



Reading Signs and Meanings in the Lyrical Text of *Padhang Bulan*: A Semiotic Analysis from a Linguistic Perspective

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Abstract

This study examined the linguistic signs and layered meanings contained in the traditional Javanese song *Padhang Bulan* through a semiotic-linguistic approach. The research aimed to uncover how denotative, connotative, and symbolic meanings were constructed in the lyrics and how these meanings reflected the cultural worldview of Javanese society. A qualitative descriptive design was employed, involving close reading, transcription, and coding of linguistic units, followed by semiotic interpretation. The analysis revealed that key lexical items such as *padhang* and *bulan* functioned as central signs that built a network of meanings associated with harmony, spiritual clarity, and communal togetherness. The study also showed that repetition, rhythm, and cohesive devices reinforced the song's communicative and symbolic functions. Furthermore, the integration of linguistic structure and cultural symbolism demonstrated that the lyrics operated not merely as aesthetic expressions but as carriers of cultural memory and moral values. Overall, the findings indicated that *Padhang Bulan* served as a textual space where language, tradition, and collective identity intersected, highlighting the value of traditional songs as meaningful cultural artifacts.

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Introduction

The Javanese folk song *Padhang Bulan* is one of the *tembang dolanan* that carries strong historical and cultural significance within the cultural heritage of the Indonesian archipelago. Beyond its function as entertainment, the song has served as a medium for moral, social, and spiritual education within Javanese communities. Beneath its seemingly simple lyrics, *Padhang Bulan* contains symbolic structures and layers of meaning that reflect the Javanese worldview regarding life, interpersonal relationships, and the human relationship with nature and the divine. In line with the growing development of interdisciplinary studies between linguistics and semiotics, lyrical texts such as *Padhang Bulan* may be viewed as complex systems of signs in which sound, words, and cultural context interact to construct meanings that extend far beyond the textual level (de Saussure, 1966; Barthes, 1977; Chandler, 2017).

Semiotic inquiry into musical texts, particularly song lyrics, opens interpretive spaces that move beyond conventional linguistic analysis. In Barthes' (1977) view, a text is not a static entity but a network of signs that becomes meaningful through the act of reading. Meaning in the text continually shifts, produced through interactions among the writer, the reader, and the sociocultural context in which the text exists. This perspective resonates with Saussure's (1966) concept of *signifiant–signifié*, which emphasizes the arbitrary relationship between form and meaning. Hence, an interpretation of the lyrics of *Padhang Bulan* requires attention not only to grammatical features but also to the relational dynamics among signs, Javanese cultural contexts, and the local values embedded within the song.



The lyrics of *Padhang Bulan* represent the Javanese way of expressing life values through linguistic aesthetics and symbolic imagery. As Koentjaraningrat (1985) explains, Javanese culture consistently places harmony and balance at the center of social and moral conduct. These values are evident in the song's soft, rhythmic, and metaphorical lyrical structure. The song is not merely a musical expression but also a form of social communication that conveys moral messages about togetherness, sincerity, and gratitude. These values align with the findings of Putrajip, Astuti, and Fitrianto (2019), who demonstrated that children's songs and traditional *tembang* play a crucial role in character development through the internalization of local wisdom.

Furthermore, *Padhang Bulan* may also be understood as a multimodal text that integrates linguistic, musical, and cultural elements. Nattiez (1990) argues that music constitutes its own semiotic system, mediating between sonic structures and social meaning. Similarly, Tagg (2013) asserts that both popular and traditional music can be examined as a form of social language, in which each musical element functions as a sign that conveys collective meaning. Within this framework, analyzing *Padhang Bulan* requires an approach that is not solely linguistic but semiotic—one that reads signs and meanings in their social, emotional, and symbolic dimensions.

The urgency of this study lies in strengthening the position of *tembang dolanan* within contemporary linguistic and cultural scholarship. Previous studies have tended to treat folk songs primarily as musicological or folkloristic objects, without adequately examining the structure of signs and relational meanings contained within them (Endang, 2016; Wijaya, 2020). Through a linguistic-semiotic approach, this research seeks to illuminate how linguistic signs in *Padhang Bulan* operate to construct cultural meanings and local values in Javanese society. The study also connects its findings to broader contexts such as character education and cultural preservation, following the direction of Gunalan, Haryono, and Putrajip (2025), who explored semiotics in relation to Indonesian visual cultural expressions.

