

## **Supernatural Signs in Minahasan Culture in Tontemboan Language**

Theresia Maria Conny Lasut<sup>1</sup>, Fentje Kodong<sup>2</sup> and Johan F. Sahetapy<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Sam Ratulangi University

<sup>3</sup>Jerman Department, Faculty of Humanities, Sam Ratulangi University

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This research is about supernatural signs in Minahasan culture in Tontemboan language. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. Data were collected from previous research document books related to research topics, the internet and from informants. The techniques used in collecting data are through observation, recording, and interviews, including virtual interviews. This research uses purposive sampling method. Data were analyzed based on concepts of semiotics, supernatural and language.*

*The results show that (1) supernatural signs in Minahasan culture in Tontemboan language were symbols (2) language expressions including categories of words, phrases and sentences, and (3) supernatural signs in the form of supernatural signs related to humans, animals, plants and inanimate objects.*

**Keywords:** supernatural signs; minahasan culture; tontemboan language.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Human civilization evolves from age to age. So does culture as a complex whole including knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, rules/laws, wisdom, and the various capabilities and habits acquired by humans as members of a community. The rapid development of culture affects science including language. Pei and Gaynor (1980) state that language is: "A. system of communication by sound, i.e. through the organ of speech and hearing, among human beings of a certain group of community, using vocal symbol processing arbitrary conventional meaning. Language becomes a tool or suggestion to examine patterns of human behavior.

Language is used in communication to convey messages and as a meaningful sign system.

It is because of this meaningful sign system that humans can understand each other. Signs are an essential aspect of semiotics as the study of the science of signs (Pierce in Friedman and Feichtinger, 2017).

Humans are constantly dealing with signs, both verbal and nonverbal signs. Learning about the meaning of this sign must continue so that the communication process between speakers and speakers can run smoothly as intended or in other words, the function of language as a tool or medium of communication (Finoza, 2003) can be truly integrated in human social life.

According to Saussure, a sign is the result of the association of signifier and signified (in Chandler, 2001). Theories about signs have come a long way, but Pierce's theory is seen as innovative and different. Of the various definitions put forward by Pierce, one of them is as quoted in the following: "I define a sign as anything which is so determined by something else called its object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its interpretant, that the later is thereby mediately determined by the former (in Atkin, 2010)."

Chandler (2007) explains about three types of signs namely; icon, index and symbol as follows: "Iconic signs resemble what they represent. Indexical signs have a logical connection with what they represent and act as indicators for some relationship. Symbolic signs are abstract and do not have a logical connection with what they represent, and unlike icons and indexical signs, symbols must be learned which creates a heavy social and cultural influence on them."

Signs allow us to communicate with others because of the common perception of meaning displayed by the universe. Nature produces signs and they are transferred into language. There are several conventionally accepted signs, one of which is supernatural signs.

Minahasa (Tontemboan) is one of the regional languages in the province of North Sulawesi, Republic of Indonesia. It originally consisted of several regions according to ethnic and linguistic provisions, such as: Manado, Bantik, Tounsea, Toubulu, Toulour, Tontemboan (Tulaar, 1993). The Tontemboan language is spoken in the areas of Langowan, Tompaso, Rumoong, Amurang, and parts of Tompaso Baru, Sonder, and Tincep.

The problems formulated in this research are: (1) what supernatural signs exist in Minahasa culture in Tontemboan language? (2) what language levels exist in supernatural signs in Minahasa culture in Tontemboan language.

This research is about supernatural signs. According to Pierce (in Friedman and Feichtinger, 2017) semiotics is the science of signs. According to Saussure as cited by Chandler (2001), a sign is the whole result of the association of signifier and sign.

Association of signifier and sign. Ockerse (1984) quoting Pierce divides the types of signs into three, namely:

1. Icon: an image based on similarity.
2. Symbol: the essence of a mutual agreement or stipulation.
3. Index: does not directly describe.

Supernatural is something that causes astonishment, fear and solemnity (Khonig, 2000). In supernatural forms, there are supernatural signs colored with auspicious beliefs as reflected in the language.

The aspect of language is inseparable from culture. Koentjaraningrat (1990) quoting Kluckhohn states that one of the elements of culture is language. He even places language as the first element. According to Sapir (1921) culture is what a society does and thinks while language is how humans think.

