

Resilience of Language Functions as Social Order and Control in Superstitions among the Malay Community in Indonesia

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Abstract. Superstitions are often expressed by parents as a means to educate their children and deter them from engaging in deviant behavior. The aim of this research is to describe and analyze the meaning and functions of superstitions within the Malay community in Riau. The research methodology employed is descriptive with a qualitative approach. Data collection techniques include direct informant interviews, recording and transcribing information, and observation. The gathered data are then analyzed through sorting, interpreting, and drawing conclusions. The research findings encompass data on superstition expressions, which are analyzed using both denotative and connotative meanings. Additionally, three functions: serving as an educational tool for children and adolescents, acting as an emotional thickener in religious aspects, and functioning as an explanation acceptable to the rational mind or a folk explanation.

Keyword: resilience, language functions, social order, superstitions

1. Introduction

Culture is a unique aspect of human societies, evolving alongside human development. It encompasses the entire communication system that binds or enables the functioning of a societal group [1]. Language, within this cultural context, serves multiple functions: (1) as a means for cultural development, (2) as a conduit for passing down cultural elements, and (3) as an inventory of cultural characteristics [2]. Indonesia is a country with more than 34 provinces, each characterized by diverse cultures and ethnicities. One such example is the Malay Community in Riau Province. This region is rich in cultural values, particularly the Malay culture. In the social life of the community, superstitions or myths are often utilized, serving as expressions of beliefs passed down through generations to educate and guide individuals.

Superstitions are considered a form of folklore, reflecting the traditional beliefs and practices of a community [3]. Superstitions are a subset of folklore, and folklore is a cultural component disseminated and traditionally transmitted in various forms, orally or accompanied by gestures and mnemonic devices. It is a reflection of habits and traditions that have been believed and practiced for generations [4]. Folklore, including superstitions, is prevalent in the Malay community in Riau, where beliefs, superstitions, and taboos persist. Superstitions, or beliefs held by the community, are integral to folklore [5]. Superstitions, also known as "takhayul," are expressions with a supernatural meaning used by older generations to guide the behavior of children in the past. Folklore includes various types, one of which is oral

folklore, evident in the beliefs of the Malay community in Riau, where superstitions, takhayul, and taboos are still ingrained [6].

Superstitions, or community beliefs, falls under the umbrella of folklore and is synonymous with superstition [7]. Superstition, originating from the Latin word "superstitio," meaning excessive fear of gods, involves statements with supernatural meanings aimed at shaping the behavior of children in the past. Folklore comprises various types, and one of them is oral folklore, exemplified by the beliefs of the Malay community in Riau, where superstitions and taboos persist [8]. In the past, older generations often used superstitions as mystical expressions to prevent ethical misconduct among the youth [9]. Superstitions, especially those related to the human body and folk medicine, involve beliefs regarding various body parts and traditional remedies. These expressions serve as warnings or advice to avoid certain actions believed to lead to negative consequences [10].

However, in modern society, the belief in superstitions has diminished among the younger generation, who tend to rely more on rational thinking [11]. Preserving these cultural traditions, including folklore and superstitions, becomes crucial to maintaining a connection with heritage [12]. The study aims to analyze the structure, meaning, and function of superstitions related to the human body and folk medicine in the Riau Malay Community. Superstitions exhibit a structural pattern consisting of two parts: cause and effect.

The choice of studying superstitions in the Malay community is motivated by the cultural significance of superstitions as a heritage. Superstitions carry meaning that can be believed or not, depending on individual interpretations [13]. Preserving these superstitions is vital as they serve as a means of communication to impart advice and knowledge with implicit meanings [14]. The research focuses on superstitions related to the human body and folk medicine in Riau Malay Community to investigate whether the community still believes and practices superstitions.

