

# *Wangsalan* as an indirect communication strategy in *Banyumasan*

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**Abstract.** Genre is used to signify a literary form. In its development, it is not exclusively used in literary form but also in daily conversation. *Wangsalan* frequently used in daily conversation is one of Javanese traditional genres which is basically constituted by two main parts, riddle and content. It is an indirect communication strategy commonly used by the member of society to deliver message. Banyumas is a district in Central Java which has a particular language variety called *Banyumasan*. *Banyumasan* is a dialect of standard Javanese with its particular phonological and lexical features. *Banyumasan* is recognized by its directness nevertheless it still utilizes *wangsalan* in its daily basis as an indirect communication strategy. It is used to praise, to advise, to mock, to warn, to inform, and to beg. This article reveals how *Banyumasan* employs *wangsalan* to achieve communication goals.

Keywords : *wangsalan*, *Banyumasan*, genre, strategy, communication goals.

## 1 Introduction

*Banyumasan* is a dialect of standard Javanese and spoken along Serayu river that flows between Sindoro-Sumbing mountains (Koentjaraningrat, 1984)<sup>1</sup>. *Banyumasan* is also known as *Ngapak* or *Ngapak-Apak* (Herusatoto, 2008)<sup>2</sup>. In addition, it is spoken in at least five regencies, namely, Banjarnegara, Purbalingga, Banyumas, Cilacap, and Kebumen. Linguistically, *Banyumasan* has distinctive particular lexical and phonological features compared to standard Javanese (Wedhawati, 2006)<sup>3</sup>. Chambers and Trudgill highlighted that dialect is often used in rural area (Chambers, 1994)<sup>4</sup>.

*...dialect is a substandard, low status, often rustic form of language, generally associated with the peasantry, the working class, or other group of lacking in prestige. Dialect is also a term which is often applied to form of language, particularly those spoken in more isolated parts of the world, which have no written form. And dialects are also often regarded as some kind of (often erroneous) deviation from a norm-as aberrations of a correct or standard form of language.*

As an indigenous dialect, *Banyumasan* is used as a means of communication. Communication can run smoothly if there is a mutual knowledge between speaker and hearer. Speaker sends his intention and hearer is supposed to achieve this intention perfectly and how

this process happens still remains a mystery as Brown and Levinson have postulated (1987: 8)<sup>5</sup>. He says that ‘Thus, even if we had a perfected system of means-ends reasoning, it would remain a conceptual mystery how we are able to reconstruct other agent’s intention from their actions’. He adds that ‘Yet that we do so, or attempt to do so, is hardly open to question, and is presupposed by at least some uses of the term ‘strategy’. It can be induced that strategy is a way employed by participants of communication to achieve the goal of communication. The term ‘way’ here refers to method used by speakers and hearers both linguistically and non-linguistically to make a successful interaction. Non-linguistically, speaker and hearer can use gesture, body language, and etc. to help them deliver the message. Linguistically, speaker and hearer can use direct or indirect utterance to express their intension.

This article reveals the function of *wangsalan* relates to communication goals in *Banyumasan*. *Banyumasan* is recognizable for its directness yet some indirect communication strategies are still employed (Hadiati, 2014)<sup>6</sup>. Similar to other dialects of Javanese, *Banyumasan* also uses indirect communication strategies such as *wangsalan*, *bebasan/paribasan*, *geguritan*, *cangkriman*, and etc. However, this research does not discuss *bebasan/parikan*, *geguritan*, *cangkriman* and other indirect way of saying in Javanese.

