



Disclosure of Sociocultural Status Through Hyperbolic Metaphors in Indigenous Toraja Funeral Ceremonies

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Abstract. This study aims to uncover how hyperbole is used to express social status in the Rambu Solo' or Funeral Ceremony. The study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design using stylistic analysis with a socio-cultural approach. The data for this study consists of ritual speeches from the Rambu Solo' or Funeral Ceremony, obtained from the traditional Rambu Solo' rituals. Data collection was conducted through observation, recording, note-taking, and interviews. The findings of the study reveal that hyperbole is employed in the execution of the Rambu Solo' Ceremony to signify the social status of the Toraja community.

Keywords: Funeral Ceremonies · Hyperbolic · Sociocultural

1 Introduction

Language is of utmost importance to human life. It is used by humans to communicate and interact with one another. One manifestation of language use in society can also be seen in traditional ritual events. Traditional rituals make use of language as a means of carrying out the rituals. However, the language used in traditional rituals differs from the language used in everyday communication.

One example of language use in traditional rituals can be observed in the Rambu Solo' ceremony in Toraja. Rambu Solo' is a traditional funeral ceremony in Toraja that utilizes language as a tool for its execution [1, 2]. The language used in the Rambu Solo' ceremony is Toraja language, known as kada-kada tominaa (Toraja language spoken by tominaa specifically used in traditional ceremonies) [3–5]. However, the Toraja language used in the Rambu Solo' ceremony differs from the Toraja language commonly used by the Toraja people as a means of everyday communication [6, 7].

Another difference between the discourse of the Rambu Solo' ritual and everyday language of the Toraja people can be observed in the expression of the Rambu Solo' ritual discourse, which employs allegorical styles using figurative expressions or symbols, making it incomprehensible to some people [1, 8]. For example, the expression of grief in the Rambu Solo' ceremony, *Susi to na siok langkan, na timpayo manuk-manuk*, which means *Like being struck by an eagle, devoured by birds* [9–11]. The use of allegorical language in the ritual discourse depicts the deep sorrow experienced by the family due

to the sudden death of the deceased family member. Thus, the extended family is deeply affected by this unexpected event.

The language or discourse of the Rambu Solo' ritual is referred to as high-level Toraja language [11–13]. It is called so because the ability to convey this language is only possessed by certain individuals, and its delivery must not deviate from the ongoing traditional situation or event. The aforementioned descriptions indicate that the ritual discourse in the Rambu Solo' ceremony is intriguing to be studied using a stylistic approach [14, 15].

This study examines how social status is expressed in the Rambu Solo' ceremony through the use of hyperbole. In the context of hyperbolic metaphors, hyperbole refers to the use of exaggerated or extravagant language to depict something. Hyperbolic metaphors are used to strengthen or magnify the meaning of a statement, exaggerating its characteristics or qualities dramatically. The aim is to create a strong rhetorical effect or impressiveness on the listener or reader. In the context of using hyperbolic metaphors in the speech of the Rambu Solo' ceremony or funeral ceremony in Toraja, the use of exaggerated or extravagant language is employed to depict socio-cultural status and create a profound impact on the audience.

The examination of hyperbole in this research adopts a stylistic perspective, which is associated with various supporting theories, including cultural theory. This is in line with Nurgiyantoro's statement that cultural stylistics is one way to understand literary works that are rich in cultural elements. Nurgiyantoro's [16] opinion is derived from Zyngier's statement), which suggests that stylistics can also be studied with a cultural approach. A society undoubtedly has a history that contains cultural values, and in turn, culture influences various aspects of life, including language use [14–16]. This confirms that style is undoubtedly influenced by the culture of society. The examination of stylistics associated with societal culture is then referred to as cultural stylistics.

Furthermore, Zyngier emphasizes the importance of the socio-cultural aspect, the cultural factor, possessed by a society in understanding the style of literary works [10, 12, 13]. This opens up avenues for researching the ritual discourse of the Rambu Solo' ceremony using sociocultural stylistics. The ritual discourse of Rambu Solo' is one form of oral literature heavily influenced by cultural factors, specifically the cultural factors of the Toraja region. In addition to cultural factors, the ritual discourse in the Rambu Solo' ceremony is also influenced by social factors.