Accordingly, this research has two primary aims. First, it identifies the linguistic signs present in the lyrics of *Padhang Bulan* and interprets the semiotic meanings that emerge from them. Second, it investigates how these meanings reflect Javanese cultural values and how they remain relevant for contemporary character education. This study is expected to contribute to linguistic-semiotic scholarship by demonstrating that traditional musical texts function not merely as cultural artifacts but as active mediums in the transmission of moral and social values.

Literature Review

The theoretical framework of this study draws upon Ferdinand de Saussure's (1966) structural semiotics and Roland Barthes' (1977) cultural semiotics, further expanded by Jean-Jacques Nattiez's (1990) musical semiology and Roman Jakobson's (1960) poetic linguistic approach. Saussure conceptualizes language as a system of signs composed of the *signifier* and the *signified*. The relationship between these components is arbitrary yet organized through a socially constructed linguistic system. Within the context of the *Padhang Bulan* lyrics, each word or phrase can therefore be understood as a signifier that points to culturally embedded concepts—for instance, *padhang* ("bright"), which does not merely denote illumination but also symbolizes clarity, happiness, and inner balance.

Barthes (1977) develops the distinction between denotation and connotation as two levels of meaning within the semiotic system. In traditional songs, denotative meanings may simply refer to descriptions of natural scenery or daily activities, whereas connotative meanings reveal deeper cultural values and worldviews. In *Padhang Bulan*, the image of a bright moon is not merely a natural phenomenon but also a spiritual symbol of

enlightenment and gratitude. Barthes' notion of *mythologies* further explains how cultural signs evolve into social myths that shape collective ideologies.

Eco (1976) adds to this by arguing that semiosis is an open process in which meanings are never fixed or final. Traditional song lyrics, including *Padhang Bulan*, lend themselves to diverse interpretations depending on social context, listener experience, and temporal shifts. Chandler (2017) similarly emphasizes the necessity of interpreting signs within cultural and ideological contexts, as each sign functions within a broader network of social meanings.

In the musical dimension, Nattiez (1990) proposes that music operates as a three-layered semiotic system: the *poietic* (the process of creation), the *neutral* (the musical structure), and the *esthesis* (the listener's reception). This framework is relevant for analyzing how meaning in *Padhang Bulan* emerges not only from its textual form but also from the collective experiences of the communities that perform and transmit it. Tagg (2013) complements this view by maintaining that traditional music serves as a form of social communication in which sonic and verbal elements jointly generate emotional and ideological meaning.

From a linguistic standpoint, the analysis also incorporates Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theory of cohesion and coherence to examine how the interrelated lines of the song construct unified meaning. Jakobson's (1960) poetic function is applied to explore how linguistic form contributes to the aesthetic and communicative power of the text. Leech (1969) further asserts that the aesthetic qualities of language in poetry or song are inseparable from its linguistic structure, forming an integrated system of meaning.

The cultural grounding of this study is informed by Koentjaraningrat's (1985) perspective on Javanese culture, which places harmony, balance, and spirituality at the core of artistic and social expression. These values illuminate why natural symbols such as light and the moon are central in *Padhang Bulan*, as they represent the equilibrium between humans and the cosmos. The study also extends Smith's (2009) insights on lyric analysis as a literary text, where meaning emerges from the interplay among linguistic structure, semantics, and cultural context.

By integrating semiotic, linguistic, and cultural theories, this research constructs an analytical foundation for interpreting the signs and meanings embedded in *Padhang Bulan*. Such an approach enables a comprehensive understanding of how traditional musical texts function as representations of cultural values and as symbolic communication across generations (Frith, 1996; Middleton, 1990; Agawu, 2003). In this way, linguistic semiotics becomes not only an analytical tool but also a bridge connecting language, music, and the living cultural practices of Javanese society.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach supported by a linguistic-semiotic analytical framework to interpret the signs and meanings embedded in the lyrics of *Padhang Bulan*. This approach was chosen because it enabled the researcher to examine linguistic and symbolic phenomena within their cultural context and to explore how these elements relate to Javanese society. Creswell (2014) stated that qualitative inquiry focuses on meaning that emerges through the interaction between text and sociocultural context, which aligns with the objective of this study to trace symbolic meanings within traditional musical texts.

