The Cultural Conceptualization of Tetunese Society on the Existence of God as Almighty

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Cultural Conceptualization, Tetunese society, God, Almighty, Cultural linguistics	This study explores the relationship of Tetunese language and Tetunese culture belonging to Tetunese society as members of Tetunese ethnic group in viewing the world, as reflected in their cultural conceptualization regarding the existence of God as Almighty paying special attention to the forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena in the traditional of Tetunese language used in the cultural texts spoken in cultural domains. The study is viewed from the perspective of cultural linguistics, one of the new theoretical perspectives in cognitive linguistics exploring the relationship of language, culture, and conceptualization. The study is descriptive as its aim is to describe the cultural conceptualization of Tetunese society regarding the existence of God as supernatural power. The results of study show that both Tetunese language and Tetunese culture belonging to Tetunese society are closely related. The relationship is manifested their cultural conceptualization regarding the existence of God as Almighty as reflected in the traditional of Tetunese language, Nai fitun nain, Nai lakan nain "The King of the stars, the King of the Sun". The forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena used in the traditional are specific to Tetunese culture as the parent culture in which Tetunese language is embedded. The meanings stored in the forms of linguistic phenomena designate that, in the cultural conceptualization of Tetunese society, God is the owner and rules of the entire universe as He is the King of the stars and the King of the Sun, as the source of light and warmth of life on this earth as a whole and the life of human beings as well. The stars and the sun are culturally conceptualized in the cognitive map of Tetunese society as metaphorical symbols representing both the omnipotence and the omnipresence of God as Almighty.

INTRODUCTION

It is all agreed that there is no society on this earth living without culture because culture makes the life of a society as a whole meaningful. The meaningfulness of culture shared by a society as members of a social group is reflected in language they employ because language is a chief means of expressing their thoughts or ideas, feelings, and experiences in the world (Gibson, 2022; Wardaugh, 1972). The world conveyed through language they employ involves the factual world as well as the symbolic world which refers to the world in which the object as referent of language used is imaginative in nature as the object in question is in their cognitions or minds (Grice, 1987; Bustan, 2005; Cassirer, 1987; Suriasumantri, 2001; Sudarminta, 2002; Ungeres & Schmid, 2006; Sihotang, 2018; Bustan et al., 2023a; Bustan et al., 2023b).

The views imply that both language and culture belonging to a society as members of a social group are closely related to each other. The relationship is profound and intricate because language serves as the medium through which culture is expressed, transmitted, and preserved (Jovitasari et al., 2023; Kramsch, 2001; Langacker, 1999; Yu, 2007; Casson, 1981; Stross, 1981; Whorf, 2001; Ungeres & Schmid, 2006; Alshammari, 2018; Bilal & Erdogan, 2005; Cakir, 2006). The relationship between both language and culture belonging to a society as members of a social group is manifested in cultural conceptualization ascribed in their cognitive map in viewing the world (Palmer, 1996; Langacker, 1999; Palmer & Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2011; Ungeres & Schmid, 2006). The cognitive map contains a bulk of linguistic knowledge and cultural knowledge depicting their experiences in viewing the world (Cassirer, 1987; Suriasumantri, 2001; Gibon, 2022; Bustan, 2005). The cultural conceptualizations are reflected in the forms and meanings linguistic phenomena they employ in the verbal expressions of cultural texts spoken in cultural domains (Gumperz, 1992; Hymes, 1974; Bustan, 2005; Geertz, 1973). Along with cultural domains as the contexts of their uses, the forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena used in the cultural texts are specific to culture as the parent culture in which that language is embedded (Gumperz, 1992; Brown, 1994; Kramsch, 2001; Bilal & Erdogan, 2005; Cakir, 2006).

This study investigates the relationship between Tetunese language and Tetunese culture belonging to Tetunese society as members of Tetunese ethnic group residing in the regency of Belu and Malaka in the island of Timor as one of the five big islands in the province of East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, and in several parts of the Republic of Democratic Timor Leste. It is worth noting that Tetunese society is identified as members of Tetunese ethnic group because they share the same culture known as Tetunese culture and, at the same time, they speak the same language known as Tetunese language (Seran, 1986; Taek, 2020). As the relationship of both Tetunese language and Tetunese culture is pervasive that the study focuses on the cultural conceptualization of Tetunese society regarding the existence of God as Almighty with special reference to the forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena in the traditional expression of Tetunese language inherited their ancestors.

