> in Indonesian means <i>Rumah</i> , a building for people to live in.	 <i>Sa'o</i> in Indonesian means <i>Rumah</i>, a building for people to live in. in this case, <i>Sa'o Limbu</i> is the traditional house specifically made for the tribe Limbu. It means that the traditional house is intended for descendants of the Limbu tribe. For people who are not part of the Limbu tribe, if they want to enter the house, they need permission from the <i>Mosalaki</i> or the traditional leader of the Limbu tribe. <i>Sao Limbu</i> is the large traditional house specifically designated for the Limbu clan within the cultural context of Saga village. This house is not merely a physical structure—it serves as a central gathering place, a symbol of identity, and a reflection of the clan's social status and ancestral heritage. As the primary house of the Limbu lineage, <i>Sao Limbu</i> holds important ceremonial and cultural functions, including rituals, meetings, and the preservation of oral traditions passed down through generations. Architecturally and symbolically, <i>Sao Limbu</i> represents unity, continuity, and the collective memory of the clan. It stands as a testament to the strength and cohesion of the Limbu people, embodying their roots, their values, and their place within the broader fabric of the traditional community.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

After the researcher analyzes some of the symbols contained in the Saga Traditional House that located in Saga Village in Ende Regency, Flores, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The researcher had found 5 symbols, 4 icons and 1 name on the Saga Traditional House which is located on the front wall of the Traditional House. The symbols, icons and name found in the Saga Traditional House in general are an identity the traditional house itself and also some of its functions according to the ancestors of the Saga people. The symbols, icon and name have function as semiotic tools that communicate the heritage, worldview and social structure of the community. Each element has a specific meaning and purpose, closely tied to the traditional customs and historical background of the Saga People. Future research may further explore the deeper philosophical meaning behind each symbol and how these continue to influence the community's way of life today

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