

Sasak Language in Rituals and Traditions: An Anthropological Analysis of Communication in the Lombok Community

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Abstract

The Sasak language plays a vital role in the rituals and traditions of the Lombok community. This study aims to analyze the use of the Sasak language in the context of anthropological communication, particularly in ritual and traditional activities in Lombok. This research uses a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods. Data collection techniques include participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques to identify patterns and meanings in the use of the Sasak language in various rituals and traditions. The research results show that the Sasak language is widely used in various religious rituals, traditional ceremonies, and celebrations. The use of this language serves not only as a communication tool but also as a symbol of cultural identity and social cohesion. In conclusion, the Sasak language plays a crucial role in preserving and transmitting cultural values and strengthening social cohesion within the Lombok community. The implications of this research highlight the importance of preserving the Sasak language in the context of modernization and globalization to ensure the continuity of the traditions and cultural identity of the Sasak people.

Keywords: *Sasak Language, Rituals, Traditions, Anthropological Analysis, Communication, Lombok Community.*

Abstrak

Bahasa Sasak memiliki peran penting dalam ritual dan tradisi masyarakat Lombok. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis penggunaan Bahasa Sasak dalam konteks komunikasi antropologi, khususnya dalam kegiatan ritual dan tradisional di Lombok. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode etnografi. Teknik pengumpulan data meliputi observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan dengan menggunakan teknik analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola dan makna dalam penggunaan Bahasa Sasak dalam berbagai ritual dan tradisi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Bahasa Sasak digunakan secara luas dalam berbagai ritual keagamaan, upacara adat, dan perayaan tradisional. Penggunaan bahasa ini tidak hanya sebagai alat

komunikasi, tetapi juga sebagai simbol identitas budaya dan pengikat sosial. Kesimpulannya, Bahasa Sasak memainkan peran krusial dalam mempertahankan dan mentransmisikan nilai-nilai budaya serta memperkuat kohesi sosial di masyarakat Lombok. Implikasi dari penelitian ini adalah pentingnya pelestarian Bahasa Sasak dalam konteks modernisasi dan globalisasi untuk memastikan keberlanjutan tradisi dan identitas budaya masyarakat Sasak.

Kata Kunci: Anthropological Analysis, Communication, Lombok Community, Rituals, Sasak Language, Traditions.

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1. Introduction

Culture is an integral aspect of human life, encompassing the values, norms, and practices that evolve within a community (Gentina et al., 2018). In Lombok, Sasak culture has profound richness, reflecting traditions and customs passed down through generations. This cultural existence manifests in various forms, including traditional ceremonies, religious rituals, and local arts and music (Gurbin, 2015). The Sasak language, as a key element of this culture, plays a central role in preserving and transmitting cultural values.

As a part of cultural identity, language functions not only as a communication tool but also as a bridge connecting different generations. In the Sasak community, this language is used in all aspects of life, from daily interactions to the execution of rituals and customary ceremonies (Ruiz-Frau et al., 2020). The presence of the Sasak language helps maintain cultural continuity by storing and conveying stories, legends, and traditional practices that shape the lifestyle of the Lombok people (Ruzol et al., 2017). By understanding the cultural existence of the Sasak community, we can better appreciate how the language contributes to the preservation of traditions and rituals. This study focuses on an anthropological analysis of the use of the Sasak language in the context of rituals and traditions among the Lombok community, revealing how the language functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a symbol of cultural identity, connecting the community to their history and heritage (Gurbin, 2015).

Language is a fundamental element of human culture, serving not only as a tool for communication but also as a carrier of cultural identity and history of a community (Le & Ngoc, 2024). In Lombok, the Sasak language plays a crucial role in preserving the traditions and rituals that characterize its people (Muliadi, Asyari, et al., 2024). This study focuses on the anthropological analysis of the use of the Sasak language in various contexts of rituals and traditions within the Lombok community, revealing how this language functions as both a medium of communication and a symbol of cultural identity (Wæraas, 2007).

The theme explored in this study is the use of the Sasak language in the rituals and traditions of the Lombok community. Through an anthropological approach, this research seeks to understand how the Sasak language is used in culturally and symbolically rich contexts (Rasyidi & Nasri, 2023). The rituals and traditions studied include religious ceremonies, customary celebrations, and other community activities that involve intensive use of the Sasak language (Muliadi, Rasyidi, et al., 2024).

