



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Role of Language in Preserving Cultural Heritage and Religious Beliefs: A Case Study on Oral Traditions in the Indigenous Sasak Community of Lombok, Indonesia

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**ABSTRACT**

This article aims to investigate the role of language in preserving cultural heritage and religious beliefs through oral traditions in the Sasak indigenous community on Lombok Island. To understand that this article employs several methods: case studies, observation, in-depth interviews, oral text analysis, participation in community activities, collaboration with local cultural experts, and qualitative data analysis. The findings indicate that the Sasak language plays a crucial role in sustaining oral traditions, including folklore, legends, and myths. The article addresses several urgent needs, including the preservation of culture and religion, the enhancement of knowledge and education, and policy development. Based on Dell Hymes' theory, this article emphasizes the importance of "adequate communication" in maintaining culture and religion through language. The oral traditions of the Sasak community are a concrete example of the application of Hymes' 'Speaking Model.' These oral traditions serve as a medium for conveying cultural values and religious beliefs from one generation to the next.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Language is essential to preserving cultural heritage and religious beliefs. In the face of globalization, local traditions and cultures are at risk, including the extinction of languages that reflect cultural identity. The loss of a language signifies the disappearance of intellectual and spiritual heritage. Therefore, preserving oral traditions is crucial to maintaining a community's identity and values.

Language plays a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage (Little 2020) and religious beliefs within a community. Amidst the rapid pace of globalization and modernization, many local traditions and cultures are at risk of extinction. According to UNESCO, approximately 40% of the 7,000 languages spoken worldwide are endangered, which affects the loss of cultural identity, and the religious beliefs embedded in these languages (Sung 2023). One of the efforts to preserve cultural heritage and religious beliefs is through oral traditions, which play a vital role in maintaining the identity and continuity of a community's culture.

The Sasak indigenous community in Lombok provides a concrete example of a group that relies on oral traditions to preserve and pass down its cultural heritage and religious beliefs from generation to generation. These oral traditions include various forms of expression, such as folklore, chants,

songs, and religious rituals. They serve as both a source of entertainment and a medium for education, as well as for transmitting cultural (Osei-Tutu 2023) and spiritual values.

However, with the advancement of technology and social changes, the oral traditions of the *Sasak* indigenous community are facing significant challenges. The younger generation tends to be more interested in popular culture and digital technology, often neglecting the importance of local oral traditions. Additionally, the lack of documentation and formal education regarding oral traditions exacerbates this issue. Therefore, efforts to preserve and promote oral traditions must not be overlooked, as they are at the core of cultural identity and local wisdom that have endured for centuries.

This article focuses on the importance of oral traditions within the *Sasak* indigenous community in *Lombok*, as well as the role of language in preserving their cultural heritage and religious beliefs. In the context of indigenous communities, traditions such as "petuq" and "bebadongan" add significant value, and UNESCO recognizes oral traditions and languages as part of intangible cultural heritage (Lonardi 2022). Language is the primary tool for conveying and preserving cultural and spiritual values (Tektigul et al. 2023). The use of distinctive language and specialized terms within cultural and religious contexts provides a unique identity for the *Sasak* people.

This article aims to bridge the knowledge gap and provide a better understanding of the relationship between language, culture, and religion within the context of the *Sasak* community in *Lombok*. In this context, language is not only a linguistic skill but also a means of understanding and appreciating culture (D. Kim 2020).

Therefore, this article offers novelty from several aspects: 1). Recent Literature Review: This article expands understanding of the role of language in preserving cultural heritage and religious beliefs (Pajarianto, Pribadi, and Sari 2022), with a focus on oral traditions. 2). Emphasis on Oral Traditions in the *Sasak Lombok* Indigenous Community: This article provides a specific focus on case studies within the context of the *Sasak Lombok* indigenous community. It offers new insights into how oral traditions are understood through both analytical and symbolic perspectives (Passerini 2021). 3). Deeper Understanding of the Interaction Between Language and Culture: This article provides a deeper insight into how language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a carrier and custodian of cultural heritage (Lo Bianco 2021), within the context of oral traditions.

Thus, this article holds significant urgency as it first emphasizes the importance of preserving cultural heritage and religious beliefs through language and oral traditions. This is especially crucial for the *Sasak* culture, as modernization and globalization increasingly threaten the preservation of their unique language and religious beliefs. As younger generations adopt more modern lifestyles and are influenced by external factors, traditional *Sasak* oral traditions, which embody the community's cultural and spiritual values, are at risk of fading. The loss of the *Sasak* language would not only weaken their cultural identity but also erase centuries of religious practices and beliefs deeply embedded in their linguistic expressions. Thus, preserving the *Sasak* language is essential for safeguarding their cultural heritage and ensuring the continuity of their religious traditions.

Second, the article enhances knowledge and education about *Sasak* culture and encourages the integration of this knowledge into both formal and informal educational curricula. In the context of this research, several previous studies have been conducted, including one by Lilomaiaava titled "Oral Traditions, Cultural Significance of Storytelling, and Samoan Understandings of Place or Fanua." This study highlights the storytelling traditions within Samoan culture, specifically through ancient stories (*tala le vavau*) such as Metotagivale and Alo. These stories emphasize the cultural values underlying fa'aSamoa (Samoan culture and worldview) regarding fanua or place (Lilomaiaava-Doktor 2020).