*Wangsalan* is classified as an indirect utterance since it delivers message indirectly. At first, *wangsalan* was a Javanese genre that was usually used in literary world. Nowadays, it spreads to daily basis since people think that it will be a good strategy to gain communication goal indirectly. *Wangsalan* is a traditional new Javanese poetry since it has several rules. The word *wangsalan* is derived from *wangsals* that means ‘answer’. Thus, *wangsalan* is meant to be answered because there is a riddle in *wangsalan*. There are some parts in *wangsalan* that are realized metaphorically and they are put in the first or second part of *wangsalan*. Here is an example of a simple *wangsalan*. *Jenang gula, aja lali*

The first part (*gatra*) is *jenang gula* and the second part is *aja lali*; each part consists of four syllables. The first part is called as *cangkriman* or riddle, and the second part is the content. *Jenang gula* is a kind of Javanese traditional food made from coconut sugar puddle. *Aja lali* means ‘not to forget’. The name of Javanese traditional food made from coconut sugar puddle is *gulali* and it is rhyming with *aja lali*. This *wangsalan* is meant to remind people not to forget anything, including their past, their hard times, their ancestors, their culture, their relatives and so on. Instead of reminding people directly, people can use *wangsalan* to replace it.

Padmosukotjo classified *wangsalan* into five types, *wangsalan lamba/ tunggal*, *wangsalan rangkap/ majemuk*, *wangsalan mepet/ rumit*, *wangsalan padinan/ keseharian*, *wangsalan edipeni/ indah* (Padmosukotjo, 1960)<sup>7</sup>. Each type will be briefly explained. *Wangsalan lamba* consists of one line which means it has only one riddle and answer. The riddle is in the first part and the answer is in the second part.

*Jenang gula, aja lali* *Wangsalan rangkap* or *wangsalan majemuk* consists of two lines. The first line that consists of two parts is the riddle and the second line is the answer or content. *Jenang sela, wader kalen sesondheran Apuranto, yen wonten lapat kawulo* *Jenang sela* in the first line means *kapur* or ‘calcium/chalk’, the word *kapur* is rhyming with *apuranto* that means ‘to forgive’ and *wader sesondheran* is *sepat* (*Trichopodus trichopterus*) a kind of fish that Banyumas people usually consume. The word *sepat* is rhyming with *lepat* that means ‘mistake’. The first line is a riddle that describes about the stone (*kapur/apuranto*) and the fish (*sepat/lepat*). The second line, the content, says about asking for forgiveness. This *wangsalan* is classified as *wangsalan rangkap/majemuk*. *Wangsalan mepet* consists of one line however it has a more complex riddle. To know the meaning of this *wangsalan*, we need to know the

metaphorical meaning of the first part. The following example displays *wangsalan mepet. Ular kambang, yen trima alon-alonan*

The first part is *ular kambang* and it is a kind of snake that floats on water's surface. In Banyumas culture this snake is known as *lintah (Hirudinea)*. The metaphorical meaning of *ular kambang* is *lintah*. The word *lintah* is rhyming with *prentah* or *order*. The second part is *yen trima alon-alonan* means 'take it slowly'. This *wangsalan* means the order will be done slowly.

*Wangsalan padinan* is *wangsalan* that is usually employed in daily conversation. In this type of *wangsalan*, the content or the answer is not mentioned since it is considered as a general knowledge of the culture. The following example shows *wangsalan padinan. Ujaraku dheweke wis ngerti pangundangku, jebul njangan gori*

The first part *ujarku dheweke wis ngerti pangundangku* means 'I think he knows my call' and the second part is *jebul njangan gori* which means 'infact, it cooks jackfruit'. *Jangan gori* is the dished made from jackfruit and in Javanese culture it is known as *gudeg*. *Gudeg* is rhyming with *budeg* which means 'deaf'. The knowledge that jackfruit dishes is *gudeg* is very general in Javanese culture and it is used in daily conversation. Thus this *wangsalan* is classified as *wangsalan padinan*.

