



Forms and Meanings of *Bale Nagi* Folksong: Expression of Longing of *Nagi* People to Their Homeland

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KEYWORDS: form, meaning, folksong, **ABSTRACT:** This study examines the relationship of Nagi language and Nagi culture belonging to Nagi people in Larantuka that lies in the island of Flores, as reflected in

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forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena used in the folksong of Bale Nagi designating the expressions of longing of Nagi's people to return to their homeland. 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 method is descriptive as the study aims to describe the cultural conceptualization of Nagi people regarding the tide to their motherland when they go and live abroad. The result of study shows that the forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena used in the folk song of Bale Nagi are unique and specific which designate the expression of longing of Nagi's people to return to Nagi as their homeland. The meanings stored in the forms linguistic phenomena used in the folksong designate the expressions of longing of Nagi's people to return to their homeland when they go and live abroad because Nagi as he first place of their presence on this earth has beautiful environment.

INTRODUCTION

It is generally accepted that both language and culture belonging to a society as members of a social group are closely related to each other in some respect (Palmer, 1996; Palmer & Sharifian, 2007; Schneider, 1976). The relationship can be seen in the features of linguistic phenomena they employ in cultural texts such as folksong, proverbs, idiomatic expression, and the like (Bustan, 2006; Bustan, 2023; Bustan et al., 2024; Jehamat et al., 2025). The features of linguistic phenomena in the cultural texts are unique and specific to culture as the parent or hosting culture in which the cultural texts are embedded (Alshammari, 2018; Miller, 1968). Therefore, the linguistic phenomena in the cultural texts can be defined not only as social phenomena, but also as cultural phenomena revealing the function of language used by a society as members of a social group is the reflection of culture they share that contains the ways they view the world (Ochs, 1988; Alshammari, 2018; Bernstein, 1972; Foley, 1997; Geertz, 1973; Keesing, 1981).

This study examines the relationship of both *Nagi* language and *Nagi* culture belonging to *Nagi* people known as '*Orang Nagi*' which refers to those living in Larantuka, the capital city of the East Flores Regency that lies in the eastern part of the island of Flores in the province of East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, with special reference to the forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena in the cultural texts in *Nagi* language which is referred to as Larantuka Malay Dialect. As cultural texts are of various kinds, the study focuses on the regional folk song of *Nagi* people entitled '*Bale Nagi*' composed by Jan Berchmans Lisen Djangun, addressing a legend about home land in Larantuka (Dama, 2024). The contents stored in the forms of linguistic phenomena in the folksong imply a set of meanings designating the expression of longing of *Nagi* people to return to *Nagi* which refers to Larantuka as their homeland when they go and live abroad. In line with its scope, the study aims to describe the forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena in the folksong of *Bale Nagi* which designate the expression of longing of *Nagi* people to return to their homeland, Larantuka, when they go and live abroad. We are interested in conducting the study for the basic reason that the features of linguistic

phenomena in the folksong of *Bale Nagi* are unique and specific in their forms and meanings designating the expression of longing of *Nagi* people to return to *Nagi* as their homeland when they go and live abroad.

FRAMEWORK

In an attempt to achieve its aim, this 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. Cultural linguistics is an emerging paradigm or model in cognitive linguistics as it 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). In the perspective of cultural linguistics, language is explored through the lens of culture to uncover conceptualization ascribed in the cognitive map of its speakers in viewing the world. The aim is based on premise that language in its use as a chief means of communication between and among a people as members of a social group is the window into their cognitions or minds (Yu, 2007; Palmer & Sharifian, 2007).

Cultural linguistics is an approach to identifying language differences based on the fact that the differences between languages are due to cultural differences shared by the speakers of those languages. This comes closest to the conception of Humboldt that the diversity of languages is not concerned with the diversity of signs and sounds, but the diversity of worldviews. The conception is reflected in the theory of linguistic relativity 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. When we explore the differences between languages, therefore, the basic concept that should be taken into account is that we perceive the world in terms of categories and distinctions found in our native language and. What is found in one language may not be found in another language due cultural differences (Miller, 1968; Palmer, 1996; Foley, 1997; Alshammari, 2018).

As language can be defined differently, in the perspective of cultural linguistics, language is defined as a cultural activity and, at the same time, as an instrument for organizing other cultural domains (Palmer & Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2007). This is equated with the idea that culture is deeply ingrained part of the very fiber of our being, but language as the means for communication among members of a society is the most visible and available expression of culture they share. Similar to language, as culture may mean different things for different people (Kaplan & Manners, 1999), in the perspective of cultural linguistics, culture is defined as the source of conceptualization of experience encountered by a society in their context of living together as members of social group (Palmer & Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2011; Palmer, 1996). In this regard, according to Foley (1997), culture is a cognitive map belonging to a society as members of a social group used as the source of reference for them in viewing the world. Culture is a display illustrating how a society as members of a social group organize their ways of thinking about items, behaviors, and beliefs or events taking place in cultural domain (Palmer & Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2011; Palmer, 1996).

