



Pemaliq of Sexual Organ within the Culture of Sasak Community: Linguistic Anthropology Study

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Abstract*

The focus of this study is pemaliq (taboo) of sexual organs within the culture of the Sasak community. This research was conducted with the aims of finding certain words used as an evasion for sexual organs and investigating the Sasak community's view through the expression of evasion words. The data was collected by applying the method of participant observation and in-depth interviews. The data analysis showed that the evasion words used by the Sasak community for sexual organs are words in the form of euphemisms: pepa (for male and female genitals) and also words in metaphorical form: anak cobek (for male genital), cobek tombong, and dompet (for female genital). The Sasak community believes the use of evasion words in communication can create a psychological comfort and will not make the speakers feel abashed

1. Introduction

Within the culture of Sasak community, taboo is refereed as *pemaliq* (Suliadi, 2019:1125; Hakim, 2015:342). The Sasak community practice *pemaliq* in managing their everyday lives, both personal and communal. *Pemaliq* is used within the aspects of speech, behavior, and act. These three things are applied carefully by the Sasak community in their daily lives. This is triggered by their belief on the occurrence of disasters or bad luck when they are being ignored or act arbitrarily, which means that in the aspects of words, behaviour, and act there are things that are forbidden and the violation may harm the offenders (cf. Selake, 2011:31).

This study discusses *pemaliq* that regulates speech, especially regarding the words for sexual organs. The Sasak community and even the world community in general are seeing the human sexual organs as intimate organs and has become everyone's privacy. In this regard, sexual organs in various cultures of the world community, including the culture of the Sasak community, are taboo if the vulgar words are applied directly.

In Indonesia, research on taboo of sexual organs itself has been widely carried out by researchers from various regions, such as a study conducted by Laksana (2009) regarding taboos in the culture of Balinese society and in a research conducted by Barus, et al. (2018) on taboos in the culture of the Minangkabau society. Both of these studies basically have the same objectives as this study, namely the taboo of sexual organs. However, the research location of this study compared to the other two are different, which shows that the culture and language of the community being studied are also different. Therefore, the differences in language and culture of the studied community indicated different use of *pemaliq* especially the evasion words for sexual

organs, which of course will also display a different world view. This is accord to the principle of Sapir-Whorf's language relativity where each different culture will interpret the world differently through the language use (Singh, 2007:37).

Research on taboo of sexual organs within the culture of the Sasak community is important to be conducted in order to give understanding to the younger generation of the Sasak community or to other regional communities on the communication competencies used by the Sasak community within the practice of taboo of sexual organs. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find certain words used as evasion words for sexual organs. Also, this study also aims to explore the views of the Sasak community expressed through evasion words for sexual organs.

2. Theoretical Framework

The applied theory in this study is anthropological linguistic. According to Hymes (1983:1), anthropological linguistics is a discipline that examines the language and the language use in the context of anthropology. Meanwhile, Foley (1997:3; 2016:251) states that anthropological linguistics is a discipline focusing to explore the meaning of the language use as an effort in understanding the cultural group of a society (cf. Ottenheimer & Pine, 2019:2; Salzman dkk., 2012:14--25; dan Sibarani, 2015:96). In line with Hymes and Foley, Duranti (1997:2) sees that linguistic anthropology studies language as a cultural resource and language use or speaking as a cultural practice.

Based on the three experts above, it can be concluded that anthropological linguistic is not merely studying the form of a language, but it also examines the use of that language form within the society in order to discover and understand the cultural significance created by a group of society through the language used. Hence, Duranti (1997:14) emphasizes that the study of anthropological linguistics is focused on three aspects, namely (1) performance, (2) indexicality, and (3) participation. When these three aspects are associated with the object of this study, the performance refers to the use of evasion words for sexual organs in the act of communication, indexicality refers to the types of words used as an evasion, and participation refers to the parties that utter the evasion words. However, among the three aspects the focus of this study is on the aspect of indexicality. In this aspect, the study does not only focus on the types of words used as an evasion, but it also discovers the perspective of the speakers regarding sexual organs through the evasion words.