Similarly, as investigated by Polar in the book titled "Writing in the Air: Heterogeneity and the Persistence of Oral Tradition in Andean Literatures," this work underscores the crucial role of oral

traditions in preserving the cultural identity and history of Andean societies, and how oral stories serve as a means of conveying values and traditional knowledge (Polar 2020).

Next, as explored by Armistead and Silverman in the book "Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews, Vol. III: Judeo-Spanish Ballads from Oral Tradition, II Carolingian Ballads, 1: Roncesvalles," this volume examines important aspects of oral tradition, particularly how ballads are preserved and disseminated through oral traditions within the Sephardic Jewish community (Armistead and Silverman 2022).

Similarly, as investigated by DuBois in his book titled "Lyric, Meaning, and Audience in the Oral Tradition of Northern Europe," DuBois explores how oral traditions function within the cultural and social contexts of Northern European societies. This includes the ways oral traditions are used in rituals, ceremonies, and daily life, as well as how these traditions help to build community identity. The book provides in-depth insights into the significance of oral traditions in Northern European culture and how these traditions operate within a broader context (DuBois 2024). Thus, this research is not only relevant to the *Sasak* indigenous community itself but also to researchers, policymakers, and the general public who are concerned with preserving cultural heritage and religious beliefs in the modern era.

This article applies linguistic anthropology theory to analyze how language use contributes to the formation of social and cultural identity (Gal 2020) within the oral traditions and religious beliefs of the *Sasak* community in *Lombok*. The article utilizes Dell Hymes' concept of "communicative competence" (Kroskrity 2023). This concept describes the understanding that language ability involves not only the correct use of grammar but also an awareness of how language is appropriately used within specific cultural and social contexts.

According to Hymes, "communicative competence" is not only valid for native languages but also applies to other communication systems within cultural anthropology (Coste, de Pietro, and Moore 2012). Therefore, it is important to understand social aspects to gain insight into and the development of a language (Hymes 2020a). In this context, language is essential for preserving the cultural heritage and religious beliefs of the *Sasak* community in *Lombok* (Pajarianto, Pribadi, and Sari 2022).

The following are the elements of Hymes' theory of "communicative competence" applied in the analysis and interpretation of this article: a). Grammatical Competence: This component helps in understanding and mastering grammar more effectively (Ghorbani and Ebadi 2020). b). Sociolinguistic Competence: In this context, the research team explains how sociolinguistic findings can be applied to education, language policy, and language planning (Hymes 2020b). c). Discourse Competence: This theory provides theoretical and methodological approaches to understanding competence (Kimura 2024). It refers to the ability to use language effectively across various types of discourse or communication contexts. d). Strategic Competence: This refers to the ability to use appropriate communication strategies in different situations to optimize the communicative competence of the learner (Furkó 2020). e). Cultural Competence: This refers to an understanding of norms, values, and cultural practices within a particular community (Katsara 2023).

To date, there has been no research on "The Role of Language in Preserving Cultural Heritage and Religious Beliefs: A Case Study of Oral Traditions in the *Sasak* Indigenous Community of *Lombok*." Therefore, this study is necessary to analyze the role of language in preserving cultural heritage within the *Sasak* indigenous community in *Lombok*.

This article employs several research steps: 1) Case Study: The research focuses on a case study involving oral traditions within the *Sasak* indigenous community of *Lombok*. This approach allows the team to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of language in preserving cultural heritage (Cristia et al. 2023) and religious beliefs within a specific context. 2) Observation: The research team conducts direct observations of the oral traditions in the *Sasak* indigenous community of *Lombok*. This observation enables the researchers to see language methods and practices firsthand (Dignath

and Veenman 2021) and to observe interactions between language, culture, and religious beliefs to obtain a comprehensive view (Von Esch, Motha, and Kubota 2020). 3) In-depth Interviews: The research team conducts in-depth interviews with members of the *Sasak* indigenous community of *Lombok* to gain complex insights and understanding (Kim and Hachey 2021) regarding the use of language in preserving cultural heritage and religious beliefs. 4) Oral Text Analysis: The research team analyzes collected oral texts, such as folklore, fairy tales, or traditional songs for pedagogical purposes (Koopman 2023). This analysis may include identifying motifs, themes, and narrative structures that reveal the role of language in preserving cultural heritage and religious beliefs. 5) Participation in Community Activities: The research team actively participates in activities of the *Sasak* indigenous community of *Lombok* related to oral traditions, such as traditional art performances including songs, poetry, and sensory experiences (Suciati and Sofyan 2021), as well as religious events. This involvement allows the research team to gain a deeper understanding of the role of language as a pattern of multicultural communication (Rakhmawati, Anisa, and Wardana 2024) within the daily life of the *Sasak* community. 6) Collaboration with Local Cultural Experts: The research team involves local cultural experts in the research process to gain deeper insights into oral traditions and language use within the *Sasak* indigenous community of *Lombok*. This is because each region has its own unique culture (Lester, Cho, and Lochmiller 2020). This collaboration also helps ensure that the research respects and takes into account the cultural values and beliefs of the local community. 7) Qualitative Data Analysis: The research team employs a qualitative data analysis approach to examine data collected from various sources, such as interviews, observations, and oral texts.

### **The Importance of *Sasak* Language in the Context of Oral Traditions**

Language is a fundamental element of culture that shapes individual thinking and logic (Mills 2020). It functions as a tool for communication and the transmission of information across generations. In the *Sasak* community of *Lombok*, oral traditions serve as the primary means for preserving and disseminating cultural values and religious beliefs. These oral traditions encompass various forms, such as folktales, myths, legends, chants, and customary songs, passed down from one generation to the next.

