

THE CULTURAL MEANINGS OF WATER AS THE INDICATOR OF LIFE PROSPERITY FOR MANGGARAI SOCIETY

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Cultural meanings, Water, Life prosperity, Manggarai society.	This study aims to describe cultural meanings of water as the indicator of life prosperity for Manggarai society with special reference to the verbal expressions of Manggarai language used in the cultural discourses of agricultural rituals. The study is viewed from cultural linguistics as one of the new theoretical perspectives in cognitive linguistics exploring the relationship of language, culture, and conceptualization. The study is descriptive-qualitative. The result of study shows that conceptualization ascribed in the cognitive map of Manggarai society regarding the cultural meanings of water as the indicator of life prosperity is reflected in verbal expression, <i>Mboas wae woang, kembus wae teku</i> 'Overflow water bucket, overflow water bucket'. The forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena used in the verbal expression are unique and specific to Manggarai culture as the parent culture in which Manggarai language is embedded. Other than syntactic parallelism, the choice of words and the ways the words are expressed containing beautiful forms that invite sensory pleasures when the verbal expression is spoken and listened to are also characterized by phonological and lexicosemantic parallelism. The meanings stored in the forms of linguistic phenomena used in the verbal expression designate that the indicator of life prosperity for Manggarai society is reflected in the availability of abundant water supply as the source of drinking water that overflows throughout the year. As it is a local wisdom inherited from their ancestors, the verbal expression is beneficial as the frame of reference for Manggarai society in designing natural environment sustainability program portrayed through the lens of Manggarai language as the reflection of Manggarai culture to support the success of green economy.
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INTRODUCTION

There is no society on this earth living without language because language makes the life of a society as members of a social group meaningful. The meaningfulness of language can be seen in its use because, out of so many different symbolic media of communication used by a society as members of a social group to fulfill their basic needs as human beings, language is the most effective one (Cassirer, 1987; Suriasumantri, 2001; Alshammari, 2018; Porat, 2022; Bustan et al., 2023a; Bustan et al., 2023b; Bustan & Ludji, 2024). Language a chief means of communication used by a society as members of a social group to express their thoughts or ideas, feelings, and experiences in the world. The world conveyed through language they employ involves both the factual world and the symbolic world which refers to the world in which the object as the referent of language used is imaginative as the object exists in their cognitions or minds (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Keesing, 1981; Grice, 1987; Cassirer,

1987; Suriasumantri, 2001; Wallace, 2001; Bustan et al., 2023a; Bustan et al., 2023b; Bustan & Ludji, 2024).

The views come closest to the conception of Palmer (1996), Palmer and Sharifian, (2007), Sharifian (2011), and Sharifian (2017) that both language and culture belonging to a society as members of a social group are closely related and the manifestation of such a relationship is reflected in their conceptualization in viewing and making sense of the world (Langacker, 1999; Maslova, 2004; Abdikalyk et al., 2016; Bustan, 2005; Bustan et al., 2023a; Bustan et al., 2023b; Bustan & Ludji, 2024). In this regard, conceptualization as the manifestation of relationship between language and culture can be equated with 'thinking' or 'cognition' (Sharifian, 2011; Sharifian, 2017). The conception implies that language used by a society as members of a social group serves not only as the window of their world (Goodenough, 1964; Miller, 1968; Ochs, 1988; Bilal & Bada, 2005; Cakir, 2006; Alshammari, 2018), but also as the window into their cognitions or minds as well (Keesing, 1981; Langacker, 1999; Wallace, 2001; Yu, 2007; Sharifian, 2011; Sharian, 2017; Bustan & Kabelen, 2023; Bustan et al., 2023a; Bustan et al., 2023b; Bustan & Ludji, 2024).

It is worth noting that the function of language as the reflection of culture shared by a society as members of a social group is manifested in discourse. Language used in discourse has power, as Kramersch (2001) declared that language is a symbolic system with the power to shape and create such cultural realities as norms, values, perceptions, and identities which are expressed through discourse as its vehicle (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Grice, 1987; Kramersch, 2001; Bustan & Semiun, 2019; Bustan et al., 2023; Bustan & Ludji, 2024). The view is in line with the idea that when a society as members of a social group interact with each other for particular purposes, in an attempt to achieve the intended goals of their communications or interactions, they should produce particular discourses as assemblies of meanings related to particular subject matters under discussion. When the discourses present a conceptual framework within which significant subject matters are discussed in their culture and the latent norms of conduct, discourses are defined as ideologies or worldviews (Kovecses, 2009; Fairclough, 2003). As culture is the worldview of a society as members of a social group (Boas, 1962), according to Geertz (1973) and Schneider (1976), discourse is a source of making meaning in a culture (Bustan, 2005; Bustan and Semiun, 2019). The meaning is defined as cultural meaning which is equated with symbolic meaning in culture (Bustan, 2005; Sudikan, 2001).

