

# *Pemaliq* Words of Human Death within the Society of Sasak-Indonesia: A Linguistic Anthropology Study

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**Abstract**—This study aimed to describe the world's view and cultural values conceptualized by the community of Sasak on *pemaliq* words of human death. Non-participatory observation and in-depth interview methods were used to collect the data. The data were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach. It applied Miles and Huberman analysis model consisting of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion. The results of the study showed that *pemaliq* words of human death used by the Sasak community in Sigar Penjalin Village, North Lombok Regency, Indonesia, reflected the perspective of the ancestors in understanding the nature of death. It means those who experience death are the physical matters, while the human spirits keep on living and they are in a holy place, namely in *alam alus* (subtle world). The Sasak community of Sigar Penjalin Village forbid the use of *matè* 'died' as a word for human death, not only it is considered impolite, but it is believed in bringing *tulah manuh* 'misfortune' to those who are using that particular word. Therefore, the ancestors of the Sasak community in Sigar Penjalin Village is in practice of using certain words as a way of avoidance, namely the word *adèq* 'nonexistence', *ngènangang* 'leaving', and *ulèq* 'returning home' (euphemistic words), in which all are used to represent the word *matè* 'died'. Cultural values reflected in the use of those words, namely the values of religiosity, consciousness, and politeness.

**Index Terms**—*Pemaliq*, world's view, cultural values, and linguistic anthropology

## I. INTRODUCTION

Interdiction or taboo has become part of the culture and rooted within the Indonesian community. The production and usage of things that are taboos prove that the Indonesian communities have their own perspectives in understanding reality. It relates to understanding things that must not be done because they are considered endangering the communities. In other words, the ancestors of the Indonesian community since ancient time have produced specific rules that limit and control the lives of every individual; controlling words, actions, and behaviors to prevent people from using arbitrary words and perform arbitrary actions and behaviors.

The interdiction or taboo in every region in Indonesia is known by different terms. In Sasak community, Lombok Island, it is known as *pemaliq*. The Sasak community used *pemaliq* as a medium of communication expression that contains taboos in saying certain words, behaving disrespectfully, and acting arbitrarily. It means *pemaliq* is made into a local rule that must not be violated (Hakim, 2008, p. 298; 2015, p. 342 and Selake, 2011, p. 31). Moreover, *pemaliq* is used by Sasak community as a powerful energy source to shape its personality. Therefore, the Sasak community considered their production of *pemaliq* as one of the cultural products containing a valuable and essential concept of thought that can be used as a guidance and principle in performing communication, behavior, and action (see Koentjaraningrat, 2015, p. 153; Uhi, 2016, p. 76-77; Daeng, 2008, p. 46). This consideration means that *pemaliq* words have cultural meanings and values that can be applied in managing life.

Concerning this short article, the writer will explain *pemaliq* words of human death. As have been stated, the words are produced and used by the Sasak community, Sigar Penjalin Village, North Lombok Regency, Indonesia. In this case, the practice of using *pemaliq* words of human death is considered a taboo language. This language is a form of manifestation on the concept of the ancestors' understanding within Sasak community in Sigar Penjalin Village towards the mystery of human existence. Moreover, the production and expression of *pemaliq* words of death is a manifestation of cultural values that can be applied in managing life, especially in the form of politeness and courtesy. Hence, the

practice of using *pemaliq* words of death is seen as a taboo language that reflects the avoidance of the utterance of certain inappropriate words referred to the people who passed on due to those words are considered to be harmful (see Wardhaugh, 2010, p. 249; Douglas, 2001, p. 4). In other words, certain words that are considered inappropriate to be uttered for those who passed on can result in adverse impact to those who spoke them; they will experience misfortunes within their lives (Yusuf & Yusuf, 2014, p. 21). The misfortune may occur due to the arrogance of the speakers' unwillingness to respect and honor those who passed on. It means that the practice of using *pemaliq* words of death can fall into a method of forming moral behavior (see Allan & Kate, 2006, p. 1; Freud, 2001, p. 22; and Laksana, 2009, p. 65).

In Indonesia, studies on taboos related to death had been carried out by previous researchers, for example, the studies conducted by Barus et al. (2018) on "Linguistic Taboos in Karonese Culture", and Laksana (2009) on "Tabu Bahasa: Salah Satu Cara Memahami Kebudayaan Bali". These studies still focus on issues regarding the type/form, function and the meaning of taboo language, also the method of avoiding forbidden words. However, these studies have not highlighted another aspect of taboo language that is considered very important, namely the cultural values contained in each taboo language.

Based on the explanation above, *pemaliq* words of death practiced by the Sasak community in Indonesia have become an interesting object to be studied deeply and comprehensively. Therefore, the essence of this short article aims to describe the speaker's world point of view and cultural values reflected in the expression of the lingual forms of *pemaliq* words of death.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The researcher applied linguistic anthropology theory for this research. Linguistic anthropology is the theory that examines the role and meaning of a language that builds a culture (Foley, 1997, p. 3; 2016, p. 251). In other words, linguistic anthropology investigates the practice on the use of a language that forms and gives meaning to culture (see Salzman, Stainlaw, & Adachi, 2012, p. 14-25; Danesi, 2004, p. 7; Crystal, 2008, p. 27; and Sibarani, 2014, p. 314; 2015; 2004).