Therefore, this research emphasizes the importance of interfaith and intercultural dialogue to promote tolerance and cultural interaction in the modern world (Yazdani 2020). This serves as a form of integration and a strategy for the development of local communities (Rahayu et al. 2023).

Additionally, the *Sasak* language plays a crucial role in the education and teaching of moral and spiritual values among the *Sasak* community. This can provide inspiration and a deeper understanding of the practical effects and practices (Benner 2021; Usman 2023) of using the *Sasak* language in daily life. Therefore, language is one of the most fundamental elements of culture, serving as a bridge between the past and the future.

Oral traditions in the *Sasak* community of *Lombok* play a central role in preserving and disseminating cultural values and religious beliefs. For example, mantras and traditional songs are used in various ceremonies and rituals to maintain a spiritual connection with ancestors and the universe (Sarbadhikary 2022).

Thus, oral traditions such as folktales (fairy tales) are usually shared in informal settings, such as family gatherings or community events. These stories not only entertain but also educate, teaching values such as honesty, courage, and cooperation. Mantras and traditional songs are employed in various religious rituals and ceremonies to connect the community with the spiritual world within a religious and cultural context (Sarbadhikary 2022).

### **Critical Review of Previous Studies**

Upon examining the article by Lilomaiaava (2020), published in 2020 and titled "Oral Traditions, Cultural Significance of Storytelling, and Samoan Understandings of Place or *Fanua*" in the journal

Native American and Indigenous Studies, several important aspects of oral traditions are explored. This article examines the rich oral traditions in Samoan culture. In Samoa, oral traditions serve as a means to convey stories about their identity and cultural heritage. Lilomaiava highlights how oral stories function to entertain the local community, as well as to teach important values, history, and social norms to the Samoan people. In this context, the study discusses how storytelling plays a crucial role in preserving and reinforcing Samoan culture.

In the Samoan context, *fanua* refers to both the physical or geographical aspects and the spiritual, historical, and cultural connections to a place. Lilomaiava reviews how oral stories help build a deep and complex understanding of *fanua*, which is a fundamental element in the relationship between the Samoan people and their natural environment.

Lilomaiava employs an ethnographic or qualitative research approach, which involves in-depth interviews with community leaders, analysis of traditional oral texts, and direct observation within the involved communities. Through this approach, Lilomaiava presents a deeper understanding of oral traditions and the concept of *fanua*.

Similarly, the book by Polar (2020) titled "Writing in the Air: Heterogeneity and the Persistence of Oral Tradition in Andean Literatures", published by Duke University Press in 2020, explores the complexity and resilience of oral traditions within Andean literatures. The book covers various important aspects relevant to our understanding of how oral traditions continue to thrive and interact with written literary forms in the Andean region.

Therefore, Polar discusses how oral stories and traditional knowledge are integrated or translated into written literary forms such as novels, poetry, or essays. The author explores how Andean writers utilize or respond to oral traditions in their works and how this influences the reception of these stories by modern society.

In this context, Polar provides broader theoretical implications about the significance of oral traditions within global literature and culture. Polar encourages readers to consider how understanding oral traditions in the Andean region can offer valuable insights into cultural adaptation, the evolution of literary forms, and cultural practices. This article makes an important contribution to our understanding of the complex relationship between oral traditions and written literature in the Andean region.

Similarly, the book titled "Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews, Vol. III: Judeo-Spanish Ballads from Oral Tradition, II Carolingian Ballads, 1: Roncesvalles", authored by Armistead and Silverman (2022), is part of a series documenting Sephardic Jewish folk literature. This volume focuses on Judeo-Spanish ballads originating from oral traditions, with an emphasis on Carolingian ballads, particularly those about Roncesvalles.

The book addresses several important points related to oral traditions, one of which is Sephardic Jewish literary heritage. It concentrates on the oral literary heritage of the Sephardic Jews, an essential part of their culture. This literature often preserves their ethnic and religious identity through folktales, including ballads presented in oral tradition. These ballads serve to entertain while conveying deep cultural and historical values to the Sephardic Jewish community.

In this context, there is a specific emphasis on Carolingian ballads. Carolingian ballads refer to a tradition of oral literature rooted in the history and culture of Europe during the Carolingian Empire. Roncesvalles is a frequently encountered theme in these ballads, recounting famous events such as the Battle of Roncesvalles. This research represents a valuable contribution to understanding and preserving the oral literary heritage of the Sephardic Jews.

Similarly, the book "Lyric, Meaning, and Audience in the Oral Tradition of Northern Europe" by DuBois (2024) from the University of Notre Dame, published in 2024, offers an in-depth analysis of

oral traditions in Northern Europe. Focusing on lyrics, meaning, and audiences, the book examines several key aspects reflecting the rich oral heritage of the region.

The author analyzes the meanings of these lyrics and explores the deep connections related to cultural values and social norms. The analysis includes comparisons of lyrics from various regions and how meanings may change over time. Additionally, the book presents various interpretations of the hidden meanings behind these oral works.

The author also highlights the crucial role of the audience in maintaining and transmitting oral traditions. The audience plays a role in shaping these narratives by providing feedback, modifying the stories, or spreading them to a broader community. Thus, DuBois's analysis offers valuable insights for a broader and more complex study of oral literature.

