

# Verbal and Non Verbal Expression of Salt Farmers In Gedangan Village, Rembang Regency (An Ethnolinguistic Study)

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**Abstract:** Salt farmers are a fairly unique profession which is usually pursued by coastal communities, for example by the people of Gedangan Village in Rembang Regency. The success in salt farming cannot be separated from the influence of Javanese language and culture in the form of verbal and non-verbal expressions. This study aims to explain the effect of verbal and non-verbal expressions on the success of the salt farmers in Gedangan Village by using ethnographic methods with an ethnoscience analysis model. The results show that there are verbal expressions in the form of words and a series of sounds in Arabic and Javanese languages which function as prayers addressed to God and the figure of Mbok Randha Gedangan who is believed to be the ancestor of Gedangan Village. The verbal expression mentioned is also accompanied by various non-verbal behaviors. Both types of expression are believed to affect the results and smoothness of salt farming activities by salt farmers from Gedangan Village.

**Keywords:** *verbal and nonverbal expression, salt farmers, ethnolinguistic.*

## Introduction

Java Island which is geographically located in the Indonesian territory can be said to be an island that is quite rich in cultural diversity. One of the many cultures that have existed and is very well known even to foreign countries is Javanese culture. People who for generations used the Javanese language in a variety of dialects in their daily lives, and reside in Central Java or East Java, as well as those originating from these regions according to cultural anthropology, are of Javanese ethnicity (Herusatoto, 2003: 37). The richness of Javanese culture is not only in the form of Javanese language used by its speakers, but also includes various forms of community tradition in which the use of Javanese language itself cannot be separated from.

Javanese language and culture are also maintained by some people on the north coast of Java, one of which is in the area of Rembang Regency. As one of the districts located close to the Java Sea, it is not surprising that some of the people worked as a salt farmer. This profession is considered to be fairly unique. Generally, ponds are filled with various aquaculture animals such as fish, lobster, shrimp and so on. However, in some areas on the north coast of Java, particularly in Rembang, could be found ponds that are only filled with seawater to, later on, be converted into the salt which may be used daily as a mixture for food consumed by everyone.

Rembang Regency could be said to have a long coastline. As a result of such geographical conditions, several points that can be used for salt farming can be found, for example, those carried out by the Gedangan Village community. Although modern times come, it does not make everyone forget the language and culture that their ancestors inherited. Those are the condition shown by Gedangan villagers who are salt farmers. The Javanese language and culture used as the background are still held firmly until now, evidenced by the use of Javanese language as a means of communication, both when socializing in residential areas or when

doing activities in the salt farm. Also, some Javanese traditions are still carried out at certain times.

Javanese language as a communication medium for salt farmers is included in verbal expressions, while the Javanese traditions carried out are included in nonverbal expressions. The verbal expression by salt farmers is not only horizontal, but also vertical. That is, Javanese language is not only used to communicate with each other but is also used to communicate with natural deities, namely God and other figures who are believed to be their ancestors. These verbal expressions are also supported by various behaviors that are manifested by various symbols as nonverbal expressions. This research takes topics related to those two expressions. The verbal expressions as the object of this research are words and sentences from Javanese and Arabic languages that serve as a prayer for the two figures mentioned earlier. Nonverbal expressions in the form of knowledge systems and rituals conducted by salt farmers in Gedangan Village are also the object of this research because these two expressions cannot be separated from each other and both are trusted by salt farmers in Gedangan Village can affect their process and success in salt farming.

Research topics on the influence of verbal and nonverbal expressions on the success of salt farmers in Gedangan Village were chosen for several reasons. First, the researcher found some uniqueness in the form of linguistic phenomena resulting from a combination of Javanese and Islamic culture which is demonstrated through verbal and nonverbal expressions carried out by salt farmers from Gedangan Village for natural rulers they believed to exist. Second, there is local wisdom in the form of belief in the figure of an occult ruler who raises certain customs and traditions among the salt farmers of Gedangan Village. Third, a research on the influence of verbal and nonverbal expressions on the success of salt farmers in Gedangan Village, Rembang Regency has never been done by researchers before, so the novelty part as a good research requirement will be fulfilled.

Research related to verbal and nonverbal expressions is indeed not the first research done. Putro (2016) has conducted the same research in the field of public health. His research was written in a thesis entitled 'Verbal and Nonverbal Behavior in the Health Field of the Community in Tambran Kidul Hamlet, Samin District, Gunungkidul District (Ethnolinguistic Study)'. As a result, there was a view of health and illness. The people there have verbal and nonverbal behavior in the treatment and prevention of illnesses in the form of text, co-text, and context. In addition, there are also found reasons for verbal and nonverbal behavior, as well as a variety of mindset and outlook on health.