The object of analysis consisted of the traditional version of *Padhang Bulan* commonly sung in Central and East Java. The selection of this song was based on its historical relevance, symbolic richness, and continuity within Javanese children's oral traditions (Wijaya, 2020; Endang, 2016). The lyrics were transcribed for linguistic analysis and subsequently interpreted using semiotic principles. The initial stage of the analysis involved identifying linguistic units—words, phrases, and symbolic imagery—serving as potential signs within the lyrical structure.

The semiotic perspective was grounded in the theories of Ferdinand de Saussure (1966) and Roland Barthes (1977). From Saussure, the study adopted the concepts of signifier and signified to examine how linguistic elements represent specific cultural concepts. From Barthes, the analysis applied the dual layers of meaning—denotation and connotation—to identify both literal and culturally embedded meanings. Barthes' notion of *mythologies* was also integrated to explore how recurring signs function as ideological symbols within Javanese culture.

In addition, Jean-Jacques Nattiez's (1990) musical semiotics was used to examine the aesthetic and social dimensions of the text. Nattiez proposed three dimensions of musical meaning: the poietic (production), neutral (textual structure), and esthetic (reception). In this study, the neutral dimension referred to the structure and diction of the lyrics, while the esthetic dimension concerned Javanese cultural interpretations of symbols such as "bulan" and "padhang." This framework clarified the relationship between the text and the collective experiences of its performers and listeners.

The linguistic analysis followed Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theories of cohesion and coherence to identify inter-line relationships that contribute to overall meaning. The poetic function of language, as described by Jakobson (1960), was also examined to understand how sound patterns, rhyme, and repetition enhance emotional and aesthetic expression. These elements were then interpreted within the framework of Javanese cultural values as articulated by Koentjaraningrat (1985), particularly regarding the balance between humanity, nature, and spirituality.

To strengthen data validity, the study implemented theoretical triangulation by integrating structural semiotics, musical semiology, and poetic linguistics. Fairclough (1995) emphasized that such interdisciplinary integration enriches textual interpretation by opening space for broader ideological and cultural analysis. This allowed the findings to reveal not only surface-level linguistic meanings but also underlying value systems embedded in *Padhang Bulan*.

Finally, meaning interpretation followed Eco's (1976) semiotic hermeneutics, which views texts as open works whose meanings evolve according to readers and cultural contexts. The analysis proceeded systematically through (1) identifying linguistic signs, (2) categorizing denotative and connotative meanings, and (3) interpreting semiotic patterns within Javanese cultural contexts. The results were then connected to local wisdom values as described by Putrajip, Astuti, and Fitrianto (2019), emphasizing the role of traditional songs as cultural resources for character education.

Results and Discussions

Identification of Linguistic Signs

The initial analysis of the *Padhang Bulan* lyrics indicated that their linguistic structure is shaped through simple diction, repetition, and metaphorical expression, reflecting the stylistic characteristics of Javanese *tembang dolanan*. Each lexical item functions not only as a sound marker but also as a bearer of cultural meaning. Following Saussure's (1966) structural semiotic approach, the linguistic elements in the lyrics operate as an interconnected system of signs, in which the signifier refers to the sound form or word, while the signified represents the cultural concept attached to it.

One of the key signifiers in the lyrics is the word *padhang*, which denotes "bright" or "radiant." At the connotative level, as explained by Barthes (1977), this word symbolizes spiritual clarity, hopefulness, and balance. *Padhang* also represents a transcendental symbol in Javanese culture, associated with harmony between humans and the cosmos (Koentjaraningrat, 1985). Thus, the word functions as a cultural sign that reinforces values of equilibrium and harmonious living—principles that form the ethical foundation of Javanese society.

