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## Interjection *Bah!* in Batak Toba: A Natural Semantic Metalanguage Approach

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### Abstract

*Interjection is the word used to show spontaneous expression. Batak language has a specific emotive interjection Bah! which is different from other interjections in the language. The objectives of this study are to find the meanings of interjection Bah! and to classify the elements of feelings of this interjection. This is a descriptive qualitative study employing the semantic explication method of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage approach. The data was collected from the interjection Bah! in a Batak Toba short story entitled Mangongkal Holi. The data were obtained by the attentive observation method and tapping technique. The methods used for data analysis were the distribution and contextual method. The results of this study showed that there are five meanings of the interjection Bah! They are astonishment, disappointment, confusion, surprise, and amazement. Meanwhile, those meanings express two elements of feelings, which are the positive feeling element (i.e. surprise and amazement), and the negative feeling element (i.e. astonishment, disappointment, and confusion). The revelation of the various meanings of Bah! is expected to provide richer understanding on its use in communication, and to further avoid miscommunication between different ethnics in Indonesia which each has their own mother tongue.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Literature, like short stories, works by linguistic means. The idea of literary works is stated through words explicitly and implicitly. Each word class comes with its own function, including interjections. Interjection is used to build and elaborate interaction between or among figures. It leads to a certain feeling where it comes before and after utterances. This phenomenon is found in one of Batak Toba short stories i.e. *Mangongkal Holi* written by Saut Poltak Tambunan in 1992. This short story was written in the Batak language. It is one of Batak Toba traditions that has been preserved until now. The literal meaning of *Mangongkal Holi* is digging bones. The bones of tribal ancestors are moved to a new site, in the form of a monument made of stone or cement. According to the Batak beliefs, death is not the end of the life cycle, but rather a stage on the journey to perfection. The *Mangongkal Holi* is one of the bridges on the way to attain that perfection. This story tells readers especially Batak young generation about the importance of *Mangongkal Holi* for their people. One of the most interesting matters found in this story is the use of the only interjection *Bah!* written in the very beginning, in the middle and the end of the story. Why the author used *Bah!* is not a coincidence because the way he started, built and ended up the story was the key to the flow of this story. They ‘played’ *Bah!* to get readers’ attention. *Bah!* means an extraordinary word for Batak. It is always spoken in daily conversations and becomes one of ‘Batak’s identity’. It is very familiar not only for Batak themselves but also for other tribes in Indonesia.

However, the existence of interjection *Bah!* in a Batak literary work sometimes brings a gap between the writer and readers which can lead to misunderstanding. Understanding an interjection *Bah!* needs knowledge because it deals with Batak language system and the culture itself. Some facts dealing with Batak’s interjections such *Bah!* are:

- 1) There is still no definition of interjection *Bah!* in Batak dictionaries, from which the writer assumes that the author of Batak dictionaries paid less attention on its important foremost meanings. It is vital that definition of interjection *Bah!* be given in the Batak dictionary because it is not only spoken in daily conversations but also written in Batak literary works.
- 2) Only two definitions of interjection *Bah!* are given in KBBI or *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (2008), literally translated as the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language. They are a) *p kata seru yang menyatakan penolakan, rasa muak (jijik, jemu, dan sebagainya) biasa dipakai pada permulaan kalimat: --, lagi-lagi dia yang muncul* [an interjection that expresses rejection, disgust (disgust, boredom, etc.) usually used at the beginning of a sentence: -, *again he appears*]; and b) *Bt kata seru yang menyatakan keintiman, biasa dipakai pada akhir kalimat: silakan duduk* – [Batak’s exclamation expresses intimacy, usually used at the end of a sentence: *please sit down* –].

In the first definition, the interjection *Bah!* comes with two negative interpretations, i.e. rejection and disgust. As far as the writer concerns, interjection *Bah!* can express positive feeling. For example, ‘*Bah! Mantapnya suaramu, ‘Bah!*’

[What a good voice you have!] In this example, interjection *Bah!* is not a rejection but a surprise. The speaker is surprised to hear/see someone singing beautifully. The interjection *Bah!* can also be spoken to express a shock spontaneously, like '*Bah! Ngerina i! 'Bah!' That's terrible*'. This sentence is uttered with no addresser. These are only a few instances because there are still other deep meanings of *Bah!* depending on a context in which the interjection used in Indonesian or Batak communication.