Verbal and nonverbal expressions also became one of the research formulas from Rais (2017) written in his book entitled 'Local Wisdom in Javanese Language and Culture: A Case Study of Fishermen Communities in the South Coast of Kebumen, Central Java (Ethnolinguistic Studies)'. One of the results of the study succeeded in explaining the various verbal expressions which contain local wisdom which was reflected in various aspects of fishermen life at the research location. In addition to verbal expressions, various nonverbal expressions are also explained which are reflected in *ubarampe* and not *ubarampe* offering.

Some of the studies mentioned above have become important references for this study. The study entitled 'The Influence of Verbal and Nonverbal Expressions on the Success of Salt Farmers in Gedangan Village, Rembang Regency (An Ethnolinguistic Study)' is expected to be able to explain the various verbal and nonverbal expressions that exist and are trusted by the Gedangan Village people who work as salt farmers can affect the success of the profession they live.

## Method

Research on the influence of verbal and nonverbal expressions on the success of salt farmers in Gedangan Village, Rembang Regency (an ethnolinguistic study) is included in the type of qualitative descriptive research. According to Sutopo (in Rais, 2017: 66-67), the method is used to reveal a variety of qualitative information accompanied by descriptions that are researched, accurate, and full of taste and nuance. This study also utilizes the ethnographic method with an analysis model using the ethnoscience model. To be able to reveal the various meanings contained in verbal and nonverbal expressions of salt farmers, the researchers used phenomenological thinking strategies. This way of thinking emphasizes various subjective aspects of human behavior in order to understand how and what meanings are formed from various events in their daily lives (Sutopo, 2006: 27-28).

The data used as research material are divided into two types, namely primary data and secondary data. Data included as primary data are in the form of (1) oral data in the form of vocabulary reflected in verbal and nonverbal expressions of salt farmers in Gedangan Village, Rembang Regency; (2) research data obtained from key informants and selected informants; (3) research data in the form of language and cultural events that occur in the salt farming community in Gedangan Village, Rembang Regency. The primary data is taken from primary data sources, namely: (1) folklore, fairy tales and speeches from the people working as salt farmers from Gedangan Village; (2) selected source who truly understand verbal and nonverbal expressions among the salt farmers of Gedangan Village, and (3) various language and cultural events that occur in the context of their lives. The secondary data includes various writings in the article, reference books and others that relate to the language and cultural phenomena of Salt farmers, particularly the salt farmers in the area of study. Thus eventually, various documents containing writings on the phenomenon of language and culture of salt farmers, especially from Gedangan Village were secondary data sources in this study.

The sampling technique used was purposive sampling technique. In addition, snowball sampling techniques are also used. This technique is used because the researcher did not know the informant previously. The technique is done by trying to find as much information as possible from the first informant and then asking him about the next informant who understands more and can be found to complete the information that cannot be obtained from the first informant. And so on and so forth for the second, third, and subsequent informants. This process is continuously done until a complete data is acquired (Sutopo, 2006: 45-46), especially those related to verbal and nonverbal expressions and their influence on salt farmers in Gedangan Village.

For data collection techniques, researchers used participant observation techniques and interviews. The purpose of the participant observation technique is that researchers enter the situation of the salt farmers in Gedangan Village and actively act and play the role of observer and also as a participant to examine the research data needed (Rais, 2017: 70). According to Spradley (in Rais, 2017: 71), the implementation of participant observation is a peculiarity of ethnographic field research methods which in this context are utilized in ethnolinguistic studies that are holistic-integrative, have a thick description and qualitative analysis in nature in order to acquire the native's point of view. Various data that have been obtained through data collection techniques are then validated by triangulation techniques. The data that has been validated is then analyzed to find leads to the influence of verbal and nonverbal expressions on the salt farmers of Gedangan Village studied from an ethnolinguistic point of view.

## Results and Discussion

Culture as a behavior and the results of behavior obtained by means of learning and all of it are arranged in community life (Koentjaraningrat, 1990: 45). Language is a system that is part of that culture. Between one region and another, there exist culture and language that are very interesting to explore deeper. Both phenomena can be studied from an ethnolinguistic point of view. The study of ethnolinguistics will be presented as a study of cultural resources and speaking as a cultural practice (Duranti, 1997: 2). So through this ethnolinguistic point of view, language can be explored in relation to the speakers' culture, culture in a broad sense (Suhandono, 2011: 1).