Another significant signifier is *bulan*, which denotatively refers to the moon but carries broader connotative meanings within the Javanese symbolic system. The moon is often viewed as an emblem of beauty, purity, and inner illumination. Within the Barthesian semiotic framework, *bulan* becomes a mythic sign—a culturally mythologized symbol embedded in collective consciousness, representing goodness and serenity (Barthes, 1977; Eco, 1976). The interplay between *padhang* and *bulan* produces a relational meaning that reflects an ideal state of existence, one that is physically and spiritually radiant.

From Jakobson's (1960) poetic-linguistic perspective, the repetition of *padhang bulan* in the lyrics functions to strengthen aesthetic and emotional resonance. The rhythmic and repetitive sound patterns enhance the song's mnemonic quality and evoke a sense of tranquility. Leech (1969) emphasized that sound structures in poetic texts play a crucial role in reinforcing semantic meaning; in this context, the soft rhythm and recurring rhyme of *Padhang Bulan* support the conveyed notions of harmony and calmness.

Lexical and grammatical cohesion also contributes significantly to the unity of meaning. Based on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theory, cohesion in the lyrics appears through repeated words, syntactic parallelism, and semantic relations among phrases that collectively reinforce the imagery of brightness and joy. Each line is connected to form a coherent representation of peaceful and grateful living under the moonlight.

Within musical semiology, Nattiez (1990) posited that linguistic signs in musical texts cannot be separated from their social and cultural dimensions. Signs such as *padhang*, *bulan*, or the phrase *padha nyawang rembulane* ("all gaze at the moon") carry linguistic meaning while simultaneously triggering shared aesthetic experiences. These elements construct the esthetic dimension, in which listeners perceive calmness and peace through culturally familiar symbols.

Overall, the identification of signs reveals that *Padhang Bulan* operates through a complex network linking form, meaning, and cultural context. Visual signifiers such as *bulan* interact with linguistic signs like *padhang*, forming a semiotic structure that represents Javanese worldviews. These findings align with Chandler's (2017) view that signs function within social networks that shape how communities understand reality. Accordingly, *Padhang Bulan* can be interpreted as a linguistic-semiotic text that affirms values of togetherness, serenity, and balanced living, consistent with the principles of harmony in Javanese culture (Koentjaraningrat, 1985; Putrajip, Astuti, & Fitrianto, 2019).

Analysis of Denotative and Connotative Meanings

The denotative meaning in the *Padhang Bulan* lyrics directly portrays a night illuminated by bright moonlight. Expressions such as "*padhang bulan, padhange kaya rina*" literally mean "the moon shines brightly, its light resembling daylight." Semantically, this structure reflects the relationship between linguistic signs and concrete natural phenomena. Denotation here functions as a factual description that presents a vivid visual image of brightness, which subsequently becomes the basis for deeper connotative interpretations (Saussure, 1966).

Within a semiotic framework, denotative meaning constitutes the first level of signification, where the sign operates straightforwardly to indicate a specific object or reality (Barthes, 1977). At this stage, the lyrics of *Padhang Bulan* appear simple, as though they merely describe a moonlit night. However, this simplicity opens a wide interpretative space. The phrase "bright as day" extends beyond physical illumination and serves as a metaphor for inner serenity, balanced living, and harmonious social relations within the community.

The Javanese cultural context provides strong connotative layers to the symbol *bulan* (moon). In Javanese worldview, the moon is frequently perceived as a symbol of calmness, wisdom, and inner beauty

(Koentjaraningrat, 1985). It acts not only as a natural source of light but also as a metaphorical illuminator of the human soul, guiding individuals toward harmony with nature and others. Such connotative meanings are ideological, as they reflect enduring cultural values embedded in the Javanese belief system, including the balance between *cipta*, *rasa*, and *karsa*.

While denotation presents a concrete visual image, connotation engages emotional and spiritual dimensions. Barthes (1977) described connotative layers as “myths,” a second-order semiotic system in which linguistic signs serve to construct social and cultural values. In *Padhang Bulan*, the resulting myth is an idealized vision of life where individuals coexist peacefully, respect one another, and remain attuned to the natural world. Thus, the song functions not merely as a children’s tune but as a cultural text that embodies a worldview.