The relationship of language and culture is manifested in conceptualization which refers 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 which refer to how people from different cultures interpret their world that contains such cultural aspects as beliefs, norms, customs, traditions, and values. As cultural conceptualization and language are two intrinsic aspects of cultural cognition, cultural conceptualizations have conceptual existence and linguistic encoding. Language in this light is defined as a central aspect of cultural cognition as a collective memory bank for cultural conceptualizations, past and present. This is because 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 in this sense is regarded as one of the primary mechanisms that functions to store as well as to communicate the cultural conceptualizations. Language is a social-collective memory bank as a fluid vehicle for the retransmission of the socioculturally embodied cultural conceptualizations (Palmer, 1996; Palmer & Sharifian, 2007; Sharifan, 2007; Sharifian, 2011).

Cultural conceptualization may not be correlated objectively with external world because cultural conceptualization is the result of interaction between members of a culture carried out through a continuous process of negotiation and renegotiation taking place through time, space, and across generations. In addition to being a means for communicating their cultural conceptualization, language they employ also functions as a means for embodying cultural conceptualization. This comes closest to the conception of Alshammari (2018) that language as a system of symbols is the vehicle for expressing the cultural identity of a people as members of a social group. The cultural conceptualizations distributed across the minds of a people as members of a social group representing their cognition at the cultural level are called linguistic imagery which is concerned with how they speak about the world that they themselves imagine. Nevertheless, the linguistic imagery can be examined from the physical forms of language and, as such, the meanings stored in the forms of language used should be interpreted on the basis of their sociocultural context (Palmer & Sharifian, 2007; Sharifan, 2007; Sharifian, 2011).

METHOD

This study is descriptive as its aim is to describe the cultural conceptualization of *Nagi* people regarding the tide to *Nagi* as their homeland (Muhadjir, 1995; Nusa Putra, 2011; Wahyuni, 2015; Sugiyono, 2020; Abdulsammad, 2021; Moleong, 2025). Along with its aim, the study was identified as an ethnographic study (Hymes, 1974; Gumperz, 1992; Spradley, 1997; Wahyuni, 2015; Sugiyono, 2020; Abdulsammad, 2021; Moleong, 2025). The sources of data were primary data and secondary data. The method of collecting the primary data was in-depth interviews with the members of *Nagi* people, represented by two informants selected on basis of the ideal criteria proposed by Faisal (1990), Spradley (1997), Sudikan (2001), Wahyuni (2015), Sugiyono (2020), Abdulsammad (2021), Moleong (2025). The techniques of data collection were recording, elicitation, and note-taking. The method used to collect the secondary data was documentary study. The documents used as the sources of data were general books, scientific articles, results of research, and papers. The collected data were then analyzed qualitatively by using inductive method as the analysis was started from the data to the concept/theory regarding the tide to homeland of *Nagi* people. The concept/theory was local-ideographic in nature as it applies to *Nagi* culture as the description was made on the basis of cultural conceptualization ascribed in the cognitive map of *Nagi* people, as reflected in the forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena employed in the folksong of *Bale Nagi* (Spradley, 1987; Sudikan, 2001; Duranti, 2001; Wahyuni, 2015; Sugiyono, 2020; Abdulsammad, 2021; Moleong, 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The result of study shows that there is an intimate interconnection between *Nagi* language, *Nagi* culture, and conceptualization of *Nagi* people in viewing the world. The relationship is manifested in the features of linguistic phenomena used in the folk song of *Bale Nagi* which lexically means 'return to *Nagi* or return to Larantuka' as the homeland of *Nagi* people'. The features of linguistic phenomena used in the folksong of *Bale Nagi* are unique and specific to *Nagi* culture as the parent culture in which *Nagi* language is embedded. The unique and specific features of linguistic phenomena used in the folksong are reflected in their forms and meanings which designate the cultural conceptualization ascribed in the cognitive map of *Nagi* people who go and live abroad regarding to the tide to *Nagi* as their homeland. The meanings stored in the forms of linguistic phenomena in the folk song of *Bale Nagi* provide request for *Nagi* people who go and live abroad to always remember *Nagi* as their homeland, as reflected in the following text:

Original Text

Lia lampu menyala di Pante Uste ...e

Orang bekarang di angin sejo ... e

Inga pa mo ema jao ... e

Inga ade mo kaka jao ... e

Pengga ole ma wura lewa Tanjo Bunga ... e

Malam embo ujan po rinte ... e

Tanjo Bunga meking jao ... e

Sinyo terdampa lah di tana orang ... e

Refrain

Bale Nagi ... Bale Nagi ... Sinyo ...e

No ... e kendati nae bero ... e

Bale Nagi ... Bale Nagi ... Sinyo ...e

No ... e kendati nae bero ... e

Translated Text

See the lights on at the Uste Beach

Fishermen are catching fish in the cold breeze

Remember father and mother who are far away

Remember brothers and sisters who are far away

Sailing across the current through *Bunga* Cape

Night due light rain

Bunga Cape is getting far away

We are stranded in a foreign land

Refrain

Let's return to *Nagi*, let's return to *Nagi*
 Even if we ride a small fishing boat
 Let's return to *Nagi*, let's return to *Nagi*
 Even if we ride a small fishing boat