The study is conducted for the basic reason that the forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena used in the traditional expression are specific to Tetunese culture as the parent culture in which Tetunese language is embedded. The meanings stored in the forms of linguistic phenomena used in the traditional expression designate the cultural conceptualization ascribed in the cognitive map of Tetunese society regarding the existence of God as Almighty. The cultural conceptualization is a cultural property inherited the ancestors of Tetunese society revealing their local religion or belief system before they come into contact with the heavenly religions. Even though the majority of Tetunese society have adhered heavenly religions nowdays, they still believe in the existence of God as Almighty as cultural property inherited from their ancestors. In addition to those reasons, the study is also conducted because there has no any study exploring in more depth the cultural conceptualization of Tetunese society regarding the existence of God as Almighty in the view of cultural linguistics as an emerging paradigm of cognitive linguistics which draws on the combined resource of both anthropological linguistics and cognitive linguistics in providing an account of the communicative behavior of a people as members of a social group (Palmer, 1996; Palmer & Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2011; Malcolm, 2007; Bustan et al., 2023a; Bustan et al., 2023b). The use of cultural linguistics as its theoretical framework is one of the novelty dimensions of the study compared with the results of previous studies exploring the relationship of Tetunese language and Tetunese culture.

FRAMEWORK

Cultural linguistics is one of the new theoretical perspectives in cognitive linguistics which explores the relationship of language, culture, and conceptualization belonging to a society as members of a social group in viewing the world. In the perspective of cultural linguistics, language used by a society as members of a social group is explored through the lens of culture they share to uncover conceptualization ascribed in their cognitive map in viewing the world (Palmer, 1996; Palmer and Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2011; Goodenough, 1964; Malcolm, 2007; Geertz, 1973). The basic premises that should be taken into account in the study of cultural linguistics are as follows: (1) there is a close relationship between language and cognitions or minds of a society as members of a social group and (2) language used by a society as members of a social group serves as the window into their cognitions or minds (Langacker, 1999; Yu, 2007; Casson, 1981; Stross, 1981; Whorf, 2001; Bilal & Erdogan, 2005; Cakir, 2006).

As it puts emphasis on the cultural elements of minds or cognitions as its main concern or interest (Casson, 1981; Wallace, 1981; Keesing, 1981; Stross, 1981), cultural linguistics also aims to explore the differences between languages due to cultural differences (Palmer, 1996; Palmer & Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2011; Occhi, 2007; Cassirer, 1987). This comes closest to the conception of Humboldt that the diversity of languages is concerned not only with the diversity of signs and sounds, but also with the diversity of cultures (Miller, 1968; Cassirer, 1987; Foley, 1997). The conception is reflected in the theory of linguistic relativism proposed by 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 the speakers of different languages think and behave differently. As every language has its own ways in viewing the world, the basic principles that should be taken into account when we study the differences between languages due to cultural differences 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 (Sapir, 1949; Goodenough, 1964; Miller, 1968; Richards & Platt, 1992; Bilal & Erdogan, 2005; Cakir, 2006; Boas, 1962).

As its definition suggests, three basic concepts of cultural linguistics are language, culture, and conceptualization. As the term language can be defined differently, in the perspective cultural linguistics, language is defined as a cultural activity and, at the same time, as an instrument for organizing other cultural domains. This definition is based on the fact that language used by a society as members of a social group is shaped not only by their special and general innate potentials as human beings but also by their physical and sociocultural experiences in viewing the world. As such, in the perspective of cultural linguistics, language is seen not only as linguistic phenomenon but also as social phenomenon and cultural phenomenon. Being a social and cultural phenomenon, language used by a society as members of a social group is not immune to change (Palmer, 1996; Palmer & Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2011).

Similar to language, as the definition of culture varies from school to school (Ochs, 1988; Kaplan & Manners, 1999; Sudikan, 2001; Bustan, 2005), in the perspective of cultural linguistics, culture is defined as the source of conceptualization of experiences adhered by a society as members of a social group in their contexts of living together for years or a long period of time and even transgenerations (Tylor, 2010; Palmer & Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2011; Palmer, 1996; Wallace, 1981; Koentjaraningrat, 1999). In line with this conception, Foley (1997) propounds that culture is a cognitive map belonging to a society as members of a social group that serves as the source of

reference for them in viewing the world. The cognitive map contains a display illustrating how they organize their ways of thinking about items, behaviors, and beliefs in cultural domains (Foley, 1997; Goodenough, 1964; Palmer & Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2011; Birx, 2011).

