

DOI: [doi.org/10.21009/ISLLAE.01244](https://doi.org/10.21009/ISLLAE.01244)

Received: 5 June 2018  
Revised: 10 June 2018  
Accepted: 14 August 2018  
Published: 31 July 2019

## **Local Wisdom In The Tabot Ceremony In Bengkulu**

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### **Abstract**

Language and culture are two inseparable things that influence to one another. They are integrated with a society which then create local wisdom. It must be maintained for the sake of the continuation of language and culture in the future. Tabot ceremony is one of the traditional cultures of Bengkulu community which has a lot of local wisdom values. Therefore, the researcher tries to analyze the values of local wisdom in the Tabot ceremony and to find the language varieties used in the Tabot ceremony. This research uses an ecolinguistic approach followed by a qualitative descriptive method. The results indicate that the values of local wisdom contained in the Tabot ceremony are the values of humanity and the obligation of caring from one Muslim to other Muslims. The language varieties found in this series of Tabot ceremony are Mengambiak Tanah, Duduk, Penja, Menjara, Meradai, Jola, Arak, Serban, Coki, Gam, Dol, Tessa, Gedang and Tebuang. These Language varieties are the result of the ecological and language processes that occur in the community in the form of traditional ceremony. Lastly, the researcher hopes that the results of this research can contribute to a cultural literacy which is a 21st-century skill. The cultural literacy is the ability to understand and behave towards Indonesian culture as a national identity. So, the results of this research are also expected to introduce Bengkulu culture at the national and international level.

**Keywords:** Local Wisdom, Tabot, Ecolinguistics

### **Abstrak**

Bahasa dan budaya adalah dua hal yang tidak terpisahkan yang saling mempengaruhi. Mereka terintegrasi dengan masyarakat yang kemudian menciptakan kearifan lokal. Itu harus dipertahankan demi kelanjutan bahasa dan budaya di masa depan. Upacara tabot adalah salah satu budaya tradisional masyarakat Bengkulu yang memiliki banyak nilai kearifan lokal. Oleh karena itu, peneliti mencoba untuk menganalisis nilai-nilai kearifan lokal dalam upacara Tabot dan untuk menemukan varietas bahasa yang digunakan dalam upacara Tabot. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan ekolinguistik yang diikuti oleh metode deskriptif kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai-nilai kearifan lokal yang terkandung dalam upacara Tabot adalah nilai-nilai kemanusiaan dan kewajiban merawat dari satu Muslim ke Muslim lainnya. Variasi bahasa yang ditemukan dalam rangkaian upacara Tabot ini adalah Mengambiak Tanah, Duduk, Penja, Menjara, Meradai, Jola, Arak, Serban, Coki, Gam,

Dol, Tessa, Gedang dan Tebuang. Variasi bahasa ini adalah hasil dari proses ekologi dan bahasa yang terjadi di masyarakat dalam bentuk upacara tradisional. Terakhir, peneliti berharap bahwa hasil penelitian ini dapat berkontribusi pada literasi budaya yang merupakan keterampilan abad ke-21. Literasi budaya adalah kemampuan untuk memahami dan berperilaku terhadap budaya Indonesia sebagai identitas nasional. Jadi, hasil penelitian ini juga diharapkan dapat memperkenalkan budaya Bengkulu di tingkat nasional dan internasional.

**Kata Kunci:** Kearifan Lokal, Tabot, Ekolinguistik

## INTRODUCTION

Bengkulu is one of the provinces in Indonesia that has a lot of cultural and linguistic diversities. It is located in the southwestern part of the island of Sumatera with 19788.70 km<sup>2</sup> and 1,904,793 inhabitants. As other provinces in Indonesia, Bengkulu also has an interesting culture and language to be studied. These cultures and languages grow and thrive in an environment of Bengkulu communities in the form of traditions, customs, norms, laws and so forth.

The cultures and languages are very important in human life because they relate to the thoughts, attitudes, and actions of humans who live in society. According to Koentjaraingrat (1980: 140), each region has a distinctive culture. The culture can be seen in rituals that are continuously maintained by the community and continue up to the present. One example of cultures is a traditional ceremony. The traditional ceremony is a system of activities in the form of series or actions arranged by customary law that applies in the community and associated with various kinds of permanent events, which usually occur in the community concerned (Koentjaraningrat, 1984: 190). Tabot is one of the traditional ceremonies of Bengkulu people to commemorate the heroic stories of the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, Saidina Hassan bin Ali and Saidina Hussein bin Ali who were killed in the war against Ubaidullah bin Zaid in the Karbala desert in Iraq on 10 Muharram 61 AH or 681 (AD). However, this religious ceremony has collaborated with Bengkulu's local wisdom. According to Keraf (2010: 369), local wisdom is a form of human knowledge, belief, and understanding of habits, customs, and ethics that guide human behavior in life.

