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 Fakultas Sastra Universitas Ekasakti	JURNAL JIPS (Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Scholastic)	
	Vol. 8 No. 3 ISSN : 2579-5449 (media cetak)	E-ISSN : 2597-6540 (media online)

Linguistic Sign on The Meaning of Uliat Manyang Dance From South Siberut Mentawai

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Abstract

This research discusses linguistic signs in the meaning of the Uliat Manyang dance movements from South Siberut, Mentawai. The Uliat Manyang dance is a dance that still functions in traditional ceremonies in Mentawai. The Uliat Manyang dance is a ritual in the form of a dance that imitates the movements of an eagle. The Uliat Manyang dance is performed by Sikerei at the Panunggru event, which is an important ceremony where the event marks the end of the mourning period and as a sign of eternal separation between the souls of the deceased and the families left behind. This dance was performed by Sikerei featuring vocal, facial and gesture elements. This research aims to determine the signifier and signified contained in the Uliat Manyang dance movements and the meaning of the song lyrics in the Uliat Manyang dance. Apart from that, this research also analyzes the body signs of Uliat Manyang dance movements. The theory used in this study is semiotics, which refers to the theory of linguistic signs proposed by Saussure in Candler. This study is a descriptive qualitative study in the form of field notes, observations, interviews, videos, and photos. The stages of implementation are carried out by observations made by watching dances at two events, recorded in video form. The conclusion in this analysis is that the Uliat Manyang dance is a dance that is a symbol of an animal that tells the story of the life of an eagle that is teased by a siamang, but they still maintain togetherness and do not cause quarrels with each other in living their lives. The story of the eagle and the siamang is told through movements and every song lyric. Likewise with the Mentawai people, they always live their daily lives together, such as farming, hunting together, and processing sago which is used as a staple food. Traditional Mentawai dance is a dance that has artistic, magical and mystical values so that turuk laggai is believed to be a dance that intercedes for the spirits of ancestors and humans.

Keywords: Linguistic Sign, Signifier and Signified, Body Signs

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I INTRODUCTION

Language is a system of signs that expresses ideas, and is to a system of writing, the alphabet of deaf-mutes, symbolic rites. The signs we employ to convey messages are not arbitrary configurations. For instance, we can only encode and decode messages during a conversation if we are conversant in the language being used. Language functions as a system. It establishes the relationships between them and offers the structures necessary to convey messages.

According to Ferdinand de Saussure linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern (Chandler 2007: 14). Signs take the form of words, images, sounds, odours, flavours, acts or objects, but such things have no intrinsic meaning and become signs only when we invest them with meaning. Linguistic signs are important because language is essentially a system of signs. When someone speaks, people select and organize linguistic signs to express thoughts and feelings in the form of a series of linguistic sounds.

Mentawai culture has various kinds of traditional rituals, but over time this culture is fading in several areas in Mentawai. One area where culture and customs are still strong is South Siberut. In the cycle of life, from birth, marriage, to death, self-identity is contained in a personal and social context framed by local culture. Therefore, the *sikerei* role is very central as a leader and ritual performer. One culture that is still frequently performed is traditional dance which is performed during rituals in the homes of people who are grieving.

Until recently, researchers have frequently recruited the Mentawai tribe as study subjects to comprehend the lifestyle and social dynamics of the tribes in western Indonesia. This strengthens the customs and culture of the Mentawai tribe. The evolution of Mentawai tribal arts is typically associated with a range of customs and everyday existence. Dance and sound art were created in response to the requirements of ceremonies, such as marriage and funeral rites.

Gaining an understanding of the language sign inside the South Siberut Mentawai traditional dance, *Uliat Manyang*, is essential to appreciating its cultural significance and communicating its deeper meaning. Using gestures, movements, and symbolic aspects, the performers in this traditional

dance can convey stories, emotions, and spiritual beliefs using language sign, which is a strong instrument for communication and expression. The Mentawai people customs, beliefs, and history can be fully experienced by both dancers and spectators through the language symbol included in the *Uliat Manyang*, strengthening their sense of self and kinship with their cultural origins (Pradoko & Pangestu, 2020). The language symbol used in South Siberut Mentawai traditional dance, *Uliat Manyang*, represents the history and shared identity of the Mentawai people and acts as a means of cultural transmission and preservation.

