



THE CULTURAL CONCEPTUALISATION OF MANGGARAI PEOPLE ON THE ORIGIN OF LIFE: CULTURAL LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT: This study describes the relationship of between Manggarai language and Manggarai culture, as reflected in the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of life that includes the origin of human beings, food plants, and animals. The study is viewed from the perspective of cultural linguistics. The study is descriptive. The results of study show that there is a close relationship between Manggarai language and Manggarai culture, as reflected in the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of life that includes the origin of human beings, food plants, and animals.

Keywords: *cultural conceptualisation, Manggarai people, origin of life.*

INRODUCTION

There are various symbolic media of communication that people as members of a social group employ to meet their basic needs as human beings. However, of various symbolic media of communication they employ, the most effective one is language because language serves not only to express their thoughts or ideas and feelings, but also to convey their experiences in the world (Cassirer, 1987; Sumarsono, 2010). This implies that both language and culture share by a people as members of social group is closely related. The relationship is reflected in cultural conceptualisation ascribed in their cognitive map that functions as a collective memory bank they use as the source of reference in viewing the world (Vito, 1970; Kramsch, 2001). The view comes closest to the conception of Sharifian (2007) that language used by a people as members of a social group is a system through which they express the ways they conceptualize experiences of different kinds. They do not always create a mirror image of an objective reality through their use of language, rather, they often negotiate with others around them as to how they should think of the various experiences. The conceptualization of such experiences may spark off from someone's imagination, and then be subjected to negotiation by people through living together for years.

Bearing the matters stated above in minds, in this study, we investigate the relationship between Manggarai language and Manggarai culture aimed at uncovering the cultural conceptualization of Manggarai people residing in the western part of the island of Flores (Verheijen, 1991; Bustan, 2005; Bustan, et al, 2017) on the origin of life in the world. As the relationship is so complex in nature that the study focuses on the forms and meanings of language they employ in folktales. We

are interested in conducting this study because the forms and meanings of language that Manggarai people employ in the folktales are specific to Manggarai culture. The meanings stated and implied in the forms of language used in the folktales designate the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of life in the world that include the origin of human beings, food plants, and animals (Erb, 1999). The forms and meanings of Manggarai language used in the folktales contribute the cultural conceptualization of Manggarai people on the sacredness of all life and its interconnection with human beings (Erb, 1999) as the fundamental principle of local religion shared by Manggarai people before they come into contact with new religions like Catholics shared by the majority of Manggarai people nowadays (Bustan, 2005).

OBJECTIVES

In general, the objective of the study is to describe the relationship of Manggarai language and Manggarai culture, as reflected in the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of life that include the origin of human beings, food plant, and animals, with special reference to the forms and meanings of language they employ in a Manggarai folktale telling the origin of life. Along with its focus and aspects of the study, the specific objectives of the study are (1) to describe the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of human beings, (2) to describe the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of food plants, and to describe the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of animals.

SIGNIFICANCES

In accordance with its objectives, the study has theoretical significances and practical significances. Theoretically, the study is beneficial to contribute the conception of cultural linguistics as one of the new paradigms or models in cognitive linguistics that explores the relationship of language, culture, and conceptualisation belonging to a people as members of a social group, as advocated by Palmer (1996), Fazard and Sharifian (2007). At the same time, the study is also beneficial to support the conceptions concerning with the relationship of language and culture proposed by Foley (1997), Wardaugh (1991), and Wierzbicka (1991). Practically, the study can be used as an additional source of reference for those who are interested in doing research concerning with the relationship of language and culture shared by other societies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Culture is one of the prominent features identifying a people as members of an ethnic group and, at the same time, differentiating them from those of other ethnic groups (Koentjaraningrat, 2004). Culture creates distinctions between people as it functions as the symbol of identity, as reflected in language as both language and culture are closely related. The relationship is realised in cultural conceptualisation imprinted in their cognitive map, as can be seen when they value certain things and do them in a certain way, they come to use their language in ways reflecting what they value and they do (Wardaugh, 1991; Wierzbicka, 1991).