Although extensive research has been conducted on the Sasak language, there remains a gap in understanding the specific role of this language in the context of rituals and traditions (Salsabila & Falah, 2024). Previous studies have largely focused on linguistic aspects and language changes, while investigations into the function of the Sasak language as a communication medium in rituals and traditions are still limited.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to preserve and deepen the understanding of the Sasak language as an integral part of Lombok's cultural heritage. In the era of globalization and modernization, local languages and traditions face the threat of extinction. This study aims to document and analyze the use of the Sasak language in contexts rich with cultural values to ensure its continuity.

This research is expected to make a significant contribution to the fields of anthropology and language studies by providing new insights into the role of the Sasak language in rituals and traditions. Additionally, the findings of this study can serve as a reference for efforts to preserve local culture and language, and provide a basis for developing policies that support the sustainability of the traditions and cultural identity of the Sasak community. This study not only adds to the academic literature on the Sasak language but also contributes to practical efforts to preserve Lombok's culture amidst changing times.

2. Method

This research employs a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods to explore the use of the Sasak language in the rituals and traditions of the Lombok community (Abramson, 2021). This approach is chosen because it allows the researcher to be directly and deeply involved in the daily life of the community being studied, revealing the meaning and function of the Sasak language in their cultural and social contexts (Randall et al., 2023).

The research process began with participant observation at various events and activities that involve intensive use of the Sasak language. The researcher spent a considerable amount of time within the community, interacting with various members, from traditional leaders and religious figures to the general populace involved in rituals and traditions (Jones-Hooker & Tyndall, 2023). This observation enabled the researcher to directly observe how the Sasak language is used in

various contexts and gain a deeper understanding of the values and symbolism embedded in its use (Wang & Canagarajah, 2024).

In addition to observation, in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants. These informants were selected based on their roles and experiences in preserving and conducting traditions and rituals in the Lombok community (Nasri, 2023). The interviews aimed to uncover their perspectives on the role of the Sasak language in their lives and how they interpret its use in the context of rituals and traditions (Butnaru, 2015). The interviews were semi-structured, allowing flexibility to delve into topics that emerged during the conversations (Roeschley, 2023).

Documentation also played a crucial role in this research methodology (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The researcher collected various forms of documentation, such as audio and video recordings of ceremonies and rituals, photographs, and detailed field notes (Gill et al., 2008). This documentation not only serves as material for analysis but also as an important archive for future reference (Barrett & Twycross, 2018).

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques. The data collected from observations, interviews, and documentation were analyzed to identify the main themes related to the use of the Sasak language in rituals and traditions (Mihas, 2023). The analysis process began with transcribing the interview and observation data, followed by coding to categorize the data based on relevant themes (Torma & Aschemann-Witzel, 2024). These themes were then further analyzed to uncover patterns of Sasak language use and the meanings and functions associated with its use in ritual and traditional contexts (Pink, 2011). The results of this analysis provide a comprehensive picture of the role of the Sasak language in the Lombok community and its significant contribution to maintaining the cultural and social identity of the community (Cissé & Rasmussen, 2022). This research is expected to offer new insights that are valuable for efforts to preserve the Sasak language and culture, and serve as a reference for further studies in the fields of anthropology and linguistics (Nasri et al., 2024).

3. Result and Discussion

Result

The Use of Sasak Language in Religious Rituals

The Sasak language is widely used in various religious ceremonies, such as weddings, circumcisions, and other traditional events. This language not only functions as a means of communication but also carries profound symbolic meanings. For example, prayers and mantras spoken in Sasak are considered to have powerful spiritual significance. One concrete example of the use of the Sasak language in religious rituals is the Bereqe ritual in Lombok. Bereqe is a traditional ceremony that forms part of the pre-circumcision rituals. This ritual not only demonstrates Sasak customs and culture but also embodies social, religious, and national values of Indonesia.

Bereqe Ritual in Sasak Lombok

The *Bereqe* ritual is a distinctive cultural practice from Sasak Lombok, Nusa Tenggara Barat. This cultural expression stems from the work, imagination, and experiences of renowned poets of their time and other imaginative individuals (Kamarudin, 2017). The ritual illustrates the rich cultural diversity of Indonesia, from Sumatra to the eastern regions, each with its own unique customs and traditions. *Bereqe* is a traditional ceremony held before the circumcision event. It involves various roles within the community, such as event organizers, poets (*tukang pace tembang*), *Inen bubus*, and officials responsible for preparing offerings or *dulang*. During this ritual, poets recite *tembang* (traditional chants) that include stories about the early days of Islam. The Sasak people believe that a child who has undergone circumcision becomes purified from impurities and is then allowed to pray closely with their parents.