Discussion

The folksong of *Bale Nagi* consists of three couplets in which the forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena are closely related to each other in uncovering the cultural conceptualization of *Nagi* people who go and live abroad not to forget or always to remember *Nagi* as their homeland even though it is far away from their sights. They are requested to return to *Nagi* as their homeland due to the beautiful panorama of both *Uste* beach and *Bunga* cape, especially at night.

Couplet (01)

As clearly seen in the physical forms of linguistic phenomena used in the text, the couplet (01) consists of four lines of sentences which are closely related to each other in their meanings dealing with the beauty of *Uste* beach that attracts *Nagi* people when go and live abroad to return to *Nagi* as their homeland. The first line describes the beauty of *Uste* beach at night indicated by scattered lights, *Lia lampu menyala di Pante Uste...e* 'See the lights on at *Uste* beach'. The second line describes how the fishermen who are busy catching fish in the cold breeze, *Orang bekarang di angin sejo...e* 'Fishermen are catching fish in the cool breeze'. The third line describes that, when they imagine the beauty of *Ute* Beach at night, they remember their father and mother who are far away from their sights, *Inga pa mo ema jao ...e* 'Remember father and mother who are far away'. The fourth line describes that, when they imagine the beauty of the *Ute* Beach at night, they also remember their brothers and sisters who are far away from their sights, *Inga ade mo kaka jao...e* 'Remember brothers and sisters who are far away'.

Couplet (02)

As clearly seen in the physical features of its linguistic phenomena used, the second couplet consists of four lines of sentences which are closely related to each other in their meanings. The first line describes the beauty of *Bunga* cape at night indicated by how fishermen were sailing across the current at night, *Pengga ole ma wura lewa Tanjo Bunga...e* 'Sailing across the current through *Bunga* Cape'. The second line describes the situation at night with light rain, *Malam embo ujan po rinte* 'Night due light rain' that makes remember *Nagi* as their homeland. The third line describes that the cape is getting far away from their sights, *Tanjo Bunga meking jao ... e* '*Bunga* cape is getting far away'. The four line describes that they are stranded in a foreign land, *Sinyo terdampa lah di tana orang* "We are stranded in a foreign land" which is far away from *Nagi* as their homeland.

Couplet (03)

As clearly seen in the physical features of its linguistic phenomena used, the third couplet as the refrain consists of four lines of sentences which are closely related to each other in their meanings. The first line describes the request to return to *Nagi* as their mother land, *Bale Nagi, Bale Nagi, Sinyo* 'Let's return to *Nagi*, let's return to *Nagi*'. The second line describes that they long to return to *Nagi* as their homeland even if they a small fishing boat, *No ... e kendati nae bero...e* 'Even if we ride a small fishing boat'. Similar to the first line, the third line describes the request to return to *Nagi* as their mother land, *Bale Nagi, Bale Nagi, Sinyo...e* 'Let's return to *Nagi*, let's return to *Nagi*'. Likewise the second line, the fourth line describes that they long to return to *Nagi* as their homeland even if they ride a small fishing boat, *No ... e kendati nae bero ... e* 'Even if we ride a small fishing boat'.

The contents stored in the forms of linguistic phenomena used in the folksong imply a set of meanings regarding the ways *Nagi* people in viewing and making sense of the world. In accordance with the social convention inherited from their ancestors, as reflected in the cultural conceptualization ascribed in their cognitive map, the folksong of *Bale Nagi* provides request for *Nagi* people to always remember *Nagi* as their homeland when they go or live abroad because *Nagi* was the first place of their presence on this earth. The meaningfulness of the folksong can be manifested by *Nagi* people in various ways. One way that can be done is that, if they go and live abroad, they are expected to go home to meet face to face with their family members who live in the homeland. At the same time, the folksong reminds *Nagi* people to still love their natal village where they were born, regardless its strengths and weaknesses, because the natal village was the first place of their presence on this earth. If for some reason they cannot return to homeland, they must not forget to send news to their family members as the guardians of the homeland where they were born.

CONCLUSION

In summary, there is an intimated relationship between *Nagi* language and *Nagi* culture belonging to *Nagi* people. The relationship is reflected in the cultural conceptualization ascribed in their cognitive map regarding the tide to *Nagi* as their homeland. The cultural conceptualization is reflected in the forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena used in the folksong of *Bale Nagi* which requests

Nagi people to always remember *Nagi* as their homeland when they go and live abroad because of its beauty as the first place of their presence on this earth.

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