Furthermore, only a few Indonesian researchers studied the interjection *Bah!* thus far. Hence, none have intensively discussed the meanings of interjection *Bah!* Saragih and Panggabean (2013) analyzed interjection *Bah!* using PRAAT to see the speakers' attitude and emotion through the utterance of intonation and duration. They found the feeling of amazement, shock, disappointment, surprise, and pity through their analysis. It has added the definition of *Bah!* given in KBI today.

Consequently, this study examines only one type of emotive or expressive interjections in Batak, i.e. *Bah!* It is a detached part of a sentence, or standing completely on its own, it is not connected to the subsequent sentence by anything other than context. It is also not connected with the intonation as the historical pragmatists. Taavitsainen (1995) as cited in Levisen (2019) says interjections in writing may have been produced in imitation of spoken language, but still under the constraints of a written medium, and their meaning has to be interpreted without the help of intonation. It is about the oral nature of interjections. Their study on the transformation of interjections into a literacy-based era of English also provides clues to the question of what lingua cultural conditions are likely to cultivate emotive interjections. It is followed by an exclamation mark, adding excitement to the utterance. Its frequency of usage varies based on the people of different social age groups and, consequently, this fact may blur its original meaning and turns it into a marker of the speaker's state of mind.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Interjection

All languages have special interjections to express feeling linked with specific words. The utterance of interjections in everyday conversation have been investigated for years. Norrick (2011) as cited in Stange (2016) claims interjections really do form separate utterances only paratactically connected to surrounding talk, if, indeed, at all. Bussmann (2006) defines interjection as a group of words which express feelings, curses, and wishes or are used to initiate conversation ('Ouch!', 'Darn!', and 'Hi!'). In line with that, Wierzbicka (2003, p. 290) defines an interjection as a linguistic sign:

- 1) which can be used on its own,
- 2) which expresses a specifiable meaning,
- 3) which does not include other signs (with a specifiable meaning),
- 4) which is not homophonous with another lexical item that would be perceived as semantically related to it, and
- 5) which refers to the speaker's current mental state or mental act (for example 'I feel ... , I want ... , I think ... , I know ...').

Then, Wierzbicka (1992) further classify interjection into:

- 1) emotive ones (those which have in their meaning the component of ‘I feel something’),
- 2) volitive ones (those which have in their meaning the component of, ‘I want something’ and which do not have the component ‘I feel something’), and
- 3) cognitive ones (those which have in their meaning the component ‘I think something’ or ‘I know something’ and which have neither the emotive component ‘I feel something’ nor the volitive component ‘I want something’).

Moreover, [Wierzbicka \(1992, p. 119\)](#) divides the basic emotions into ten emotions: interest, joy, surprise, sadness, anger, disgust, contempt, fear, shame/shyness, and guilt. These ten classifications are considered to be the basic emotions that become the reference of the word emotion or universal emotion.

## 2.2 Natural Semantic Metafunction

Natural Semantic Metafunction (NSM) is a theory of semantic analysis which assumes that a sign can be only analyzed by its sign. Its primitive meaning is classified by paraphrasing the meaning using ordinary, not technical language ([Wierzbicka, 1996](#)). By using the semantic primes, the subtlest shades of meaning encoded in interjections can be articulated in a way that accounts for their range of use without having to rely on language-specific terms such as disgust (for ‘yuck!’), impressed (for ‘wow!’) or pain (for ‘ouch!’) ([Wierzbicka, 1992](#)). In this vein, the meanings of a number of interjections in different languages have been described using the NSM technique. They include *tweaa* in Ghana ([Thompson, 2019](#)), *pfui* in German, *fy* in Danish, *feh* in Yiddish, ‘*ach, fe, t’fu, ojej, och*’ in Polish ([Wierzbicka, 1992](#)), ‘*waa3!*’ and ‘*ai1jaa3!*’ in Cantonese, ‘oops, wow, gee, gosh, yikes, ugh’ and ‘yuck’ in English ([Goddard, 2014](#)), ‘*hehe!, hih!, tih!, hoho!, hæhæ!, høhø!, tøhø!*’ and ‘*håhå!*’ in Danish ([Levisen, 2019](#)), ‘*wawww, jhahaha*’ in Indonesian ([Yatno et al., 2018](#)) and ‘*aha, ah, wah, oh, hmm, oops, hah, aduh*’ and ‘*nah*’ in Indonesian ([Shalika & Mulyadi, 2019](#)). Some of the components in the explications for these interjections are ‘I didn’t think before that it would be like this’, ‘I feel something good/bad because of this’ and ‘I don’t want something like this to touch part of my body’.