The phrase “*padha nyawang rembulane*” (“all gaze at the moon”) represents social togetherness. Denotatively, it depicts a group of people looking at the moon. Connotatively, it signifies a collective activity that fosters social cohesion. The act of “gazing at the moon together” symbolizes communal awareness that prioritizes shared well-being over individual interests. From Halliday’s (1978) perspective on social semiotics, language here operates as a social practice reflecting community values rather than merely a tool for individual communication.

The repetition of *padhang* within the song structure further reinforces connotative meanings of illumination and hope. This repetition acts as a rhetorical strategy that affirms collective spiritual experience. As noted by Leech (1969), repeated sounds and words in poetic texts produce affective effects that shape emotional perception. In the context of *Padhang Bulan*, such repetition evokes calmness and peace, as though listeners are symbolically invited to “bathe in moonlight.”

The connotative dimension of the song may also be examined through an ecocultural lens. Natural symbols such as “moon,” “sky,” and “bright night” reflect harmonious relations between humans and their environment. This view aligns with Nattiez’s (1990) claim that musical texts always involve a triadic relationship among the poietic (creation), neutral (structure), and esthetic (perception). In the esthetic process, listeners interpret not only literal meanings but also emotional experiences that revive ecological and spiritual values inherited from ancestors.

Furthermore, the connotation of “bright as day” can be interpreted as a metaphor for spiritual enlightenment after darkness. In Javanese tradition, brightness symbolizes spiritual clarity (Koentjaraningrat, 1985). Thus, the song conveys a moral message encouraging individuals to maintain an inner state that remains *padhang*—free from resentment and open to wisdom. This reinforces Barthes’ (1977) view that connotation always involves a system of values shaping how a community interprets reality.

Connotative meaning is also evident in the song’s gentle and rhythmic musical quality. Its slow pace strengthens the themes of calmness and tranquility conveyed through the text. Here, music becomes a sign vehicle that enhances linguistic messages. As Eco (1976) argued, sign systems operate intersemiotically, with language, sound, and symbol collaborating to create meaning. Accordingly, *Padhang Bulan* communicates not only through its words but also through the sonic atmosphere it evokes.

Taken together, the analysis of denotative and connotative meanings demonstrates that *Padhang Bulan* functions as a representation of deeply rooted Javanese cultural values. Denotation presents the tangible beauty of nature, while connotation elevates it to a symbolic level as a moral and spiritual message. The song reflects the philosophy of *urip iku mung mampir ngombe*—life is transient, and thus should be lived peacefully and harmoniously with the natural world.

Overall, the findings indicate that *Padhang Bulan* contains a multilayered system of signs operating across linguistic, cultural, and mythological levels. Through the interplay between denotative and connotative meanings, the song emerges as a living semiotic text that transmits ethical, aesthetic, and spiritual teachings of Javanese society to future generations (Chandler, 2017; Nattiez, 1990; Barthes, 1977; Koentjaraningrat, 1985).

Symbolic and Cultural Meanings

The lyrics of *Padhang Bulan* do not merely represent natural beauty through linguistic metaphor; they also contain a symbolic system deeply rooted in Javanese culture. The symbols that appear in the song do not function in isolation; rather, they form an interconnected network of meanings that reflects the Javanese understanding of the relationship between human beings, nature, and the divine. Within the framework of cultural semiotics proposed by Eco (1976), signs are never detached from their socio-cultural contexts. Instead, they serve as mediating structures that link linguistic forms with the value systems of a community. Therefore, the symbolic interpretation of *Padhang Bulan* must be understood as an interpretive process that reflects the Javanese worldview.

The central symbol in this song is the moon (*rembulan*). Symbolically, the moon represents illumination within darkness—both in physical and spiritual dimensions. In Javanese cosmology, *rembulan* is commonly associated with inner calmness, patience, and wisdom (Koentjaraningrat, 1985). It signifies *rasa*, the emotional and intuitive dimension of human experience, which is crucial within Javanese philosophical thought. Thus, when the lyric mentions “*padhange kaya rina*” (“bright like daytime”), the meaning extends beyond describing luminous night; it affirms *padhang* as a state of mental clarity, purity, and spiritual illumination.