*Wangsalan edipeni* is *wangsalan* that has beautiful rhyming and diction. It usually uses repetition either words or sound. The following example displays *wangsalan edipeni*

*Kulik priya, priyagung Anjaningputra*

*Tuhu eman, wong enom wedi kangelan*

The word *priya* —and *putra* means 'a man'. It is used in *priya, priyagung* and *Anjaningputra*. This word is used repetitively. The repeating form of *priya* result the beauty effect of this utterance, thus it result an *edipeni wangsalan*. *Anjaningputra* refers to *Anoman*, a character in Ramayana epic, who has strong will, hard worker, and loyal to his master. The first line is the riddle. It describes a man, a young man and *Anoman*. The second part is the content. *Tuhu eman wong enom wedi kangelan* means 'it is a pity if a young man is afraid of hard-work'. This *wangsalan* is a kind of advice from old people to young people not to afraid of hard-work. *Wangsalan* are utilized in daily conversation for several communication goals depending on the contexts. Culture becomes the most dominant context to find the meaning and function of *wangsalan* due to the fact that culture brings the precious values of the community and it is meant to be transferred from generation to generation. Preserving *wangsalan* can simultaneously preserve the local wisdom and values of the community. In daily basis, people use it as an indirect communication strategy to achieve several communication goals

## 2 Method

This research belongs to qualitative research since it tries to depict the use of *wangsalan* in Banyumasan daily conversation in achieving communication goals. Basically, there are six functions that are found in data, namely, to praise, to advise, to mock, to warn, to inform, and to beg. Each function is elaborated by calculating the context of Banyumas culture. The analysis utilizes words instead of numbers in revealing language phenomenon. Data is collected from daily conversation in which researchers were actively and passively involved. Researcher recorded the conversation using cell phone, and tape recorder secretly to avoid non-natural conversation. Natural occurring data is preferable in qualitative research so that

researcher can get authentic data. The recording was repeatedly played to find out *wangsalan* in the conversation. These *wangsalan* are then analyzed and classified by utilizing context. The analysis shows the function of *wangsalan* in the daily conversation. There were 40 respondents involved in this research and 75 *wangsalan* were produced. Respondents consisted of 20 male and 20 female native speakers and they were around 40 and 60 years old. Respondents were chosen from older native speakers due to the fact that they produced *wangsalan* more often compare to younger native speakers. Most of the respondents were farmers and sellers in traditional market.

### 3 Result and Discussion

*Wangsalan* is an indirect way of communication because it uses riddle to deliver message. Based on data analysis, *wangsalan* is used for several functions, such as, to praise, to advise, to mock, to warn, to inform, and to beg. Each function is elaborated in the following parts.

#### 3.1 to praise

*Wangsalan* that is used for praising can be found in the following data. It has one riddle and one content, hence, it belongs to *wangsalan lamba*.

*Sarpa kresna, mung kowe sing nyong percaya*  
[Just like a black snake, it is only you I trust]

The first part is *sarpa kresna* or 'black snake' (*Naja sputatrix*). 'Black snake' in Javanese is known as *dumung*. The following picture shows *sarpa kresna* or *Naja sputatrix*.



Fig.1. *Naja sputatrix*

The word *dumung* is rhyming with the word *mung* that means 'only'. The second part is *mung kowe sing nyong percaya* means 'only you I trust'. This *wangsalan* informs indirectly that the speaker only trusts the hearer. This information can be said directly, for example, by stating that 'I only trust you'. In fact, speaker expresses it indirectly by using *wangsalan*. This *wangsalan* is used to praise the hearer that he is the only person the speaker trusts. Thus, *sarpa kresna, mung kowe sing nyong percaya* is an example of *wangsalan lamba* which is used to gain communication goals.

The second *wangsalan lamba* that is used to praise can be seen in the following data.

*Mbalung janur nyatane kowe sing paring usada*  
[It is like coconut leaves, in fact, it is only you who gives the cure]

The first part is *mbalung janur*. *Mbalung janur* is a term used to describe the bone of young coconut leaves (*Cocos nucifera*). *Mbalung janur* is known as *sada*. The following picture shows *sada*, the yellow part.