Language is a sign. Supernatural signs will be transferred into language, in the form of words, phrases, sentences, and discourse. According to Pei and Gaynor (1980) a word is a written or spoken or written symbol in the form of the smallest unit that has meaning and can stand alone. A phrase is a group of words that is not a subject and predicate. A sentence is a number of words arranged grammatically and syntactically which is a unit that has grammatically complete meaning.

## **METHODS**

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. Data were collected from books, documents, previous research related to the research topic and the internet. Techniques used in data collection, namely through observation, recording and interviews. The research used purposive sampling method or subjective sampling method. The collected data were analyzed based on the concept of semiotics, the concept of supernatural, the concept of language. The research location is in Minahasa Regency, precisely in Suluun 1 Village, Suluun Tareran District, Sendangan Village, Sonder District, and Langowan District. This research was conducted from January 2020 to October 2020. The method used was descriptive qualitative. Data collection techniques were observation, recording, document study (textbooks, seminar reports,), and interviews, including virtual interviews. The techniques used are tapping, note taking and recording, through the stages of analyzing the concept of semiotics (signs), the concept of the supernatural, and the concept of language level.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Supernatural Signs Relating to Humans***

*Tou masiri* 'The man cleared his throat'. The sentence *Tou masiri* (people cleared their throat) is a simple sentence consisting of noun + verb. There are places that are considered haunted, such as graveyards or places believed to be inhabited by beings that do not have physical form. Passing by such places, Minahasa people usually clear their throats, and even more than that they ask for permission. They speak using a language of sound or the language of nature, which is mainly vibration. With vibrations, people declare that we are living beings, please do not disturb us, because we are not doing anything bad, we are just passing by. In this case, we consider them as living beings. These supernatural signs of the existence of spirits are in the symbol of people clearing their throat when passing a haunted place.

*Tou mama'an* 'People sneeze'. The sentence above is a simple sentence consisting of noun + verb. If we are planning to go out but suddenly someone sneezes (in Tontemboan: *Sa cita kumesot woon am bale, wo awean tou walina mama'an*), then you should not go, wait for a moment because a disaster awaits ahead. This sneeze is a supernatural sign of danger. Minahasa culture owners usually delay their departure for a moment to avoid accidents that will happen. Waiting for a moment means letting the danger pass and we are kept away from the calamity.

*Maurowk en namo eng kama* 'Wash hands and face' The above language expression consists of the category verb + noun phrase + noun phrase. Both noun phrases function as objects. There is a Minahasan custom to wash hands and face upon their return from mourning at a funeral home. The advice in Tontemboan *Sa cita marengo nilumili am pinatean, sama cita wo mawoas eng kama wo namo* (when we return from attending a mourning event, we should wash our hands and face) has a supernatural sign that by washing hands and face, the pale face of the deceased will not be imagined in the minds of the mourners or in other words, his shadow will not follow us. Imagining a dead person often causes fear so it is necessary to eliminate the shadow by washing hands and face.

### **Supernatural Signs Related to Animals**

*Kalimpopo ni muntep am bale* 'The butterfly entered the house' The sentence *kalimpopo ni muntep am bale* consists of the categories noun + verb + adverb. In Minahasa legend, butterflies are considered ancestors who come to give signs or as sign-givers. Butterflies entering the house are supernatural signs symbolizing the arrival of guests. The arrival of guests is something good, positive and brings happiness to the host.

*Si wai ni muntep am bale* 'The black snake entered the house'. The sentence above, which consists of category noun phrase + verb + adverb, contains a supernatural sign in the form of a symbol that a disaster is coming or someone has bad intentions. This black snake gives a message so that the snake should not be killed, only driven away by sounding a broomstick.

*Si wai ni mosok am pouwayaan* 'A black snake crossed the road'. This sentence consists of the phrase category noun + verb + adverb. It has a supernatural sign that there will be danger if you continue your journey. It is believed that a black snake signals the danger that lurks ahead. Therefore, people or cars should not continue their journey or delay for a while to avoid possible calamities. This black snake symbolizes a messenger. This black snake is usually not killed but allowed to leave. After the snake has left, the journey may be resumed.

*Sopit tumenge* 'The lizards chirped' the above language expression is a simple sentence consisting of the noun + verb category. Sometimes when we are about to leave the house, the lizards chirp; the lizards chirp along with our footsteps out of the house. The sound of the lizards is considered a warning sign or message to stay inside the house for a while or to delay leaving the house because something bad is waiting for us. If we continue our journey, it could be believed that we will be hit by calamity.