NSM consists not just of a lexicon, but also of a syntax. Semantic primes are hypothesized to have certain universal combinatorial properties (a ‘conceptual syntax’), and available evidence indicates that these properties also manifest themselves in all or most languages ([Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2014](#)). [Mulyadi and Siregar \(2006\)](#) agree with the theory of four semantic scenarios of [Goddard \(2008\)](#), i.e. the concept of primitive meaning, polysemy, allolaxy, and universal semantic syntax in an analysis of meaning to get similarities and differences in the meaning of words. In line with that, [Wharton \(2003\)](#) concludes that interjections communicate attitudinal information, relating to the emotional or mental state of the speaker. In some instances, the attitude might be genuinely propositional in an attitude of questioning or regret, or an emotional attitude directed at embedded propositional content. [Ameka \(1992a, p. 107\)](#) says that “from a pragmatic point of view, interjections may be defined as a subset of items that encode speaker attitudes and communicative intentions and are context bound. [Kockelman \(2003\)](#) says that interjections play a very important role in social life and shed light on local values, norms, and ‘cultural scripts’—as discussed by [Ameka \(1992a\)](#) and [Ameka \(1992b\)](#). Careful studies on the use of interjections in context based on fieldwork in remote communities are particularly valuable. However,

to investigate the meanings of interjections, one needs a suitable methodological framework.

Generally, interjections are used to express, but not to describe, a speaker's emotions or mental state, attitude, action, or reaction to a situation. They may suggest what someone feels, thinks, wants, believes or knows at a particular moment (Goddard, 2014). They appear to be in all human languages and can be significant in daily interactions. With regard to emotive interjections, emotive is to mean that speakers express how they feel, but not necessarily an emotion. The example for this is 'Ouch', 'Yuck!', 'Wow!' – 'I feel pain/disgusted/surprised' (Stange, 2016). This is in line with Wierzbicka (1996) who proposes the NSM theory to discover the meaning of interjections from which to predict their usage in context. Context means words around an interjection. Mao (2017) supports this by saying that interjections encode conceptual content and are context-sensitive. This theory is followed by some linguists, such as Ameka (1992a), Ameka (1992b), and Goddard (2014). The conceptual structure by Wierzbicka (1992, p. 164) for 'wow!' is shown below:

'Wow!'

- I now know something
- I wouldn't have thought I would know it
- I think it is very good
- (I wouldn't have thought it could be like that)
- I feel something because of that

According to the explications above, interjection 'Wow!' points out the emotive feeling of a speaker to an addresser. 'Wow!' is always used in contexts of positive feeling, such as on hearing of a friend's success to get a promotion. A sentence like 'Wow! That's bad' is odd unless it is intended sarcastically. Another indication of the positivity of 'Wow!' is that it derived forms such as the verb 'to wow', and expressions like 'the Wow factor' and 'a wow of a time' clearly imply very good feeling.

### 3. METHODS

This study examined the interjection *Bah!* in a Batak short story entitled *Mangongkal Holi* written by Tambunan (1992). This study was a descriptive qualitative research. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) state that qualitative research has some characteristics, as follows:

- 1) qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument,
- 2) qualitative research is descriptive. The data collected is in the form of words rather than numbers,
- 3) qualitative research is concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products,
- 4) qualitative research tends to analyze their data inductively, and
- 5) 'meaning' is essential to the qualitative research.

The data of this study are interjection *Bah!* collected from 17 pages of *Mangongkal Holi* short story. The data was obtained by applying the attentive observation method with two techniques. The basic technique used is tapping

technique. The advanced technique is using the note technique. The methods used for data analysis were distribution and contextual method. This study employed the semantic explication method of the NSM approach proposed by Wierzbicka (1996) followed then by analyzing the discursive uses of interjections *Bah!* which leads to understand each meaning depending on the context.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Meanings of *Bah!*

Interjection *Bah!* is the single most frequently used in *Mangongkal Holi* short story. There are 10 data distributed by the researchers at the very beginning, at the middle, and at the end of the short story. Those data collected are classified based on meanings, as follows.