**Fig.2.** Coconut leaf

The word *sada* is rhyming with *usada* that means medicine. The second part is *nyatane kowe sing paring usada* which means ‘in fact, it is you who give the medicine’. This *wangsalan* indirectly informs that the speaker praises the hearer that he is the one who can cure the speaker. Speaker can directly express it by using direct utterance in fact he or she expresses it indirectly by using *wangsalan*. In conclusion, *wangsalan Mbalung janur nyatane kowe sing paring usada* can be used to praise the hearer.

### 3.2 to advise

The second function of *wangsalan* is to give advice. It can be found in the following *wangsalan*.

*Cubung wuluh, asiha maring sepadha*

[It is like a gemstone ring, be caring to other]

The above *wangsalan* is *wangsalan lamba* since it only has one riddle and answer. The first part or the riddle talks about *cubung wuluh/wulung*. *Cubung wuluh/wulung* in Banyumasan is known as *tlasih*, it is a kind of gemstone or agate. This stone is believed to give its wearer affection or *asih/kasih* from other party. Whoever wears this stone, he or she will be loved by other unconditionally. The picture below shows this ornamental stone.



**Fig. 3.** Gemstone

The second part is *asiha marang sepadha*. The word *tlasih* in the riddle is rhyming with *asih*. This is the content of this *wangsalan*. *Asiha marang sepadha* means to be caring and loving to other. This *wangsalan* contains advice from speaker to hearer that hearer should be caring and loving person in any condition or situation. Instead of saying directly to its hearer to be caring and loving to other, speaker can choose to express it indirectly by using *wangsalan*. Asking other to do good thing is a kind of advice, thus *wangsalan* can be used to advise. The second *wangsalan lamba* that is used to give advice can be found in the following example.

*Udan riris (grimis), sugih mlarat wis ginaris*

[It is line drizzle, whether you are poor or rich has been determined by God]

The first part or the riddle is about *udan riris* or *grimis* ‘drizzle’ or light rain falling in very fine drops.



**Fig. 4.** The drizzle

The second part is *sugih mlarat wis ginaris* that means ‘whether you are poor or rich has been written by God’. The word *ginaris* means ‘written’. *Riris (grimis)* is rhyming with *ginaris*. The riddle is rhyming with the content. This *wangsalan* advises people to accept their condition whether they are rich or poor since it has been written down by God.

### 3.3 to mock

*Wangsalan* that can be used to mock can be traced from these *wangsalan lamba*.

*Bocah cilik senengane ngrokok cendhek*

[A young boy who likes to consume short cigarette]

*Bocah cilik senengane ngrokok cendhek* means ‘a little child likes to smoke short cigarette’. ‘short cigarette’ is known as *tegesan*. *Teges* can be seen in the following picture.



**Fig.5.** Short cigarette

The word *tegesan* is rhyming with *teges* that means ‘seeking for the truth or clarification’. This *wangsalan* is used to mock a child who likes to ask for detailed information about anything. In Banyumas culture, a child is supposed to be calm and accept anything without asking for further clarification. By saying *Bocah cilik senengane ngrokok cendhek*, a speaker mocks the hearer or the third party. This *wangsalan* is an example of indirect strategy used by the speaker to achieve communication goal. Another *wangsalan* which is used to mock is portrayed in the following example.

*Mrica kecut, muni bab sing ora nyata*

[The sour pepper, talk about unrealistic things]

*Mrica kecut, muni bab sing ora nyata* means that the speaker mocks other party who likes to boast and speak nothing but lies. *Mrica kecut* or (*Antidesma bunius*) is known as *wuni* in Banyumas culture. *Wuni* can be seen in the following picture.



