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MAMACA **The Tradition of Reading Arabic Texts from an Ethnolinguistic- Aesthetic Perspective**

Anisah Isnaini
julie.anisah@gmail.com
IAI Miftahul Ulum Pamekasan

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the Mamaca tradition within the context of reading Arabic texts from an ethnolinguistic-aesthetic perspective. The research approach used is literature-based, with content analysis applied for data interpretation. The findings show that the Mamaca tradition, from an ethnolinguistic-aesthetic perspective, functions not only as a ritual of reading Arabic texts but also strengthens the collective identity and religious perception of the community. Through the synergy of text (layang), reader (pamaos), and translator (paneges), Arabic in Mamaca is regarded as sacred, creating a profound spiritual experience while adapting Islamic values to local culture. This tradition merges linguistic beauty with spiritual meaning, enriching the cultural identity of Madura within an Islamic context.

Keywords: *Mamaca, Reading Skills, Arabic Texts, Ethnolinguistics, Aesthetic.*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tradisi Mamaca dalam konteks pembacaan teks Arab dari perspektif etnolinguistik-estetik. Pendekatan penelitian yang digunakan bersifat berbasis kepustakaan, dengan analisis isi diterapkan untuk menginterpretasi data. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tradisi Mamaca, dari perspektif etnolinguistik-estetik, tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai ritual pembacaan teks Arab, tetapi juga memperkuat identitas kolektif dan persepsi keagamaan masyarakat. Melalui sinergi antara teks (layang), pembaca (pamaos), dan penerjemah (paneges), bahasa Arab dalam Mamaca dipandang sebagai sesuatu yang sakral, menciptakan pengalaman spiritual yang mendalam sekaligus mengadaptasikan nilai-nilai Islam ke dalam budaya lokal. Tradisi ini menggabungkan keindahan bahasa dengan makna spiritual, sehingga memperkaya identitas budaya Madura dalam konteks Islam.

Kata kunci: Mamaca, Keterampilan Membaca, Teks Arab, Etnolinguistik, Estetika.

INTRODUCTION

The reading of Arabic texts holds significant spiritual and social meaning for the Madurese community. Although most people do not fully master Arabic linguistically, the tradition of reading religious texts such as the Qur'an, prayers, and classical books remains a respected routine activity. This reading is often performed on various occasions, ranging from religious events such as study circles (pengajian), the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday (Maulid Nabi), to traditional ceremonies filled with religious values. (Husnawati et al. 2023).

The routine of reading Arabic texts in Madura is inseparable from the long history of Islam's spread on the island. Islam entered Madura through trade networks, preaching, and scholars since the 15th century, which later played a significant role in shaping the religious identity of the Madurese community. (Arifin, Suyitno, Rochmiatun, Thoha, et al. 2023). One of the legacies that has endured to this day is the tradition of reading Arabic texts, such as the Qur'an, prayers, and yellow books (classical texts), which have become a part of daily religious routines.

Reading in the context of Arabic language learning, is a fundamental skill that plays a crucial role in mastering the language. The ability to read independently allows individuals to deepen their understanding of the language's structure, vocabulary, and grammar. (Samsudi, Hasan Ruzakki, and Andrian Firdaus 2023). In Arabic language learning, reading skills often serve as a gateway to mastering other abilities, such as speaking, writing, and understanding religious texts. (Busiri 2020).

The habit of reading Arabic texts, integrated with the cultural and social factors of the Madurese community, has given rise to a unique tradition known as Mamaca. (Dewi et al. 2020). This tradition is not merely a practice of reading, but an expression of culture and religion that combines Islamic elements with local Madurese wisdom. Mamaca stands as evidence of how Arabic, as a language of religion, can adapt and become deeply rooted in the social and cultural context of a community, creating a tradition that holds both aesthetic and spiritual value. (Hidayatullah 2020).