The function of language as the mirror of culture is the main concern or issue of cultural linguistics, that is one of the new theoretical perspectives in cognitive linguistics exploring the relationship between language, culture, and conceptualisation (Palmer and Sharifian, 2007; Palmer, 1996). Cultural linguistics draws on the combined resource of anthropological linguistics and cognitive linguistics (Palmer, 1996) in providing an account of the communicative behavior of a people as members of a social group (Malcolm, 2007). In the perspective of cultural linguistics, language is explored through the prism of culture aimed at knowing the conceptualisation of its speakers in viewing the world on the basis of assumption that language is a window into the cognition of its speakers (Whorf, 2001).

Cultural linguistics is an emerging paradigm in cognitive linguistics because, besides emphasizing the cultural elements of cognition (Casson, 1981; Wallace, 1981; Keesing, 1981; Stross, 1981), it also functions as an approach to identify language differences due to cultural differences (Cassirer, 1987). This is in line with conception that the diversity of languages is not the diversity of signs and sounds, but the diversity of cultures (Miller, 1968; Cassirer, 1987; Foley, 1997). The conception comes closest to the theory of linguistic relativity proposed in the hypothesis of Sapir and Whorf that the varying cultural concepts and categories inherent in different languages affect the cognitive classification of the experienced world in such a way that speakers of

different languages think and behave differently. As such, two basic concepts that we should take into account when exploring the relationship between language and culture are as follows: (a) we perceive the world in terms of categories and distinctions found in our native language and (b) what is found in one language may not be found in another language due to cultural differences. The two basic concepts emphasize the significance of emic perspective in the study of language as the mirror of culture in which that language is embedded.

As can be seen in its definition, the basic concepts of cultural linguistics are language, culture, and conceptualisation. As language can be defined differently, according to Palmer and Sharifian (2007), in the perspective of cultural linguistics, language is defined a cultural activity and, at the same time, an instrument for organizing other cultural domains. This is because language used by a people as members of a social group is shaped not only by their special and general innate potentials as human beings, but also by physical and sociocultural experiences in the contexts of living together for years (Sharifian, 2007). As culture may mean different things for different people (Kaplan and Manners, 1999), in the perspective of cultural linguistics, culture is defined as the source of conceptualisation of experiences in the world (Wallace, 1981; Palmer, 1996; Wallace, 1981; Palmer and Sharifian, 2007). This is in line with the conception of Foley (1997) that culture is a cognitive map shared by a people as members of a social group. The conception is based on the fact that culture shared by a people as members of a social group serves as a display illustrating how they organize their ways of thinking about items, behaviors, and beliefs or events in cultural domain (Palmer and Sharifian, 2007; Palmer, 1996).

Since cultural concepts are embedded in language, the relationship between language and culture is reflected in conceptualisation as fundamental cognitive processes which naturally lead to the development of schemas, categories, metaphors, and scripts. The ways a people as members of a social group conceptualise their experiences in cultural domains known as cultural conceptualisations that include beliefs, norms, customs, traditions, and values. Cultural conceptualisations and language are two intrinsic aspects of cultural cognition and, as such, cultural conceptualisations have conceptual existence and linguistic encoding as well. Language as the central aspect of cultural cognition is a collective memory bank for cultural conceptualisations, past and present. This is because language is shaped by cultural conceptualisations that have prevailed at different stages in the story of its speakers and these different stages can leave their traces in current linguistic practices. Language is one of the primary mechanisms to store and communicate cultural conceptualisations because language as a collective memory bank is a fluid vehicle for the retransmission of the socioculturally embodied cultural conceptualisations (Sharifian, 2011).