In a community life, the environment has a very large role in preserving the culture and language. According to Sapir hypothesis (1912) as cited in (Fill & Muhlhauser, 2001: 5), language and nature have a significant correlation to the establishment of a culture. This is in line with the opinions of Einar Haugen (1970) who stated that ecology as a metaphor transferred by the language in an environment where the language is spoken, and ecology understood as the environmental biology of whose languages have an important role in society environment (Fill & Muhlhauser, 2001: 43).

Ecolinguistics is an interdisciplinary science that relates to the environment and language. According to Hougen (1972) as cited in Fill & Muhlhauser (2001: 57), "Language ecology may be defined as the study of interactions between any given languages with its environment". Therefore, Ecolinguistics term as an interdisciplinary study linking ecology and linguistics, beginning in the 1970s when Einer Hougen, created an ecological paradigm language (Subiyanto, 2013: 1). This

statement is also confirmed by Fill (2001; 43-45) who divided Ecolinguistics into two branches, namely metaphorically environment (social environment) and biological or natural environment. According to Saphir as cited by Foley, (2001: 192-214) the environment is where the speakers participated in shaping a culture. Language exists only in the minds of the native speakers', language can serve as a language used mainly by native speakers, and it means that it can be used as a link between the speakers of the language with their environment. Thus, language cannot be separated from the environment in which the language is used by the native and non-native speakers.

In addition, according to Saphir, the natural environment can comprise eographical characters such as the topography of an area (beaches, valleys, hills, mountains, etc.), climate and weather, natural resources (flora and fauna), human resources etc. Meanwhile, the social environment includes various forces in society that can influence the system and mindset of the people such as culture, religion, ethics, art, organization, and politics. Therefore, the local wisdom in this research can be included in the metaphorical environment or social environment. This local wisdom must be maintained and preserved well so that the good social behavior always still exists in it. According to AW Widjaja (1986: 134), the preservation of local culture is an effort to defend the values of art and culture, the value of traditional by developing the dynamic, flexible and selective manifestation, and adjust to the circumstances that continuously change and develop within the time and at the level of the discourse of nation. Meanwhile, Yuwano, et. al. (2009: 1) states that the preservation of local culture in the form of state norms and cultural values which are the most important elements in their participation form the identity of the Indonesian cultural life. So, the preservation of local wisdom becomes very crucial to do.

*Tabot* is one product of the traditional culture of the people of Bengkulu, Indonesia to commemorate the heroic stories of the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W, Saidina Hassan bin Ali and Saidina Hussein bin Ali who died in the war against Ubaidullah bin Zaid in the desert of Karbala, Iraq on the 10th of Muharram 61 AH or 681 AD. *Tabot* ceremony is celebrated each year in 10 days from the 1st until the 10th of Muharram in the Hijri. This *Tabot* ceremony cannot be separated from the sacred word since this ceremony found numerous religion rituals and local cultures that have collaborated in the community for centuries. This ceremonial activities starting from taking land on the *1st of Muharram* (in two places considered sacred *Tapak Padri* and *Anggut*), then ended with the final procession called *Tabot* on the 10th of Muharram by escorting 17 sacred *Tabot*. The location for the closing of this ritual event takes place is in the public cemetery of Karbala, Padang Jati, Bengkulu. This location is selected since the people who confirmed it as a *Sengelo* or *Imam Shaykh Burhanuddin* (A pioneer of *Tabot* in Bengkulu) was buried.

Henceforth, based on the background and theories above, the researcher interested to analyze the values of local wisdom and to find the variety of languages contained in the *Tabot* ceremony in Bengkulu, Indonesia. In addition, the researcher believes that this research can contribute to the cultural literacy. The cultural literacy is the ability to understand the diversity and responsibility of

citizens as part of a nation. On other hands, the cultural literacy is also a skill that is worthy of every individual in the 21st century.