Understanding the linguistic symbol used in South Siberut Mentawai traditional dance, *Uliat Manyang*, helps us to better appreciate the complex and profound communication that occurs through this kind of expression. The dancers use language signs to communicate not just their physical movements but also Mentawai cultural stories, feelings, and values. The Mentawai people's traditions are preserved, and cross-cultural understanding is fostered by this linguistic sign, which facilitates a greater comprehension of the cultural background and spiritual importance of *Uliat Manyang*.

The linguistic symbol found in South Siberut Mentawai's traditional dance, *Uliat Manyang*, serves as a vehicle for cultural communication and preservation, facilitating the passing down of cultural knowledge, values, and customs from one generation to the next. (Syaihuputera et al, 2022). Researchers can better comprehend the cultural meanings and symbolic representations ingrained in this traditional dance by examining and interpreting the language sign inside *Uliat Manyang*.

In addition to fostering a greater regard and respect for the Mentawai people customs within larger society, this understanding in the preservation and promotion of their cultural legacy. Through an analysis of the linguistic symbolism present in the South Siberut Mentawai traditional dance, *Uliat Manyang*, scholars and enthusiasts can play a role in safeguarding this culturally significant art form and guaranteeing its ongoing relevance to the Mentawai people.

We can make sure that future generations have the chance to learn about and interact with

this significant facet of Mentawai culture by integrating the linguistic sign found in *Uliat Manyang* into educational efforts and cultural events. Researchers can learn about the complex cultural and historical settings that have influenced the traditional dance of South Siberut Mentawai, or *Uliat Manyang*, by examining and interpreting the linguistic indication within the dance.

To preserve and present the cultural legacy of many groups, traditional dance is essential. They are an essential component of social life and folk culture, and they accurately depict the everyday customs and lives of Filipinos (Lobo, 2020). Language plays a major role in traditional dances like the *Uliat Manyang* from South Siberut Mentawai. Through the dance's movements, gestures, and facial expressions, they express meaning and cultural values.

In addition to their historical significance, all Indonesian traditional dances serve a purpose. The same is true of this customary Mentawai dance. This dance, performed by the Mentawai tribe, has a close bond with the natural world. The dancing movements make this very evident. Numerous motions are derived from the surroundings, mimicking the motions of animals. This traditional Mentawai dance serves to transmit great qualities to all communities, such as love, peace, prosperity, and unity amongst tribes. This dance is typically performed on cheerful nights, welcoming events, and unfortunate occasions (cleaning the spirit). Both *Sikerei* and ordinary people perform this dance. When dancing on happy occasions and unfortunate ones, they differ. When bad things happen, the *Sikerei* cast charms and call upon the spirits of their ancestors to throw them into a trance during what is considered to be a very sacred ceremony. Meanwhile, even though the dancer is *Sikerei* this shaman spell is not used at welcoming celebrations.

Dancing is a way to preserve and convey linguistic and cultural identity in addition to being a form of artistic expression. The distinctive

language and dialect spoken by the South Siberut Mentawai community can be better understood by examining the linguistic signs employed in the *Uliat Manyang* traditional dance. The *Uliat Manyang* traditional dance's linguistic sign is a crucial part of efforts to conserve and preserve cultural traditions.

This research discusses linguistic signs in the dance *Uliat Manyang*. This research can provide benefits as a linguistic study and as an additional reference in the field of semiotic analysis. The object of this research focuses on the meaning of *Uliat Manyang* dance movements and dance songs. Problems that arise today are immediately addressed and preserved so that culture is maintained. Mentawai people today, especially the younger generation, consider this dance only as entertainment without meaning. This happens due to a lack of preserving culture and not understanding its true meaning. This is the background for the author to study the meaning of the dance movements and songs of the *Uliat Manyang* dance in South Siberut, Mentawai.

This research will contribute to the development of semiotics, especially signs. The artwork is seen as a sign, which is, in the most basic limit case, itself a structure of sign, from the perspective of aesthetics' inclusion in the semiotic field. That this analysis produces benefits for theoretical and practical as follows:

1. Theoretically, this research is predicted to offer contribution for the improvement linguistic ideas and as linguistic disciplines that decide its attention to the signs of language in society.
2. This research can contribute to the development of the dance culture used in Mentawai.
3. This research is to contribute to the true meaning of the *Uliat Manyang* dance movements.
4. The results of this research can be a reference for other researchers in conducting similar research in the future.

II RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Method of Collecting The Data

The methods used in this research are observation and interviews. The observation carried out was to look systematically at the picture of the social life of the Mentawai people in performing the *Uliat Manyang* dance in traditional party rituals. The tool used to make this observation is a mobile phone. This tool is used to capture moments when watching the *Uliat Manyang* dance in video form.

Sutrisno Hadi (in Sugiyono, 2013) states that observation is a complex process, a process composed of various biological and psychological processes. The two most important are the processes of observation and memory. Qualitative methods are research that uses methods, steps and procedures that involve data and information obtained through respondents as subjects who can express their own answers and feelings to get a general picture of the thing being studied. The qualitative focus in research is based more on the level of novelty of information that will be obtained from social or field situations.

2.2 Method of Analyzing The Data

Data analysis in this research using descriptive qualitative was carried out before going into the field and during implementation in the field. This research data was obtained from interviews, observations and recordings. Data analysis is carried out by organizing the data obtained into categories, breaking it into units, analyzing important data, compiling or presenting the data according to research and making conclusions. From the data that has been obtained the author uses data analysis techniques according to Miles and Huberman (1992). Activities in qualitative data analysis are carried out interactively and continue until they are finished, according to Miles and Huberman (1992), at which point the data is considered complete. Because of this, the research benefits include the understanding of linguistic signs, which have a particular meaning for those around them. Signs and signifiers also offer advantages related to the reference concept, which facilitates a deeper understanding of the meaning of these signs by the general public.

2.3 Technique of Collecting The Data

Data collection techniques use oral and written. Oral data can be collected from several informants native to the Mentawai community. According to Sugiyono (2013) in qualitative research, data collection is carried out in natural settings, primary data sources, and data collection techniques are mostly participant observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. Interviews can be conducted by asking questions about information about the *Uliat Manyang* dance. Interviews can be conducted at the most appropriate time to obtain detailed data.

The research observations were carried out by directly observing the *Uliat Manyang* dance which was danced at the event of misfortune for one of the residents in Salappa Hamlet, South Siberut, Mentawai. This research technique uses documentation and sound recording techniques. Documentation techniques are carried out before researchers conduct interviews with sources. Taking voice recordings using a cellphone, research carried out during interviews with sources.

2.4 Technique of Analyzing The Data

Sugiyono (2013) data analysis is the process of systematically searching and compiling data obtained from interviews, field notes and other materials, so that it is easy to understand, and the findings can be shared with others. This research uses content analysis techniques to examine the cultural values contained in the *Uliat Manyang* dance, examining the meaning and linguistic signs contained in it. The results of the documentation research were used as data analysis material. In this research, data analysis techniques are used by grouping each data taken from interview transcripts, documentation in the form of voice recordings, video recordings of dancers. The results of the research documentation were used as material for analysis of the *Uliat Manyang* dance data. The results of the research documentation were used as material for analyzing data on the meaning of the *Uliat Manyang* dance.

III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Signifier and Signified in The Meaning of *Uliat Manyang* Dance

Data 1

The movement of stomping the feet on the floor

The signifier is stomping the feet on the floor. The signified of stomping the feet on the floor is to inspire enthusiasm and togetherness. The cultural meaning of the movement of stomping the feet on the floor is to depict the closeness of the Mentawai people with others so that it reflects joy, strength, burning enthusiasm, and togetherness between the dancers and the audience who are enthusiastic about watching the dance.

Data 2

The movement of bending the body while standing on tiptoes

The signifier is bending the body while standing on tiptoe. The signified of the movement of bending the body while standing on tiptoes is asking for protection from the ancestors in the *Uliat Manyang* dance performance so that there will be no disturbance and will receive protection from the ancestors. The cultural meaning of this movement reflects full involvement in the appreciation of the values and traditions represented by the Mentawai people by the *Uliat Manyang* dance. Apart from that, this movement also shows respect for the ancestors of the Mentawai people because they receive protection during their dance performances.

Data 3

The movement of spreads the arms like wings

The signifier is to spread your arms like wings. The signified of spreading arms like wings is the spiritual form of a bird which symbolizes freedom. The movement is that humans unite with the animals around them. The cultural meaning of this movement is to symbolically depict the closeness between the Mentawai people and the natural surroundings.

Data 4

The movement of shaking the hips like a gibbon

The signifier is shaking your hips like a gibbon. The signified of shaking the hips like a gibbon is an imitation of the behavior of a gibbon that tempts an eagle. The cultural meaning of this movement is to depict the Mentawai people

maintaining togetherness and living their lives. This movement is described in the story of *Uliat Manyang*, gibbon who was teasing an eagle that was looking for prey in the river. The characteristic of the gibbon, like hip shaking movement is that two dancers face each other.