### **Comparison of This Article with Previous Studies**

Therefore, a more detailed comparison between the article titled "The Role of Language in Preserving Cultural Heritage and Religious Beliefs: A Case Study on Oral Traditions in the Indigenous *Sasak* Community of *Lombok*" and the four previous studies can be outlined as follows: Firstly: The article written by Lilomaiva-Doktor (2020) focuses on oral traditions in Samoa, emphasizing the cultural significance of storytelling and the Samoan understanding of place or *fanua*.

In comparison, the current article centers on the *Sasak* community and examines how language plays a role in preserving cultural heritage and religious beliefs. This highlights a difference in geographic context and the focus of the research on the *Sasak* indigenous community on the island of *Lombok*.

Similarly, if we examine the research methods and approaches used, Lilomaiva employed a case study and theoretical analysis of oral traditions in Samoa. This contrasts with current research approaches, which are more directly involved with the *Sasak* indigenous community on *Lombok* Island.

Secondly, the book written by Polar (2020) focuses on oral traditions in the Andean region. Polar highlights oral traditions in the Andean area, emphasizing the diversity of communities and how oral traditions endure in this varied context. In comparison with the current article, although both examine oral traditions, Polar's research is more focused on the analysis of oral literature in a broader geographic area, whereas the research in the current article is centered on the *Sasak* indigenous community on *Lombok* Island.

Polar uses theoretical methods and approaches to analyze oral literature. This reflects a difference in methodological approaches compared to the more specific and targeted case study, such as the current article, which is conducted within the *Sasak* indigenous community on *Lombok* Island.

Thirdly, the book by Armistead & Silverman (2022) focuses on Sephardic oral literature. It documents oral literature from Sephardic traditions, specifically Judeo-Spanish ballads. This involves the collection and analysis of oral texts from this cultural heritage, particularly within Sephardic communities. This contrasts with the current article, which is more general in examining how language plays a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage and religious beliefs on *Lombok*.

Similarly, regarding methods and approaches, they use methods focused on the collection and analysis of oral texts. This differs from the current research approach, where the researcher is more directly involved with the *Sasak* indigenous community on *Lombok*.

Fourthly, the book by DuBois (2024) focuses on oral traditions in Northern Europe. DuBois explores how lyrics and meanings relate to oral traditions in that region. In addition, DuBois highlights oral traditions in different geographic and cultural areas, which contrasts with the research conducted within the *Sasak* indigenous community on *Lombok*. DuBois employs an approach focused on the analysis of lyrics and audience in oral traditions. This differs from the more specific approach to

preserving cultural heritage and religious beliefs found in the *Sasak* indigenous community on *Lombok*.

Therefore, the main difference from the current article is its focus on the *Sasak* indigenous community and how the *Sasak* language aids in the preservation of cultural heritage and religious beliefs.

Overall, each study explores unique cultural heritage from different perspectives, such as the understanding of place (Samoan), community heterogeneity (Andean), specific oral literature (Sephardic), or lyrics in oral traditions (Northern European), compared to research in *Lombok*, which focuses on cultural preservation within the context of oral traditions in the *Sasak* indigenous community.

### **The Importance of Preserving *Sasak* Oral Culture**

Based on this, the preservation of the *Sasak* language through oral traditions is crucial for maintaining the cultural identity of the *Sasak* community. Folk tales, myths, and legends contain collective knowledge about history, social norms, and community values (Hemming 2020). When children listen to stories from their parents or grandparents, they not only learn about past events but also absorb the cultural values that shape their behavior and attitudes. Thus, oral traditions have become a vital tool for preserving cultural identity in the face of changing times. Oral Traditions and Moral Education in the *Sasak* Community

Oral traditions also play a crucial role in moral education within the *Sasak* community. Folk tales and myths often carry important moral messages essential for character development. For example, stories about brave and honest heroes serve as examples that inspire children to cultivate similar traits. Additionally, through traditional songs and chants, young generations are taught about spiritual and ethical values crucial for daily life. This demonstrates that oral traditions provide rich and profound insights into education (Frazer and Yunkaporta 2019).

Therefore, the transmission of oral traditions typically occurs in group settings, such as during family gatherings, traditional ceremonies, or community meetings. This process not only conveys information but also strengthens social bonds and a sense of unity. Thus, oral traditions play a significant role in building and uniting the community and honoring ancestors (Wirawan and Widana 2020).

Therefore, the preservation of the *Sasak* language and oral traditions requires a collective commitment from all community members, the government, and cultural institutions. These oral traditions are not only a legacy of the past but also a marker of cultural identity amidst a homogenizing modern society (Phukan and Nath 2023).

### **Oral Cultural Heritage in the *Sasak* Community**

Oral traditions encompass various forms of verbal expression used to convey stories, customs, moral values, and religious teachings. One such form is folk tales. These stories often carry moral and educational messages and are frequently used to teach children about the noble values and history of the community. For example, the tale of *Putri Mandalika* tells the story of a princess who chooses to sacrifice herself to avoid a war among princes vying for her love. In this story, *Putri Mandalika* transforms into *nyale* (sea worms), which appear annually on the shores of *Lombok* and are celebrated with the "Bau Nyale" festival. This story imparts values of sacrifice, bravery, and peace using simple language that is easily understood by children and the community (Masjid et al. 2023).

