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## An anthropological linguistic study on Maccera' Bulung ritual

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### Abstract

This research aims at exploring all possible meanings of maccera' bulung ritual through an anthropological linguistic study. Maccera' bulung literally means bleeding the chicken for the grown paddy. This research employed a qualitative method with descriptive-naturalistic characteristics. As a result, Maccera' bulung ritual has three clusters of meaning. The fundamental meaning confirms it as a form of sacrificing and gratitude manifesting for the grown paddy. In conclusion, the ecological meaning reveals that it is ecologically rational. The cultural meaning exposes some ideological and sociological values of society.

**Keywords:** Anthropological linguistics, Cultural meaning, Ritual.

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## Un estudio lingüístico antropológico sobre el ritual Bulung de Maccera

### Resumen

Esta investigación tiene como objetivo explorar todos los posibles significados del ritual de maccera a través de un estudio lingüístico antropológico. El bulung de Maccera literalmente significa sangrar el pollo para el arroz adulto. Esta investigación empleó un método cualitativo con características descriptivas-naturalistas. Como resultado, el ritual abultado de Maccera tiene tres grupos de significado. El significado fundamental lo confirma como una forma de sacrificio y agradecimiento que se manifiesta por el arrozal crecido. En conclusión, el significado ecológico revela que es ecológicamente racional. El significado cultural expone algunos valores ideológicos y sociológicos de la sociedad.

**Palabras clave:** Lingüística antropológica, Significado cultural, Ritual.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In line with their great numbers, there are many studies on traditions and rituals in Indonesia. The studies were mostly conducted to explore the valuable contents of the traditions and rituals (BADARUDDIN, 2016; GENUA, 2017; HARIANTO, 2017; HARTINI, 2017). Those studies also employed various approaches and analyses to find out the form and meaning of a tradition or a ritual.

Anthropological linguistics is one of the approaches that has been employed by many researchers in studying tradition and ritual. Anthropological linguistics is a search for the meanings in linguistic practices within wider cultural practices (FOLEY, 1997). It has a

broader perspective toward human language because it relates a language form, its function/use, and its cultural environment. Anthropological linguistics proposes that a text/discourse will be meaningful and give complete information if it is observed in its context. A cultural/tradition discourse should be studied from its whole linguistic signs (BUSTAN & BIRE, 2018).

There are several models of analyzing a text/discourse under the umbrella of anthropological linguistics. One of them is the social semiotic concept by HALLIDAY & HASAN (1985). A text should be interpreted in terms of textual metafunction, the context of situation and context of culture (HALLIDAY & HASAN, 1985). The other one is the dialectical ecolinguistics model by BANG & DOOR (1993). A text is understood in three parts namely dialogue, situation, and social praxis (BANG & DOOR, 1993; ANDI & ARAFAH, 2017). Both models are also quite fashionable in studying tradition or ritual discourse.

Maccera' bulung ritual is a part of bunga' lalang tradition which is still frequently done in Luwu, South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. Bunga' lalang is an agricultural tradition that refers to a series of activities/rituals led by a bunga' lalang (path opener) in every stage of a planting season. Maccera' bulung itself is performed when the paddy has been bulung grown/raised like a teenage girl or bundara the condition of the paddy stem is rounded because it is about to emerge flower. The main action of the ritual is Maccera bleeding the cattle or poultry. Maccera' bulung ritual is a form of gratitude for the fine

current paddy growth. It is always performed joyously. It can be said as a festive culture is which is complex in content, morphology, and dynamics. The bunga' lalang of a village leads the pray to deliver thankfulness to God and the chicken butchering in the ricefield. All farmers/villagers then cook and eat together in that ricefield. In the Encyclopedia of Luwu Culture, maccera' bulung ritual is more or less the same with the one called maddupa ase (welcoming the paddy) in Buginese culture.

This article presents all the possible meanings in maccera' bulung ritual through an anthropological linguistic study. The discourse of maccera' bulung ritual is analyzed using the combined framework of social semiotics and dialectical ecolinguistics which both have a parallel notion with the gist of anthropological linguistics. The meanings of maccera' bulung ritual resulted from this study are expected to be a basic consideration in preventing and promoting the tradition or a primary document whenever the ritual is no longer performed in the future.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative method with descriptive-naturalistic characteristics. Maccera' bulung ritual was directly observed in its natural setting, when it was held on 4 March 2018 in Tabbaja Village, Kamanre District, Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. There were six informants consist of bunga'

lalang (the leader of the tradition), local governments, societal figures, and the farmers-villagers. They were interviewed about the ritual. Some documents related to the ritual were also collected to support the result of the observation and interview.