The study of Mamaca as part of the socio-intellectual tradition of Madura is not limited to the present. Dana et al. conducted a similar study titled Conservation and Development Model of Mamaca in Pamekasan Madura in 2023. The findings of

this research show that Mamaca is seen as a practice capable of strengthening national character and social harmony. The participants take turns reading and chanting verses that contain parts of the Mahabharata and Ramayana epics, as well as stories of the Prophets in Islam, conveying norms and values of goodness related to teachings of wisdom. This study serves as a model for preserving and developing the noble cultural values of the community. (I Wayan Dana, Prasetya, and Anggraeni 2023). Arifin et al. also explored the same theme in their 2023 study titled *Tradisi Mamaca Madura Dalam Tinjauan Falsafah Dan Teori Peradaban Islam*. This study found that the Mamaca tradition in Madura strengthens solidarity through religious values. Civilization is formed from a culture rooted in solidarity and religion, yet it follows a lifecycle that may lead to its decline. Currently, Mamaca faces challenges from technology and a lack of interest from the younger generation. (Arifin, Suyitno, Rochmiatun, and Thoha 2023). Although both of these studies focus on Mamaca as their main theme, they primarily concentrate on cultural and social aspects of the community. In contrast, the current research examines Mamaca as part of Madurese culture from a linguistic perspective, emphasizing its aesthetic value.

In the context of ethnolinguistics, Mamaca highlights how the Madurese community has adopted and adapted the Arabic language into the local cultural context. Although most of the community does not fully understand Arabic, the texts read in Mamaca still carry significance. The aesthetic meaning of Mamaca is manifested in the way these texts are recited. The reading is done with a beautiful rhythm, arranged in patterns of intonation and uniform sound waves. This recitation is usually performed in a solemn atmosphere, with a slow, regular, and emotional rhythm, creating a profound spiritual experience for the listeners.

This article aims to examine how the foundations of Arabic linguistics and culture integrate into a single aesthetic culture within the Madurese community. Through this analysis, the article seeks to offer new insights in interdisciplinary studies (ethnolinguistic-aesthetic perspective), highlighting the interaction between linguistics and aesthetics in oral traditions.

METHOD

This research uses a library research approach, gathering all research materials from written sources. The role of the researcher as the primary instrument in library research is crucial in determining the data to be collected at the initial stage. Generally, the stages of this research, such as data collection, analysis, and reflection, are divided into two major groups based on the data sources: primary and secondary sources. These data sources include both formal and material objects. The primary sources in this study are data taken from scholarly literature published in nationally accredited scientific journals, as well as reputable and non-reputable international journals. This literature is directly related to the main topics, namely Arabic language reading skills and the Mamaca or macapat culture.

The data analysis technique used in this research is content analysis, which can be defined as a systematic approach to interpreting the meaning of texts (written sources) through the processes of classification and categorization. According to Krippendorff, content analysis is a set of research techniques used to make reproducible and valid inferences from data based on its context. This technique allows the researcher to identify specific patterns in the messages contained within the texts, both through quantitative analysis (counting word or concept frequencies) and qualitative analysis (exploring the underlying meaning of the texts). (Krippendorff, K., 2004)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Mamaca as a Tradition of Reading Arabic Texts

Etymologically, the term Mamaca comes from the root word maca in Madurese, which means "to read," providing an essential foundation for understanding this tradition as a distinctive reading activity. (Rifqi 2018). Mamaca is not just about reading, but involves several important elements that offer deep cultural and spiritual value. The three main aspects of the Mamaca tradition are: the text being read (kitab or layang), the reader (pamaos), and the translator (paneges). (I Wayan& Dana and Kusmayati 2018). These three key elements of Mamaca are as follows:

First, Layang (text), In the Mamaca tradition, the text being read is typically in the form of a kitab or layang, referring to Arabic-language manuscripts, often containing prayers, hymns of praise, or stories related to Islamic values. These texts not only serve a religious function but also form a part of the wealth of Islamic literature.(I Wayan& Dana and Kusmayati 2018)

Second, Pamaos or the reader in the Mamaca tradition is an individual who possesses the skill to read and chant the Arabic texts. The role of the pamaos is central because they act as a bridge between the text and the audience.(I Wayan& Dana and Kusmayati 2018)

Third, Paneges or the translator in the Mamaca tradition plays an important role in bridging the meaning of the Arabic text with the understanding of the community that is not fluent in Arabic.(I Wayan& Dana and Kusmayati 2018).