3. Research Method

This study was conducted in Bayan village, one of the villages in Bayan District, North Lombok. It used Miles and Huberman's research method (1994:10-12), which consists of four processes: data collection, data reduction, data display and conclusion. The data was collected by applying the method of participant observation and in-depth interviews. The collected data is the primary data in the form of conversations and single words used as evasion. The conversation data contained the use of evasion words for sexual organs within the act of communication. Therefore, the conversation data in this study was collected during the observation on the people's communication activities in daily life. Meanwhile, the data of single words was gained during interviews with the informants. The conversation and single-word data, which was collected directly, was selected during the observation and interviews with the informants. The selected data was then being transcribed and translated into Indonesian. The conversation data was transcribed and translated according to the format of the original text's translation steps, glossing morpheme by morpheme and then followed by free translation (Duranti, 1997:158). Meanwhile, the single words or data in the form of phrases was transcribed and translated

directly based on the referred index. Furthermore, every data presentation was followed by a narrative explanation on the views of the Sasak Bayan community gained through an etic and emic approaches. At the end, conclusion was drawn from the expected objectives of this study.

4. Result and Discussion

Genitals are vital organs owned by everyone (male and female). In this case, every male or female always takes care and covers their genitals especially when they are teenagers/adults. In Sasaknese, the female genital is called *telè* while the male is *lesèq*. Related to these two words, the Sasak Bayan community believes that uttering those two words, especially the word for the female genital, is considered as a bad behavior not to mention if it is being spoken in public places. They believe the action can lower a person's self-esteem; the woman whose genital is being mentioned will feel abashed. This shows that both words contain meanings with a low sense of value. Therefore, the ancestors of the Sasak Bayan community created certain words to replace the two words, i.e. words that are considered to have subtle meanings and able to disguise the actual object (vital organ), as expressed in the following data.

- (1) Sp : *Nyaraq keruan tan kadu selana kanak nina nengka,*
 NEG obvious way wear pants child female now
kadu selana laguq pepa ngenah
 wear pants but genital seen
 'Girls now days even though they are wearing pants, but their
 genitals are to be seen'
- Ls : *Kadu selana ketat mbe tadah soraq segitan*
 wear pants tight how manner NEG seen
tombong-a pada
 genital-POSS-3PL
 'They are wearing tight pants, how can we not see their
 genitals'

The above data show that Sp (speaker) and Ls (listener) use certain words when referring to the female genital. Sp uses the word *pepa*, while Ls uses the word *tombong*. In this case, the word *pepa* is a form of euphemism referring to the valuable part of the body between the thighs; the genital. The word *pepa* is not only used for the female genital, but it is also used for the male genital. Whilst, the word *tombong* is a form of metaphor describing the female genital like a coconut plant (the seed within the coconut). The metaphor illustrates that the female genital grows and it is attached between the thighs.

The words above that are used to replace the actual word of the female genital have subtle meanings because they can disguise the meaning of the actual object. This is different from using the word *telè*; the listeners sometimes feel disgusted and angry due to the word is well known in which its meaning directly refers to the female genital. Hence, within the culture of the Sasak community in Central Lombok, if the word *telè* is used as a curse by a husband to his wife, for example in the sentence 'telen inaq-de' "your mother's genital", it will certainly make the wife angry and oppose the husband.

The prohibition of uttering the female and male genitals using *basa jamaq* 'language for the lower class' as described above are basically aiming to maintain the honor of everyone, especially the adults. In this case, uttering the genitals with *basa jamaq* 'language for the lower class' is seen as a bad behaviour, especially for the female genital because it can make the women feel abashed and considered as a person with bad manners, whom in the end is said to be

impolite. Therefore, women who have been mocked on their genitals will feel that their genitals had been seen, held, and touched by the speaker. Because of that, those women will be angry, moreover, the speakers' actions will be reported to the authorities (the head of the hamlet, RT, and the traditional leaders) due to the act is seen as verbal sexual harassment for the humiliation of others' genitals (the symbol of honor) in public places. Someone whom by purpose utters the female genital will be subjected to social sanctions; the sanction if the lips have made 'wrong talk'.

