



***Tanduk* Prayer in a Traditional Event in Sendangcoyo Village, Lasem District, Rembang Regency: An Ethnolinguistic Study**

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DOI: 10.15294/sjsj.v13i2.30413

Submitted: July 16th, 2025 **Accepted:** November 21st, 2025 **Published:** November 28th, 2025

Abstract

Tanduk is a series of activities carried out before the start of a traditional ceremony to bring blessings. This study employs an ethnolinguistic approach to investigate the recitation of *tanduk* prayers as a verbal expression in the traditional ceremonies of the Sendangcoyo Village community, located in Lasem Subdistrict, Rembang Regency. The *tanduk* prayer is a conventional form of speech rich in spiritual, symbolic, and local cultural content. The research method employed is a qualitative descriptive approach, utilizing data collection techniques that include observation, interviews, and documentation. The primary data consists of the text of the *tanduk* prayer obtained from local traditional figures, which was then analyzed using an ethnolinguistic approach. The study results indicate that the *tanduk* prayer has a distinctive linguistic structure, consisting of Javanese krama sentences with a repetitive style. The primary function of this prayer is as a medium for requesting safety and spiritual protection during traditional rituals. Additionally, the *tanduk* prayer contains local knowledge systems regarding life after death, spiritual hierarchy, and the relationship between humans, nature, and ancestors. Through this *tanduk* prayer, the community collectively builds awareness of the values of life that have been passed down through generations. Thus, the *tanduk* prayer is a religious practice and a living archive of the spirituality and cultural identity of the Sendangcoyo community.

Keywords: *tandukprayer; ethnolinguistics; local culture; spirituality*

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p-ISSN 2252-6463

e-ISSN 2686-5408

INTRODUCTION

In the study of the relationship between language and culture, language is viewed not only as a means of communication but also as a reflection of a society's culture and values. Sapir's opinion that "*language is a guide to social reality*" emphasizes the importance of language

in shaping the way of thinking and *worldview* of a society. (Ermitati, 2022).

According to Siregar et al. (2022) Language and culture are inextricably linked, as they shape the thought process and establish a shared value system. This is also evident in the metaphorical use of language, which serves as

one of the key doors to understanding the relationship between language, culture, and thought. (Maulana, 2023). This aligns with ethnolinguistics, which examines language as a symbolic system that reflects its speakers' social and cultural lives. Ethnolinguistics is particularly relevant for studying traditional forms of communication, such as *rapalan*, which are rich in cultural meaning and have symbolic functions in a particular society.

Ethnolinguistics, as an approach in linguistic research, emphasizes the relationship between linguistic elements and the cultural context of the speaking community. According to Suryana (2013) Ethnolinguistics combines linguistic and cultural anthropological perspectives to examine the correlation between language and culture in a particular community, whereby language can be viewed simultaneously as a cultural indicator and a means of understanding the cultural reality of its speakers.

As for Widayat & Dwiadmojo (2023) ethnolinguistics has a close relationship between language and culture, which contains complex values. This is in accordance with the findings of Sumitri & Arka (2020), that *poetic ritual speech* contains social meaning, legitimizes customary authority, and functions as a medium for inheriting local knowledge. This study enables an analysis that focuses on formal language forms and structures, as well as the cultural meanings embedded in linguistic practices. Therefore, the ethnolinguistic approach is

particularly suitable for examining linguistic forms, such as mantras, prayers, and poems, which are deeply rooted in a society's cultural context.

In traditional Indonesian societies, various forms of oral expression serve symbolic, sacred, and even performative functions. One of these forms of expression is *rapalan doa*, which is locally known as a type of speech uttered in the context of rituals or traditional ceremonies. According to Nurrahmawati & Lestari (2024), a mantra is typically spoken only by specific individuals or by the leader of a traditional ceremony procession, known as *jampi-jampi*. One is the recitation of the *tanduk* prayer, which is integral to the implementation of conventional events passed down from generation to generation in Sendangcoyo Village, Lasem District, Rembang Regency.

Tanduk itself is recited by the *modin* (religious leader) as a procession before the start of a series of traditional village rituals. This recitation is believed to possess magical powers that can bring protection, safety, blessings, and harmony between humans, nature, and the spiritual world. In line with this, according to Limbu (2020) Ritual language is considered a means of conveying cosmological views and a way to maintain the continuity of the community's spiritual values.