Stylistics with a sociocultural approach is the study of stylistics applied to texts, both oral and written, emphasizing the sociocultural elements or context. Soekanto states that sociocultural pertains to the relationship between humans and culture. This process involves human behavior and its regulation, creating an interconnected process between material and spiritual elements.

Sociocultural is also defined as the ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools that characterize a particular group of people at a specific time. Sociocultural refers to a system of integrated patterns that regulate human behavior. The fact that no society exists without a sociocultural dimension highlights the importance of sociocultural factors in fulfilling specific psychological and biological needs in humans.

2 Methods

This research is categorized as qualitative research. This is because the data in this study consists of oral language units (words, phrases, clauses, and sentences) found in the discourse of the Rambu Solo' ritual [17–19]. The approach used in this study is the sociocultural stylistic approach [16, 20]. This approach is employed to demonstrate the language style present in the discourse of the Rambu Solo' ritual, which characterizes the social and cultural hierarchy of the Toraja people. Thus, in the analysis of stylistics, sociocultural factors are essential to consider. Specifically, in the implementation of the Rambu Solo' ceremony, sociocultural factors such as nobility status are crucial to observe during the ceremony [2, 7, 12, 13].

The data in this study were obtained from ceremonies at the *didoya*, *dirapa'i*, and *disapurandanan* levels. These three levels of the Rambu Solo' ceremony are specifically conducted by the noble class, and they contain the discourse of the Rambu Solo' ritual. The other two levels, *disilli'* and *dipasangbongi*, were not used as data sources because there are no ritual discourses expressed in these levels. In other words, there are no Tominaa speakers who articulate the discourse of the Rambu Solo' ritual in these two events.

The data were collected using the observation method [21–23]. The observation method was employed to observe language use. Here, the term observation is not only related to oral language use but also to written language use. The application of the observation method was carried out through recording, note-taking, and interviews [21, 24–26].

Sudaryanto states that the recording technique is a method in language research that involves recording the language used by speakers and their interlocutors. The recording technique in this study was conducted by recording all the speeches uttered by the Tominaa during the Rambu Solo' ritual procession. In addition to the recording technique, the note-taking technique was also used. Sudaryanto states that the note-taking technique is used in research by jotting down important findings. Through this technique, researchers can directly mark, transcribe, and focus on the object of study. The note-taking technique in this research was employed to record the ritual discourses expressed by the Tominaa.

3 Results and Discussion

In the discourse of Rambu Solo' ritual, the use of hyperbole is found to express social status [27, 28]. Hyperbole is a figure of speech that involves making exaggerated statements, where something is magnified or exaggerated. The use of hyperbole in the discourse of Rambu Solo' ritual can be observed in the following data:

Kayunna membua ringgi', sola menta'bi eanan

The wood bears money and blossoms with wealth

The use of hiperbola in the discourse of Rambu Solo' ritual is evident in the clause *Kayunna membua ringgi'*. The clause *Kayunna membua ringgi'* is formed by the noun *kayunna* meaning *the wood* and the verb phrase *membua ringgi* meaning *bearing fruits*

of money. The ritual discourse is considered hiperbola because the statement expressed through this clause greatly exaggerates or magnifies.

The exaggerated statement in this discourse is the social status of the person being celebrated, who is described as being extremely wealthy through the clause *Kayunna membua ringgi'*. In daily life, no matter how rich someone is, it is not possible for their wood to bear fruits of money.

The use of hiperbola in the discourse of Rambu Solo' ritual is also evident in the clause *sola menta'bi eanan*. The clause *menta'bi eanan* is a verb phrase meaning *blooming with possessions*. Similar to the clause *Kayunna membua ringgi'*, this ritual discourse states that the person being celebrated is so wealthy that their wood blooms with possessions. This clause is considered hiperbola because in reality, no matter how rich someone is, their wood cannot bloom with possessions.