*Si asu manguang* 'The dog roared'. The sentence *si asu manguang* consists of the phrase category noun + verb. The sound of the dog crying out roaring causes fear and even makes the hairs stand up. This is a supernatural sign symbolizing the arrival of ethereal or invisible creatures. These creatures cannot be reached by the five human senses but can be seen by animals such as dogs. This animal sees the creatures of the supernatural realm so it cries / roars.

*Si asu mama'an an dior ni tou* 'The dog sneezes in front of people'. The sentence above consists of the phrase category noun + verb + adverb. This sentence contains supernatural signs symbolizing danger. When a dog sneezes in front of a person, the person should not continue their activities or stop for a moment. If they continue their activities, they could be hit by a disaster or get an accident. If you are traveling, you should stop for a while, and continue your journey later, so as to avoid disaster.

*Meong wuring maame* 'The black cat is crying'. The sentence *Meong wuring maame* is a simple sentence consisting of the noun + verb phrase category. Sometimes black cats cry behind the house or in *Tontemboan Meng wuring maame an sompi im bale*. This is a supernatural sign symbolizing the presence of grief (dead people) or sick people.

*Koko laka kumukuk ang kato'ora im bengi* 'The rooster crowed at midnight'. The sentence above consists of a noun phrase + verb + adverb. Crowing is only done by roosters or roosters. Rooster owners can hear the rooster crowing in the morning. People who live nearby will wake up in the

morning, the crowing of the rooster wakes up the sleeping people to wake up at dawn. That is a good thing, a normal thing. But sometimes the cock crows in the middle of the night, and this is not something that is common. In Minahasan culture this is a supernatural sign symbolizing two things: (1) rising water levels, and (2) a warning in case of theft to lock doors and to be careful of fire. When the water rises, there will be flooding but there can also be other calamities, namely the presence of bad people such as thieves who will enter our homes or the danger of fire. People who understand the signs will be vigilant and lock their doors and check for fire.

*Si keak* 'Eagle' *Si keak* is a language expression in the form of a noun category. Minahasan people call the night eagle by its sound name, keak. Keak birds are active at night, and make a loud sound. When this night eagle makes a sound and flies along the river/river as in Tontemboan *si keak tumengen wo tumelew kumiit in doyongan*, it is believed that there will be sorrow or someone will die. This is a supernatural sign in the form of a symbol of the grief that has hit the surrounding population.

### **Supernatural Signs Related to Plants**

*Mokol im betes am palembolan* 'Cutting the banyan tree at the spring' The language expression above consists of verb + noun phrase + adverb. In the understanding of the Minahasa people, water is the source of life; people cannot live without water; water is a primary human need. Cutting trees that are believed to store water means preventing the fulfillment of the needs of many people. The perpetrator of cutting the tree will receive punishment or reward in the form of death from the living source, namely *Empung maha luhur*. The death is not done by humans but by *Empung Wailan*. This is a supernatural sign that cutting trees is the same as negating water which is the source of life for many people so that they will receive punishment from God.

*Popontolen* '*Lemon suanggi*'. *Popontolen* is a noun language expression. *Popontolen* or lemon suanggi, according to Minahasan philosophy, is a plant whose thorny tree and sharp-smelling fruit are believed to ward off evil things. That is why *lemon suanggi* is often carried by pregnant women, as in the Tontemboan expression *Si wewene ni mawaato mawali im popontolen* (pregnant women carry *lemon suanggi*). This is believed to keep the pregnant mother away from bad people who have supernatural bad intentions. So, evil intentions are not carried out because they are protected by *lemon suanggi*. This is a supernatural sign symbolizing protection from evil intentions. *Em betes maero* 'The banyan tree moves'. *Em betes maero* is a simple sentence made up of a noun + verb phrase. The banyan tree, which is a tall tree with shady leaves, is believed to be the abode of spirits. This can be seen through the swaying of the branches with their leaves even though there is no wind strong enough to move these parts. People believe that the swaying is done by spirits. The swaying of the tree is a supernatural sign of the presence of formless beings.