#### 4.1.1 *Bah!* = Shock

According to the Online Oxford Learner's Dictionary (2020), the word *shock* means [countable, usually singular, uncountable] a strong feeling of surprise as a result of something happening, especially something unpleasant; the event that causes this feeling. The explication of *Bah!* is shown below:

*Bah!*

I now know something about something  
I wouldn't have thought I would know it  
When I think about this  
(I wouldn't have thought it could be like that)  
I feel surprised and unpleasant  
I feel like I feel at many times when I say this: '*Bah!*'

There are four utterances expressing shock found in *Mangongkal Holi* short story. The analysis of each sentence is as follows:

- 1) ***Bah!*** *Luangon parbandaan i!* (p. 1)  
*bah-empty-grave-the*  
[***Bah!*** The grave is empty!]

The writer of this story starts the story by saying *Bah!* at the very beginning. It is followed by a clause *luangon parbandaan i!* 'the grave is empty'. Benny and his families are going to hold a Batak ceremony called *Panangkok Saring-Saring* (moving their parents' bones from a grave to a monument). This ceremony is started with *mangongkal holi* when all bones are taken out from the grave. It is described in the short story that only the bones of Benny's parents have not been found, yet. Few people are digging the grave, while Benny and his families are waiting outside. They are sure that the bones are in the grave. Little by little the land is lifted out. They dig deeper and deeper, but they still get nothing. They expect to find the bones soon but no bones are in there. The interjection *Bah!* shows how unpleasant the people feel finding that



the grave is empty. Everyone has a strong feeling of surprise. The grave still stands on where it should be but after digging it, they do not see any bones of their parents. All people represented by the writer are shocked also. They expect greatly to find the bones but they get nothing except the land.

- 2) “*Molo laos so dapot...?*  
if-still-not-be found  
“**Bah!** *Ingkon. Ingkon dapot. Ndang adong molo, molo.*” *Songkak alus ni Ama Ruhut.* (p. 8)  
*bah-must-must-be found-there-not-if-if-sharply-reply-that-Ama Ruhut*  
[“How if the bones are still not found?”  
“**Bah!** It’s a must. We must find them. There is no if, if...” Ama Runggu replies sharply.]

Benny is the youngest son in the family. He has no knowledge and experience in the Batak culture, especially *Mangongkal Holi*. His parents were dead when he was still a kid. He arose and sent to school and college by his old brothers then until he got his degree from a university in Australia. As the youngest, he respects his brothers so much but he finds difficult to understand the plan of his brothers. The question surprises Ama Runggur strongly because the bones must be found as soon as possible. He feels unpleasant to hear the question from Benny.

- 3) “*Ndang boi huroha disundati tu marsogot?*”  
not-can-about-be delayed-until-tomorrow  
“**Bah,** *disundati?*” *Tarhiap Ama Ruhut, marjengger matana dompak si Benny* (p. 8)  
*bah-be delayed-be shocked-Ama Ruhut-look-his eyes-to-Benny*  
[Cannot it be delayed until tomorrow?  
“**Bah,** delayed?” Ama Ruhut is shocked and stares at Benny sharply.]

Interjection *Bah*<sup>1</sup> in (3) is the response to Benny’s idea to continue digging tomorrow. He proposes the idea because it is getting dark and the rain is coming down heavily. Besides that, they are so tired and so are the diggers. Benny does not realize that the *panangkok saring saring* ceremony must be held tomorrow morning. All families and guests have been invited to come. The ceremony is not only for Benny’s family, but also for his three other families whose parents’ bones are dug in that day. Besides that, everything has been set up. Ama Ruhut gets unpleasant after hearing that because he does not expect it. He stares at Benny sharply.

- 4) “*Amang-inang tinggi besar. Tulang belulang yang aku lihat itu kecil, pendek.*  
father-mother-tall-big-bones-which-I-see-that-small-short  
*Sebenarnya aku mau protes, tapi mulutku terkunci melihat abang sudah capek.*  
actually-I-want-protest-but-mouth-my-be locked-see-brother-have-tired  
*Apalagi omongan datu itu pasti lebih percaya.*  
moreover-words-shaman-that-sure-more-believe  
**Bah!**” (p. 17)  
[“My father and mother were big and tall. When I saw that the bones were short and small.