The presence of *tanduk* prayers in traditional events serves not only as a ceremonial complement but also represents the heritage of the local community's cosmological values. In

this context, language is not just a means of communication, but contains religious, symbolic, and magical values in the lives of Javanese people. (Harsono, 2020). The same thing was stated. Wayan & Rismadewi (2025), that special vocabulary in rituals reflects local philosophy and is a means of preserving cultural identity amid modernization.

This *rapalan* is seen as an integral part of indigenous traditions and rituals, which not only conveys verbal messages but also serves as a channel to convey the spiritual and cosmological values of the local community. According to Duranti in Rizkia Nur Farikha et al., (2024) linguistic practices in traditional societies have complex cultural dimensions, and the inheritance of values from generation to generation cannot be underestimated. Therefore, the study of *rapalan tanduk* not only has cultural significance but also includes aspects of preserving intangible cultural heritage, which is increasingly threatened by modernization and social shifts. Darojah (2021).

Rapalan tanduk, as a form of oral expression, shows linguistic uniqueness in its choice of diction, syntactic structure, and distinctive language style. With its repetitive and rhythmic nature, as well as the use of archaic words, the verbal experience in this *rapalan* is not only informational but also functions as a performative speech act, in accordance with Austin and Searle's theory of "speech acts." (Santoso, 2023).

According to Lestari et al. (2023), linguistic units in ritual ceremonies exhibit poetic patterns, serve as strong symbolic functions, and support the continuity of cultural values. This practice highlights the close relationship between language, community identity, and the continuity of cultural values in multicultural societies, such as Lasem, which is rich in various traditions. (Siwi et al., 2021).

However, the biggest challenge to preserving traditional languages and cultures arises from factors such as globalization and the dominance of popular culture, resulting in a shift in values among the younger generation. This phenomenon has led to the neglect of local cultural practices, including the use of *rapalan tanduk*, which is now increasingly rare. (Kertiasih et al., 2021). According to Wigiati (2022), the decline in the use of traditional languages can indicate a threat to the integrity of a community's cultural identity.

Therefore, documenting and maintaining oral forms of expression, especially among the younger generation, is crucial for the sustainability of cultural heritage. As emphasized in the research of Anggraeni et al. (2024), prayers in traditional rituals are crucial for maintaining the continuity of intangible cultural heritage while fostering social relations within the community. Thus, this research on the rapping of *tanduk* prayers in Sendangcoyo Village can significantly contribute to the study of ethnolinguistics and the preservation of local culture.

This effort is expected to enhance our understanding of the significance of language as a medium for preserving the cultural values and spirituality of local communities, which aligns with the importance of integrating and affirming a community's identity in the modern era. Considering the importance of preserving oral cultural heritage and scientific contributions to the development of cultural linguistics studies, this research is of high urgency.

Until now, academic studies that specifically discuss the *rapalan* doa *tanduk* in the context of ethnolinguistics are still minimal. Several previous studies are in line with this research, including research by Nurrahmawati & Lestari (2024), Syarofi (2022), and Aini (2024). The three studies examine oral traditions in the form of *rapalan* or internal prayers that develop in the community, which contain meaning and function as part of local cultural wisdom. Therefore, this study aims to discuss the recitation of prayers as part of the community's knowledge system in Sendangcoyo Village, Lasem District, Rembang Regency.

METHOD

The method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative method. The data in this study are in the form of *tanduk* prayers spoken directly by the modin of Sendangcoyo Village, Rembang Regency, during traditional ceremonies. The data source in this research is the speaker of the *tanduk* prayer, who lives in Sendangcoyo Village, specifically a man who is accustomed to reciting

the *tanduk* prayer (Modin). When collecting data, the researcher selected only one informant because that informant was responsible for leading all events taking place in the village where the research was conducted.

In conducting this research, the researcher observed directly in Sendangcoyo Village, Lasem District, Rembang Regency. The study was conducted in May 2025. The object of this research is the *tanduk* prayer recitation, obtained from informants residing in Sendangcoyo Village.

Data collection techniques in this study were employed in various ways, including observation, recording, and interviews. Observations were conducted directly in the field to observe the practice of using prayers in the context of community life, allowing researchers to obtain a realistic picture of the speech situation and the cultural environment behind the prayer text. Recording was conducted systematically for every piece of data found, in both text and context, as well as information from informants, to ensure that no critical information was missed.

