

## Conference Paper

# Cultural Norms and Values Configuration in Acehese Traditional Fishing Ritual

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## Abstract

This study is aimed at providing an overview of cultural reality of *Khanuri la'ot* discourse, a traditional fishing ritual activity in Aceh Province. The objectives of this study are: to describe the cultural norms and values configuration from an ethno-pragmatic perspective. This study presents the role of cultural script in the analysis of norms and values in cultural discourse on *natural semantic meta-language* theory. It is considering that cultural norms and values constituted rules and regulation in social communication interaction practices. In conducting the research, this study followed qualitative method with its phenomenology approach in which data were obtained from observation in a *khanuri la'ot* ritual, and in depth interview with the respondents from Acehese fishing community. The result of this study showed that there are some cultural norms and values found on the ritual in the community. They are: (1) politeness, (2) asserting hope, (3) respect, (4) family atmosphere, and (5) giving advice. The configuration of these cultural norms and values was in accordance with the understanding of knowledge and wisdom in terms of *khanuri la'ot* ritual system. The configuration is constructed in low level scripts with the component of lexicons in semantic primes.

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## 1. Introduction

Acehnese language is one of traditional languages in Indonesia. It is spoken by Acehese community mostly in Aceh Province, in the north-western tip of Sumatra Island, and in some other parts of Indonesia. Acehese is a member of the Chamic branch of the Malayo-Polynesian language family (Durie, 1985: 3). According to the census of 2013 there are about 3.5 million speakers of Acehese, which is also known as Aceh, Achehnese, Achinese or Atjehnese. As a local language and as the identity of the Acehese people, it has an essential function among the community, that is it can unite the Acehese people, as a means of communication and verbal interaction,

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and to record and transmit the culture from one generation to other in various aspects. In other word, Acehnese has been used in various domain of life. It is also specifically used in traditional fishing ritual discourse. The activity is called *khanuri la'ot*.

Language which is used in *khanuri la'ot* by the Acehnese fishing community implies that people have their own ways of transferring and exchanging messages in terms of cultural norms and values and social interaction convention. The meaning of people's interpretation and configuration are based on their cultural script which frames that different ways of speaking of different society draws the cultural values of the community (see Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2004; Netra, 2011).

The linguistic and cultural phenomena which are reflected in the traditional fishing ritual discourse, *khanuri la'ot*, shows the fact that its complexity in the activity of human communication and social interaction contains meanings, norms and values which are based on the culture of its speakers. Acehnese speaker community, especially older generation still keeps this ritual up to now in order to avoid ecological, cultural and social damages in line with the maintenance of cultural norms and values within the *khanuri la'ot*.

## 2. Literature Review

This paper is concerned with the application of ethnopragmatics to the metalanguage of the semantic primes in the natural semantic metalanguage approach which is actually one streams of cognitive linguistics. The tasks in ethnopragmatic descriptions are to identify and describe the preferred the style or pattern of speaking culturally, and to spell out these links. The standard practice implied when to describe the speech pattern culturally is to employ the inventory terms such as: "directness", "politeness" and so on. Take "directness" as the example. This term can be valuable and useful up to a point which implies different way of speaking and different meaning based on the background of culture of the speakers (speaker's community). However, to have the complete understanding, ethnopragmatics also describes the differences in how, when and why to be "indirect".

Following Goddard (2004), the solution to overcoming the problem of describing the values and attitudes based on speech pattern culturally is by applying the Natural Semantic Metalanguage theory developed by Anna Wierzbicka and colleagues over many years of cross-linguistic semantic research (see Goddard, 2004; Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2004; Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2007 Eds). Wierzbicka offered the small set

of simple, basic meanings (semantic primes) as the core lexicons of every language which cannot be further explicated without circularity as shown below.

TABLE 1: A chart of Semantic Primes.

Category	Primes
Substantives	I, you, someone, people, something/thing, body
Relational Substantives	kind, part
Determiners	this, the same, other~else~another
Quantifiers	one, two, some, all, much/many, little/few
Evaluators	good, bad
Descriptors	big, small
Mental predicates	think, know, want, don't want, feel, see, hear
Speech	say, words, true
Actions, Events, Movement	do, happen, move
Existence, Possession	be (somewhere), there is, be (someone/something), (is) mine
Life and Death	live, die
Time	when/time, now, before, after, a long time, a short time, for some time, moment
Space	where/place, here, above, below, far, near, side, inside, touch (contact)
Logical Concepts	not, maybe, can, because, if
Intensifier, Augmentor	very, more
Similarity	like/as/way

The basic grammar of vocabulary is able to govern how the primes can be combined, so that the system is supposed to be able to explicate all the complex word meanings found in any language.