Cultural conceptualisation may not be correlated objectively with external world and this occurs because cultural conceptualisation is the result of interaction between members of a culture through continuous process of negotiation and renegotiation through time and space as well as across generations. As such, it is true to say that language functions not only as a means for communicating cultural conceptualisation but also as a means for embodying cultural conceptualisation as it functions as the vehicle for expressing the cultural identity of a people. The cultural conceptualisations distributed across the minds of a people as members of speech community representing their cognition at the cultural level are called linguistic imagery. A linguistic imagery is not related to how they speak about objective reality as it deals with how they speak about the world that they themselves imagine. The linguistic imagery can be examined from the physical form of language used along with the situational context of speech event and the sociocultural context of its speakers (Sharifian, 2007).

METHODOLOGY

This study is descriptive as it describes the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of life on the basis of data collected through research and the data were described as they were found (Muhadjir, 1995). The procedures of research were field and library research. The field research was aimed at collecting the primary data as the main sources of data. The data were obtained by using ethnographic approach implemented together with emic perspective as the interpretations of data were made on the basis of the viewpoints of Manggarai people as the native speakers of Manggarai language (Spradley, 1997; Hymes, 1974; Palmer, 1996; Foley, 1997; Palmer and Sharifian, 2007; Duranti, 2001; Afrizal, 2014). The main sources of primary data were Manggarai people, represented by five people as key informants selected on the basis of criteria proposed by Faisal (1990), Spradley (1997), Sudikan (2001), and Bungin (2007). The main method of data collection was interview with the key informants aimed at distilling their thoughts and ideas on the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of life. The library research was aimed at collecting the secondary data through documentary study, as provided in general documents (books) and special documents (scientific articles, results of research and paper). The data were analyzed qualitatively by using inductive method as the analysis was started from data to concepts related to the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of life.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part provides findings and discussion dealing with the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of life that include the origin of human beings, food plants, and animals.

Findings

The results of study show that there is a close relationship between Manggarai language and Manggarai culture, as reflected in the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of life in the world that include the origin of human life, the origin of food plants, and the origin of animals. The cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of life is reflected in the forms and meanings of language they employ in folktales. The forms and meanings of language used in the folktales are specific to Manggarai culture as they uncover the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of life that include the origin of human beings, food plants, and animals.

As the folktales in Manggarai language are of various kinds, for the purpose of this study, the text of Manggarai folktale telling the origin of life that had been translated by Erb (1999) into English was selected as the corpus of data because the folktale was universal for Manggarai people.

THE ORIGIN OF LIFE

The rays of sun from "father above" (*ema eta*), the sky, shone down on the "mother below" (*ende wa*), the earth. These rays hit a clump of bamboo high on a mountain top and two people emerged. These first two people were a man and a woman. They had to eat forest roots, the leaves of trees and fungus for there was nothing else for human beings to eat. Then they took the bamboo and split it open. By rubbing the two pieces together they could produce fire. They used the bark of the *lale* tree (*artocapus elastica*, a kind of breadfruit tree) for clothing. In fact, the traditional name of Manggarai is *Nuca Lale* - "the island of the *lale* tree". Eventually they gave birth to a son. When the child was about five years old, the father dreamt of an old man who told him that they must kill his child. This old man had several nicknames (*paci*), some of which were *Jari Dedek* ("to make and create") and *Morin agu Ngaran* ("the owner and guardian"), phrases that Manggaraitoday associate with God. He told the father, "Take some *teno* wood and some rocks and burn them so that they will fragment. Then use the pieces to cut down the trees and open a *lingko* (field). Then kill the child with the *teno* wood and cut up its body into little pieces and plant the flesh in the *lingko*". So the father went and cleared the *lingko* and burnt it. When he has finished preparing the field, he asked his wife to send their son to the field with some food for him. When the child arrived the father cut him up and spread his flesh around in the field. In the afternoon, when he returned home, he pretended that the child had never arrived to deliver the food. His wife said she had sent the child. So the father said, "This means that our son must be stolen by forest spirits." So they cried and cried for their only child. After three days, plants started to grow in the *lingko*. The father went into the field and saw the plants growing and