According to Barthes (1977), such symbols operate through second-order connotation, where linguistic signs transform into cultural myths. Within this context, the moon transcends its referential meaning as a celestial object and becomes a cultural myth representing cosmic balance and social harmony. *Padhang Bulan* conveys an idealized atmosphere in which humans live harmoniously with nature and with one another, resonating with the Javanese principle of *memayu hayuning bawana*—the moral responsibility to preserve beauty, balance, and well-being in the world.

The symbol of the moon also carries significant social dimensions. In rural Javanese communities, a bright moonlit night often becomes a moment for communal gathering, play, or shared leisure in open yards. Such activities provide not only recreation but also reinforce social cohesion and solidarity. In the framework of Halliday’s (1978) social semiotics, the linguistic expressions in the lyrics represent interpersonal meanings that connect individuals through collective experience. The phrase “*padha nyawang rembulane*” (“all gaze at the moon”) signifies shared participation in a simple yet meaningful social ritual—looking at the moon together as an act of unity and harmony.

Symbolic meanings also emerge from other natural elements implied in the song, such as the sky and night. From a semiotic perspective, these elements form oppositional structures between light and darkness, awareness and reflection, life and contemplation. Chandler (2017) emphasizes that such oppositions are fundamental mechanisms in generating symbolic meaning, where meaning arises through differential relations among signs. Accordingly, in *Padhang Bulan*, “night” is not merely a temporal setting, but a reflective space that evokes awareness of togetherness and inner tranquility.

The musical qualities of the song further reinforce its symbolic significance. Its gentle rhythm and slow tempo align with the characteristic aesthetic of Javanese cultural expression, which emphasizes patience, balance, and gracefulness. As explained by Nattiez (1990), every musical expression can be understood as a semiotic system in which sound, rhythm, and melody function as signifiers conveying particular cultural values. In this

case, the music of *Padhang Bulan* does more than structurally support the lyrics—it serves as a transcendent medium that invites listeners into a meditative atmosphere characteristic of Javanese agrarian life.

Moreover, the symbolic meanings embedded in the song can be understood through Fairclough's (1995) critical discourse theory. Language is never neutral; it shapes and is shaped by the underlying ideologies of a society. The lyrics of *Padhang Bulan* carry the ideology of simplicity and serenity that characterizes local Javanese values. This ideology acts as a cultural counterbalance to modernity, which often emphasizes rationality and individualism. Thus, the song becomes a subtle form of cultural resistance, sustaining oral tradition and communal values amid rapid social changes.

The symbolic dimension is also evident in the performative aspects of the song. In Javanese communities, *Padhang Bulan* is frequently sung during children's games, village celebrations, or family gatherings. This social function demonstrates how the linguistic symbols in the song are not merely interpreted passively but are continually animated through collective practice. As Frith (1996) argues, music and lyrics construct meaning not only through text but also through social performance that forms shared identity. In this sense, *Padhang Bulan* operates as a performative medium that strengthens cultural belonging.

The interrelationship between symbolism and culture within the song can also be explained through Agawu's (2003) perspective, which suggests that traditional music often becomes a site where postcolonial values and local identities are negotiated. Songs such as *Padhang Bulan* preserve cultural narratives that gently yet effectively resist external influences—through local aesthetics that remain universally resonant. The moon becomes an emblem of cultural resilience; its soft but enduring glow parallels the persistence of local wisdom within modernity.

Furthermore, the symbol of togetherness expressed in the lyrics echoes the findings of Putrajip, Astuti, and Fitrianto (2019), who highlight that children's songs and traditional *tembang* contain character-building values such as cooperation, empathy, and respect for social harmony. As part of the repertoire of *tembang dolanan*, *Padhang Bulan* embodies an educational function consistent with character education rooted in local culture. These values are also aligned with the studies of Endang (2016) and Wijaya (2020), which reveal that *Padhang Bulan* reflects moral teachings conveyed through simple language and natural symbolism.

Thus, the symbolic and cultural meanings within *Padhang Bulan* operate across multiple layers—linguistic, social, spiritual, and ideological. The symbol of the moon serves as the gravitational center that links these meanings, while musical and performative elements reinforce its symbolic vitality within the community. The song is not merely an aesthetic artifact but a cultural discourse that preserves collective Javanese knowledge about balance, togetherness, and spiritual illumination.