The use of hiperbola can also be observed in the data obtained from the ritual discourse during the *membala kolong* or the reading of the life history in the Rambu Solo' ritual, as shown in the following example:

bulaan ia nakande indo'na

Gold is consumed by his/her mother

The use of hiperbola in the discourse of Rambu Solo' ritual is also evident in the clause *bulaan ia nakande indo'na*. The clause *bulaan ia nakande indo'na* is formed by the noun *bulaan* meaning *gold*, the verb phrase *ia nakande* meaning *eaten by*, and the noun *indo'na* meaning *his/her mother*. The ritual discourse states that when the person being celebrated was in their mother's womb, their mother ate gold. This clause is considered hiperbola because in reality, no matter how rich someone is, it is not possible to eat gold. However, in this discourse, eating gold signifies that the person who passed away was already wealthy since their conception.

The construction of hyperbole is also evident in the following nominal clause:

To dadi lanmai bulan

a person born from the moon.

The use of this clause aims to express a person's social class through hyperbole. The clause exaggerates the nobility by portraying them as individuals who are born or originated from the moon. The nominal clause *to dadi lanmai bulan* is used to exaggerate the nobility of the deceased person. The hyperbolic mention of the moon is used to depict the nobility in Toraja society, who hold a high social position or status [28] that sets them apart from the general populace.

The construction of hyperbole is also evident in the following nominal clause:

To dadi dao pussana

a person born above the sky

The word *to* in the phrase *to dadi dao pussana* means a person; *dadi* means *born*; *dao* means *above*; and *pussana* means *sky*. Thus, the nominal clause *to dadi dao pussana* means a person who is born or originates from the sky. The reference to a person born in the sky in the ritual utterance signifies someone who belongs to the noble class, distinct

from the general society [29–31]. The use of this clause aims to express a person's social class through hyperbole.

The construction of hyperbole is also evident in the following nominal clause:

To kombong barrean allo
person who becomes the sun

The use of the nominal clause *To kombong barrean allo* in the Tominan utterance is another example of constructing hyperbole, referring to *to sugi'* [5, 28] or people from the noble class. The nominal clause *To kombong barrean allo* in the Rambu Solo' ritual is formed from the nominal phrase *to sugi'*, which refers to the meaning of the noble class.

The word *to* in the phrase *To kombong barrean allo* means a person; *kombong* means becoming; and *barrean allo* means the sun. Thus, the nominal clause "to kombong barrean allo" means a person who becomes the sun. The person who becomes the sun in the ritual utterance represents someone who originates from the noble class, distinct from the general society.

In the given data of the Tominan utterance, there is the clause *To kombong barrean allo*. This clause represents the everyday language transformation into Tominan language through hyperbole. The clause exaggerates the nobility as someone who will become the sun. According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian Dictionary), the sun is described as a round object in the sky that brings light and heat to the Earth and other planets (visible during the daytime). The phrase *di langit* (in the sky) in the definition indicates that the position of the sun, like the moon, is high in the sky.

This hyperbolic portrayal is further reinforced by the subsequent clauses in the Tominan utterance, such as *Tang ditiro ri raka lako*, *tang ta'pari ka tu matanna*, *ditiro pundala-dala disaile paruninin*, which means it truly appears to us, shines in our sight, and our bodies tremble upon seeing it. This indicates that the nobility possesses something that sets them apart from the rest of society. The nobility has a high social class or status, making them appear as if they are shining when viewed by the general public.

The use of hyperbole in the ritual utterance reflects the sociocultural context of the Toraja society. In the sociocultural life of the Toraja community [29, 30], the measure of a person's wealth is the possession of tongkonan (traditional houses), accompanied by the abundance and vastness of their rice fields and water buffalo. Therefore, when a Toraja person passes away, the Rambu Solo' ceremony is conducted in their tongkonan, with the number of buffalo sacrifices corresponding to their social status [9, 10, 27, 29].

4 Conclusions

The Toraja community highly values their social status, and this is evident in the utilization of lada-kada tominaa, which incorporates various linguistic features to signify social status, including the use of hyperbole. In the discourse of the Rambu Solo' ritual, stylistic features such as hyperbole are employed to display social status.

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