Actually, I wanted to protest that the bones do not belong to my parents. I just kept silent because I saw my brothers exhausted.  
Moreover, everyone would believe the shaman more than me.  
*Bah!*”]

The writer ends his short story by using interjection *Bah*<sup>1</sup> spoken by Valerina, Benny’s wife in (4). After the ceremony is over, Benny and Val are heading to Jakarta. Benny looks sad sitting on the plane. After being asked by Val, he tells something unexpected. Benny is sure that the bones, actually, do not belong to his parents because the bones are too short and small compared to his parents’ bones. He cannot protest because he sees his brothers looking exhausted. Moreover, he assumes that people will believe the shaman more than him. Hearing this Val feels unpleasant.

#### 4.1.2 *Bah*<sup>2</sup> = Disappointment

According to the Online Oxford Learner’s Dictionary (2020), the word disappointment means upset because something you hoped for has not happened or been as good, successful, etc., as you expected. The explication of *Bah*<sup>2</sup> is shown below:

*Bah*<sup>2</sup>

I now know something about something  
I wouldn’t have thought I would know it  
When I think about this  
(I wouldn’t have thought it could be like that)  
I feel something upset  
I feel like I feel at many times when I say this: ‘*Bah*<sup>2</sup>’

There is one utterance which expresses disappointment found in *Mangongkal Holi* short story. The analysis of the sentence is as follows:

- 5) “*Munsat? Munsat sandiri do?*” *Tarjollang mata ni si ‘Benny’ Benyamin mambe gesa.*  
move-move-themselves-mean-glare-eye-of-Benny-hear it  
*Manat ho tutu manghatai, bah, sotung sitik roha nasida annon laos ditandingkon ulaon on diuduti Ama Longga, hahana nomor dua.*” (p. 2)  
careful-you-really-speak-*bah*-lest-offended-heart-they-later-so-be left-job-this-be continued- Ama Longga-brother-number-two  
[“Move? Move by themselves you mean?” Benny glares at after hearing it.  
“Mind your words, *bah*, if they feel offended, they will go away” Ama Longga, his second older brother continues.]

The interjection *Bah!* in the middle of (5) expresses *Bah*<sup>2</sup> of disappointment. Benny, Ama Ruhut, and Ama Longga are having a conversation with an old man from the village beside the grave. They witness the grave is empty. There are no bones found. The old man assumes that the bones move themselves. Spontaneously Benny gives a quick response. He disrespectfully questions how the bones of his parents can move themselves to the old man. Ama Runggu and Ama Longga are upset to see the



Benny's manner. In Batak culture, a young man is taught to respect parents and an older man. Their expectation is contrary with the fact. Ama Runggu asks Benny to lower his voice and Ama Longga reminds Benny to mind his manner.

#### 4.1.3 *Bah*<sup>3</sup> = *Confusion*

According to the Online Oxford Learner's Dictionary (2020), the word *confusion* means [uncountable, countable] confusion (about/over something) confusion (as to something) a state of not being certain about what is happening, what to do, what something means, etc. The explication of *Bah*<sup>3</sup> is shown below:

##### *Bah*<sup>3</sup>

I now know something about something  
I wouldn't have thought I would know it  
When I think about this  
(I wouldn't have thought it could be like that)  
I feel something confused  
I feel like I feel at many times when I say this: '*Bah*<sup>3</sup>'

There is one utterance which expresses confusion found in *Mangongkal Holi* short story. The analysis of the sentence is as follows:

- 6) "*Tingkos do i, Hasian. Alai na mangongkal holi on ma jolo tahaporluhon.*  
true-that-dear-but-the-mangongkal holi-this-should-first-priority  
***Bah*** *didia do dalanna gabe umporlu parjabuan ni na mate sian na mangolu?*" (p. 12)  
bah-which-its way-become-more important-house-of-dead-than-alive  
["That is true, my dear brother. But *mangongkal holi* should be our first priority. *Bah* how comes the monument (for dead bodies) is more important than a house (for a living bodies)"]

Interjection *Bah!* in (6) expresses *Bah*<sup>3</sup> of confusion. It is spoken by Benny in his heart when he hears Ama Runggu said that *mangongkal holi* should be their first priority, not their broken house. Few months ago, Ama Runggu called Benny telling that he needed some money to repair Benny's house in the village. According to Batak tradition, the house of their parents goes to Benny as the youngest son. Because he lives in Jakarta, Ama Runggu and his family live in the house temporarily. Although Ama Runggu lives there, he always asks for some money to fix the house. Benny never rejects because he knows the condition of his eldest brother. However, he is confused to hear that *mangongkal holi* is more important than the house. He expects that the house be better now. He does not speak it out. He is afraid to argue his brother. He remembers the things his brother has done for him.