### RESEARCH METHOD

This research used an ecolinguistic approach followed by a descriptive qualitative method. This research includes Simak method, interview, and document study. Simak method is the same as the observation method because, in the process of collecting data, the researcher listens directly to the language used by language users (Mahsun, 2007: 29). In addition, gaining the more accurate of the data, the researcher conducted an interview with *Tabot* Family Harmony (Kerukunan Keluarga *Tabot*). They are the families who considered as the descendant of Sheikh Burhanuddin (a pioneer of *Tabot* in Bengkulu). Furthermore, the researcher also conducted a study of documents from several journals and books that support this research. Then, the data were collected, classified, processed, analyzed and interpreted into a conclusion.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the discussion of the values of local wisdom and the varieties of language are found in the *Tabot* ceremony. In the *Tabot* ceremony, there are several processions namely,

*Mengambiak Tanah*. *Mengambiak Tanah* was the first procession in the *Tabot* ceremony. It took place at night precisely on the 1st of Muharram, around 22.00 WIB. This land was taken to make human dolls and it was believed to contain magical elements. Furthermore, the land taken wrapped in a white shroud then placed inside *Gerga* (the center of activity/ headquarters of the related *Tabot* group). There were two oldest *Gerga* in Bengkulu, *Gerga Berkas* and *Gerga Bangsal*. The location for taking the land that considered as sacred ground were *Keramat Tapak Padri* and *Keramat Anggut*. Both of these places were given offerings containing red pulp, 7 stems of Nipa cigarettes, a cup of bitter coffee, a cup of sherbet water, Dadi (pure milk), a cup of sandalwood water, a cup of freshwater and a cup of Selasi water.

This process of *Mengambiak Tanah* was a symbol of the existence of human beings, where a man was created from the ground and would return to the ground. The language variety found in this procession was *Mengambiak Tanah*. In English it has a meaning of taking the land but In Indonesian, there is a little different to pronounce this word "Mengambiak and Mengambil."

*Duduk Penja*. *Duduk Penja* was the second procession in the *Tabot* ceremony. It was a process to wash the sacred objects. *Penja* was an object that made of brass, silver or copper in the form of human hands with the fingers. According to Sippai family (Family of *Tabot*), *Penja* was a sacred object that contains elements of magic. This ceremony of *Duduk Penja* was performed on the 5<sup>th</sup> of Muharram around 16.00 pm. In this ceremony, the given offerings were one portion of Kebuli rice, a plate of rice ponds, one cup of bitter coffee, a glass of sherbet water and a glass of buttermilk.

This process of *Duduk Penja* symbolized the agility of Husayn ibn Ali in a fight by using their hands and fingers. In addition, the process of *Duduk Penja* was

as a symbol of duty for every Muslim to clean or bathe every Muslim who died before they are buried. The language varieties found in this procession were *Duduk* and *Penja*. *Duduk* means not sitting but washing something and *Penja* was the name of the sacred object that was washed.

*Menjara*. *Menjara* was the third procession in the Tabot ceremony. It was visiting to other groups to *beruji*, or fighting for *Dol*. This activity took place on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of Muharram. From the 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> of Muharram, the group of *Tabot Bangsal* visited to the group of *Tabot Berkas* and so did *Tabot Bangsal*. This activity took place in the open field that provided by each group. The process of *Menjara* was done by hitting *Dol* symbolizes the spirit in the fight against the enemy, besides; this process of *Menjara* also contained a political value, the value of fighting spirit and togetherness. The language varieties found in this procession were *Menjara*, *Beruji*, and *Dol*. In Indonesian, *Menjara* has a meaning of *Mengunjungi* but in English means *visiting*. *Beruji* was another word of word *Bertanding* but in English meant a fighting. Furthermore, *Dol* was a traditional drum from the Province of Bengkulu, Indonesia. *Dol* musical instruments were usually played by men using a hump from a coconut tree. In its manufacture, the hump of the coconut tree was punched in the middle and covered with cowhide or goat skin as a sound-producing membrane.

*Meradai Jola*. *Meradai Jola* was the fourth procession in the Tabot ceremony. It was taking funds by *Jola* (the Malay language for the person in charge for taking the funds for a community project) consisting of children at the age of 10-12 years. *Meradai* was done on the 6<sup>th</sup> of Muharram around 07:00 to 17:00 pm.

The process of *Meradai Jola* also symbolized the values of togetherness and mutual cooperation that should be built in the community. Meanwhile, *Meradai Jola* was committed by children at the age of 10-12 years old in order that those children as adults should be able to earn money (sustenance). The language varieties found in this procession were *Meradai* and *Jola*. *Meradai* in Indonesian, it means *Mengumpulkan* while in English is collecting. Furthermore, *Jola* is children.