Through the '*Bau Nyale*' festival and the stories about the noble values upheld by the *Sasak* community, these traditions remain alive and are passed down from generation to generation. Thus, the tale of *Putri Mandalika* is an inseparable part of *Lombok's* cultural identity. This tradition links the past with the present, ensuring that the cultural heritage is valued and preserved for the future.

## Exploring Hymes' Concepts in the Legend of *Putri Mandalika*

Dell Hymes was a linguist and anthropologist who introduced the concepts of communicative competence and ethnography of communication. Communicative competence encompasses not only linguistic ability but also how language and communication are used within broader social contexts. This includes an understanding of cultural norms, values, and social practices that influence how people communicate (Aririguzoh 2022).

Connecting Hymes' Concepts with the Story of "*Putri Mandalika*," we can understand how this tale reflects cultural competence within the *Sasak* community. In this context, cultural competence refers to an individual's ability to understand, appreciate, and interact effectively with people from different cultures (Aririguzoh 2022), as well as to understand and value their own cultural heritage as members of the *Sasak* community.

Therefore, the story of "*Putri Mandalika*" is a legend that contains many elements of cultural competence, including an understanding of the social values and cultural practices of the *Sasak* community. In this context, the research team will outline the elements present in the story of *Putri Mandalika*:

- a. Values of Sacrifice and Peaceful Love. a) Sacrifice: *Putri Mandalika* chooses to sacrifice herself to avoid conflict among the princes vying for her love. This action reflects the value of sacrifice for the greater good, which is a crucial aspect of cultural competence. In the context of the story, this sacrifice demonstrates that collective interests and peace are prioritized over personal gain. b) Peaceful Love: By sacrificing herself, *Putri Mandalika* exhibits a profound sense of peaceful love, avoiding bloodshed and conflict among the princes. This reflects an important value upheld in *Sasak* society: peace and harmony within a diverse community, including intercultural dialogue (Aririguzoh 2022).
- b. Rituals and Traditions: The "*Bau Nyale*" Festival. a) *Nyale* Tradition: "*Bau Nyale*" is an annual celebration held to commemorate the sacrifice of *Putri Mandalika*. The festival involves activities such as catching sea worms, which are believed to be the embodiment of *Putri Mandalika*. This tradition not only preserves the legend but also strengthens social bonds within the *Sasak* community. b) Cultural Practices: During the festival, various cultural activities such as traditional dances, music, and ceremonial rituals take place. This demonstrates how stories and cultural practices are interconnected and reinforce each other within local customs, festivals, and arts (Lestari and Yusra 2022).
- c. Symbolism and Cultural Identity. a) Symbols of Courage and Sincerity: *Putri Mandalika* represents symbols of courage and sincerity within the *Sasak* community. Her story imparts deep moral values, such as the importance of sacrifice for the greater good and selfless love. b) Cultural Identity: The tale of *Putri Mandalika* and the "*Bau Nyale*" festival are crucial parts of *Lombok's* cultural identity. They remind the community of the significance of unity and togetherness while linking the past with the present. This is a clear example of how folklore can reinforce cultural identity and social solidarity (Harell et al. 2022).

Dell Hymes emphasized the importance of understanding communication within social and cultural contexts. In the story of "*Putri Mandalika*," we see how communication is conveyed through storytelling. This story is not only presented as entertainment but also as a medium for transmitting cultural and moral values to the community. This reflects the significance of communicative competence, which includes understanding cultural context. Similarly, the story illustrates how language and symbols, such as language and writing, play a role in the evolution of human cognition (Dehaene et al. 2022). In this context, elements such as *Putri Mandalika's* sacrifice and the "*Bau Nyale*" festival are used to convey moral messages and cultural values. This aligns with Hymes' view on the importance of understanding how language is used in broader social contexts.



Based on this, the story of "*Putri Mandalika*" serves as a rich example of cultural competence as described by Dell Hymes. Through the sacrifice of *Putri Mandalika* and the celebration of the "*Bau Nyale*" festival, we can observe how cultural values and social practices are upheld within the *Sasak* community. This story entertains and teaches important values such as sacrifice, peacefulness, and unity. It is a tangible manifestation of cultural competence that helps the *Sasak* people preserve and transmit their cultural heritage from generation to generation. Thus, the story can contribute to building a strong identity (Salamah-Qudsi 2024).

In addition to the story of *Putri Mandalika*, there is also the tale of "*Batu Goloq*," which tells the story of a young man named *Goloq* who faces various obstacles to prove his courage and loyalty. This story is often used to teach perseverance, honesty, and the importance of striving to achieve one's goals.

In this tale, the young man *Goloq* must overcome numerous trials set by the guardian spirits of nature to obtain a magical stone that can bring prosperity to his village. From that time on, the village never experienced drought again. *Batu Goloq* becomes a symbol of bravery, perseverance, and dedication to the community. This folktale not only serves as entertainment but also as a means of imparting moral and ethical values to the younger generation.