Research relevant to the superstitions of the Malay community regarding the human body and traditional medicines, may include the following studies. First, Ridha Hasnul Ulya with the title "Dimensions of Social Order of Pregnant Women in Kubuang Tigo Baleh Superstition" in the Kafa'ah Journal [15]. This qualitative research utilized data collection techniques such as observation and unstructured interviews. Data analysis involved data reduction, display, and verification. The study provided a description of the forms, meanings, and dimensions of social order among pregnant women in maintaining behavior and ethics for safety. Sarli Ostarina's thesis from FKIP Universitas Islam Riau titled "Semantic Analysis of Taboos in Setako Raya Village, Peranap Subdistrict, Indragiri Hulu Regency." The study aimed to explore taboo expressions in the mentioned village and analyze both denotative and connotative meanings [16]. Siti Aisyah's study from Universitas Terbuka UPBJJ Samarinda titled "Meaning and Function of Taboos in Sukupaser Community, Long Ikis Subdistrict, Paser Regency." The research aimed to uncover the meanings and functions of taboos in the Paser community [17]. Although the focus was on taboos in the Paser community, the commonalities with the upcoming research include exploring meanings, functions, and utilizing qualitative approaches.

In summary, these studies contribute valuable insights into the superstitions, taboos, and cultural practices within specific communities, providing a foundation for further exploration in the context of the Malay community in Riau. To obtain clear research results, the study narrows down the focus to the form, structure, meaning, and function of superstitions related to the human body and folk medicine. Classification of these superstitions is analyzed based on the body parts and folk medicine category, two or three-part structure, denotative meaning, connotative meaning, and the functions embedded in superstitions in Riau Malay Community.

The study employs relevant theories to support findings and enhance the accuracy of the data. The conceptual and theoretical framework is grounded in the Theory of Meaning and Theory of Function. These theories guide the analysis of superstitions related to the human body and folk medicine in the Malay community of Riau.

2. Method

The research approach utilized in this study is qualitative. This field research is conducted within the Malay community in Riau. The focus of this study is on the structure, function, and meaning of superstitions in the Malay community of Riau related to the human body and traditional medicines. The author selected individuals from the Malay community in Riau to gather information on taboos, aiming to provide insights into the situation and conditions of the research background. Data is obtained through recording and pre-planned interviews with informants, evolving according to the data and concluding when the required information is deemed complete. The data collected in the field focuses on primary data, presenting information on the structure, function, and meaning of the superstitions under investigation. Following that, data verification is conducted. The data analysis technique in this research employs the model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which outlines three stages for analyzing qualitative research data: (1) data reduction, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion/verification.

3. Results and Discussion

According to Lyons, the meaning of a word involves understanding the study of words related to the relationships that make that word distinct from others [14]. Djajasudarma states that meaning has three existences: (1) the first level, meaning as the content of linguistic form; (2) the second level, meaning as the content of a language; (3) the third level, meaning as the content of communication that can produce precise information [18]. In this study, the researcher employs denotative and connotative meanings [19].

The research findings indicate that the superstitions of the Malay community in Riau convey both denotative and connotative meanings. This is evident from the excerpt: *Tak boleh togak dengan kaki yang terhimpit, beko rozokinyo jauh* which can be interpreted denotatively. The connotative meaning of the expression reflects a form of superstition or traditional belief within the community, signifying specific behavioral or movement norms and rules. The prohibition against standing with crossed legs implies the existence of strict norms or rules upheld by the community. The use of the term "rezeki" (fortune) in the expression suggests that the prohibition is associated with beliefs regarding an individual's fate or luck. Standing with crossed legs is considered to influence or diminish one's fortune. This expression mirrors the mystical or supernatural beliefs prevalent in the community, exemplifying a non-scientific or mystical perspective.

The expression related to superstitions concerning the human body can be seen in the following statement *Saat tidu tak boleh menelungkup, beko bisa membuat urang tuo kita meninggal*. The expression "During sleep, one must not lie facedown; supernatural beings can cause the death of our elders" reflects a belief or taboo within the community, particularly concerning sleeping positions and potential dangers associated with specific behaviors. This

expression denotes certain habits or traditions related to sleeping positions within the community. Such rules may have been passed down from generation to generation as part of local culture and beliefs. The statement implies that seemingly simple behaviors like lying facedown during sleep can impact the well-being or even lead to the death of one's elders. This underscores the high regard for elders and the belief that violating this rule can bring about calamity.