Based on the results of an interview with one of the key informants, Mr. Rianom, who explained that mentioning genitals using the word *telè-lesèq* is an impolite act because fundamentally those words have very rude meanings, therefore, they shouldn't be used in front of others. The word *telè-lesèq* can only be used by husband and wife in the bed room and only if it has been agreed upon them. In addition, the prohibition of using these two words is actually to educate the children or teenagers not to perform verbal sexual abuse. Moreover, Mr. Rianom explains that if the cloth or pants worn by a woman or a man is in a state of *keselèr*, in which it could make the genital visible, then in this case, anyone who sees such situation should whisper to them using the sentence *pepa cia segitan* 'the genital is visible'.

Other than the words *pepa* and *tombong* as in the data (1) above, the North Lombok Sasak community in general (Sasak community in Bayan, Kayangan, Ganges, Tanjung, and Pemenang Districts) also use other euphemism words, namely:

(2) *telè* 'female genital' → *cobek*

(3) *lesèq* 'male genital' → *anak cobek*

Both of the above data showed the evasion words for *telè* and *lesèq*, are *cobek* for female's genital and *anak cobek* for male's genital. These two evasion words are not only used by the Sasak community, but also by the Balinese community (see Laksana, 2009:97). This indicates that the evasion words were actually produced by the ancestors of the Balinese community and practiced within the Sasak community by the Balinese during the expansion of Karang Asem kingdom to the kingdom of Lombok in the 17th century, which caused the Sasak community as the colonized community to also use these evasion words.

Aside from the words above, the Sasak Bayan community also uses other metaphorical forms, as expressed in the following data.

(4) Sp : *Kanak, **dompet** diriq ca segitan. Perikeq kerèng*
 Child, genital POSS-2SG DEM seen. fix sarong
diriq ca
 POSS-2SG DEM
 'your genital is visible, child. Please fix your sarong!'

The data above is captured when the speaker (Sp) tells his daughter to repair the sarong she is wearing. The reason Sp sent his daughter to fix the sarong she wore was because Sp accidentally saw her daughter's genital. The data shows that Sp uses the word *dompet* to refer to his daughter genital. In this context, the word *dompet* illustrates that the female genital is a place to store something of value.

5. Novelities

In this research, three words of evasion for the taboo of sexual organs were found and different from the findings of previous researchers (Barus, et al., 2018; Laksana, 2009), namely the word *pepa* (for men and women genital), *tombong*, and *dompêt* (for women genital).

6. Conclusion

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the Sasak Bayan community has produced and used certain words as an evasion for the taboo of sexual organs. The words being used as an evasion for sexual organs consist of words in the form of euphemisms: *pepa* (for male and female genitals) and also words in metaphorical form: *anak cobek* (for male genital), *cobek*, *tombong*, and *dompêt* (for female genital). The evasion words express the views of the Sasak Bayan community towards sexual organs; sexual organs are seen as valuable parts of the body, so their honor must be maintained. One way of maintaining the honor of sexual organs is by not mentioning the sexual organs using their actual words (*telè-lesèq*), but to use these evasion words in which their meanings are considered not to be vulgar in order to give psychological comfort for everyone. It means, if the sexual organs are called using their actual words (*telè-lesèq*), it will make the people feel abashed, which can cause a relationship break. In other words, if the evasion words of sexual organs are always expressed in the act of communication, it can make the relationship of the participants of communication harmonious. This is in line with Simpen's point of view (2008:2) that participants of communication in the act of communication must develop emotional intelligence; not only it is required to convey the truth of what is being said, but it is also committed to maintain harmony within the relationship by reassuring that the participants would not feel abashed (cf. Murdana, et al., 2014:2).


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