### **"Batu Goloq" and Dell Hymes' Theory of Cultural Competence**

Examining the story of "*Batu Goloq*" through Dell Hymes' theory of Cultural Competence highlights the ability to communicate effectively within the *Sasak* cultural context. *Sasak* cultural competence encompasses understanding, skills, and effective behavioral changes (Verplanken and Orbell 2022), which enable individuals to interact well in various social situations. Several key components of this theory are relevant for analyzing the story of "*Batu Goloq*":

- a. Communication as Social Action:
  - a. Setting and Scene: The story is set in a village in *Lombok* experiencing drought, providing crucial social and geographical context for understanding the narrative.
  - b. Participants: The main characters in the story are *Goloq*, the village guardian spirits, and supernatural beings who test *Goloq*. The interactions between *Goloq* and these beings reflect the social and spiritual dynamics of the *Sasak* community.
- b. Norms of Interaction and Interpretation:
  - a. Ends: *Goloq's* primary goal is to save his village from drought by obtaining the magical stone. This reflects values of perseverance, courage, and sacrifice for the common good.
  - b. Act Sequence: The sequence of *Goloq's* actions, from his journey to find the stone to successfully bringing it back, mirrors the process of learning and moral testing that individuals undergo in achieving noble goals.
- c. Means and Methods of Communication:
  - a. Key: The story's tone, filled with enthusiasm and *Goloq's* determination, provides inspiration and motivation to listeners to persevere in the face of challenges.
  - b. Instrumentalities: The medium of storytelling is oral, highlighting the importance of oral tradition in conveying cultural values.
- d. Norms and Genre:
  - a. Norms of Interaction: The story illustrates social interaction norms within the *Sasak* community, such as the importance of helping others and caring for the environment.
  - b. Genre: As a folktale, "*Batu Goloq*" serves both to entertain and educate, demonstrating how this genre is used to convey moral messages.

The story of "*Batu Goloq*" is a rich example of cultural values conveyed through oral tradition. Through Dell Hymes' concept of Cultural Competence, we can see how this story serves as both entertainment and an effective moral education tool. By delving into this story, young generations can learn about the importance of perseverance, honesty, and courage, as well as appreciate their cultural heritage. Such oral traditions play a crucial role in shaping individual character and preserving cultural values within the *Sasak* community.

Similarly, *Sasak* folktales often include explanations about the origins of places and natural phenomena in *Lombok*. For example, the story of "*Gunung Rinjani*" recounts how this volcano is believed to be the dwelling place of gods and ancestral spirits. This tale reinforces the *Sasak* community's spiritual connection with their natural surroundings, teaching them to respect and protect the environment. Through this story, children learn about the importance of preserving nature and valuing their ancestral heritage.

### **Dell Hymes' Cultural Competence Theory in the Context of *Gunung Rinjani***

The folktale of *Gunung Rinjani*, which includes the story of *Dewi Anjani* and the spiritual connection of the *Sasak* community with the mountain, is an example of oral tradition rich in cultural and spiritual values. To understand this story within the framework of Dell Hymes' Cultural Competence Theory, we need to explore how the story functions within the *Sasak* community and how it conveys moral values, ethics, and cultural identity from one generation to the next.

Hymes' theory emphasizes the importance of understanding both the structure of language and how language is used in specific social and cultural interactions (Hymes 2020b). In the context of the *Gunung Rinjani* story, we will examine how this tale reflects and reinforces cultural competence within the *Sasak* community. From the perspective of 'Linguistic Competence,' the *Gunung Rinjani* story employs the local *Sasak* language, rich with idioms, expressions, and symbols unique to *Sasak* culture. Therefore, the language in this story not only conveys information but also communicates deep emotions, values, and beliefs.

Similarly, when analyzed through Dell Hymes' concept of 'Discourse Competence,' the structure of the *Gunung Rinjani* story features a clear narrative arc with character introduction, conflict, and resolution that convey a strong moral message. The story also employs natural symbols, such as *Gunung Rinjani* and Lake *Segara Anak*, to reinforce its spiritual significance and connection to nature.

Traditional storytellers often use effective 'Strategic Competence,' as seen in the *Gunung Rinjani* tale, where metaphors and analogies are frequently repeated to ensure that the 'listeners' understand and remember the message being conveyed.

When addressing audiences of varying ages or backgrounds, the storyteller can adapt their delivery to maintain attention and match the audience's level of understanding. In this context, certain metaphorical phrases are repeated to reinforce meaning and provide a deeper insight into the *Sasak* community's spiritual connection with nature and their traditions. These metaphors play a crucial role in conveying the moral messages and cultural values embedded in the story.

In the context of this story, the research team provides examples of repeated metaphorical phrases found in the *Gunung Rinjani* tale:

- a. This volcano is believed to be the dwelling place of gods and ancestral spirits. This metaphorical expression portrays *Gunung Rinjani* not just as a geological formation but as a spiritual entity with profound significance for the *Sasak* community. It illustrates how nature is perceived not only in its physical aspect but also in its spiritual and religious dimensions.
- b. *Segara Anak* was formed from the tears of *Dewi Anjani*, who wept upon seeing the environmental damage caused by humans. This metaphor depicts the crater lake (*Segara Anak*) as a manifestation of *Dewi Anjani's* sorrow over the environmental destruction wrought by humanity. The "tears of the goddess," which are sacred, then become a source of life for the flora and fauna around the lake. This conveys a strong moral message (Ding et al. 2024) about the importance of protecting the environment. The environmental damage caused by humans evokes deep sadness in the guardian deity of nature, in this case, *Dewi Anjani*. This metaphor reminds listeners that their actions have significant impacts on the balance of nature and that they must take responsibility for preserving the environment.