The existence of this taboo is likely closely tied to local cultural norms. Some societies hold specific views on sleeping positions or daily activities that may influence their relationship with the supernatural. While this expression may appear peculiar from a scientific standpoint, it is crucial to appreciate the contextual interpretation and underlying cultural significance. This expression may be rooted in the community's beliefs and ingrained values. Furthermore, sleeping in a prone position fundamentally may pose challenges in breathing due to the bodily position compressing the lungs. Although this aspect is not explicitly mentioned in the expression, it is worth noting that lying facedown can hinder proper breathing, contributing to potential health concerns. In conclusion, this analysis highlights the complexity of beliefs and local norms related to daily life and interactions with the supernatural in the community. Understanding the cultural context and potential health implications of such superstitions is essential for a comprehensive interpretation of these beliefs.

The expression related to superstitions concerning remedies can be observed in the following statement: "Herbal concoctions that can be utilized to dispel money possessed by ghosts include the roots of jasmine flowers and the seeds of tanjung trees." This expression reflects a form of belief or superstition associated with treating ailments believed to originate from supernatural forces or ghosts. It signifies a belief in magical or supernatural powers thought to heal diseases perceived to be caused by ghosts, reflecting mystical perspectives within the community.

The choice of ingredients such as jasmine flower roots and tanjung seeds may be linked to traditional beliefs or the continuity of specific cultural practices. In this context, certain plants may be considered to possess healing properties or mystical powers. The utilization of herbal concoctions for treating ghost-related illnesses may reflect cultural norms and beliefs within the local community, indicating a medical tradition passed down through generations as part of cultural heritage. While from a scientific standpoint, these ingredients may lack proven therapeutic efficacy, it is important to appreciate the contextual interpretation and cultural significance. The use of specific plants in concoctions often reflects a strong connection between flora and mystical beliefs in certain cultures, where plants may hold symbolic or spiritual significance.

From a health perspective, it is crucial to note that the effectiveness of these concoctions is not supported by scientific evidence. Although some plants possess medicinal properties, their use should be applied with careful consideration and ideally under the guidance of medical professionals. This analysis highlights the cultural richness and local beliefs surrounding the use of herbal remedies for ghost-related illnesses. While lacking scientific basis, this reflects the complexity of beliefs and traditions within a particular community. Superstitions serve a functional purpose, as they are consciously directed as educational tools within the human life cycle. [20].[21][11]. There are five functions of superstition according to Danandjaja, including: thickening religious or belief emotions, serving as a projection system of imagination, an educational tool for children and adolescents, an explanation of natural phenomena, and a source of comfort for those facing adversity [22][23][8].

Based on the research findings and a comparison with other regions regarding this superstition expression, it can be explained that the superstition expression in the Malay community in Riau is not only utilized by the local community but is also found in other areas. Another relevant research examining the meaning of superstition is conducted by Elvian Syahrir. His research shares the same objective with the researcher, aiming to uncover the true meaning, both explicit (denotative) and implicit (connotative), of superstitions. The objective of the research is quite similar to the researcher's, seeking to explore the meaning of superstitions, both overt and covert, in order to educate the community. The intention is to move beyond the perception that superstitions are merely intended to induce fear, but rather to convey a purpose and message, possibly conveying forbidden beliefs held by people in the past.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research findings, expressions of superstitions were identified within the Malay community in Riau. These superstitions have both denotative and connotative meanings. In the taboos expressed, there are explicit meanings as well as implied meanings, with the latter often understood only by some of the older generation who grasp the significance, function, and intent behind these superstitions. The study also revealed three functions of these superstitions: serving as a reinforcement of religious emotions, functioning as tools for educating children and adolescents, and acting as explanations acceptable to the folk's reasoning. The existence of these superstitions is gradually diminishing, as only a portion of the population continues to use them, and most adolescents are indifferent to the superstitions prevalent in the Malay community in Riau.

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