Gedangan as one of the areas in Rembang Regency which incidentally is close to the north coast of Java has a local wisdom in the form of language and culture. This local wisdom can be found in one of the professions that are quite unique, namely the salt farming profession. They have special vocabularies that mostly use the Javanese vocabulary, which might sound a little strange to ordinary people. In addition, some of them, especially elderly salt farmers, still adhere to Javanese customs and traditions which are realized through various behaviors included in nonverbal expressions. Both the verbal and nonverbal expressions used are believed to influence the process and the final results obtained in salt farming. The following will describe the forms of verbal and nonverbal expression used by Gedangan Village salt farmers and their influence on the success of salt farming.

### • The form of Verbal Expression of Salt Farmers in Gedangan Village, Rembang Regency

Verbal expressions that can be used by salt farmer communities in Gedangan Village, Rembang Regency are a form of local wisdom. The expression even appeared from the beginning and continued until the salt harvesting time. When starting to farm salt, some of them believe that there are certain times that can be counted before which will provide maximum salt yield. This behavior is an example of culture, which in this context is the culture of salt farmers in Gedangan Village. Culture is a set of general meanings that people use to manage the experience, explain what happened, and predict the future that will occur (Subroto, 2011: 17). The behavior shown by some salt farmers in choosing the day aims to choose *dina apik* [dinɔpɪʔ] 'good day'. The process is called *petung* [petUŋ]. In Javanese culture, it is believed that each day has a weight, which between one and another is different. The weight of each day is termed *neptu* [nɛptu]. Poerwadarminto (1939) mentions that *neptu* is *ajining angka ing dina* 'number values in a day'.

The salt farmers in Gedangan Village who still believe *dina apik* will calculate the number of two *neptu*, namely *neptu pasaran* [nɛptu pasaran] and *neptu pitu* [nɛptupitu]. There are 5 *neptu pasaran* known by the Javanese community, namely: *legi* [lɛgi] with a value of 5, *pahing* [pahɪŋ] with a value of 9, *pon* [pɔn] with a value of 7, *wage* [wage] with a value of 4, and *kliwon* [kliwɔn] with value 8 (Hartono, 2013: 261). Whereas for *neptu pitu* are the days commonly referred to by the general public. Those days in the salt farming community as one of the Javanese speakers in Gedangan Village are called: *Nga'ad* [ŋaad] 'Sunday' with a value of 5, *Senen* [sɛnɛn] 'Monday' with a value of 4, *Selasa* [sɛlɔsɔ] 'Tuesday' with a value of 3, *Rebo* [rɛbo] 'Wednesday' with a value of 7, *Kemis* [kɛmɪs] 'Thursday' with a value of 8, *Jemuwah* [jɛmuwah] 'Friday' with a value of 6, and *Setu* [sɛtu] 'Saturday' with a value of 9 (Hartono, 2013: 261).

The sum of the *neptu pasaran* and *neptu pitu* are then calculated as the *tibane* [tibane] 'fall'. There are four forms of lingual units in the form of words which determine the good and bad of

the fall from a calculation of *neptu pasaran* and *neptu pitu*, the four of which, sequentially: *sandhang* [sanDan], *pangan* [paŋan], *lara* [lOrɔ], and *pati* [pati]. *Sandhang* lexically means *panganggo* 'clothes' (Poerwadarminto, 1939) while *pangan* means *sarananing urip* 'means for life' (Poerwadarminto, 1939). If the result of the calculation falls on the word *sandhang* and *pangan*, it means that the day is considered 'good' for salt farmers who believe in it to start salt farming activities. However, if the calculation results *tiba* 'fall' on the words *lara* and *pati*, then it is believed that the day is not good if it is used to initiate salt farming activities. *Lara* is lexically defined as *nandhang ora kepenak ing badane* 'feeling uncomfortable in the body' (Poerwadarminto, 1939), while *pati* is interpreted as *pisahing nyawa (sukma) saka ing badan wadhag* 'the separating of life (soul) from the body' (Poerwadarminto, 1939). There are several combinations of *neptu pasaran* and *neptu pitu* which are believed to be *dina apik* to start salt farming activities. The combination is, for example, *Ngaad Kliwon, Jemuwah Kliwon, Ngaad Legi* and others.<sup>1</sup>