#### 4.1.4 *Bah*<sup>4</sup> = *Surprise*

According to the Online Oxford Learner's Dictionary (2020), the word *surprise* means [uncountable, countable] a feeling caused by something happening suddenly or unexpectedly. The explication of *Bah*<sup>4</sup> is shown below:

*Bah*<sup>4</sup>

I now know something about something  
I wouldn't have thought I would know it  
When I think about this  
(I wouldn't have thought it could be like that)  
I feel something surprised  
I feel like I feel at many times when I say this: "*Bah*"

There are three utterances expressing *Bah*<sup>4</sup> found in *Mangongkal Holi* short story. The analysis of each sentence is as follows:

- 7) *Songgot, marpor muse udan. Bah! Tarjollong mandele muse do Ama Ruhut* (p. 13)  
Suddenly-come-again-rain. bah-hopeless-again-Ama Ruhut  
[Suddenly, the rain comes again. *Bah!* Ama Ruhut looks hopeless again.]

Sentence (7) is a writer's statement. From the context, the phrase *songgot, marpor muse udan* 'suddenly, the rain comes' and the phrase *tarjollong mandele muse do Ama Ruhut* 'Ama Ruhut looks hopeless' rise the feeling of the character. He is surprised to see two things. First, the rain comes again, and the second, Ama Runggu looks hopeless again.

- 8) "*Nunga ro be Datu Ronggur,*" *ninna Ama Longga di lambungna*  
have-come-Datu Ronggur-say-Ama Longga-beside-him  
"*Bah! Oooh, Amang, Tuhan Debata, mauliate ma!*" *pintor minar muse bohi ni Ama Ruhut.* (p.13)  
bah-oooh-father-lord-thank-directly-cheerful-then-face-of-Ama Ruhut  
[*"Datu Ronggur has already come,"* said Ama Longga sitting beside him.  
*"Bah! Oooh, God, thanks a lot!"* Ama Ruhut looks cheerful.]

Ama Runggu in (8) expresses *Bah*<sup>4</sup> when hearing good information from Ama Longga who is sitting beside him when they are waiting for good news from the diggers. They look so tired and hopeless. It is dark already and the rain is still coming. It is a surprise for him. The shaman named 'Datu Ronggur' brings a new hope. He looks happy and cheerful. He directly thanks his God to send Datu Ronggur.

- 9) *Bah, bah, mintorhumalaput ma si Val mandapothon lahomangarekam, ditadingkon ingananna di uduran ni hasuhuton* (p. 16)  
*bah, bah,* suddenly-run-Val-meet-in order to-record-left-her place-at-row-of-host  
[*Bah, bah,* Val runs directly to record. She gets out from the line of host.]

The interjection *Bah!* in (9) expresses *Bah*<sup>4</sup> of surprise. After they find the bones, it continues to a ceremony called *Panangkok Saring-Saring* the following day. Everybody is very happy especially, Val. It is the first experience for her to watch a party directly like that. As the member of the family, she has to stand and to dance (*manortor*) in a line of *hasuhuton* (the host of the party). She is surprised to see all especially when few people are coming and taking a small tree whose leaves are money. Spontaneously, Val runs and gets out from the line where she should belong

to. She does not care what people say. Then, she is recording it. *Bah*<sup>4</sup> is expressed twice to show how surprised the character is.

#### 4.1.5 *Bah*<sup>5</sup> = Amazement

According to the Online Oxford Learner's Dictionary (2020), the word astonishment means a feeling of great surprise. The explication of *Bah*<sup>5</sup> is as below:

*Bah*<sup>5</sup>

I now know something about something  
 I wouldn't have thought I would know it  
 When I think about this  
 (I wouldn't have thought it could be like that)  
 I feel something great, surprised  
 I feel like I feel at many times when I say this: '*Bah*<sup>5</sup>'

There is one utterance which expresses amazement found in *Mangongkal Holi* short story. The analysis of the sentence is as follows:

- 10) *Boi dipaunsat Datu udan tu tonga tao? Bah!* (p. 14)  
 can-move-shaman-rain-to-middle-lake?-bah  
 [The shaman can move the rain to the middle of the lake? *Bah!*]

The writer tells an unbelievable moment when the shaman moves the rain to the middle of the lake. Everybody is amazed; no one in the world can do it. The shaman surprises everyone with a spectacular show. There is no rain anymore around the place.