*Tawaang al pasek* 'Tawaang pembatas kapling'. The language expression *tawaang al pasek* is a noun phrase. A type of plant believed by the Minahasa people to have magical power is *tawaang*. This plant is usually used in cultural events and is generally planted as a fence or plot boundary, namely *tawaang* which belongs to the species *cordylinefrutiosa* (tiplant). In Minahasa culture, this plant is commonly planted at the boundary of plots as a fence, but not just any fence. It has to do with a covenant that is agreed upon and prayed for. There is a supernatural sign when someone moves this *tawaang*. If this plant is shifted or moved, it will have bad consequences in the form of death. The person who moves the *tawaang* will experience death, like the law of cause and effect, all movements or actions have consequences. *Tawaang* is a symbol of an agreement that should not be broken.

### **Supernatural Signs Related to Inanimate Objects**

*Mawou manam* 'The smell of fragrance'. The language expression above is a noun phrase. Sometimes when we are in a place, suddenly there is a fragrant smell that is unknown where it comes from, unknown source. Here, people will assume that there is another creature present together. They are invisible or come from another world. This smell becomes a sign of their presence and usually people will move away, avoid the place or convey expressions of language not to disturb. The smell becomes a supernatural sign symbolizing the presence of invisible beings.

*Muran paso* 'Hot rain'. *Muran paso* is a noun phrase (noun + adjective) language expression. In Minahasa culture, when it rains but the sun is still shining, in Tontemboan it is called *muran paso* (Hot rain). This has a supernatural sign that symbolizes mourning or that someone has died.

*Tumenge in klakson* 'Honking the horn'. The language expression above consists of the category verb + noun phrase. There are some places that are considered haunted, such as a road where several people have died in accidents. Such places are considered to be home to astral beings from the other world, so to pass through this place the drivers seem to ask for permission by honking the horn. The horn as an inanimate object can be sounded to express a hope that these spirits will not disturb road users so that they can reach their destination safely. *Tumenge ing klakson ang lalang kapelian* (honking the horn on the haunted road) is a supernatural sign in the form of a symbol of asking permission to creatures from the other world.

*Eng ari 'I pasali 'si* 'The main pillar of the house is upside down'. The above language expression consists of a noun + adjective phrase. In Minahasa culture, the traditional or customary house is made of wood with a rather high construction; the house is supported by wooden beams that are rather high. In this house, there is something called the king post/main pillar which is an important part of a house". In Minahasa culture, the king post is not allowed to be placed upside

down. If this happens, it is believed that it will cause unexpected things, such as family members getting sick, difficulty in getting sustenance and other difficulties. This upside-down installation is a supernatural sign that symbolizes distress or difficulty in life. An upside-down king post, according to the laws of nature, will be poisonous.

*Maweta in solo am palowengan* 'Putting a lamp on the grave'. This language expression is formed from the category verb + noun phrase + adverb. There is a Minahasa custom of putting lamps on the graves of the recently deceased or on certain days such as holidays. This expresses the family's concern for those who have passed away; the living understand who they are so they are visited, in the soul there is a noble memory. *Sumolo* or solo means to open the way. It is a supernatural sign that the lamp can pave the way or be a light for them in the beyond to the eternal place.

*Sondang 'Parang'*. *Sondang* is a word class or noun category. A machete is a long sharp object that is a necessary tool for every family. When there are natural symptoms in the form of bad weather with strong winds, lightning and roaring thunder, people will stick a machete in front of the door. This is expected to calm the storm and not continue. This is a supernatural sign in the form of a symbol that the machete placed in front of the door can calm the storm or the house and its inhabitants can get through this difficulty.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted on supernatural signs in Minahasa culture in the Tontemboan language, the author concludes that there are various supernatural signs in Minahasa culture, as follows:

- 1) Semiotically, these supernatural signs are symbols.
- 2) Language expressions in the supernatural signs of the Tontemboan language are categorized as words, phrases and sentences.
- 3) The types of supernatural signs found are:
  - a) Supernatural signs related to humans are: tou masiri, tou mama'an and mawoks en namo eng kama.
  - b) Supernatural signs related to animals are: kalimpopo ni muntep am bale, si wai ni muntep am bale, si wai ni mosok am powayaan, sopit tumenge, si asu manguang, si asu mama'an an dior ni tou, meong wuring maame, koko laka kumukuk ang kato'ara im bengi, si keak and manguni.



- c) Supernatural signs related to plants are: mokol im betes am palembolan, popontolen, em betes maero and tawaang al pasek.
- d) Supernatural signs related to inanimate objects, namely: mauwo manam, muran paso, tumenge ing klakson, eng ari'I pasali'si.

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