tried to pull at them. The plants cried, "*Ema aku ce'el*" (Father, I am here!). At last theman understood that this was his child, grown into different plants. That night he dreamt again of the old man, who said, "Those plants that do not call out to you are the ones that are ripe. They are old enough to be eaten." He then revealed the names of the plants. "The plant that crawls along on a vine is *timung* (cucumber). The other plant on a vine with bigger fruits is *ndesi* (pumpkin). The plant with small leaves is *hocu* (millet). The shorter plant is *woja* (rice). While the taller plant is *latung* (maize)." So the man went to the field again and held onto the different fruits. Those that screamed out he did not take and those that were silent he picked. He brought the ripe fruits to the field hut and told his wife they could be eaten. She was surprised. The cooked the fruits and ate them, and found them delicious. When his wife asked him where he had got the plants from, the man responded, "Go into the field, but do not be afraid of what you encounter there." So the woman went into the *lingko* and all the plants that she stepped on cried out, "*Ende, aku ce'e*" ("Mother, I am here!"). She was frightened, thinking it was some kind of spirit, so she ran back to the hut, without bringing anything with her. She told her husband what she had heard, and it was then he admitted what he had done, and the plants were indeed their own child. The woman was sad, but also delighted that they had so many delicious plants to eat. In addition to plants, different animals emerged out of the field, and became those animals which human beings care for - horses, buffaloes, goats, and chickens.

Discussion

Based on the aspects of the study, the following is discussed the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of human beings, food plants, and animals.

The Origin of Human Beings

As reflected in the forms and meanings of language used in the folktale, in the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people, the first human beings were a man and a woman. Both the man and the woman emerged from plants when the rays of the sun from the sky shone down on the earth and hit a climp of bamboo high on a mountain top. The sky refers to *ema eta* 'father above' and the earth refers to *ende wa* 'mother below'. These are the two specific terms used by Manggarai people to designate the existence of God as *Jari agu Dedek* 'the Maker and the Nourisher'. It is conceptualised in the cognitive map or the cultural knowledge of Manggarai people that, the first human beings – a man and a woman – emerged due to the marriage of the sky as *ema eta* and the earth as *ende wa*. The man and the woman lived as husband and wife. Eventually, a few months later, they gave birth to a son, the only son they had. As they did not have names so did their son. As there was nothing for them to eat, they had to eat forests roots, the leaves of trees, and fungus. In

order to cook their food, they rubbed two pieces of bamboo splits to produce fire. While for clothing, they used the bark of the *lale* tree (*artocapus elastica*, a kind of breadfruit tree). As the island was full of *the* *lale* trees, the traditional name of Manggarai is known as *Nuca Lale*. The word *nuca* means 'island' and the word *lale* refers to 'the *lale* tree'. Therefore, the lexical meaning of the term *Nuca Lale* as the traditional name of Manggarai is 'the island of the *lale* tree'.

The cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of human beings is reflected in the forms and meanings of language used in the following segment.

- (01) The rays of sun from "father above" (*ema eta*), the sky, shone down on the "mother below" (*ende wa*), the earth. These rays hit a climp of bamboo high on a mountain top and two people emerged. These first two people were a man and a woman. They had to eat forests roots, the leaves of trees and fungus for there was nothing else for human beings to eat. Then they took the bamboo and split it open. By rubbing the two pieces together they could produce fire. They used the bark of the *lale* tree (*artocapus elastica*, a kind of breadfruit tree) for clothing. In fact, the traditional name of Manggarai is *Nuca Lale* - "the island of the *lale* tree". Eventually they gave birth to a son.