- c. *Dewi Anjani* received a revelation that she was assigned to maintain the balance of nature in *Lombok*. This metaphor underscores the role of *Gunung Rinjani* as a spiritual guardian responsible for the ecological balance on the island of *Lombok*. *Dewi Anjani*, who is believed to reside at the mountain's peak, is thought to possess the power to control the weather and protect the island from natural disasters. This illustrates the close relationship between humans and nature, where nature is not merely exploited but also respected and treated as a living entity as part of religious and spiritual expressions in daily life (Knibbe and Kupari 2020). The reverence for the mountain as a spiritual guardian teaches the importance of living in harmony with nature and not disrupting the existing balance.
- d. *Segara Anak* is also believed to possess healing powers, and its water is often used in traditional ceremonies for blessing and purification. This metaphor portrays *Segara Anak* as a lifegiving source that provides healing and spiritual strength to the *Sasak* community. The lake is not merely a physical location but also a symbol of health, purity, and blessing. Water from the lake is used in various traditional ceremonies for blessing and purification, highlighting its significance in the spiritual and cultural life of the community. This metaphor reminds listeners of the values of health and purity, and how ritual practices can influence and maintain spiritual and physical balance (Maia, Daldegan-Bueno, and Tófoli 2021).

All the *Sasak* folktales on the island of *Lombok* are clear examples of how oral tradition plays a crucial role in *Sasak* society. Using Dell Hymes' theory of 'Cultural Competence,' we can see that these stories serve not only as entertainment but also as tools for conveying important cultural, moral, and spiritual values.

Myths are an essential part of the oral tradition and cultural heritage of the *Sasak* community on *Lombok* Island. These stories not only provide entertainment but also reinforce the cultural identity and spiritual beliefs of the community. An example of this is the myth of *Dewi Rengganis*.

*Dewi Rengganis* is the goddess of beauty and fertility in *Sasak* mythology. She is believed to bring good fortune and fertility to those who worship her sincerely. The tale of *Dewi Rengganis* is often associated with agricultural rituals and harvests, where the community performs traditional ceremonies to seek blessings and bountiful crops. The story of *Dewi Rengganis* teaches the importance of gratitude and maintaining a harmonious relationship with nature.

The presence of *Dewi Rengganis* in the oral tradition of the *Sasak* community holds not only aesthetic value but also contains significant spiritual and social values crucial for daily life. In *Sasak* mythology, she is often depicted as a beautiful and loving figure, playing a key role in regulating soil fertility and ensuring successful harvests. *Dewi Rengganis*'s presence highlights the important role of women in the agrarian aspects of *Sasak* life.

Therefore, the story of *Dewi Rengganis* plays a vital role in the cultural education of the *Sasak* community. Through these stories, younger generations learn about history, moral values, and local wisdom. This myth also serves as a reminder of the importance of preserving the traditions and customs inherited from their ancestors.

### **Analysis of the *Rengganis* Story Based on Dell Hymes' Theory**

Dell Hymes' theory, which relates to the ethnography of communication, focuses on how language and communication are used within specific cultural contexts. Hymes proposed that understanding communication within a society requires examining the complex cultural and social contexts that influence communication practices (Hymes 2020a). His theory emphasizes aspects such as participants, goals, forms, content, interactional norms, and the outcomes of communication.

In the context of the discourse surrounding *Dewi Rengganis* in *Sasak* mythology, we can apply Dell Hymes' theory to analyze how this myth functions within *Sasak* society and how communication about *Dewi Rengganis* reflects and influences their cultural and social values.

From the perspective of the ethnography of communication proposed by Dell Hymes, the stories and rituals related to *Dewi Rengganis* can be analyzed through several key elements. First, the element of Setting and Scene. The ceremonies and stories about *Dewi Rengganis* are usually held in sacred places such as temples or rice fields. These locations are chosen because they hold deep spiritual significance for the *Sasak* community.

Second, the element of Participants. The ceremony involves all members of the community, from traditional elders to children. Each member has a specific role, either as an active participant in the ceremony or as a listener to the stories. Third, the element of Ends. The purpose of the ceremony is to seek blessings, maintain soil fertility, and strengthen social cohesion. By performing these ceremonies, the community hopes to achieve bountiful harvests and preserve harmony within the community.

Fourth, the element of Act Sequence. The ceremony includes the preparation of offerings, prayers, and the performance of the ritual itself. These stages are carried out systematically and sequentially to ensure the ceremony proceeds with reverence. Fifth, the element of Key. The tone and spirit of the ceremony are characterized by respect and gratitude. Every action and word spoken during the ritual reflects a deep sense of honor and appreciation towards *Dewi Rengganis*.

Sixth, the element of Instrumentalities. In this ceremony, traditional musical instruments, offerings, and the local language are used. These tools and media help create a sacred atmosphere and reinforce the spiritual meaning of the ritual. Seventh, the element of Norms. The norms observed in this ceremony include manners and respect for tradition. Participants are expected to follow the established procedures and honor each stage of the ritual.

Finally, the element of Genre. The genre of this ceremony is a sacred ritual. This form of discourse involves symbolic elements and profound rites, serving as a means of communication that encapsulates deep cultural and spiritual significance.

By understanding these elements, we can see how the stories and rituals about *Dewi Rengganis* function within the *Sasak* cultural context. Through these ceremonies and stories, the *Sasak* people not only celebrate their cultural identity but also uphold the moral and social values (Puspitasari et al. 2021) inherited from their ancestors.