Social and Religious Values

The social value of the *Bereqe* ritual is evident in the mutual cooperation among community members in preparing for the event. Each person has an essential role, from organizing to presenting food. This sense of togetherness and mutual aid strengthens social bonds within the community. Religiously, the *tembang* recited by the poet contains stories about the origins of Islam, illustrating how religion and culture are intertwined in the daily lives of the Sasak people. This reinforces the view that religious traditions are not just rituals but also serve as a medium for imparting spiritual and moral values to the younger generation (Myers et al., 2023).

National Identity

The *Bereqe* ritual also reflects the national identity of Indonesia. Despite the influences of globalization and modernization, the Sasak community remains committed to preserving their cultural identity and traditions. This is evident in the preparation and execution of the circumcision ceremony according to established traditions. The *Bereqe* ritual serves as factual evidence of Indonesia's rich cultural and traditional heritage. Sasak Lombok's traditions and customs, with their noble values, are worthy of study, pride, and preservation as cultural heritage. This ritual not only reinforces the identity of the Montong Baan community but also that of Indonesia as a whole (Ter-Minasova, 2021).

The use of the Sasak language in religious rituals demonstrates how the language functions not just as a communication tool but as a medium rich in symbolic and spiritual meaning. Through rituals like *Bereqe*, the Sasak language plays a role in preserving social, religious, and cultural values. This tradition is a vital part of the cultural heritage that should be cherished and upheld by the entire Indonesian nation.

The Role of Sasak Language in Traditional Ceremonies

In traditional ceremonies, the Sasak language plays a crucial role in conveying cultural values and social norms. It is used to express moral messages, advice, and teachings passed down from generation to generation. Through its use in ceremonies like Nyongkolan and Perang Topat, the Sasak language serves as a tool for strengthening social bonds and community cohesion.

Nyongkolan Ceremony

Nyongkolan is a vibrant traditional ceremony that forms part of the wedding celebration. This ceremony involves a lengthy procession from the bride's home to the groom's home. The Sasak language is used during Nyongkolan to convey prayers, hopes, and advice related to married life. Throughout the procession, various tembang (traditional songs) are sung in Sasak to add meaning and solemnity to the event. Additionally, the Sasak language is used to communicate with all participants, reinforcing a sense of togetherness and solidarity.

Perang Topat Ceremony

Perang Topat is a traditional ceremony held to celebrate the harvest and express gratitude to God. In this ceremony, the Sasak language plays a role in reciting prayers and chants. This ritual reflects the connection between social and spiritual life within the Sasak community. The use of the Sasak language in this context not only makes the celebration meaningful but also serves as a way to educate younger generations about cultural and religious values.

Roles of Various Participants in Traditional Ceremonies

Traditional ceremonies within the Sasak culture are characterized by the active involvement of various participants, each contributing a unique role that enhances the richness of the ritual. Understanding these roles provides insight into how the Sasak language and cultural practices interweave to create a meaningful ceremonial experience. The following outlines the key participants and their roles:

1. Bujangga: The Bujangga is the esteemed reciter of poetry and tembang, responsible for delivering cultural and spiritual messages through their art. Their role is crucial in conveying traditional wisdom and values during the ceremony.
2. Inen Bubus: Inen Bubus, a traditional healer, performs essential duties in the circumcision ceremony, using symbolic rituals to prepare and purify the child. Their involvement underscores the connection between traditional health practices and spiritual beliefs.
3. Sekehe: Sekehe members, as part of the gendang beleq ensemble, provide musical accompaniment that energizes the ceremony. Their performance of traditional Sasak songs and rhythms fosters a vibrant atmosphere and cultural appreciation.
4. Gendang Beleq: The Gendang Beleq, a traditional Lombok music ensemble, creates an emotional and engaging atmosphere through its diverse range of instruments. The rhythmic and melodic elements of the ensemble play a central role in the ceremony's ceremonial and festive ambiance.

5. **Andang-andang:** Andang-andang represents the ceremonial offerings that include various symbolic items. These offerings are integral to the ritual, symbolizing respect and prayer within the traditional ceremony.
6. **Dulang:** Dulang, a bamboo woven tray filled with food and money, plays a social role during the ceremony. The distribution of dulang's contents reflects communal sharing and participation, highlighting the social cohesion within the event.

By examining these roles, we gain a deeper appreciation of how each participant contributes to the ceremony, ensuring that the cultural, spiritual, and social dimensions of the Sasak traditions are preserved and celebrated.