The relationship of both language and culture belonging to a society as members of a social group is manifested in their conceptualizations which refer to fundamental cognitive processes which naturally lead to the development of schemas, categories, metaphors, and scripts. The ways a society as members of a social group conceptualize their experiences in cultural domains are known as cultural conceptualizations that contain such cultural aspects as beliefs, norms, customs, traditions, and values. Both cultural conceptualization and language are the two intrinsic aspects of cultural cognition and, as such, the cultural conceptualizations have conceptual existence and linguistic encoding as well. Language in this regard is seen as a collective memory bank belonging to a society as members of a social group for storing their cultural conceptualizations, past and presents. Being a collective memory bank, language they employ also serves as a fluid vehicle to retransmit their socioculturally embodied cultural conceptualizations (Palmer & Sharifian, 2007; Scharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2011; Langacker, 1999).

On the other side, as language is shaped by cultural conceptualizations that have prevailed at different stages in the story of its speakers and the different stages can leave their traces in current linguistic practices, language is defined as one of the primary mechanisms that stores and communicates the cultural conceptualizations. The cultural conceptualizations distributed accross the minds of a society as members of a social group that represent their cognition at the cultural level are called linguistic imagery which is concerned with how they speak about the world that they themselves imagine. Being imaginative in nature, the analysis of linguistic imagery requires in depth-interpretation to understand its meanings as the meanings exist in their cognitions or minds. Therefore, language they employ is defined not only as the window of their world but also as the window into their cognitions or minds as the main interest of cultural linguistics (Yu, 2007; Palmer & Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2011; Langacker, 1999).

The main approach to achieving the objectives of cultural linguistics is ethnography because its main aim is to describe the culture shared by a society as members of a social group through the lens of language they employ (Bernstein, 1972; Spradley, 1978; Hymes, 1974; Spradley, 1978; Palmer & Sharifian, 2007; Palmer, 1996; Sharifian, 2011; Duranti, 2001; Foley, 1997). As cultural linguistics also aims to explore the differences between languages due to cultural differences, other approaches to achieving the intended aim are the school of Boas' linguistics, ethnosemantics, and ethnography of speaking (Boas, 1962; Palmer & Sharifian, 2007; Palmer, 1996; Sharifian, 2011). The three approaches emphazise that there is a close relationship between cultural linguistics and sociolinguistics as a branch of linguistics exploring the relationship of language and society (Bustan, 2005; Bustan & Semiun, 2019; Bustan & Kabelen, 2023). As such, other than anthropological linguistics and cognitive linguistics, cultural linguistics also draws on the resources of sociolinguistics in providing an account of the communicative behavior of a society in viewing the world (Gumperz, 1992; Hymes, 1974; Bustan, 2005; Bustan & Semiun, 2019; Bustan et al., 2020; Bustan & Kabelen, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

In terms of its research design, this study is descriptive as its aim is to describe the cultural conceptualization of Tetunese society regarding the existence of God as Almighty in view of cultural

linguistic perspective (Muhadjir, 1995; Nusa Putra, 2011; Sugyono, 2022). To achieve the intended aim, the sources of data were primary and secondary data. In terms of the process of acquiring the data, the procedures of research were field and library research. The field research was carried out to collect the primary data of cultural conceptualization ascribed in the cognitive map of Tetunese society regarding the existence of God as Almighty as reflected in the forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena used in the traditional expression of Tetunese language.

The field research was carried out in the regency of Belu with the main location being in Atambua town. In addition to being the capital city of Belu regency, the residents living in Atambua town are a mix of members of Tetunese ethnic group from all over the region of Tetunese so that it was not difficult to select key informants as the sources of data. For the purpose of this study, they were represented by five persons selected on the basis of the ideal criteria proposed by Afrizal (2014), Bungin (2007), Faisal (1990), and Duranti (2001). The approach to collecting the required data was dialogic ethnography amalgamated with the use of emic perspective as the meanings of data were interpreted on the basis of cultural conceptualization ascribed in their cognitive map as the native speakers of Tetunese language (Bernstein, 1972; Spradley, 1987; Duranti, 2001). The method of data collection was interview (in-depth interview). The techniques of data collection were recording, elicitation, and note taking (Bungin 2007). The library research was carried out to collect the secondary data relevant to the objectives of the study. The method of collecting the data was documentary study. The documents used as the sources of data were general documents such as books and special documents such as articles, papers, and research results.