The Origin of Food Plants

Besides the origin of human beings, as has been previously described, it is also conceptualised in the cognitive map or the cultural knowledge of Manggarai people that food plants were born out of the flesh of human being, from the body of their child or son killed in the field. They killed their only son when he was about five years old on the basis of the instructions given by an old man in the dream of the father. The old man had several nicknames (*paci*), some of which were *Jari Dedek* ("to make and create") and *Morin agu Ngaran* ("the owner and guardian"), verbal expressions that Manggarai people associate with the existence of God. Based on the instruction given in the dream, the father killed the son, cut up its body into little pieces, and plant the flesh in the agricultural land known as *lingko*.

The cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of food plants is reflected in the forms and meanings of language used in the following segment.

- (02) When the child was about five years old, the father dreamt of an old man who told him that they must kill his child. This old man had several nicknames (*paci*), some of which were *Jari Dedek* ("to make and create") and *Morin agu Ngaran* ("the owner and guardian"), phrases that Manggarai today associate with God. He told the father, "Take some *teno* wood and some rocks and burn them so that they will fragment. Then use the pieces to cut down the trees and open a *lingko* (field). Then kill the child with the *teno* wood and cut up its body into little pieces and

plant the flesh in the *lingko*". So the father went and cleared the *lingko* and burnt it. When he has finished preparing the field, he asked his wife to send their son to the field with some food for him. When the child arrived the father cut him up and spread his flesh around in the field. In the afternoon, when he returned home, he pretended that the child had never arrived to deliver the food. His wife said she had sent the child. So the father said, "This means that our son must be stolen by forest spirits." So they cried and cried for their only child. After three days, plants started to grow in the *lingko*. The father went into the field and saw the plants growing and tried to pull at them. The plants cried, "*Ema aku ce'el*" (Father, I am here!). At last the man understood that this was his child, grown into different plants. That night he dreamt again of the old man, who said, "Those plants that do not call out to you are the ones that are ripe. They are old enough to be eaten." He then revealed the names of the plants. "The plant that crawls along on a vine is *timbang* (cucumber). The other plant on a vine with bigger fruits is *ndesi* (pumpkin). The plant with small leaves is *hocu* (millet). The shorter plant is *woja* (rice). While the taller plant is *latung* (maize)." So the man went to the field again and held onto the different fruits. Those that screamed out he did not take and those that were silent he picked. He brought the ripe fruits to the field hut and told his wife they could be eaten. She was surprised. She cooked the fruits and ate them, and found them delicious. When his wife asked him where he had got the plants from, the man responded, "Go into the field, but do not be afraid of what you encounter there." So the woman went into the *lingko* and all the plants that she stepped on cried out, "*Ende, aku ce'e*" ("Mother, I am here!"). She was frightened, thinking it was some kind of spirit, so she ran back to the hut, without bringing anything with her. She told her husband what she had heard, and it was then he admitted what he had done, and the plants were indeed their own child. The woman was sad, but also delighted that they had so many delicious plants to eat.

Along with the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of food plants, it is not surprising that there were many precautions and prohibitions on verbal and nonverbal behaviour that should be taken into account so as not to frighten these children during the harvest time. Many common words for plants and animals, for example, could not be used as they originated from the child's flesh. Instead of saying *kaba*, buffaloes should be called *iko ghorik* ("short tail") as its pseudonym and instead of saying *jarang*, horses should be called *iko bombor* ("long tail") as its a pseudonym. If they showed crude behaviour, fighting, and swearing during the harvest time, for instance, the

plant children were frightened and their souls run away. In order to secure their souls while the harvest was in progress, some plants should be tied, just as a string might be tied around the wrist of a child, so that if it was shocked its soul would not be off. If the souls of the plants left them, then, even though the harvest looked like a bountiful one, when the crops were brought in, there would be nothing but empty husks (Erb, 1999).