### 3. Research Method

This study is designed in qualitative method by adopting phenomenology field research approach in which the data were gathered mainly by recording and note taking techniques through in-depth interview with the participants of Acehese fishing community which Acehese is their native language. Participating observation is also conducting while the ritual was going on to get the complete and accurate scene and utterance (Creswell, 1998, 2005, 2009).

The data collected were analyzed by following the steps of phenomenological approach proposed by Creswell (1998) which can be summed up that every phenomenon expressed by the respondents is described texturally and structurally which is supposed to get the entire and accurate meaning. Both formal and informal methods were used for presenting the result of data analysis.

## 4. Result and Discussion

This part focuses on the discussion of cultural norms and values configuration in the traditional fishing ritual discourse in the activity of *khanuri la'ot*. The cultural norm and value configuration can be determined by cultural scripts. Goddard and Wierzbicka (2004 Eds) offers two categories of scripts: high level and low level. The high level scripts is master scripts which does not concern speech or even social interaction but captures a prevailing cultural attitude in cultural domain and practices. It could be seen as stating a 'norm of interpretation". While, the low level is scripts which spell out more specific "norms of interaction" (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2004 Eds).

The two kinds of cultural scripts are related to the components of semantic primes of evaluation, as "that *is good (bad)if...*", "it *is not good (bad) if...*". Or with variant, such as "*it can be good (bad) if...*". Besides, human perception component is used to explain the cultural norms and values. The components can be: "I can say (think, do, etc) ...", "I cannot say, think, do, etc) ...". The component of "when" and "if" are the kind of low level scripts which tends to be constructed (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2004 Eds). Inspired by the examples of components given by Goddard (2004), the followings are the examples of cultural scripts of Acehnese traditional fishing ritual discourse.

[A] Someone thinks like this:

When someone does something, it is good if he can think like this:

"I do this because I want to do it and because this is something polite"

[B] Someone thinks like this:

That is good if someone wants the other person knows what someone thinks.

"I feel something good because of this"

### 4.1. Politeness

The traditional fishing ritual in Acehnese community tends to express any utterance which shows politeness to other entities before and during the ritual. See the data below:

[1] *oh rakan...breuh pade roh nyang pukat raya*

Oh friend ... rice paddy spoil PREP boat big

Oh friend... the paddy has been spoiled in the big boat

The utterance of *rakan* is used to show politeness instead of *ngon* which brings the similar lexical meaning, but different cultural entity. The use of *rakan* contains the message that the fishing community confirms the polite utterance. Therefore, they think that it will be good if they say *rakan* instead of *ngon*. Such a way of communication is a reflection of the community's cultural attitude. It is suggested that the culture is actually prefer to express what people feel or thinks directly and frankly so that something polite will happen. This is a kind of local wisdom containing the configuration of cultural norms and values, as below.

Someone will say something to other person if someone knows the person wants to hear it.

"I think I say something like this because I think it is good"

## 4.2. Asserting hope

*Khanuri la'ot* ritual discourse also asserts hope to other entities in terms of God directly as the Lord of the Universe. See below.

[2] *beuselamat beusejahtera beutrok bak geujak beutrok bak teuka*  
 PRE Save and PRE prosperous PRE arrive PREgo PREarrive PREPback  
 Save and prosperous while going fishing and coming home.

The utterance *beuselamat beusejahtera beutrok bak geujak beutrok bak teuka* contains a message that speakers want to say in the form of pray to other entity, that is God, the Lord of the Universe. Acehnese community always asserts hope to God to protect them from something bad in every domain of life because it is God's obligation. Such speech pattern is a reflection of Acehnese religious cultural behavior. Again, this is a kind of cultural wisdom which figures out cultural norms and values.

Someone will say something to other person if someone knows the person wants to do it.

"I think I say something like this because I think something can do it"

## 4.3. Showing respect

Acehnese community has a special traditional organization which order various domain of cultural life. One of them is traditional fishing organization headed by a custom leader called *Panglima La'ot* or *pawang la'ot*. Every regulation and problem in terms of fishing is in the hand of *Panglima la'ot*. However, *imeum mukim* or *imeum chik* has a role

to give any suggestion and consideration in terms of any rule and decision taken by *panglima la'ot* by confirming to islamic rule and regulation, that is based on Holy Qur'an and Hadits maja. Besides, according to the respondents, Acehnese will be based every domain of life on God, the Lord of the Universe, Who has blessed them with blessing and prosperity. Acehnese will respect all the entities before they may request something. The quote of the data below will show it.