The data analysis used the analytical process by DORNYEI (2007) that consisted of transcribing the data, pre-coding and coding the data, growing ideas, interpreting the ideas, and drawing a conclusion. The combined framework of social semiotics and dialectical ecolinguistics was integrated into the analytical process. All contexts of the ritual were analyzed and then the meanings of the ritual were developed from the contexts by consulting them with the informants and the available documents. The analytical framework is illustrated in the figure below:

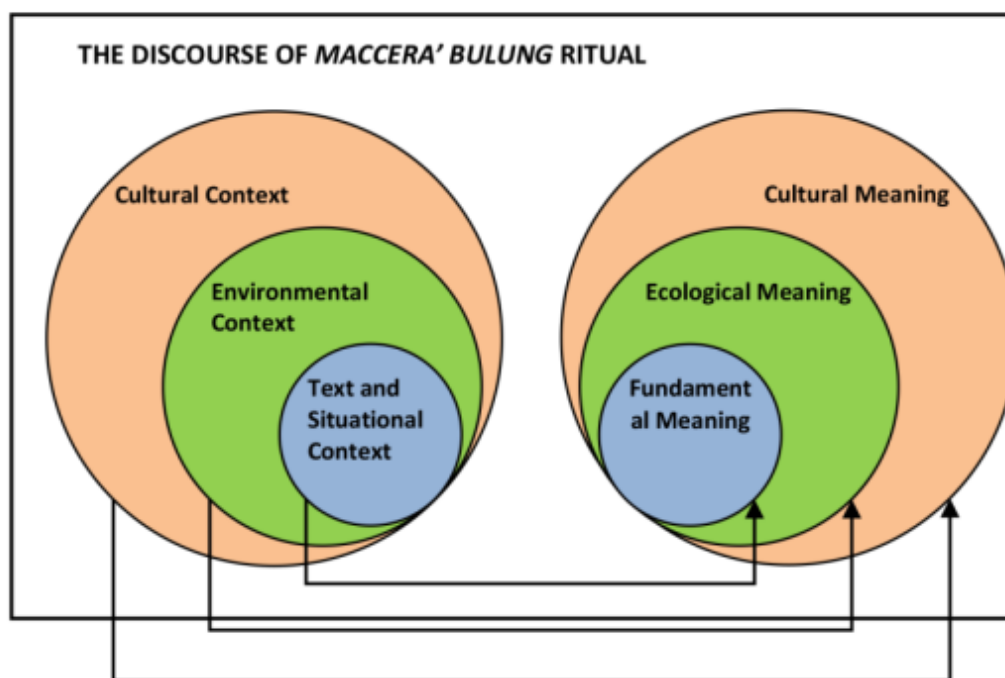


Figure 1: The Analytical Framework

### 3. FINDINGS

The ritual of maccera' bulung in Tabbaja Village which observed in this research was festive because the leaders at the district level were invited. The ritual is presented in the following discourse:

Many people come to the ricefield area. They bring chickens, bunches of leaves (tabang leaves, pare-pare leaves, bance leaves) and various foods. Bunga' lalang sits along with the religious leader, local government leader, custom leader, environment leader and crowded by the farmers-villagers (DORNYEI, 2007: 15).

Bunga' lalang chooses one brown cock among many chickens. He wipes the cock off while whispers: "This is the symbol of our unity in here, to nourish our paddy plants, hopefully, Allah the Highest directs it well (HALLIDAY & HASAN, 1985: 17)".

Bunga' lalang hands over the cock to other leaders to be wiped off while they whisper their intention and pray. He also lets some of the crowds to wipe the cock off and have them pray. The cock is then returned to bunga' lalang. Next, by whispering Bismillahirrahmanirrahim, bunga' lalang butchers the cock and all other chickens. The farmers' bunches of leaves are used as an underlayment to receive the blood of the chickens butchered. The leaves with chickens' blood are taken home by the farmers to be swept on their paddy plants. The chickens butchered are cooked by the mothers and serve with other foods to be eaten together.