Discussion

The critical examination of the Sasak language's role in traditional ceremonies reveals its integral function in preserving and expressing cultural identity, social cohesion, and spiritual beliefs. The Bujangga, as the reciter of traditional poetry and tembang, exemplifies the role of oral traditions in maintaining cultural continuity. Through the Cultural Transmission Theory, we understand that the Bujangga's use of the Sasak language serves as a crucial medium for passing down cultural narratives and moral teachings (Gurbin, 2015). This process ensures that essential values and historical knowledge are retained across generations, reinforcing community identity and coherence.

Inen Bubus, the traditional healer, demonstrates how symbolic rituals and health practices are intertwined with spiritual beliefs. According to Symbolic Interactionism, the rituals performed by Inen Bubus are imbued with significant symbolic meaning, influencing perceptions of health and spirituality (Newman, 2008). The use of the Sasak language in these rituals highlights how symbolic actions, such as the purification process involving betel leaves and areca nuts, are essential for integrating spiritual beliefs with practical health measures.

The role of Sekehe, the musical ensemble, in energizing the ceremony through gendang beleq and Sasak songs further illustrates the power of performance in cultural expression. Performance Theory, emphasizes that such performances are critical for articulating and reinforcing cultural values. The vibrant and rhythmic nature of Sekehe's music enhances the communal experience, fostering a sense of cultural pride and collective identity among participants.

Similarly, Gendang Beleq, with its array of traditional instruments, contributes significantly to the auditory and emotional dimensions of the ceremony. Through the lens of Cultural Materialism, the ensemble's instruments are seen as more than mere objects; they play a pivotal role in shaping the ritual's sensory and emotional impact (Gentina et al., 2018). The music created by Gendang Beleq deepens the ceremonial experience, reinforcing cultural traditions and community solidarity.

The Andang-andang offerings, rich with symbolic meaning, serve to reinforce respect and spiritual devotion within the ritual context (Peltonen & Huhtinen, 2023). Functionalism, provides insight into how these offerings fulfill specific functions in maintaining social order and reinforcing cultural norms (Sun et al., 2024). The Sasak language used in presenting these offerings underscores their role in facilitating spiritual connection and communal harmony.

Finally, the practice of sharing and contesting the contents of Dulang exemplifies the communal nature of Sasak ceremonies. Social Exchange Theory explains that such interactions are based on mutual benefits and reinforce social bonds (Ruzol et al., 2017). The Sasak language's role in this context highlights the importance of communal rituals in fostering social interaction and solidarity, reflecting the social dynamics of the Sasak community.

In conclusion, the Sasak language is central to the ceremonial practices of the Sasak community, serving as a vital tool for cultural preservation, social cohesion, and spiritual expression. By integrating these roles with relevant theories, we gain a comprehensive understanding of how traditional practices function to sustain and enrich cultural heritage, emphasizing the need to continue and adapt these practices in contemporary settings.

4. Conclusion

The exploration of the Sasak language in traditional ceremonies highlights its crucial role in preserving cultural heritage, fostering social cohesion, and expressing spiritual beliefs within the Sasak community. Participants such as Bujangga, Inen Bubus, Sekehe, Gendang Beleq, Andang-andang, and Dulang illustrate how the Sasak language serves as a vital medium for cultural expression and continuity. The Bujangga's recitations align with Cultural Transmission Theory by preserving cultural narratives, while Inen Bubus's rituals reveal the integration of symbolic and practical elements in spiritual practices, as seen through Symbolic Interactionism. Sekehe's musical performances enhance communal pride, reflecting Performance Theory, and Gendang Beleq's instruments highlight the sensory impact of musical traditions, explained by Cultural Materialism. Andang-andang's offerings demonstrate how rituals maintain social order, supported by Functionalism, and the communal sharing of Dulang underscores the role of rituals in fostering social bonds, as analyzed with Social Exchange Theory. These insights underscore the Sasak language's essential role in enriching ceremonies and maintaining cultural fabric, emphasizing the need to sustain and adapt these traditions to keep the Sasak cultural legacy vibrant in modern contexts.

Explain limited study, and future research:

This study, while offering significant insights, is limited in its focus on specific ceremonies and participants within the Sasak community. Further research could expand by exploring the Sasak language's role in other forms of cultural practices or examining generational differences in language use and its evolving role in modern society. Future studies might also investigate the influence of external cultural factors on Sasak traditions and how they impact the preservation of the language in an increasingly globalized world. By doing so, the comprehensive understanding of the Sasak language's role in both historical and contemporary contexts can be further enriched.

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