In line with the views of Barthes (1977) and Eco (1976), the symbols in *Padhang Bulan* demonstrate that cultural texts are always open to multiple interpretations. They do not merely communicate messages; they invite listeners to participate in a continuously living process of meaning-making. Thus, reading *Padhang Bulan* through the lens of linguistic semiotics is not solely an academic endeavor but also an act of appreciating the ways Javanese culture articulates wisdom through signs, sound, and *rasa*.

Linguistic Integration

The semiotic reading of *Padhang Bulan* becomes more comprehensive when aligned with linguistic approaches that examine the structure of language, its social functions, and the contextual formation of

meaning within discourse. Such a linguistic perspective moves beyond the analysis of grammar or phonology alone and considers how language operates as a signifying system that organizes cultural experience and values. As articulated by Halliday and Hasan (1976), language serves as a primary medium through which social meaning is constructed, with lexical and syntactic choices reflecting cultural contexts and interpersonal relations. In the context of *Padhang Bulan*, each word, phrase, and sound contributes to a system of signs embedded in the cultural wisdom of Javanese society.

Integrating linguistic theory with semiotics enables a more nuanced interpretive framework. Saussure (1966) conceptualizes language as a system composed of signifiers and signifieds, bound together by socially defined conventions. In *Padhang Bulan*, the word *padhang* (“bright”) functions as a signifier whose literal reference to illumination expands into social and spiritual associations such as sincerity, clarity of mind, and wisdom. This relationship illustrates that the language of the song functions not only descriptively but also ideologically, shaping a symbolic reality grounded in local values.

The lirik also demonstrates how linguistic elements at the phonological and morphological levels contribute to its meaning. The repetition of *padhang* and the soft nasal endings in lines such as *padhange kaya rina* generate a calming acoustic effect, illustrating Jakobson’s (1960) poetic function of language, in which sound patterns reinforce emotional and aesthetic messages. These repeated structures offer not only phonetic beauty but also emphasize the theme of spiritual clarity and harmony.

Within the framework of systemic functional linguistics proposed by Halliday (1978), language is inseparable from its situational context, composed of field, tenor, and mode. These elements are evident in *Padhang Bulan*: the field evokes the communal life of a village illuminated by moonlight; the tenor reflects egalitarian and warm social relations; and the mode takes the form of orally transmitted musical lyrics. Together, these components form a discourse that reinforces social solidarity and internalizes moral values.

Linguistic analysis also highlights cohesion and coherence within the lirik’s structure. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion is created through lexical repetition, reference, substitution, and conjunction. In *Padhang Bulan*, cohesion is largely achieved through the repetition of *padhang* and *rembulan*, which serve as semantic anchors throughout the text. Coherence emerges from the interrelated meanings across the lines, collectively shaping an atmosphere of serenity, warmth, and simplicity. Despite its brevity, the song possesses high semantic density because each lexical choice symbolizes and reinforces the overarching theme of harmony between humans and nature.

Linguistics further illuminates the song’s social function. Fairclough’s (1995) critical discourse analysis views language as a social practice intertwined with power relations and ideology. In *Padhang Bulan*, lexical selections such as *padhang*, *nyawang*, and *rembulan* articulate an ideology of harmony and modesty central to Javanese ethics. Rather than expressing dominance or individualism, the language constructs a social order grounded in balance and collective well-being. This demonstrates that linguistic analysis helps uncover how traditional lirik serve as vehicles for the preservation of cultural ideology.

The integration of semiotics and linguistics also reveals the interplay between verbal and musical signs. Nattiez (1990) argues that music, like language, consists of poietic, neutral, and esthetic dimensions. In *Padhang Bulan*, the poietic dimension appears in the community’s creation of lyrics and melody that convey cultural values; the neutral dimension lies in the structural form of the music and text; while the esthetic dimension emerges through listeners’ culturally shaped interpretations. Through this interaction, meaning becomes more comprehensive, linking verbal signs with embodied and affective experiences.