The nonverbal text contains material processes of bringing, choose, wipe off, hand over, return, butcher, use, take, cook, eat; behavioral processes of come, sit, crowd, let; and mental process of the whisper. The verbal text whispered by bunga' lalang contains the existential process of is; the material process of nourish; and a divine process of direct with the manner of well. The main action of maccera' bulung ritual is the butcher. There are two groups of a participant in the ritual namely the human participants that is people in general and the material worlds. In the nonverbal text, bunga' lalang is actor and senser toward other leaders, crowds (farmers-villagers), the cock, chickens, and the verbiage. The leaders are actors and senser toward the cock and their intention/pray. The farmers-villagers including mothers are actors and senser toward the chickens, bunches of leaves, foods, the cock, and their intention/pray.

Based on dialectical ecolinguistics model BANG & DOOR (1993), through the processes of hand over and let, bunga' lalang is called logical subject; the leaders and the farmers' villagers are the grammatical subjects; and the cock is the psychological subject. So the three participants in those particular processes are equal as subjects. In the verbal text, the cock represented the other chickens is existent; bunga' lalang on behalf of farmers-villagers is actor toward paddy plants, and Allah the Almighty is divine senser toward the ritual of maccera' bulung. Then, the mood of the verbal text is declarative. All interactions between participants in both nonverbal and verbal texts are direct because they all physically exist. Except for the interaction

between Allah the Almighty and the ritual which exists but is physically invisible by human beings.

The verbiage is the only small portion within the whole ritual of maccera' bulung; it does not constitute the whole activity. It is one literal part deals with the demonstration of the existing process; endeavor within the material process; and intention on the divine process. There are other verbal texts from other leaders and farmers-villagers but they are not included as the verbiage of the ritual. The topical themes of the verbiage are this, nourish, and hopefully. There is no textual theme but there is a repetition of ours. The verbiage is a monologue spoken with an expository mode which is reflected by the declarative mood, the organization, and the topical themes of the verbiage.

In the nonverbal text of the ritual, the existing biological elements are the ricefield area, chickens, bunches of leaves, the cock, chickens blood, paddy plants. In the verbal text, the biological elements mentioned/referred to are the cock and the paddy plants which are also included in the nonverbal text of the ritual discourse. Each of them has different ecological parameters toward the farmers.

The element of the ricefield area is the largest one in Tabbaja Village named Padang Kalua. The ricefields in that area were the ricefields with bulung (grown) paddy and the low pool of water. The element of the paddy plant in the discourse refers to bulung paddy. It is the paddy that has grown for about 30 cm tall with dense stems/leaves.

The chickens brought by the farmers-villagers to maccera' bulung ritual are local chickens and mostly cocks. The chickens are quite similar in size but varied in color. The one chosen by bunga' lalang is a brown cock with a bit black and white on its back. The chickens' blood results from the butchering of all chickens.

The bunches of leaves brought by the farmers-villagers consist of three local plants' leaves. The first is called tabang leaves, the second is pare-pare leaves, and the third is bance leaves. In the nonverbal text of the ritual discourse, many processes function as the cultural context of it namely sit along, wipe off, whisper, hand over, let, butcher, sweep, cook, eat together. Several elements also function as the cultural context of the ritual namely chickens, bunches of leaves, brown cock, chickens blood. The verbiage of the ritual discourse is said to be literal but it has its cultural values.

#### **4. DISCUSSIONS**

The meanings of the discourse of maccera' bulung ritual which are derived from its text and contexts and verified using relevant sources and explanation from the informants are presented below: In field analysis, it is identified that the nonverbal part of maccera' bulung ritual mostly involves physical/material processes. Whilst in mode analysis, it is identified that the small portion of the mental process of whispering the verbiage contains an intention. Connecting the two linguistic facts, great physical process (working on or giving

material world) with small intention (not expecting a greater material return) tends to be a form of sacrificing and gratitude manifesting. Then, it is said in mode analysis that the intention is on the divine process i.e. direct. When the process of direct was done by a human, it might be a behavioral, mental, or verbal process based on its realization (act, thought, talk) (HALLIDAY & HASAN, 1985). When it is done by Allah the Almighty. the process of direct can cover all of that even all other processes.

In the tenor analysis, many human participants are completing their tasks in maccera' bulung ritual. Among others, bunga' lalang leads the ritual but he does not demand other participants. But based on the dialectical ecolinguistic model, bunga' lalang position is equal to other human participants. He just leads them in the ritual because it is his authority/specialty. In the verbiage, the cock representing the chickens is existent which means the cock is passive. That is the nature of something sacrificed. Bunga' lalang representing other farmers-villagers is actor toward paddy plants due to maccera' bulung ritual then Allah the Almighty is divine senser toward the ritual. The divine senser is structurally after/above and essentially greater than the actor. That means the success of the action/effort done by bunga' lalang is determined by Allah the Almighty.