The words used in determining the *dina apik* to start salt farming indicate the existence of a linguistic phenomenon which involves the meaning of a word, namely associative meaning. Chaer (1995: 72) mentions that associative meaning concerns something outside of language. Associative meaning is also used by the language community to express other concepts, which have similarities with nature, circumstances, or characteristics that exist in the concept of the origin of the word or Lexis (Kasopa, 2017: 3). The word *sandhang* and *pangan* in the process of *petung dina apik* in the early days of salt farming is associated with good conditions, because *sandhang* and *pangan* are two basic human needs, in other words anyone must have the desire to fulfill these, as expressed in *mergi tiyang tani kangge mangan kalih ngge nyandhang* "because people farm to eat and buy clothes".

In contrast to the words *lara* and *pati*, who are associated with bad conditions. The ugliness associated in both words is due to a universal mindset that all humans, in general, do not want to feel these two things. That is, the verbal expressions embodied in four words that are used as indicators in determining the *dina apik* for salt farmers in Gedangan Village are not just words that are used for granted. These words contain the life view of the salt farmers who become its adherents and certainly very possibly also contain their hopes for the conditions in the future, relating to their profession as salt farmers.

Some salt farmers in Gedangan Village, especially farmers who are considered old, also have other verbal expressions in the form of prayer, which are expressed through a sentence which they form in such a way from Javanese language vocabulary. Prayer is a request (hope, request, praise) to God (KBBI). Referring to this understanding, the salt farmers who have been mentioned previously did not only pray to God but also intended for other supernatural beings considered as ancestors of Gedangan Village. The following is a verbal expression in the form of prayers from several informants in this study.

(membaca basmallah...) Mbok Randha Gedangan kula badhe nyambut damel sareng, mugi-mugi dipunparingi along angsal kathah, saged sukses.

**Free translation:** '(reading basmallah ...) Mbok Randha Gedangan, I want to farm salt, hopefully, I get a lot, and can be successful '.

(membaca basmallah...) Sing mbahureksa bumi Gedangan mbok Randha (Gedangan), kaluntu mbah Dungkul nyuwun pangestu ndedungkul ngriki.

**Free translation:** '(reading basmallah ...) those who control the earth in Gedangan mbok Randha (Gedangan), also mbah Dungkul I beg your permission to *ndedungkul* here.'

Both verbal expressions in the form of prayer mentioned above besides showing linguistic phenomena also show cultural phenomena in salt farming activities. The transcription results above provide a fairly clear possibility of the existence of a two cultures combination, namely



the Islam and Javanese cultures. It can be seen from the prayer which begins with the reading of *basmallah* which in Islamic religious culture is highly recommended to be spoken before starting any activity. The influence of Javanese culture is more dominant in this verbal expression in the form of prayer, evidenced by the use of Javanese vocabulary in most of the above prayers.

As mentioned earlier, the prayers expressed by the salt farmers of Gedangan village are not only for God alone but also for other people who are considered as village ancestors. There is a folklore about the figure of *Mbok Randha Gedangan* which is a belief in the Gedangan village community, especially for those who work as salt farmers. It is said that *Mbok Randha Gedangan* was a powerful person who had the real name Sumini. She is a *randha* 'widow' who lives in an area that is now the territory of Gedangan Village. Because of her status as a widow, she became very sensitive to negative speeches, especially if the speech was related to widow status. As a result of this folklore, there is now a belief for anyone who enters the Gedangan Village area not to be *gaman gemet* [gaman gemet] 'do (something) carelessly'.

- **The form of Nonverbal Expression of Salt Farmers in Gedangan Village, Rembang Regency**

This study not only discusses the verbal expression of the salt farmers in the Gedangan village of Rembang Regency. Nonverbal expression as a complement to verbal expression was also found in salt farming activities by the salt farmers of Gedangan village. Nonverbal expression in this cultural context is manifested in the form of action to show gratitude towards the Almighty God. Just like verbal expressions in the form of prayer, actions taken as a form of nonverbal expression are also influenced by Islamic and Javanese cultures.

Nonverbal expressions influenced by Islamic culture are indicated by giving alms in the form of money to the mosque by salt farmers. This action is usually carried out after the completion of salt harvesting activities as a form of gratitude for the gifts that have been given by God so that salt farmers succeed in harvesting. There are no binding rules for the recipient mosque or the amount of alms that must be given, meaning that no matter where the mosque and whatever the nominal value it is accepted.