From a semantic point of view, Barthes' (1977) concept of layered signification is also relevant. He explains how everyday linguistic signs gain ideological meaning through secondary signification. In *Padhang Bulan*, simple expressions such as *padhang* and *nyawang rembulane* signify not only physical acts but also moral attitudes central to Javanese cultural philosophy. The song therefore functions as an aesthetic discourse that conveys ethical messages through symbolic language.

A pragmatic reading of the lirik shows that it also constitutes a collective performative act. Leech (1969) notes that poetic language does more than communicate information—it shapes emotional atmospheres and aesthetic values. The song's rhythmic repetition and gentle diction operate as an illocutionary act that fosters calmness, strengthens communal bonds, and internalizes cultural values implicitly. In this sense, traditional songs function as aesthetic communicative practices that subtly instill social norms.

The integration of linguistic approaches also elucidates the song's educational function. Putrajip, Astuti, and Fitrianto (2019) highlight that children's songs and traditional *tembang* serve as effective media for character education because they synthesize language, values, and emotion within a coherent semiotic system. The language of *Padhang Bulan* conveys values such as cooperation, togetherness, and respect for nature—expressed through simple yet symbolically rich structures. This aligns with Frith's (1996) argument that musical and verbal texts play a significant role in shaping social identities and values.

Taken together, linguistic integration within the semiotic study of *Padhang Bulan* provides a broader understanding of how language functions not merely as a communicative tool but as a medium for transmitting cultural and moral knowledge. The song exemplifies the unity between form and meaning, between linguistic structure and social context. Consistent with Chandler (2017) and Eco (1976), *Padhang Bulan* can be understood as a network of interrelated signs; linguistic analysis helps reveal how these signs operate systemically to construct cultural realities.

Drawing upon Saussure, Halliday, Fairclough, and Barthes, *Padhang Bulan* emerges not simply as a musical text but as a complex representation of cultural communication. Through its linguistic simplicity, the song articulates a Javanese worldview centered on balance, communal harmony, and inner peace—expressed through language that is gentle, poetic, and symbolically resonant.

Conclusion

The semiotic examination of the *Padhang Bulan* lirik demonstrates that traditional musical texts function as rich sites of linguistic signs and cultural symbolism. Through an analytical framework informed by the semiotic theories of Saussure and Barthes, this study reveals that the linguistic elements within the song operate not only as aesthetic communicative devices but also as representations of the social, cultural, and spiritual meanings embedded in Javanese society. Although structurally simple, the lyrics contain a complex web of signs that intertwine denotative meanings at the textual surface with connotative meanings that reflect worldview, moral values, and communal bonds deeply rooted in Javanese cultural philosophy.

The findings illustrate that *Padhang Bulan* extends beyond a depiction of a bright night or shared communal experiences; it serves as a symbol of harmony between humans, nature, and the divine. From a linguistic perspective, the choice of words and stylistic features points to the intimate relationship between language structure and the cultural context that shapes it. Lexical items such as *padhang* and *bulan* exhibit the local metaphorical orientation of Javanese discourse, where language often carries symbolic layers that articulate ethical and spiritual sensibilities. Consequently, linguistic analysis within a semiotic framework allows a deeper reading of meaning layers that are not always explicitly apparent.

This study affirms the significance of interdisciplinary approaches connecting linguistics and cultural studies. The application of semiotic theory to the analysis of traditional song texts opens new interpretive possibilities, particularly in understanding how language operates not only as a formal system of signs but also as a tool for shaping social identity and transmitting cultural values. This aligns with Danesi's (2017) assertion that language and culture are mutually constitutive and reinforcing entities.

Based on these findings, further research is encouraged to explore other traditional songs from the Indonesian archipelago using semiotic and cultural-linguistic approaches. Such studies may enrich academic discourse on the interplay between language, art, and local cultural identity. Additionally, the insights gained from this research can serve as references for educators, researchers, and artistic practitioners in integrating local wisdom into language and cultural learning. Through this integration, musical texts such as *Padhang Bulan* can be understood not only as artistic heritage but also as living cultural knowledge that continues to hold relevance amid the dynamics of contemporary society.

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