Data 5

The movement of tilting the head upwards

The signifier is tilting the head upwards. The signified of tilting the head is respect for the ancestors. The cultural meaning of the head upward movement is to illustrate the relationship between the Mentawai people and their ancestors. The function is to get protection from the spirits of the ancestors to avoid dangers that would threaten the lives of the Mentawai people.

Data 6

The movement of rotating chasing each other

The signifier is rotating chasing each other. The signified of rotating chasing each other is the circular concept, the cycle of life. The cultural meaning of this movement is that it shows a close connection with natural cycles, a representation of the ongoing spiritual journey or human life. This movement has a symbolic meaning in strengthening solidarity between members of the Mentawai community in order to increase togetherness between humans.

Data 7

The movement of marching and facing

The signifier is marching and facing. The signified of marching and facing movements is reflect social interaction. The cultural meaning of this movement is to describe the interaction of the Mentawai people with the surrounding environment. This movement also shows the representation of order, cohesiveness and equality of the Mentawai people in carrying out activities together.

Data 8

The movement of hand holding leaves

The signifier is holding leaves. The signified of hand holding leaves is a balance between nature and humans. The cultural meaning of holding leaves describes the Arat Sabulungan in Mentawai because the ritual always uses leaves which are believed to mediate the relationship between humans and God. Holding leaves is also one of the props of dancers

in Mentawai who use accessories from their region.

Data 9

The movement of rotating resembles a bird in flight

The signifier is a rotating resembles a bird in flight. The signified of rotating resembles like a bird in flight is the beauty of the universe. The cultural meaning of this movement is that it reflects the relationship between nature and the living creatures in it. For the Mentawai people, the world is a big place where they can live by utilizing all the resources that exist in nature.

Data 10

Song lyric of Uliat Manyang

Togat malimai ipatoak ekew... (like a homeless abandoned child)

Togat bilou leleu ki...ki.... (jungle monkey baby ki...ki...)

Bak pubairat tubu togat malimanyang... (do not hang on a tree, look at your child being neglected)

Kualak akek sirigeigenu ka kan manyang ki...ki... (your wings will break if you keep hanging from the tree ki...ki...)

Ale manyang bak mobak ka tubuh ukkuira sirigeigenu... (oh eagle, do not come any closer)

Kekew togat bilou leleu... (oh jungle monkey, I will peck you)

Kutauk-tauk te ekew tak nuagai nganga na... (I can not talk)

Koi aa koi an tek legre akek tubub toga malimai... (come come, come closer here)

Aku alak sirigeugeunu ki... ki... (I will take your wings ki..ki..)

Ulegre akek ekew togat sinabileu... (come closer to the forest monkey)

Kutauk-tauk te ekew ka guilugguk... (I'm looking for fish in a small river)

In this song, the call of the gibbon can be given extraordinary associations, as seen in the gibbon become friends with dangerous supernatural creatures that can harm humans. The song lyrics in the *Uliat Manyang* dance are a song that describes an encounter where a naughty gibbon deliberately disturbs an eagle. However, this did not cause disputes between the two. Through this song, it illustrates that disputes do not have to cause problems.

3.2 The Body Signs That Showed in Movements of Uliat Manyang Dance

Data 1

The movement of stomping the feet on the floor

This movement is a sign of the body as dancing and eye contact between fellow dancers and the audience. This movement is the initial movement in the *Uliat Manyang* dance which is started by the first dancer. Apart from that, this movement is a movement that is carried out repeatedly by the dancer. This movement is the initial movement of the *Uliat Manyang* dance which has meaning according to Mentawai people beliefs asking for protection from good spirits in the *Uliat Manyang* dance performance so that there will be no disturbance and receive protection from the ancestors.

Data 2

The movement of bending the body while standing on tiptoes

This movement is a movement that uses dancing body signs and gestures to express full joy and pride in one culture. Through this movement, the dancer can express his respect for his ancestors. This movement displays nonverbal communication which functions to connect expressions of gratitude towards nature and ancestors as expressed in the *Uliat Manyang* dance. By showing these movements to the audience, the story of this dance can reveal the meaning of each movement.