Furthermore, Duranti (1997, p. 2) also asserted that linguistic anthropology is a study of language as a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice. Thus, Duranti (1997, p. 3-4) emphasized that the concept of a language in linguistic anthropology as a symbolic source used in social and communication settings has a vital role in manifesting the real and unreal world's view or the aspect of ideational and material that realize the existence of the human being (cf. Palmer, 1996; Geert, 1973, p. 10-12). Therefore, the language features that create *pemaliq* of death are considered as conceptualization codes that are embedded within the social construction and had become a reflection of the human experience (Sharifian, 2017, p. 2). The language feature that objectifies *pemaliq* words related to death influenced Sasak community's view on the reality of life and their personality (see Astawa, Budiarsa, & Simpen, 2019). To that, this justifies Wang & Jia (2016) perspective that the use of language within a culture can give an understanding of the production of the culture itself in regards to reality and itself.

## III. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted within the indigenous community of the Sasak in Sigar Penjalin Village, North Lombok Regency, Indonesia. This research is descriptive qualitative research that describes lingual expression data. The data expressed manifests *pemaliq* words of death in a narrative manner. The data was obtained through the method of in-depth interviews and non-participatory observation. The collected data was analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1994, p. 10-12) flow path models. The models consisted of four, namely: data collection, data reduction, data display and conclusion. (1) data collection; collecting utterances expressing taboos that are mentioning death and the use of evasion words; (2) data reduction; simplifying and adjusting the data by only selecting data that are related to *pemaliq* words of human death; (3) data display; presenting the data in the form of lingual expression that showed the interdiction of mentioning the human death. In addition, this section also describes the content of the evasion words that are used to replace the avoided words, exploring the meaning and cultural values embedded in evasion words based on ethic and emic approaches; and (4) conclusions; drawing conclusions from the perspective of Sasak community in Sigar Penjalin Village towards the mystery of human existence.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The community of Sasak in Sigar Penjalin Village considered the behaviors of mutual respect and honor between human beings are not limited only to the people but also to those who passed on. In this case, the Sasak community in Sigar Penjalin Village produced specific rules that can be used in respecting them. The rules applied to those people are known as *pemaliq* that must not be violated, and if so it is believed to bringing *tulah manuh* a 'misfortune', for instance, it is taboo to name the process of a dead person with the word *matè* 'die'. See the example in the following *pemaliq* expression.

- (1) *Deq kanggo ny-(s)ebut matè tau siq ngènangang*  
 NEG allow DA-say to die people REL dead

'It is not allowed to use the word 'die' for the dead people'

The *pemaliq* expression above illustrates that Sasak community in Sigar Penjalin Village has forbidden the usage of the word *matè* 'die' in referring to human death. The word 'matè' in this case, is considered inappropriate to be applied to humans. Its meaning is believed to be less polite and has a low sense of values. The utterance is improper to be heard by the people, primarily if heard by the family of the ones who passed on. Hence, the word *matè* 'die' itself refers to the death of animals or plants. Thus, if the word *matè* 'die' is used for human death, then humans are considered animals. To distinguish between the death of humans and the death of animals or plants, the ancestors of Sasak community in Indonesia had produced and used specific words to replace the use of the word *matè* 'die', that is, using euphemistic words such as *adèq*, *ngèngang*, and *ulèq*.

The word *adèq* lexically means 'non-existence'. This word is categorized as adverbial, a word that describes the state of things. The word *adèq* is used when a person is dying or several minutes after passing away. This word is usually uttered by a *kiai* or a religious figure who checks on the condition of the dying person. It is to ensure whether s/he is still alive or not. In this case, when a dying person is truly dead, then a *kiai* will announce the death of a dying person to all the family members. Regarding the above situation, the word *adèq* in this context is known as a word that refers to the soul of the deceased who had left his physical body. In other words, the spirit that livens up the physical matter of a human is *adèq* 'no longer existing' within the human body. See the data below:

- (2) *Wah adèq-nya, Inaq Samenah ni*  
 Already NEG PRON-3, Mrs Samenah this  
 'Mrs. Samenah is no longer existing'

The sentence above was uttered by a religious leader who examined *Inaq Samenah's* condition to reassure whether she was still alive or already passed away. In this case, when the physical matter of *Inaq Samenah* had shown no sign of living, which was proven by the non-existence of her pulse and breath, the religious leader who examine her condition then informed her relatives that she had passed away. Thus, the word *adèq* 'no longer existing' uttered by the religious leader on data 2 refers to the fact that the soul of *Inaq Samenah* no longer existed in her physical matter.