In mode analysis, it is identified that the verbiage is not constitutive. It does not even support one single action in the ritual. It deals with the demonstration, endeavor, and intention concerning maccera' bulung ritual as a whole. Because of that, one concerns also

the topical theme and repetition mentioned earlier, the verbiage is coherence. The verbiage is an expository monologue. It is expected to be heard by other creatures around and the Creator, Allah the Almighty. At last, the words whispered by the other leaders and farmers-villagers are not the part of maccera' bulung verbiage. They are not in the form of the consistent text of the bunga' lalang tradition. The words of the text are changeable according to the people who expressed it and the content of their intention. The informants said that the leaders have their intention and bunga' lalang cannot interfere that. The value of it is respecting others' intentions.

The ricefield area with bulung paddy, from a far, looks like a green carpet. From a close distance, the low pool of water in the ricefield is still seen. Based on the guidance of direct planting, after sowing the seeds, the ricefield is kept damp without the pool of water about 10 to 20 days; when the plants have appeared on the surface of ricefield, the water is entered for about 5 cm depth. So, it is standard to have a low pool of water when the paddy has grown (bulung). In an ecological context, the bulung paddy is described to have 30 cm tall with dense stems/leaves. The informants described that bulung paddy has rounded stems and starts to emerge flower. Referring to that explanation and confirming scientific knowledge and technical terms of rice farming, maccera' bulung are held in the time during the end of the vegetative stage and the beginning of the reproductive stage of rice growth.

The end of the vegetative stage of rice growth called the tillering stage. The Tillering stage is the stage in which the rice plant reaches maximum tiller number; tiller is a vegetative stem which may

develop a panicle. A panicle is the inflorescence of a rice plant that produces grain. Whereas the beginning of the reproductive stage is called the booting stage; it is when the panicle causes swelling of the stem. The booting stage is also known as the panicle initiation stage. Then, the coexistence, collectivity, and interactivity of the farmers-villagers with the bulung paddy and the ricefield (contains bulung paddy) is in a short time only. Complete tillering to booting stage happen on around day 30-40 of rice planting for 100 days' paddy; in the middle of the planting season. Though existing in a short time, the farmers-villagers have high interdependency on bulung paddy since they are very grateful for it.

In brief, from the biological point of view, bunga' lalang and the farmers-villagers do maccera' bulung ritual to be grateful for the paddy that has completed vegetative stage growth and entered the reproductive stage in which the paddy is around to emerge flower. It can be said that the time of maccera' bulung ritual is ecologically rational. The elements of chickens, the chosen chicken/cock, the chickens' blood have no relevant scientific explanation which can be added as the ecological meaning of maccera' bulung ritual. Still, the ecological parameters of the elements can be explained. Chicken coexists, is collective and is in interaction with the farmers-villagers every day. It is the most popular poultry raised by the villagers in Luwu. The interdependency of the farmers-villagers and the chickens are evidently high.

The chosen cock rarely coexists, being collective and in interaction with the farmers-villagers. It is rare to find a cock with particular feathers' color among numerous chickens. The interdependency of such chicken is low for the farmers-villagers in

daily life but the interdependency is high in maccera' bulung ritual. The chickens' blood coexists, being collective and in interaction with the farmers-villagers at particular times only. The interdependency with the farmers-villagers is high in maccera' bulung ritual as they attempt to have it using their bunches of leaves.

The three kinds of leaves in the bunch brought by the farmers also do not give any relevant ecological meaning to maccera' bulung ritual. Bunga' lalang Tabbaja said that the three leaves are quite difficult to be found now. He explained the leaves in terms of their symbolic meanings (which presented in cultural meaning). Thus, the ecological parameter of the three leaves still can be clarified here. The villagers do not coexist and interact also are not collective and interdependent with the three leaves in their daily life as rice farmers, except in maccera' bulung ritual.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Through this anthropological linguistic study, maccera' bulung ritual has three clusters of meaning. The fundamental meaning confirms that maccera' bulung is a form of sacrificing and gratitude manifesting for the grown paddy. The ecological meaning reveals that maccera' bulung ritual is ecologically rational because it is performed when the paddy has completed vegetative stage growth and entered the reproductive stage. The cultural meaning of maccera' bulung ritual exposes some ideological and sociological values of the society.

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