Recording was used to document oral prayer texts in audio or video form, allowing researchers to transcribe the data accurately and repeat it whenever necessary. The informants chosen met the criteria, such as being male, having mastered and frequently recited *tanduk* prayers, and residing in Sendangcoyo Village.

The data analysis technique used in this research is content analysis. The stages in conducting data analysis are as follows. (1) data

obtained from interviews and recordings were transcribed into spoken language into written language; (2) the results of the transcription were then translated into Indonesian with the speech situation so that the meaning was maintained; (3) the researcher interpreted the prayer text by paying attention to the linguistic aspects, cultural context, and local values contained in it; (4) the results of the interpretation were then drawn conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After conducting interviews and analyzing the data, researchers found only one form of the *tanduk* prayer; however, it remains functional. Functional means that the prayer can be used in any event, tailored to the specific needs of the event or the activities that will be carried out. In this study, researchers took a sample of the recitation of *tanduk* prayers when an event was held to commemorate a deceased person. The following is an example of its recitation if presented using written language:

Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh,
Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi
wabarakatuh,

Dèrèk sepuh miwanganem dosami ngrèncangi
mbantu pandungo slamet nggih,
Old and young brothers and sisters, let's
accompany to help pray for congratulations,
Dening kajat kula tan sagriya sageta kempal dados
setunggal,
Thus, my desire and the host can all gather
into one,

Sepindah malih mangkuban sugeng griyan,
The first to say welcome home,

Kaping kalih ngurmati cekal bakal kang ngersa
dukuh mriki,
The second is to honor the origin of those who
live here,

Kaping tiga sedèrèk (...) kagungan kersa,
The third brother (...) has a wish,

Kersanè boten menapa, kaperlu kintun duno
tiyang sepuh miwah ingkang anem mantuk
wonten bumi kelanggengan,
His wish is nothing but to send prayers to his
parents, who have passed on to eternity.

Sapara ahli sedaya jaler miwah ingkang estri
ingkun kintun,
Everything (here), both male and female, is
sent.

Sageta padhang dalanè, jembar kuburè, ngadega
dat sipatè tunuta maring nabinè,
Bright is the way, broad is the grave, upright
is the character, like the prophets,

Dumugi kang dipun seja, dumugi ingkang dipun
kira sakbadhènè hell, pinaringan suwarga,
To those who have died, the time will come
when it is expected that, after passing through
hell, they will get heaven.

Slamet ingkang ngintun, dumugi ingkang dipun
kintun, lan malih kanekesen an gusti Allah ingkang
paring kaselamatan,
Congratulations to the one who sends, as well
as the one who is sent, and also witnessed by
Gusti Allah, who is the one who gives
salvation.

Kenekсэнan para nabi lan para wali sainggilipun
sapangandhapipun sageta mbantu rahayu selamat,
Witnessed by the Prophets and the Guardians
from top to bottom, who can help provide
safety,

Lan malih ngurmati sunan kalijaga kang njagani
rahayu selamat,
And also honor Sunan Kalijaga, who keeps
salvation,

Lan malih ngurmati bapa Adam lan babu Hawa terus adamawanè,
And also honor Father Adam and Mother Eve,

Dinten pitu pekenan gangsal sarta sasinè,
The seventh day of the fifth week and month,

Taun wolu sasi rolas lungguhipun kalih mahujud klinten kelawan dalu,
Year eight, month twelve, which is sent at night,

Kaneksènan dinten sakmenika.
Witnessed on that day.

Sampun cekap anggenipun kula nglairakè, dipun seksèni dèrèk nglempek wonten mriki sedaya.
It is enough for me to pledge, witnessed by all the relatives here.

The brackets in the text of the *tanduk* prayer can be modified and adapted to suit the intended purpose or occasion, such as for thanksgiving, slametan, and other ceremonial events. The *tanduk* prayer is recited before the event begins. This recitation is not just a ceremonial complement. Still, it aims to bring harmony, blessings, and safety to the event. *Tanduk* prayers are not just oral speeches but reflect the community's spiritual knowledge system, passed down from generation to generation. Some of the knowledge content contained in the *tanduk* prayers includes:

Belief in the afterlife

In the sentence of the *tanduk* prayer, if you pay close attention, there is a belief in the afterlife. Such as the hope of "*padhang dalane, jembar kubure*", "*sakbadhènè hell, pinaringan suwarga*".

These phrases convey a spiritual understanding of the phase that follows death.