More specifically, according to Gumperz (1992), meaning as fundamental to language and culture is realized in a cultural discourse as an umbrella term for any form of discourse taking place within cultural domain that contains a set of items, behaviors, and beliefs defined as belonging to the same category of things. The cultural discourse serves as the vehicle for the representation of cultural conceptualization ascribed in the cognitive map of a society as members of a social group (Bustan & Semiun, 2019). As the use of language as an essential instrument and component of culture is reflected in its linguistic structure (Langacker, 1999), a cultural discourse can be defined as a repository of meanings stored in the forms of linguistic signs commonly shared by members of a culture (Kovecses, 2009). The forms refer to the physical features of linguistic phenomena used in cultural discourses, while the meanings refer to the contents stored in the forms of linguistic phenomena in question (Foley, 1997; Piliang, 2008). The meanings are defined as deeper meanings or conceptual meanings which uncover conceptualization of experience faced by the speakers of that language in viewing and making sense of the world (Foley, 1997; Bustan, 2005; Sharifian, 2007; Bustan & Semiun, 2019; Bustan et al., 2023a; Bustan et al., 2023b; Bustan & Ludji, 2024).

Referring to the matters stated above in minds, in general, this study investigates the function of Manggarai language as the reflection of Manggarai culture along with its significance as the identity marker of Manggarai society as members of Manggarai ethnic group residing in the region of Manggarai that lies in the island of Flores as one of the big islands in the Province of East Nusa Tenggara as one of the provinces in Indonesia (Verheijen, 1991; Erb, 1999; Lawang, 1999; Bustan, 2005; Bustan, 2006; Bustan et al., 2017; Bustan et al., 2019; Bustan et al., 2020; Gunas et al., 2023; Bustan & Kabelen, 2023; Bustan et al., 2023a; Bustan et al., 2023b; Bustan & Ludji, 2024). Manggarai society is identified as members of Manggarai ethnic group because they are bound by the awareness of sharing the same culture known as Manggarai culture as well as the awareness of speaking the same language known as Manggarai language (Bustan, 2005; Koentjaraningrat, 1992; Koentjaraningrat, 2004; Kaplan & Manners, 1999). The study is carried out on the basis of premise that the function of Manggarai language as the reflection of Manggarai culture is the source of meanings designating the ways Manggarai society as members of Manggarai ethnic group view and make sense of the world (Bustan et al., 2023a; Bustan et al., 2023b; Bustan & Ludji, 2024).

As the function of Manggarai language as the reflection of Manggarai culture is pervasive that the study is mainly concerned with the conceptualization ascribed in the cognitive map of Manggarai society regarding the cultural meanings of water as the indicator of their life prosperity, as reflected in the forms of linguistic phenomena used in the verbal expressions of Manggarai language in the cultural discourses spoken in the context of agricultural rituals (Bustan, 2005; Bustan et al., 2023a; Bustan et al., 2023b). The study is conducted for the basic reason that the forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena in the verbal expressions of Manggarai language used in the cultural discourses spoken in the contexts of agricultural rituals are unique and specific to Manggarai culture as the hosting culture in which Manggarai language is embedded. The meanings stored in the forms of linguistic phenomena reveal the conceptualization ascribed in the cognitive map of Manggarai society in viewing the word with regard to the cultural meanings of water as the indicator of life prosperity. The conceptualization is one of the local wisdoms inherited from the ancestors of Manggarai society that should be reserved because it is concerned with the sustainability of groundwater as the source of fresh water for drinking. Because of the dynamics of Manggarai society, however, the verbal expressions tend to be meaningless. There have been many environmental issues in the last few decades due to the shortage of drinking water supply available in water sources as the cultural properties belonging to the *wa'u* as patrilineal-genealogic clan living in a village (Verheijen, 1991; Erb, 1999; Lawang, 1999; Bustan, 2005; Bustan, 2006; Bustan, 2009; Bustan et al., 2024). This is also one of the reasons why we are interested in conducting the study regarding the cultural meanings of water as the indicator of life prosperity for Manggarai society.