**Fig.6.** *Antidesma bunius*

The word *wuni* is rhyming with *muni* that means ‘to say something’. This *wangsalan* is used to mock other who likes to say nothing but lies. In Banyumas culture, people are required to be honest and tell the truth or be silent. Saying lies will be considered as bad thing to do. Thus, *wangsalan Mrica kecut, muni bab sing ora nyata* is used to mock people who always lies.

### 3.4 to warn

*Wangsalan* that is used to warn is displayed in the next explanation.

*Kembang kopi, wong nek mblanggreng pancen angel ladenane.*

[Like the flower of *Coffea arabica*, stubborn people are hard to please]

The first part, *kembang kopi* or the flower of (*Coffea Arabica*) in Banyumasan, is known as *blanggreng*. The picture of *blanggreng* is displayed below.



**Fig.7.** The flower of *Coffea arabica*

The second part is *wong nek mblanggreng pancen angel ladenane*. *Wong nek mblanggreng pancen angel ladenane* which means that arrogant people are hard to please. The word *blanggreng* is rhyming with *mblanggreng* ‘arrogant’. This *wangsalan* is used to warn arrogant people because arrogant people are hard to please. In a simple way, this *wangsalan* is employed in Banyumasan dialect to gain communication goal that is to warn.

### 3.5 to inform

The following explanation elaborates the function of *wangsalan* to inform.

*Ana gedhang nunggang kupu*

[There is a banana rides a butterfly]

*Ana gedhang nunggang kupu* means there is a banana that rides a butterfly. Literally, it is impossible for a banana to ride a butterfly. It must be a riddle. The first part is *ana gedhang* ‘banana’ and the second part is *kupu-kupu* ‘butterfly’. In Javanese culture there are various types of bananas, one of them is *gedhang raja*. The word *raja* means ‘the king’. In addition, there are also some variants of butterflies, one of them is *kupu gajah* that *Gajah* means ‘elephant’. In a simple way *Ana gedhang nunggang kupu* means there is a king who rides an elephant.



**Fig.8.** A king rides an elephant

This *wangsalan* is meant to inform since it has informational message even though it is delivered indirectly. Thus, *Banyumas* dialect employs *wangsalan* to gain communication goal that is to inform.

### 3.6 to beg

The sixth function of *wangsalan* in Banyumasan is 'to beg'. This subsequent elaboration depicts the use of *wangsalan* in Banyumasan dialect.

*Godong mlinjo, wis kesel njaluk ngaso*

[It is the leaves of *Gnetum gnemon*, feeling tired and need to rest]

The first part is *godong mlinjo* or the leaf of *Gnetum gnemon* which is called as *so* in Banyumas culture. The leaves of *Gnetum gnemon* can be seen below.



**Fig. 9.** The leaves of *Gnetum gnemon*

The word *so* is rhyming with the word *ngaso* 'to take a rest'. The second part is *wis kesel njaluk ngaso* that means 'feel tired and need to take a rest'. *Wangsalan Godong mlinjo, wis kesel njaluk ngaso* means that the speaker is tired and he wants to take a rest. Asking to take a rest can be expressed indirectly by using *wangsalan*. In a simple way, it can be seen that *wangsalan* is an indirect strategy to achieve communication goal.

## 4 Conclusion

Banyumas dialect or *Ngapak* is known for its directness, however, indirect strategies are still used by speakers of this variant. Based on the analysis, it can be summarized that *wangsalan* becomes one of indirect strategies in Banyumasan. There are other indirect strategies, such as, *paribasan*, *bebasan*, *geguritan*, *cangkriman*, and etc. In Banyumasan, *wangsalan* is used to gain at least six communication goals, namely, to praise, to advise, to mock, to warn, to inform, and to beg. To find out the meaning of those *wangsalan*, first speaker and hearer must understand the riddle and then relate it to the next utterance or part. The riddle is usually put in the first place and the content is the second part. To understand the riddle, participants must be able to grasp the context of Banyumas culture. For further research, other indirect strategy can be tested to get a deeper insight of language phenomenon in Banyumas dialect.



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