## 4.2 Feelings of *Bah!*

The multiple meanings of *Bah!* earlier discussed can be classified into two feelings, positive and negative feelings.

### 4.2.1 The positive feeling of *Bah!*

The positive feeling means that the meaning of interjection *Bah!* are happiness, cheerfulness, joy, etc., as shown in the explications of *Bah*<sup>4</sup> and *Bah*<sup>5</sup> below:

*Bah*<sup>4</sup>, *Bah*<sup>5</sup>

I now know something  
 I wouldn't have thought I would know it  
 I think: it is very good  
 (I wouldn't have thought it could be like that)  
 I feel something because of that

### 4.2.2 The negative feeling of *Bah!*

The negative feeling means that the meaning of interjection *Bah!* results sadness, disappointment, and confusion. Let's see the explication of *Bah*<sup>1</sup>, *Bah*<sup>2</sup>, *Bah*<sup>3</sup> below:

*Bah<sup>1</sup>, Bah<sup>2</sup>, Bah<sup>3</sup>*

I now know something

I wouldn't have thought I would know it

I think: it is very bad

(I wouldn't have thought it could be like that)

I feel something because of that

### 4.3 Discussion

As noted earlier, emotive interjections are often used in social interaction to display the speaker's reaction to something that has been said. Briefly, it can be argued that discursive uses work by a process that can be modeled as in the following explications. The idea is that the speaker indicates the quality of his/her own current feeling by appealing to typical situations in which he or she uses the interjection.

From the findings above, there are five meanings of *Bah!* found in *Mangongkal Holi* short story. All of them belong to emotive interjection proposed by Wierzbicka (1996), those which have in their meaning the component 'I feel something'. It is like 'Wow!' in English explicated by Wierzbicka (1992), Ameka (1992a), and Goddard (2014) which is uttered to show a surprise but on the other hand, its meaning is more than 'Wow!' in English. *Bah!* is also used by Indonesian especially Batak Toba people to express shock, disappointment, confusion, surprise, and amazement. All the meanings come with its various meanings due to the context where it is used. *Bah<sup>1</sup>* can only be accepted when it is spoken to respond something unpleasant which triggers a strong feeling of surprise. The unpleasant situation of sentence (1), (2), and (3) leads to a strong feeling of surprise. Different from *Bah<sup>1</sup>*, *Bah<sup>4</sup>* is used if there is something happening suddenly or unexpectedly seen in (7), (8), and (9). According to Saragih and Panggabean (2013) both of them were spoken with the same contour which led to only one type of *Bah!* expressing *kaget* 'surprised' in communication to express both expressions. On the other hand, *Bah<sup>5</sup>* expressing amazement is used to show a feeling of great surprise in (10).

From the definitions of *Bah<sup>1</sup>*, *Bah<sup>4</sup>*, and *Bah<sup>5</sup>* above, it can be understood that they express the same emotive feeling, i.e. surprise, to have or to see something happening unexpectedly. There is only a slight difference among them where *Bah<sup>1</sup>* has a strong feeling of surprise that can make people shocked and always express only a negative feeling, *Bah<sup>2</sup>* is always a positive feeling expression, and *Bah<sup>5</sup>* has a great feeling to have or to see something outstanding or out of mind.

Meanwhile, the notion of surprise in the definitions of *Bah<sup>2</sup>* expressing disappointment and *Bah<sup>3</sup>* expressing confusion is just a little. *Bah<sup>2</sup>* in (5) is used when something you expected has not happened and *Bah<sup>3</sup>* in (6) is used when there is uncertain thing. Both of them express negative feelings.

## 5. CONCLUSION

There are five meanings of interjection *Bah!* found in *Mangongkal Holi* short story, namely shock, disappointment, confusion, surprise, and amazement using Natural Semantic Metalanguage proposed by Wierzbicka (1996). The interjection *Bah!* expressing shock, surprise, and amazement has a different notion of surprise in

the expressions, while interjection *Bah!* expressing disappointed and confusion have only a little of it.

The interjection *Bah!* belongs to emotive interjection which expresses an element of feelings, positive and negative depending on context. The positive feelings are surprise and amazement and the negative ones are shock, disappointment, and confusion. These results bring new information to all speakers especially to the Batakese and Indonesian people to the meaning of interjection *Bah!* Therefore, it is recommended that further research on this topic investigate other possible meanings of *Bah!* from other viewpoints through other types of research to find the various functions of *Bah!* in real communication.

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