METHOD

This study is descriptive-qualitative as it describes the cultural meanings of water as the indicator of life prosperity for Manggarai society as members of Manggarai ethnic group in accordance with conceptualization ascribed in their cognitive map (Faisal, 1990; Muhadjir, 1995; Afrizal, 2014; Sugyono, 2018; Yusuf, 2019; Moleong, 2021; Sugyono, 2022; Bustan et al., 2024; Bustan & Ludji, 2024). The procedures of research were field and library research. The field research aimed to obtain the primary data dealing with conceptualization ascribed in the cognitive map of Manggarai society regarding the cultural meanings of water as the indicator of their life prosperity. The location of the field research was in the regency of Manggarai with the main location being in Pagal as the capital city of Cibai district. The sources of the data were the members of Manggarai society, especially those residing in Pagal as the main location of the field research represented by three key informants selected on the basis of the

ideal criteria put forward by Faisal (1990), Spradley (1997), Duranti (2001), and Sudikan (2001). The approach to data collection was ethnography, especially dialogic ethnography (Spradley, 1997; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1993). The method of data collection was in-depth interview which was then elaborated by the technique of recording, elicitation, and note-taking (Nusa Putra, 2011). The library research was aimed at obtaining the secondary data relevant to the main concern of study. The method of data collection was documentary study. The documents used as the sources of data were of two types, that is general references such as books and specific references such as research results, scientific articles, and papers. The collected data were then analyzed qualitatively by inductive method as the process of analysis moved from the data to abstraction and concept/theory. The concept/theory is local-ideographic in nature as it describes the cultural meanings of water as the indicator of life prosperity for Manggarai society in accordance with conceptualization ascribed in their cognitive map (Bustan et al., 2024; Bustan & Ludji, 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The function of Manggarai language as the reflection of Manggarai culture as the identity marker of Manggarai society as members of Manggarai ethnic group is manifested in conceptualization ascribed their cognitive map in viewing and making sense of the world. The conceptualization is reflected in the verbal expressions they employ in the cultural discourses of agricultural rituals inherited from their ancestors in which the contents stored in the forms of linguistic phenomena used implies the cultural meanings of water as the indicator of their life prosperity. The result of study shows that there are many verbal expressions of Manggarai language in the cultural discourses spoken in the contexts of agricultural rituals designate the conceptualization of Manggarai society regarding the cultural meanings of water as the indicator of their life prosperity. Based on the result of data selection, the verbal expression of Manggarai language which is often used to designate conceptualization ascribed in the cognitive map of Manggarai society regarding the cultural meanings of water as the indicator of their life prosperity is as follows: *Mboas wae woang, kembus wae teku* 'Overflow water bucket, overflow water bucket'. The forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena used in the verbal expression are unique and specific to Manggarai culture as the parent culture in which Manggarai language is embedded. The unique and specific features of linguistic phenomena used in the verbal expression are reflected in the choice of words and the ways the words are expressed that contain beautiful forms that invite sensory pleasures when the verbal expression is spoken and listened to which appear in the such parallelisms as syntactic, phonological, and lexicosemantic parallelism. The meaning stored in the form of language used in the verbal expression designate that one of the prominent indicators of life prosperity for Manggarai society is reflected in the condition of abundant drinking water supply in a spring that overflows throughout the year. As it is one of the local wisdoms inherited from their ancestors, the verbal expression can be used as the frame of reference for the members of Manggarai society in designing natural environment sustainability program in Manggarai regency portrayed through the lens of Manggarai language as the reflection of Manggarai culture along with its function as the identity marker of Manggarai society along with their existence as members of Manggarai ethnic group.

Discussion

As seen in the physical features of language used, *Mboas wae woang, kembus wae teku* 'Overflow water bucket, overflow water bucket', the verbal expression appears as a declarative sentence as it

conveys information related to the availability of abundant drinking water supply throughout the year. While in view of its component parts, the sentence is a compound sentence made up of two independent clauses or complete sentences as its component parts. The two independent clauses serving as its component parts are as follows: (a) *Mboas wae woang* 'Overflow water bucket' and (b) *Kembus wae tekku* 'Overflow water bucket'. The relationship of the two independent clauses forms an asyndeton construction as it is not linked by the coordinating conjunction *ago* 'and' or *kop* 'or' as a lexical-cohesive device. The coordinating conjunction is intentionally omitted to maintain the harmony of tempo and rhythm when the verbal expression is spoken and listen to as the number of words in each independent clause is the same as three.

The independent clause (a), *Mboas wae woang* 'Overflow water bucket', consists of the word (verb) *boas* 'overflow' as the predicate (P) and the word (noun) *wae woang* 'water bucket' which refers to water source as the subject (S). The word *wae woang* 'water bucket' is a nominal phrase made up of two words at its immediate constituents, that is the word (noun) *wae* 'water' as the core word that functions as head (H) and the word (verb) *woang* 'bucket' that functions as its modifier (M). Likewise the independent clause (b), *Kembus wae tekku* 'Overflow water bucket', consists of the word (verb) *kembus* 'overflow' as the predicate (P) and the word (noun) *wae tekku* 'water bucket' which refers to water source as the subject (S). The word *wae tekku* 'water bucket' appears in the form of a nominal phrase made up of two words as its immediate constituents, that is the word (noun) *wae* 'water' as the core word that functions as the head (H) and the word (verb) *tekku* 'bucket' that functions as its modifier (M). The meanings of the two independent clauses are interrelated as the word (verb) *boas* 'overflow' as the predicate of the independent clause (a) is synonym with the word (verb) *kembus* 'overflow' as the predicate of the independent clause (b). Likewise the word (nominal phrase) *wae woang* 'water bucket' in the independent clause (a) is synonym with the word (nominal phrase) *wae tekku* 'water bucket' in the independent clause (b). The lexical meanings of the words in the verbal expression denote that water source overflows throughout the year so that the members of Manggarai society living in one village don't suffer from the lack of drinking water supply throughout the year.