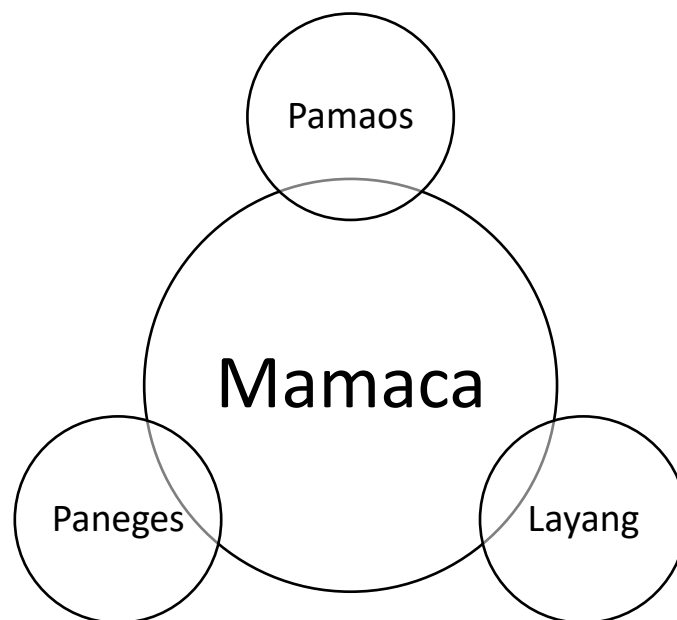


Figure 1: Components of Mamaca

When examined closely, the three elements—text, reader, and translator—function synergistically in the execution of the Mamaca tradition. The text serves as the source of teachings and spiritual reflection, the reader ensures the message is delivered with deep appreciation, and the translator makes the message comprehensible and relevant within the context of the local culture. The Mamaca

tradition is not merely a reading practice, but an integration of language, culture, and religion that strengthens the collective identity of the Madurese community.

Etnolinguistics of Mamaca as a Tradition of Reading Arabic Texts

The Mamaca tradition viewed from the perspective of Ethnolinguistics, can be illustrated through the lens of Linguistic Relativity (the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis), which suggests that language influences an individual's thought process and perception of the world.(Wedasuwari 2020). According to this theory, speakers of different languages perceive and interpret the world in distinct ways. For instance, the differences in vocabulary related to color in various languages can affect how individuals recognize and distinguish between colors.(Jufrizal, Zul Amri, and Refnaldi 2007).

The Ethnolinguistics of Mamaca, according to Linguistic Relativity, provides a strong perspective for understanding the Mamaca tradition in Madura. The Arabic language in Mamaca is not just a language used, but also a medium that shapes the worldview, religious perceptions, and collective identity of the Madurese people.(Rifa'i 2020). The values of Mamaca according to this theory are seen as follows:

1. Language as a Sacred Medium and Spirituality

From the perspective of linguistic relativity, Arabic in Mamaca shapes the way the Madurese people experience their spiritual life. Words in Arabic, understood as forms of worship such as prayers, dhikr, and Quranic recitations, create a deeper religious perception where every word and pronunciation is regarded as having sacred value and bringing blessings. In this practice, Arabic does not merely serve as a medium for speech, but as a vessel for embedding Islamic spiritual values and strengthening the religious beliefs of the Madurese people.

The use of Arabic in Mamaca brings a sacred effect to rituals because it is believed to carry divine values that cannot be fully translated into the local language. The Madurese people understand and value that Arabic contains "blessings" and moral messages with spiritual weight, serving to purify the heart and strengthen their spiritual connection with God.