*Arak Penja*. *Arak Penja* was the fifth procession in the Tabot ceremony. It was a parade event placed in Tabot on the main streets in the city of Bengkulu. This process of *Arak Penja* was held on the evening of the 8th of Muharram, at around 19:00 to 21:00 pm.

This process symbolizes the ferocity of Yazid bin Muawiyah forces against the martyred Husayn with his hands cut off. This process contains social values such as forgiveness, sacrifice and no revenge. The language varieties found in this procession is *Arak*. *Arak* in Indonesian means *Pawai* while in English means *Parading*.

*Arak Serban*. *Arak Serban* was the sixth procession in the *Tabot* ceremony. This activity was carried out on the 9th night of Muharram around 19:00 - 21:00 to take the same route with the *Arak Penja* procession. Meanwhile, the object being paraded was *Penja* coupled with a white *Serban* placed in *Tabot Coki* and equipped with white banners in green or blue and decorated with the names Hasan and Husain. *The serban* which was paraded symbolizing the *Surban* used by Husain

during his struggle against Yazid bin Muawiyah and this symbolized the greatness of the struggle to break and defend the truth. This also symbolized Muslim brotherhood, as evidenced by the willingness to help each other fellow Muslims. The variety of languages found in this procession were *Serban* and *Coki*. *Serban* is the same as *Surban* but there is a slight difference in the pronunciation of the words between Indonesia and Bengkulu. *Serban* is one type of clothing worn on the head, usually in the form of cloth that is curled or tied to the head. Furthermore, *Coki* is a name of small *Tabot*.

*Gam*. *Gam* was the seventh procession in the *Tabot* ceremony. It was a part of the ritual of *Tabot* where at any specified time, there should not be any activity include ringing the *Dol* and *Tessa*. Therefore, the *Gam* period could also be called as a quiet period. *Gam* was as a sense of concern and grief over the death of Husayn bin Ali's brother. This action showed a sense of brotherhood of Muslim, when a Muslim felt pain, then the pain was also felt by other Muslims. The language varieties found in this procession were *Gam* and *Tessa*. *Gam* means a quiet period and *Tessa* is a tambourine which is played by being hit using rattan wood.

*Arak Gedang*. *Arak Gedang* was the ninth procession in the *Tabot* ceremony. *Arak Gedang*, namely the ceremony of the release of *Tabot* from each other's headquarters to take a predetermined route and then they would meet and form a grand parade. The end of this grand parade was the entire *Tabot* and entertainers group gathered and lined in the large field in Bengkulu. This is called *Tabot Bersanding* or *Tabot side by side*.

*Arak Gedang* or the grand parade was as a symbol to muster force in order to fight the enemy. This activity contains the value of creativity, strength, persistence, and discipline. The language variety found in this procession was *Gedang*. *Gedang* means *Akbar*.

*Tabot Tebuang*. *Tabot Tebuang* was the end of a series of *Tabot* ceremonies. This ceremony was held at 10:00 am on the 10th of Muharram. All *Tabot* gathered at Merdeka Square. Then, at 11:00 a.m. the whole *Tabot* was paraded to Padang Jati and ended at the Karbela public cemetery. This place was the location of the *Tabot Tebuang* ceremony because this place was buried by Sheikh Burhanudin (*Tabot* pioneer in Bengkulu). After the ritual was finished, the *tabot* building was thrown into the rice fields adjacent to the tomb complex. Then, after throwing away the *tabot* around 1:30 p.m., the entire *Tabot* ceremony was finished. The variety of languages found in this procession was *Tebuang*. *Tebuang* is the same as *Terbuang* Indonesian, but is slightly different in pronunciation of the words between Indonesian and Bengkulu.

## CONCLUSION

The values of local wisdom in *Tabot* ceremony in Bengkulu are the values of humanity and the obligation of caring from one Muslim to other Muslims who a Muslim dies, other Muslims must bathe him, wear shrouds, pray and bury the bodies of Muslims. There are several languages found in the *Tabot* ceremony series in Bengkulu such as *Mengambiak Tanah, Duduk, Penja, Menjara, Meradai, Jola, Arak, Serban, Coki, Gam, Dol, Tessa, Gedang* and *Tebuang*. These language

varieties are as the result of the ecological and language processes that occur in the community in the form of traditional ceremony. Finally, the researcher hopes the results of this research can contribute to cultural literacy which is a 21st-century skill. The cultural literacy is the ability to understand and behave towards Indonesian culture as a national identity. So, the results of this research are also expected to introduce Bengkulu culture at the national and international level.

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