As mentioned earlier, the choice of words and the ways the words are expressed reflect beautiful forms of linguistic phenomena that invite sensory pleasures when the verbal expression is spoken and listened to. In addition to syntactic parallelism, the beautiful forms are also characterized by both phonological parallelism and lexicosemantic parallelism. The syntactic parallelism can be seen in the following features: (1) the number of words in each independent clause is the same as three and (2) the number of syllables for each word is the same as two. The phonological parallelism reflecting beautiful form of language is marked by the following features: (1) the asymmetrical assonance of phonemes /o-a/ in the word (verb) *mboas* 'overflow' and the word (verb) *woang* 'bucket' in the independent clause (a); (2) the asymmetrical assonance of phonemes /e-u/ in the word (verb) *kembus* 'overflow' and the word (verb) *tekku* 'bucket' in the independent clause (b); and (3) the use of phoneme /s/ as a fricative-alveolar consonant that serves as final rhyme in the word (verb) *mboas* 'overflow' as the predicate of the independent clause (a) and in the word (verb) *kembus* 'overflow' as the predicate of the independent clause (b). While the lexical or semantic parallelism, as mentioned earlier, is indicated by using the synonymous words, as in the following: (1) the word (verb) *mboas* 'overflow' as the predicate of the independent clause (a) is synonymous with the word (verb) *kembus* 'overflow' as the predicate of the independent clause (b) and (2) the word (nominal phrase) *wae woang* 'water bucket' as the subject of the independent clause (a) is synonymous with the word (nominal phrase) *wae tekku* 'water bucket' as the subject of the independent clause (b).

The meanings stored in the forms of linguistic phenomena used in the verbal expression designate the conceptualization ascribed in the cognitive map of Manggarai society regarding the availability of abundant drinking water supply throughout the year as the indicator of their life prosperity as human beings. The conceptualization is based on the general fact that water is an essential element for all living organisms in the sense that all living organisms can't live and survive without water. Being aware of the great importance of water for them as human beings, it is not surprising that the members of Manggarai society give special treatment to water in the contexts of agricultural rituals. In this regard, it is conceptualized in the cognitive map of Manggarai society that the condition of water source overflowing throughout the year is the side effect of sustainable natural environment, especially forests as the sources of rain (Bustan, 2005).

Therefore, one of the local wisdoms inherited from the ancestors of Manggarai society is prohibiting them to clear forests because forests serve as the sources of rain. The prohibition is clearly seen in the verbal expression of Manggarai language, *Neka pongga puar boto mora usang* 'Don't clear the forest so that the rain doesn't disappear'. Along with such a conceptualization, it is expected that the verbal expression might be the frame of reference for Manggarai society in designing natural environment sustainability program in the region of Manggarai portrayed through the lens of Manggarai language as the reflection of Manggarai culture as the identity marker of Manggarai society. This is because, as mentioned earlier, the conceptualization of Manggarai society regarding the condition of drinking water source that overflows throughout the year as an indicator of sustainable natural environment is a local wisdom accepted as a cultural property inherited from their ancestors. However, to what extent the local wisdom of sustaining natural environment, especially dense forest as the source of rain, is meaningful nowadays depends greatly on the awareness of Manggarai society to show the local wisdom in actions to support the success of green economy.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the cultural meanings of water as the indicator of life prosperity for Manggarai society are reflected in the verbal expression used in the cultural discourses of agricultural rituals in Manggarai language, *Mboas wae woang, kembus wae tekus* 'Overflow water bucket, overflow water bucket'. The forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena used in the verbal expression are unique and specific in to Manggarai culture as the parent culture in which Manggarai language is embedded. The choice of words and the ways the words are expressed that contain beautiful forms that invite sensory pleasures when the verbal expression is spoken and listened to are characterized by such parallelisms as syntactic parallelism, phonological parallelism, and lexicosemantic parallelism. The meanings stored in the forms of linguistic phenomena used in the verbal expression designate that one of the indicators of life prosperity for Manggarai society are reflected in the condition of abundant drinking water supply in the spring that overflows throughout the year. Therefore, the verbal expression can be used a frame of reference for the members of Manggarai society in designing natural environment sustainability program portrayed through the lens of Manggarai language as the reflection of Manggarai culture as the program is of great importance to support the success of green economy.

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