[3] *geumeuhoi petuah geumeuhoi pawang*

Call-INF- advice call -INF- *pawang*

Ask the advice from *pawang*

[4] *oh watee geujak geulakee do'a bak sidro Tuhan*

Time PRE go PRE ask pray PREP one God

When to go pray for God first please

[5] *peusijok pukat...ta jok keu ureung tuha*

PRE cool boat... we give PREP person old

Peusijuk\* for safty while fishing by boat...give it first to old/respected people

\* *tepung tawar (Malay): a traditional ritual which supposed to avoid misfortune.*

The data above show the reflection of the local or cultural wisdom concerning respecting to the three important entities, in this case to Lord of the universe [2], to *Panglima La'ot* [1] and also to old or respected people [3]. Respondents expressed frankly that they believe if they respect the other entities that they performed in fishing ritual discourse *khanuri la'ot*, something good will happen accordingly. This speech pattern constitutes the traditional norms and values of a local tradition. The cultural representation show that the members of the community have an obligation to do something before they have right to get something. The meaning of cultural value can be configured as follows:

I will say something like this to someone

If I know something good happen

It will be good when someone know it "I think I say it I respect someone"

Respecting other entities implies several things in community and culture. First, it implies obedience to other entity Who is regarded glorious, the entity Who protect and governs the life of the Universe. The other implication is that it is considered a symbol of

close relationship and politeness to the entities who are regarded having high position in community. This symbolic meaning indicates the harmonious relationship among the entities in the community. This is the kind of low-level scripts as suggested by Goddard (2004) which reflects Acehnese cultural norms and values, as figured below:

If I do this to someone I believe someone can give something good in result  
 It not something bad will happen  
 It would be better if I do this “I think I should do this”

Goddard (2004) proposed that respect “*hormat*” instead of patience “*sabar*”, is one of the cultural key words of cultural scripts in Malay (when he explicated the word and link it to cultural scripts). It is true that Malay and Acehnese are under the same family language, *melayo polinesia*.

#### 4.4. Family atmosphere

The family atmosphere shows that the reflection of the harmonious relationship among members of the community. Based on the respondent’s argument that they tend to avoid to use the pronoun “I”, instead of “we”. “I” may symbolize egoistic and arrogant. Furthermore, “I” delivers the meaning distant relationship between the speaker and hearer. Linguistic etiquette also avoids very much to use this pronoun (Goddard, 2004). So “we” is preferred to use especially in public and cultural discourse for it represent a close and intimate relationship among members of the community and it is regarded refined in speech style.

The words “*syedara*” (family) echoes many times in fishing ritual discourse. This word may symbolize that Acehnese put respect highly to all members of the community that they all are regarded family. This will result positive image of the cultural wisdom. The utterances below will show it:

[6] *ta troun u la’ot ta kalon bintang*  
 We down PREP sea we see star  
 Before we go fishing, see the weather first

[7] *meuikot-ikot mandum syedara*  
 PRE follow RED all family  
 Come and join all the family

Actually this family atmosphere reflected in the discourse is also a part of showing respect to others, but it is put in different part for it also reflects familiarity in human

relationship. This is also a kind of low level script proposed by Goddard (2004) which can be configured below:

I can say this to someone because I think it is good  
 If I say this to someone, someone will feel good  
 It will be good if do this  
 “I think I should say this”

#### 4.5. Giving advice

Giving advice is related to solidarity (see Netra, 2011). Following Netra (2011), there are some reasons and conditions for someone to give advice: (1). Both sides of adviser and the person being advised has a close relation, (2). The other entities have got problem with them, so that they need some advice to solve their problem, (3) Someone is flexible to receive the advice or not.

In relation to traditional fishing regulation in fishing community of Acehnese, as a custom leader, *panglima la'ot* is a person in charge who has the role and right to give advice concerning fishing and all aspects of oceanic life. Culturally *panglima la'ot* bases his advice on the cultural role which is based on Islamic rule. Based on the norm, every advice from *panglima la'ot* has been confirmed first to *imeum mukim* or *imeum chik*, a person who supposed to have a better religious knowledge of Islam. The following data will show some advices performed in ritual:

[8] petuah gampong bak mandum geutron  
 Advice village PREP all PRE down  
 The advice from the ancestor covers to all fishermen

The above data is the reflection of cultural habit performed in the traditional fishing ritual discourse in Acehnese community. The data [6] actually also shows the advice to all the fishermen to see the weather first before going fishing. The advice can be in the form of order or instruction as shown in data [8] and also a suggestion as shown in data [6]. Therefore, the cultural norms and values of giving advice can be figured below:

I can say like this to other someone as human being, friend, follower or companion.  
 I say something like this to prevent someone from bad happen  
 I believe that someone will follow what I have said  
 “I give advice”



## 5. Conclusion

This part draws that ethnopragmatics can be as a tool to analyze cultural scripts from cultural key words to formulate the meaning of cultural norms and values configuration. The result of this study found some configuration of cultural norms and values of traditional fishing ritual discourse of Acehnese fishing community. They include: politeness, asserting hope, showing respect to other entities, special to the three important entities, family atmosphere, and giving advice. The configuration of the cultural norms and values can be figured out based on the prototype of semantic primes.

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