The collected data were then analyzed qualitatively by using inductive method as the analysis was started from the data to the local-ideographic concept/theory. This is because the concept/theory describes the relationship of both Tetunese language and Tetunese culture belonging to Tetunese society as members of Tetunese ethnic group in viewing the world, as reflected in their cultural conceptualization regarding the existence of God as Almighty paying special attention to the forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena used in the traditional expression of Tetunese language that signifies the attribute of God as Almighty on the basis of social convention inherited from the ancestors of Tetunese society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results
The results of study reveal that there is a close relationship between both Tetunese language and Tetunese culture belonging to Tetunese society as members of Tetunese ethnic group. The relationship is manifested in a set of cultural conceptualizations ascribed in the cognitive map of Tetunese society that contains a bulk of linguistic and cultural knowledge that function as the sources of reference of their experiences in viewing the world. Referring to the kinds of knowledge stored in their cognitive map, one of the cultural conceptualizations is concerned with the belief system of Tetunese society regarding the existence of God as Almighty. The cultural conceptualization is reflected in the features of linguistic phenomena used in the traditional expression of Tetunese language serving as the attribute of God as Almighty. The features of linguistic phenomena used in the traditional expression are specific in some respect to Tetunese culture as the parent culture in which Tetunese language is embedded. In terms of the two poles of linguistic signs, the specific features of linguistic phenomena used in the traditional expression are reflected in their forms and meanings. The forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena used designate the cultural conceptualization ascribed in the cognitive map of Tetunese society regarding

the existence of God as Almighty as the main teaching in their local religion or belief system before they come into contact with heavenly religion.

Discussion

The cultural conceptualization of Tetunese society regarding the existence of God as Almighty is reflected in the forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena used in the traditional expression of Tetunese language as in the following: *Nai fitun nain, Nai lakan nain* "The King of the stars, the King of the sun'. The traditional is made up of two nominal phrases as its component parts including (1) *Nai fitun nain* 'The King of the stars' (2) *Nai lakan nain* 'The King of the sun'. The two nominal phrases are closely related in their forms and meanings which designate the cultural conceptualization of Tetunese society regarding the existence of God as Almighty in the sense that God is the King of the stars as well as the King of the sun (Taek, 2020).

The nominal phrase (1), *Nai fitun nain* 'The King of the stars', is made up of two words as its Immediate Constituents (ICs) including the word (noun) *Nai* 'king' as the core word that functions as the Head (H) and the word (nominal phrase) *fitun nain* 'the owner of the stars' functions as it Modifier (M). The word *Nai* 'the King' is modified by the word *fitun ain* 'the owner of the stars' or, vice versa, the word fitun ain 'the owner of the stars' modifies the word *Nai* 'the King'. The nominal phrase *fitun nain* 'the owner of stars' is made up of two words as its Immediate Constituents (ICs) including the word (noun) *fitun* 'stars' as the core word that functions as the Head (H) and the word (noun) *nain* 'owner' as its Modifier (M). The word (noun) *fitun* 'stars' is modified by the word (noun) *nain* 'owner' or, vice versa, the word (noun) *nain* 'owner' modifies the word (noun) *fitun* 'stars'. The structure of the words can not be changed as the construction is regarded as a fixed form in Tetunese language that reveals the structure of thinking for Tetunese society in viewing the world in regard to their belief on the existence of God as the King of the stars (Taek, 2020).