Applying Dell Hymes' theory to the folklore about *Dewi Rengganis* allows us to gain a deeper understanding of how this myth operates within the *Sasak* culture. This theory helps us recognize that communication through myths and rituals is not just about conveying information, but also about reinforcing social bonds, teaching cultural values, and maintaining the balance between humans and nature.

Based on the research conducted, here are the key findings presented by the research team: a). The Importance of Effective Communication: Dell Hymes' concept of "communicative competence" (1980) emphasizes that communication skills encompass not only linguistic aspects but also an understanding of the social, cultural, and situational contexts in which language is used. This finding demonstrates that the *Sasak* language plays a crucial role in conveying and preserving cultural values and religious beliefs from one generation to the next. b). Contribution to Literature and Research: This study contributes new insights into how language plays a role in preserving cultural heritage and religious beliefs. By expanding the understanding of oral traditions within the context of the *Sasak* indigenous community, this research provides a foundation for further studies and the development of more effective policies for preserving cultural and religious richness.

## CONCLUSION

This article asserts that language plays a fundamental role in preserving cultural heritage and religious beliefs within the *Sasak* indigenous community on Lombok Island, with a focus on oral traditions. Through an integrated approach using Dell Hymes' communication theory, this research

highlights the importance of "communicative competence," which encompasses linguistic abilities and an understanding of social and cultural contexts.

The findings of this research indicate that the Sasak language serves as a vital tool for communication in preserving and transmitting cultural values and religious beliefs from generation to generation. Oral traditions, such as folk tales, legends, and myths, function as an effective medium for educating young people about the moral and spiritual values that are essential in daily life. These traditions also play a key role in strengthening the cultural identity of the Sasak people, positioning them as guardians of a cultural heritage that has endured for centuries and continues to shape their identity and values.

Language serves as the primary medium for transmitting cultural and spiritual values from one generation to the next. The study demonstrates that, through folklore, myths, and legends, the Sasak community has successfully maintained its cultural and spiritual identity despite the threats posed by modernization and globalization. In this context, the main implications of the research findings are as follows: **Preserving Cultural Identity:** The Sasak language plays a vital role in safeguarding the cultural identity of the Sasak community. Through oral traditions such as folklore and traditional songs, moral and spiritual values are passed down to younger generations. This study suggests that the loss of the Sasak language would result in the erosion of a significant portion of the community's cultural identity, which has been preserved for centuries. Therefore, efforts to preserve the language and oral traditions must be intensified, particularly through formal and informal educational programs.

**The Importance of Education and Cultural Policy:** This research emphasizes the urgent need to integrate knowledge of the Sasak language and oral traditions into educational curricula. This can help preserve local culture and educate younger generations about the importance of their traditions. Educational and cultural policies that support the preservation of language and oral traditions are crucial to ensuring the continuity of this cultural heritage. Strengthening collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and local communities is essential for creating sustainable programs.

**Adapting to Modernization:** Modernization and globalization present significant challenges to the preservation of oral traditions, as younger generations are increasingly influenced by popular culture and digital technology. The study implies the need for innovation in how oral traditions and language are preserved and promoted. For instance, creating digital documentation or introducing oral traditions through digital platforms could be effective solutions to engage younger generations and maintain cultural relevance in the modern era.

**Social and Community Impact:** Oral traditions in the Sasak community not only serve as entertainment but also as tools to strengthen social cohesion and solidarity among community members. The social implication of this research is that preserving language and oral traditions can reinforce social bonds within the Sasak community and foster a sense of togetherness and collective identity. Additionally, these traditions can strengthen relationships between humans and nature, as reflected in stories related to the environment.

**Contribution to Global Research and Policy:** This study also makes significant contributions to the global discourse on the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, as recognized by UNESCO. The broader implication of this research is that the preservation model applied in the Sasak community could serve as an example for other indigenous communities worldwide facing similar challenges. This underscores that a community-based approach, which values the importance of language and oral traditions, can be an effective strategy for preserving global cultural heritage in the modern era.

On the other hand, the challenges oral traditions face in the context of modernization and globalization must be addressed. The younger generation, increasingly exposed to popular culture and digital technology, often neglects the values and practices of local oral traditions. Therefore, it is important for stakeholders, including the government and educational institutions, to integrate

education about oral traditions and the *Sasak* language into both formal and informal curricula. This will not only aid in preserving culture but also strengthen the sense of community and identity within the community.

Moving forward, this research opens up opportunities for further exploration of the relationship between language, culture, and religion in the context of other indigenous communities in Indonesia and worldwide. Future studies could examine the impact of social change and technology on the preservation of oral traditions and explore how language and traditions can adapt to meet contemporary challenges. By understanding the role of language in preserving culture and religious beliefs, we can better appreciate and support efforts to protect the rich and diverse cultural heritage in various communities worldwide.

Thus, it is important to emphasize that language is not only a tool for communication but also a bridge that connects generations, cultures, and beliefs that shape the identity of a community. This research provides a strong foundation for understanding and preserving the existing cultural richness, while also encouraging deeper and more meaningful intercultural dialogue. In conclusion, the findings of this study have significant implications for cultural preservation efforts, both locally and globally. A comprehensive approach is needed, including educational policy, cultural preservation, and technological innovation, to ensure that the cultural heritage and religious beliefs of the *Sasak* community endure for future generations.

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### Informed Consent

The authors have obtained informed consent from all participants.

### Conflict of Interest

The author states there is no conflict of interest.

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