The phrase "*padhang dalane, jembar kubure*" implies a wish for the deceased's spirit to have a clear path and a spacious grave, symbolically reflecting comfort and acceptance in the beyond. Meanwhile, the phrase "*sakbadhènè neraka, pinaringan suwarga*" demonstrates an understanding of the existence of a post-mortem spiritual court process, namely hell as a place of purification or accountability, and heaven as a boon or a coveted final destination.

This belief confirms that *tanduk* prayers are not only a means of spiritual communication between the living and the dead, but also a manifestation of the community's knowledge system regarding the metaphysical structure of life. Through these phrases, it is evident that local spirituality has shaped the community's perspective on death and the hope for the salvation of the soul, which is passed on and maintained through sacred speech, such as the prayer of the *tanduk*.

Conception of salvation

In the *tanduk* prayer, there is also a conception of salvation. This can be seen from the sentence that reads "*lan malih kaneksenan gusti Allah ingkang paring kaselamatan*" and also "*Lan malih ngurmati sunan kalijaga kang njagani rahayu selamat*". The mention of the names of God, the Prophet, and the Wali as intermediaries of salvation shows the community's belief system in spiritual hierarchy. In this case, the *tanduk* prayer is not only a verbal

utterance but also contains hopes and prayers for protection.

Respect for ancestors and holy figures:

The mention of figures such as Sunan Kalijaga, Adam, and Eve in the *tanduk* prayer indicates a syncretic religious knowledge system, i.e., a fusion of Islamic teachings with local Javanese beliefs. In the context of Javanese Islam, these figures are regarded as historical and spiritual ancestors who serve as essential guardians of salvation and moral guides. Respect for them reflects local values that combine theological elements with traditional wisdom, thus creating a transcendental relationship between humans and the supernatural world.

As explained by Geertz (1989:62022) In his study of Javanese religion, "Javanese religion is a complex synthesis of Islam, Hindu-Buddhism, and ancient Javanese traditions that form a distinctive pattern of religious belief and practice." The practice of respect also emphasizes that the presence of holy figures and ancestors is an integral part of the community's religious identity, where prayers and respect are not only symbolic but also believed to have adequate power in providing protection, blessings, and safety for the community (Woodward, 2011: 124).

Modin's Social Role as the Owner of Knowledge Authority

Tanduk prayer is a prayer that is recited before an event. The *tanduk* prayer is recited by someone

who has in-depth knowledge about religion. In this case, the people of Sendangcoyo Village refer to it as mbah modin. Modin himself is considered to have the spiritual authority to organize all matters related to religious practices. This demonstrates that the *tanduk* prayer is not merely a verbal text, but is part of a knowledge system structured by local figures, thereby maintaining its sacredness and authenticity.

Language as a Medium of Spirituality Representation

The language used in the *tanduk* prayer is a blend of Javanese krama and Arabic, reflecting the integration between local cultural practices and Islamic teachings. The choice of diction, such as "*slamet*", "*kaneksènan*", "*padhang dalanè*", indicates a distinctive spiritual symbolization. This reflects the local community's efforts to internalize universal religious values in local idioms.

CONCLUSION

Tanduk prayer in Sendangcoyo Village is a form of spiritual expression that is rich in meaning and serves to transmit the community's spiritual knowledge system. It integrates Islamic values with local wisdom in the form of sacred oral rites. Through an ethnolinguistic approach, prayer *tanduk* is a linguistic structure containing the community's belief system, moral values, and worldview. Thus, the *tanduk* prayer is not only a religious practice but also a living archive of the spirituality and cultural identity of the Sendangcoyo community.

More specifically, this study found that (1) the linguistic form of *tanduk* prayers is dominated by the Javanese krama language variety with repetitive patterns, archaic diction, and a mixture of Arabic elements that reinforce their sacred effect; (2) the meaning of the *tanduk* prayer reflects the local knowledge system about life after death, the concept of salvation, the relationship between humans and their ancestors, prophets, and saints, as well as a cosmological view of the order of nature; and (3) the functions of the *tanduk* prayer include religious functions (asking for protection), social functions (strengthening community solidarity), identity functions (as a marker of Javanese-Islamic culture in Sendangcoyo), and performative functions (initiating and “purifying” a series of rituals).

This study also confirms that the existence of modin as the authority on spiritual knowledge is a crucial factor in maintaining the continuity of using *tanduk* prayers. These findings demonstrate that *tanduk* prayers are not only related to linguistic aspects but also serve as a means of preserving the community's knowledge and cultural values.

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