Data 3

The movement spreads the arms like wings

This movement is a sign of the body as a gesture that communicates hand signals as nonverbal communication which is a spiritual form of birds symbolizing freedom which resembles bird wings. This movement depicts the *Uliat Manyang* dance, which according to the story itself is a dance that imitates the movements of the Garuda bird.

Data 4

The movement shaking the hips like a gibbon

The movement of shaking the hips like a gibbon is body language as a facial expression of the gibbon towards the gibbon that is tempting the eagle. This movement is an interaction that shows the closeness of the two animals, where in the story of the *Uliat Manyang* dance it tells of an eagle and a gibbon.

Data 5

The movement of tilting the head upwards

The body signs used in this movement are signals which are movements which mean that in the work carried out a person must see the

situation and conditions. According to Mentawai people beliefs, in carrying out daily activities, the people know that there are good days and bad days. A good day is a sunny day and there is no evil spirit disturbance, while a bad day occurs due to evil spirit disturbances such as storms, floods, earthquakes.

Data 6

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Data 7

The movement of marching and facing

This marching movement facing each other uses body signs, namely gestures and dancing, which convey the meaning of symbolizing balance and harmony between various elements of nature and human life. This movement reflects the importance of maintaining relationships between the older and younger generations, as well as individuals in society. In the context of

Mentawai traditional dance, this movement has a special ritual meaning because it depicts important stages in the traditional ceremony process in Mentawai history.

Data 8

The movement of hand holding leaves

The movement of holding leaves uses bodily signs, namely touch and nonverbal, which convey messages through the movement of holding leaves, symbolizing the connection between the Mentawai people and nature. In Mentawai culture, nature has an important role in daily life and traditional ceremonies.

Data 9

The movement of rotating resembles a bird in flight

The circular movement is like a bird flying using body signals, namely signals, which are signals through outstretched arms imitating a bird's wings. This movement provides a meaning that reflects the aspiration to achieve a calm and free mind and escape from existing problems. From these movements, indirectly the story in the *Uliat Manyang* dance where an eagle that is looking for prey is tempted by a gibbon can be expressed in the form of movement. However, the dispute between the two did not cause major problems.

IV CONCLUSION

Uliat Manyang dance is a dance that tells the story of the life of an eagle that is teased by a gibbon, but they maintain togetherness in carrying out their lives. So are with the Mentawai people, they always carry out their daily lives together, such as farming, hunting together, and processing sago which is used as a staple food. The *Uliat Manyang* dance is performed in Mentawai traditional rituals and ceremonies. However, over time, this dance has appeared in the form of welcoming guests, such as the opening ceremony for the Mentawai Charm Festival.

There are nine movements in the *Uliat Manyang* dance, including:

1. The movement of stomping the feet on the floor depicts the closeness of the Mentawai people to other people, thereby reflecting joy, strength, burning enthusiasm, and togetherness between the

dancers and the audience who are enthusiastic about watching the dance.

2. The movement of bending the body while standing on tiptoes is asking for protection from the ancestors in the *Uliat Manyang* dance performance so that there will be no disturbance and will receive protection from the ancestors.
3. The movement of spreading your arms like wings is a spiritual manifestation of birds which symbolizes freedom. The movement is that humans unite with the animals around them. Body movements used as a form of symbolic expression and hand gestures that resemble wings can depict a connection to nature, freedom or certain spiritual entities.
4. The movement of shaking hips like a gibbon. This movement depicts the

Mentawai people maintaining togetherness and living their lives.

5. The movement of tilting the head upwards. The meaning of the head upward movement is to describe the relationship between the Mentawai people and their ancestors. Its function is to obtain protection from ancestral spirits to avoid dangers that threaten the lives of the Mentawai people.
6. Rotating movements chase each other. This movement has a symbolic meaning in strengthening solidarity between members of the Mentawai community in order to increase togetherness between people. In the life of the Mentawai people, disputes often occur between tribes, but they will gather again and make peace to carry out activities at traditional events.
7. The movement of Marching and facing . The meaning of marching and facing

movements reflects social interaction. This movement also shows the representation of order, cohesiveness and equality of the Mentawai people in carrying out joint activities.

8. The movement of holding the leaves. The meaning of holding hands in leaves is the balance between nature and humans. Holding leaves is also one of the props for dancers in Mentawai who use regional accessories.
9. The movement of rotating resembles a bird in flight. The meaning of spinning like a flying bird is the beauty of the universe. The characteristic of this movement is that he spins to imitate a flying bird by waving his arms followed by other dancers who make similar movement.

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