2. Collective Identity

Linguistic relativity posits that language influences an individual's identity. In the context of Mamaca, Arabic functions as a unifier of collective identity, and its use becomes a symbol of unity that strengthens social and religious ties within the community. Arabic in Mamaca acts as a symbol connecting the Madurese people with their Islamic spiritual heritage on a deeper level. Since the language is considered sacred, its use in rituals carries a broader significance beyond merely reciting religious texts. It becomes part of the culture and a symbol of togetherness, reinforcing social bonds within the community. When people gather to listen to Mamaca, they experience a collective identity as Muslims, coming together to honor and internalize Islamic values, transcending their ethnic identity as Madurese.

3. Language Structure and the Formation of Ritual Perception

Linguistic relativity explains that the structure of language shapes the thought patterns of its speakers. Arabic in Mamaca presents a grammatical structure that is orderly, rich in metaphors, and utilizes a style of language full of symbolic meaning. This stimulates the audience to experience a profound sense of spirituality, where the rhythm of the recitation accompanies the ritual process with a sacred atmosphere. For the listeners, the rhythmic structure of Arabic helps create a reverent and contemplative ambiance, ultimately deepening their religious experience.

4. Cultural Adaptation and Social Values in Language

As a translator, Paneges plays a role in adapting the Arabic text to the cultural context of Madura. This adaptation allows for a new interpretation that resonates with the social life of the Madurese community. Values such as respect, politeness, and reverence for religious teachings are conveyed through the language familiar to the people, making the Mamaca ritual a form of honoring religious traditions within a local flavor. Linguistic relativity theory, in this case, demonstrates that language serves as a tool for adapting cultural values. People not only communicate but also transform these values into their everyday lives.

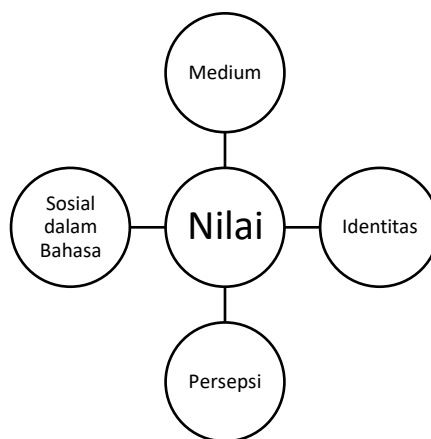


Figure 2: The Values of Mamaca from the Perspective of Linguistic Relativity

The explanation above clarifies that the ethnolinguistic perspective of the Mamaca tradition, viewed through the lens of linguistic relativity, conveys a strong message that Arabic as a medium shapes the way the Madurese perceive religion, identity, and social relationships. The use of Arabic in Mamaca strengthens sacred religious perceptions, reinforces collective identity, creates a spiritual understanding pattern in rituals, and adapts Islamic values within the cultural context of Madura.

From a linguistic communication standpoint, spiritual messages and aesthetic rhythms are elements that enrich the dimension of language in the context of oral traditions. Spiritual messages provide profound meaning that connects religious values or local wisdom with daily life. Meanwhile, aesthetic rhythms, often manifested through the use of intonation patterns, rhymes, or word repetition, create a unique attraction that makes the messages easier to remember and be received by listeners.

Conclusion

The Mamaca tradition in Madura has deep cultural, spiritual, and social dimensions, reflected through the use of Arabic as the primary medium. The Mamaca tradition is not merely an activity of reading texts but a ritual involving three essential elements: the text (*layang*), the reader (*pamaos*), and the translator (*paneges*). The synergy of these three components strengthens the essence of the

tradition as a means to deepen spiritual understanding and collective identity. Through the ethnolinguistic perspective and the theory of linguistic relativity, Arabic in Mamaca is not only a tool for communication but also shapes sacred religious perceptions and solidifies the community's identity. Additionally, the rhythmic and symbolic structure of the Arabic language helps create an aesthetic atmosphere that enhances the ritual experience.

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