In addition, nonverbal expressions of Gedangan village salt farmers were also realized with the existence of *sedekah bumi Gedangan* activities. According to the informant, in ancient times the Gedangan villagers often used to come to a place said to be the hermitage of *Mbok Randha Gedangan* to ask for safety and smoothness, including safety and smoothness in salt farming activities. Usually, when they carry out these activities they bring *upet* [upət] to be burned and *sajen* 'offerings'. *Upet* is an object similar like *dami* 'rice tree' which is used to make smoke when asking for something in *Mbok Randha Gedangan's* hermitage. The materials used as offerings are in the form of *bucu* [bucu] complete with *gedhang* 'banana' and side dishes in the form of eggs and roasted chicken. The body parts used for offerings are limited to 4 parts only, namely: *sempol* 'thigh', *ceker* 'claw', *dhadha menthok* 'breast part' and *ndhas* 'head'.

When offerings are going to be placed in what is said to be the hermitage of *Mbok Randha Gedangan* there is hope expressed. The hope was expressed in *Mbok randha Gedangan aku nduwe karep arep sedekah bumi, wong Gedangan njaluk slamet aja ana alangan apa-apa sebab sampeyan sing ingkang ngreksa bumi Gedangan* 'Mbok Randha Gedangan, I have a desire to give alms, people in Gedangan ask for safety and no obstacles come because you are the ruler of Gedangan area'. Until now the origins of various symbols that are realized in the various *sajen* mentioned above is not certainly known. The people of Gedangan Village who still carry out the ritual are doing so based on the examples given by their parents only.

### • The Impact of Verbal and Nonverbal Expression for Salt Farmers in Gedangan Village

Verbal and nonverbal expressions that emerge in a community are a manifestation of concrete actions in safeguarding the customs and traditions being the local wisdom of the community. Just like what was done by some salt farmers in Gedangan village. Some of them still maintain the customs and traditions inherited from their predecessors. This behavior is able to create a stigma that if it is not done (the traditions) it will affect smoothness and results of what is done by the villagers.

The behavior of some salt farmers in Gedangan village in maintaining the customs and traditions can be seen firstly from how they choose the time to start salt farming. It has been explained in the previous discussion that there still are salt farmers who believe in *dina apik* 'good day'. For salt farmers who believe it, if the amount of *neptu pitu* and *pasaran* after being calculated falls on the word *pangan* or *sandhang*, the farmer will get success when the time to harvest salt come later, which results can be used for *mangan* and *nyandang* "eat and buy clothes". But if it turns out the count falls on the word *lara* or *pati* and the farmer continues to start salt farming, it is said that the farmer will experience bad luck which can even cause the crop to be not as expected.

Aside from *dina apik*, there is also something to do when starting the salt farming activity, which is praying. The ritual is carried out as a form of request to the rulers of the universe which in this context is God Almighty and also 'begs to bless' to the ancestor of Gedanganvillage called *Mbok Randha Gedangan*. There are some disturbances believed to occur to salt farmers of Gedangan village who deliberately did not perform the ritual. These disturbances include occult disturbances, natural disturbances in the form of rain, even causing '*asile boten wonten*' or crop failure. But the impact will be different if the salt farmers are unintentional or forget not to do the ritual by reading prayers. If that is the case, various disturbances as mentioned before will not befall the salt farmer.

### Conclusions

Various verbal and nonverbal expressions description of the salt farmers fromGedangan village illustrate that local wisdom can also be found there. Finally, after elaborating on what verbal and nonverbal expressions related to the profession as salt farmers, and how they affect those who believe it, some conclusions can be drawn.

First, salt farmers in Gedangan village have verbal expressions related to their way of determining the right time to start salt farming activities. These expressions contain their life views on the realization of words used as the guideline in choosing a good day. In addition, salt farmers in Gedangan village also have other verbal expressions which are manifested in the form of prayers that are routinely spoken when they start salt farming activities. This verbal expression in the form of prayer is related to the smoothness of the salt farming process and success when the harvest time came.

Second, the nonverbal expression is also found in the salt farming community in Gedangan village. These nonverbal expressions are realized through Javanese cultural rituals held in a place said to be the location of *Mbok Randha Gedangan*'s hermitage with various offerings. This nonverbal expression is carried out as a means to ask for smoothness as well as a form of gratitude to God and *sing ngreksa* '(one) who controlled' the territory of Gedangan village. In addition to nonverbal expressions with Javanese cultural nuances, there are also verbal

expressions that are Islamic in nature, which is done by setting aside some of the money from the harvest to be given as alms to the mosque.

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