The nominal phrase (2), *Nai lakan nain* "The King of the sun', is made up of two words as its Immediate Constituents (ICs), including the word (noun) *Nai* 'the King' is the core word that functions as the Headt (H) and the word (a prepotional phrase) *lakan fain* 'the owner of the sun' as its Modifier (M). The word *Nai* 'the King' is modified by the word *lakan ain* 'the owner of the sun' or, vice versa, the word lakan ain 'the owner of the sun' modifies the word *Nai* 'the King'. The words *fitun nain* 'the owner of the sun' is a nominal phrase made up of two words as its Immediate Constituents (ICs), including the word (noun) *fitun* 'stars' as the core word that functions as the Head (H) and the word (noun) *nain* 'owner' as as its Modifier (M). The word (noun) *fitun* 'stars' is modified by the word (noun) *nain* 'owner' or, vice versa, the word (noun) *nain* 'owner' modifies the word (noun) *fitun* 'the sun'. The structure of the words can not be changed because the construction is regarded as a fixed form in Tetunese language revealing the structure of thinking for Tetunese society in viewing the world especially in regard to the existence of God as the King of the sun.

The traditional appears as an asyndeton construction because the combination of the two nominal phrases as its component parts is not linked by the use of the coordinating conjunction (function word) 'and' as a lexical cohesive device. The coordinating conjunction is intentionally omitted for the purpose of keeping and maintaining harmony in rhythm and tempo when the traditional is spoken and listened to as the number of words in the two phrases is the same as three words. Other than the number of words indicating the syntactic parallelism, the number of syllables in the two words (nouns) is also the same as two syllables. Other than syntactic parallelism, the beauty of forms that invites sensory pleasure when the traditional expression is spoken and listened to is also characterized by the use of lexical or semantic parallelism indicated by the use of synonymous

words. Nevetheless, the structure of the words cannot be changed because the traditional is regarded as a fixed form in Tetunese language. The structure reveals the structure of thinking for Tetunese society in viewing the world especially in regard to their system of belief on the existence of God as Almighty.

The use of such specific forms of linguistic phenomena in the traditional expression shows the poetic function of language indicating the ritual piety of linguistic phenomena used. The basic reason of using the beautiful forms of linguistic phenomena in the traditional expression is that the communication conveyed through the traditional is transcendental in nature. This is because the communication is directed to God as Almighty that determines whether or not their hopes and expectations conveyed through the traditional expression are accepted and fullfilled.

The existence of God as the Supreme is one of the main teachings in the belief system or local religion of Tetunese society before they come into contact with heavenly religions. The meanings stored in the forms of linguistic phenomena used in the traditional expression propound that, in the cultural conceptualization of Tetunese society, there in no other Almighty besides God as the King of the stars and the King of the sun. God is the ruler of the sky and all its contents, represented by the stars as the source of light at night and the sun as the source of light and warmth during the day. This also implies the meaning that, in the cultural conceptualization of Tetunese society, God is Almighty who controls time, both night and day, and the place that stretches from the eastern horizon where the sun rises to the western horizon where the sun sets. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the members of Tetunese society do not worship the stars and the sun or, in other words, the stars and the sun are not defined as God in the cultural conceptualization of Tetunese society. The stars and the sun are culturally conceptualized in the cognitive map of Tetunese society as metaphorical symbols representing both the omnipotence and the omnipresence of God as Almighty. At the same time, in the view of belief system, the members of Tetunese society belong to the group of implicit monotheists as they do not believe in the existence of God as Almighty based on the result of philosophical and theological reflection as in the case in heavenly religions, including Catholicism which is adhered by the majority of Tetunese society today.

CONCLUSION

There is a close relationship between Tetunese language and Tetunese culture belonging to Tetunese society and the relationship is manifested in their cultural conceptualization regarding to the existence of God supernatural power. The cultural conceptualization is reflected in the traditional expression of Tetunese language, *Nai fitun nain, Nai lakan nain* 'The King of the stars, the King of the sun'. The forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena used in the traditional expression are specific to Tetunese culture as the parent culture in which Tetunese language is embedded. The choices of words and the ways they express contain beautiful forms that invite sensory pleasures when spoken and listened to, as reflected in the use of such parallelisms as phonological, syntactic, and lexical or semantic parallelism. The meanings stored in the forms of linguistic phenomena used in the traditional expression reveal that, in the cultural conceptualization of Tetunese society, there in no other Almighty besides God as the King of the stars and the King of the sun. The stars and the sun are culturally conceptualized in their cognitive map as metaphorical symbols representing both the omnipotence and the omnipresence of God as Almighty. The belief in God as Almighty is based on social convention inherited from the ancestors of Tetunese society and is not the result of philosophical and theological reflection as in the case in heavenly religions.

Note:
Authors declare no conflict of interest whatsoever.

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