Therefore, the food plants should be "cuddled" just as human children were, and especially during the major harvests of rice and maize, songs were sung to lull and nurse the rice seeds and maize ears to ensure that they were snug and happy. When the first baskets of rice seeds were brought into the village from the fields, they were brought in the great procession. The man who was the leader of the agricultural rituals wore on his head a crown made of rice plants. When they arrived at the entrance to the village, the "rice" was received as a highly-respected guest, with a chicken and a bottle of plum wine (*tuak*), and with areca and betel nut to chew. The rice crown was handed over to the daughter of the ritual leader, who danced with it on her head into the village centre. This ritual was done to welcome the *meka weru* ("the new guest") into the village for the first time (Erb, 1999).

As conceptualised in the cognitive map of Manggarai people, the sacrifice of blood was necessary for life to prosper and hence all rituals that they did were to remember this first sacrifice, directed by *Jari agu Dedek* ('the Maker and the Nourisher'). As human beings, therefore, they should make sacrifices to the creator when they planted and harvested their *lingko* 'round land', as a way of remembering the first sacrifice act. The sacrifice was made in the centre of the *lingko*, called *lodok*. A stick of *teno* wood was planted in the *lodok* representing the male aspect of the deity, "the mother below". The circle enclosing the *teno* stake or the *lodok* area was also symbolic of the womb and female genitals. Sometimes it was encircled by an itchy vine (*wase ose*) to represent female pubic hair. Sacrifices made in the *lodok* as the centre of the *lingko* recalled the first sacrifice of the human child cut up to become the source of life (Erb, 1999; Bustan, 2005).

In line with the idea of the sacredness of all life and its interconnection with human beings, the forms and meanings of language used in the folktale also provide several aspects in the agricultural system of Manggarai people. The farm land of Manggarai people was called *lingko* in which its shape was round or circular. The *lingko* was divided into *moso* (sector) for each family of *wa'u* (patrilineal clan) and the *moso* was drawn from *lodok* as the the centre of the *lingko*. The shape of the *lodok* was round or circular. A stick of *teno* wood was planted in its centre encircled by an itchy vine (*wase ose*). The *lodok* was the place where the sacrifices were made to recall the first sacrifice of the human child as the source of life or the origins of food plants. The kinds of food plants that they grew in the *lingko* were *timbang* (cucumber), *ndesi* (pumpkin), *hocu* (millet), *woja* (rice), and *latung* (maize) (Erb, 1999; Bustan, 2005).

The Origin of Animals

As realised in the forms and meanings of language used in the folktale, in the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people, different animals such as (horse), *kaba* (buffalo), *mbe* (goat), and *manuk* (chicken) also emerged out of the field. The cultural conceptualisation reveals that, besides being farmers, Manggarai people also cared animals, that is *jarang* (horse), *kaba* (buffalo), *mbe* (goat), and *manuk* (chicken), for living. The forms and meanings of language used in the folktale designating the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people on the origin of animals can be seen in the following segment.

- (03) In addition to plants, different animals emerged out of the field, and became those animals which human beings care for - horses, buffaloes, goats, and chickens.

Along with the cultural conceptualisation on the origin of animals, it is not surprising that, in the agricultural rituals like *penti* ritual or new year party for land and mbaru gendang as traditional house, Manggarai people also mention those kinds of animals as the symbols of household economic welfare (Bustan, 2005).

CONCLUSIONS

There is a close relationship between Manggarai language and Manggarai culture, as reflected in the cultural conceptualisation of Manggarai people the origin of life, paying special attentions to the forms and meanings of language used in the folktale reveal the cultural conceptualization of Manggarai people about the sacredness of all life and its interconnection with human beings. The conceptualization of Manggarai people on the origin of life includes the idea of the origin of human beings (a man and a woman who then sacrificed their only son when he was about five years old), the idea of the origin of food plants, that is *timbang* (cucumber), *ndesi* (pumpkin), *hocu* (millet), *woja* (rice), and *latung* (maize), and the idea of the origin of animals they cared for living, that is *jarang* (horse), *kaba* (buffalo), *mbe* (goat), and *manuk* (chicken).

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