Meanwhile, the word *ngèngang* is a word categorized as a verb and in a syntactic structure, always functions as a predicate. Morphologically, the word *ngèngang* is formed by the addition of the confix {*ng- ang*} + *èngang* → *ngèngang*, which lexically means 'leaving'. The word *ngèngang* is usually uttered by *penyilaq*; a person who is in charge of informing a person's death to a relative or other people, and at the same time inviting them to attend the prayer and the funeral. See the example of the use of the word in the data below:

- (3) A : *Aku kte berain diq seninan man Salik nu ngèngang*  
 PRON-1 here tell PRON-2, wife uncle Salik that leaving  
 'I'm here to tell you that uncle Salik's wife had left/passed away'  
 B : *Sekumbèan ia ngèngang?*  
 When PRON-3 leaving  
 'When exactly did she pass away?'  
 A : *Tonèq lemaq*  
 Just now morning  
 'This morning'

Data (3) showed that speaker A is *penyilaq* who informed the death of uncle Salik's wife to speaker B. In this case, when speaker A informed the news to speaker B he used the word *ngèngang*, which was then also being used by speaker B after receiving the information from speaker A. However, the word *ngèngang* within the understanding concept of Sasak community in Sigar Penjalin Village is actually a word that informs the spirit's departure of the deceased to return to God. In this case, the Sasak community of Sigar Penjalin Village understood that the departure a person to meet his Creator has *ngèngang* 'left' his physical matter, leaving all family, relatives, and loved ones forever. To leave a physical matter here means that the human spirit that has departed will leave its body to be in eternal life. Furthermore, the context of leaving the family, relatives, and loved ones illustrates that the person who passed on travels earlier to real life. In other words, this world is claimed to be a terminal for everyone waiting for a vehicle or to be picked up, which will take them to a place as the final destination. In this regard, those who passed on earlier are those who were picked up earlier to be taken into the place of his final destination.

The following word *ulèq* is a word categorized as a verb, which lexically means 'returning home'. Concerning death, the word *ulèq* illustrates that a person who died is an actor (subject) who travels *ulèq* back home from a place to its origin or original residence. For more explanation, look at the data below:

- (4) *Cukup wah menangis, ikhlasang seninan diq teger tenang ulèq!*  
 Enough already crying, be sincere wife PRON-2 so peaceful returning home  
 'Stop crying, you have to let your wife go sincerely so she can return home peacefully!'

Data (4) showed that a speaker was advising a man who was left by his wife. The sentence reflected that the speaker was trying to give comfort, strength, and understanding to the man that his wife is actually on a journey of *ulèq* 'returning home' to her origin/the place where she once came from. In this context, those who passed on have returned to their owners, to God the Creator. Hence, it can be emphasized that the word *ulèq* reflects the understanding of Sasak community in Sigar Penjalin Village that this world is not an eternal place; however, it is only a temporary place or a

stop for the route to eternity. The place of eternity for the deceased in this case is in the *alam alus* (subtle world) (cf. Budiwanti, 2000, p. 145).

The understanding of Sasak community in Sigar Penjalin Village, which is conceptualized in the practice of using the words *adèq*, *ngènanang*, and *ulèq* as references to the word *matè* 'die' as explained above, is related to the understanding of the three worlds of human life. The sasak community of Sigar Penjalin Village conceptualizes the three worlds of human life into (1) *alam peteng* (in the womb), (2) *alam benah* (in the real world), and (3) *alam alus* (the world after death).

*Alam peteng* (in the womb) is the starting point of human life, and it is believed to be the place where humans received the orders and decisions of the Creator. Furthermore, the received command in that world will be practiced by humans after being born into the next phase of life; *alam benah* (the real world). In this case, *alam benah* (the real world) is seen as a place where humans actualize their existence as servants. As the servants, humans must obey the orders and stay away from things prohibited by the Creator. Furthermore, *alam benah* (the real world) is also understood as a waiting place for being picked up to the third world, which is *alam alus*; the subtle world as the final destination for facing the Creator. Thus, the three worlds of human life essentially describe the journey of human life itself, in which initially starting from the subtle world (*alam peteng*) to the real world (*alam benah*) and returning to the subtle world (*alam alus*). In other words, the three worlds of human life understood by Sasak community of Sigar Penjalin Village are the understanding of the existence and non-existence of human beings.

The explanation of the evasion words in the form of euphemism words above reflected that *pemaliq* words of death contain cultural values that can be applied in managing life. The cultural values of *pemaliq* words of death consist of the value of religiosity, the value of consciousness and politeness. The value of religiosity is the value that describes the belief in human existence as a creature created by God and will return to God. The value of consciousness is the value that represents human consciousness in understanding the presence of its physical body only as an outer layer that will get damaged and becoming soil again. Meanwhile, politeness is the use of kind words, words that have a high sense of values and are appropriate to be uttered to all human beings, even to those who passed on.

## V. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be inferred that *pemaliq* words of human deaths, which are being used by Sasak community in Indonesia, have shown that there are perspectives or concepts in understanding the nature of human existence. In this case, the ancestors of the Sasak community had conceptualized their views on the nature of human existence through lingual items that express *pemaliq* words of death, especially on euphemistic evasion words.

*Pemaliq* words of death are the local rules produced by the ancestors as a mean of control to avoid the occurrence of arbitrariness in a speech to prevent the happening of misfortune. In other words, *pemaliq* words of death are used to create mutual respect and honor among human beings even to those who passed on because the essence of the person's death is the deceased of his physical matter, while his soul will stay alive.

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