

Islamic Talqin in Javanese Community Funeral and Its Relation to Language Socialization: An Ethnolinguistic Research

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian tentang praktik pemakaman di berbagai budaya telah menunjukkan bahwa praktik yang berkisar pada kematian dapat mengungkap banyak hal tentang budaya tersebut. Penelitian etnolinguistik ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan fenomena talqin Islam sebagai praktik pemakaman di komunitas Jawa di Kajen Tengah, Desa Giri, Kecamatan Kebomas, Kota Gresik dan mengeksplorasi hubungannya dengan sosialisasi bahasa. Strategi kualitatif yang melibatkan observasi langsung dan wawancara diterapkan untuk melakukan penelitian ini. Untuk mendeskripsikan praktik pemakaman dan menyelidiki hubungannya dengan sosialisasi bahasa masyarakat, teknik analisis yang digunakan adalah analisis tingkat mikro dan makro. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa praktik talqin menunjukkan persepsi masyarakat tentang kematian yang mengalami perubahan bertahap dari masa muda hingga dewasa. Selain itu, dalam kaitannya dengan sosialisasi bahasa dalam masyarakat, ditemukan bahwa pemahaman bahasa Jawa dan istilah-istilah kunci Arab dalam ajaran Islam yang relevan dengan identitas agama bersama dalam masyarakat dianggap sebagai fitur utama untuk diterima sebagai anggota masyarakat yang kompeten.

Kata kunci: pemakaman, masyarakat Jawa, sosialisasi bahasa, talqin

ABSTRACT

Studies on funeral practices among cultures have shown that the practice revolving around death can reveal a lot about the culture. This ethnolinguistic research aims to describe the phenomenon of Islamic talqin as a funeral practice in a Javanese community in Central Kajen, Giri village, Kebomas subdistrict, Gresik city and explore its connection to language socialization. Qualitative strategies involving direct observation and interviews were implemented to conduct this study. In order to describe the funeral practice and investigate its connection to the language socialization of the community, the techniques of analysis used microlevel and macrolevel analysis. The findings show that the talqin practice emphasizes the community's acceptance about death which is predominantly directed to those listening on the funeral ceremony. Moreover, in relation to the language socialization within the community, it is found that the comprehension of Javanese language and Arabic key terms in Islamic teaching relevant to the shared religious identity within the community are deemed as key features to be accepted as a competent member of the community.

Keywords: funeral, Javanese community, language socialization, talqin

A. INTRODUCTION

Mortality has always been an interesting subject in the discussion about human life. Death is an inevitable part of life, yet everyone has their own perception about the end-of-life experience which results in various level of preparedness for speaking about it (Banner, et al, 2018). As a

ceremony which formally distinguishes life and death, the practice of funeral generally holds an important status in many cultures. The reason is that the death ceremony does not only stand as a traditional ceremony, but it goes beyond that. It is noted that a funeral practice also contributes to the establishment of ethnic and cultural identity, one of which is by being a means of constructing and/or negotiating social boundaries (Reimers, 1999). However, despite the shared values, the practice of the ceremony differs across cultures. It is derived from the fact that each culture has their own perception about the experience of the end of life that is heavily influenced by their cognition.

In the context of Islamic funeral, there is a concept known as ‘talqin’ or ‘talqeen’ which serves as a type of ritual. It is practiced by many Muslim communities across regions and countries, with no exception to Muslim communities in the Javanese culture. In its literal sense, the term talqin (originally from Arabic) is the closest to the word ‘prompting’ in English. The nature of the practice is that it is performed on purpose to “prompt” someone to remember God in a certain critical time by addressing a speech or sayings to the person being prompted. There are two types of talqin in the discourse of Islamic funeral; talqin for dying individuals and talqin for the deceased. In this article, we focus on the second type of talqin, which is one for the deceased.

Research on Islamic funeral traditions in Indonesia has been conducted extensively over the years. Several studies have examined the historical aspects of these traditions (Bowen, 1989) as well as the rituals associated with burial practices (Manan, Kamarullah, Husaini, Rasyad, & Fauzi, 2024). Other research has focused on tahlilan, a communal recitation tradition commonly observed following Islamic funerals in various regions of Indonesia (Ma’arif, 2022; Fadhli & Iqbal, 2018). However, the practice of talqin, which constitutes an integral part of the overall Islamic funeral rites, has not been a primary focus of academic inquiry. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by examining the talqin practice within the context of a Javanese community

This study attempts to describe the phenomenon of Islamic talqin in Javanese community funeral and explore its connection to language socialization. As defined by Longman (2008), language socialization is the process of acquiring knowledge and practices among individuals in order to be perceived as an effective or competent member of a language community. Literatures on language socialization have always been noted to emphasize on language acquisition process during childhood. However, in the present time the development of language socialization has reached a new paradigm of perspective that considers the process throughout adulthood (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2017). This study belongs to the latter paradigm since it deals with social interactions among adults rather than focusing on merely children.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research on mortality discourse has contextualized funeral as a social practice across cultures. For example, the comparison of Chinese and Western funeral was depicted in the work of Shuang (1993). The study describes that the Chinese see death as ‘a new beginning’ as they believe in the concept of reincarnation, while the Westerners perceive death as ‘the last stop’ that the soul is hoped to go straight to heaven. The different cognitive stance results in different sets of ceremony by which the death ritual of the Chinese has celebratory theme as its remark, while that of the Westerners revolves around gloomy and sincere atmosphere. Another

study by Van der Geest (2006) investigated the case of funeral in Akan culture. The study notes the disruptive changes that occur to the practice and also to the social dynamics within the culture due to the growing favor toward mortuaries. The major disruption caused by the presence of mortuaries is the commercialization of death ritual under the professionalization façade. It results in the shift of the practice which used to be purely traditional but now far modernized.

In this study, Islamic talqin practice at Islamic funerals in Giri Village is viewed as the community's social practice. As mentioned earlier in the introduction section, this study aims to describe talqin as a part of Islamic funeral traditions in Indonesia. Studies on Islamic funeral traditions in Indonesia have shown that there are traditions uniquely exclusive to Indonesian community and being passed down to generations. Some of these traditions are more generally practiced than the others, such as chanting azan at funerals (Gafar, 2015), or organizing communal feast to provide social and moral support for the family of the deceased (Manan, Kamarullah, Husda, Rasyad, & Fauzi, 2024). However, the overall funeral practice in one culture in Indonesia compared to another might differ, despite the similar Islamic background between said cultures. This is because of the different cultural values being upheld by each culture, resulting in different outcomes and purposes in the whole funeral practices (Manan, Kamarullah, Husda, Rasyad, & Fauzi, 2024).

The cultural values reflected in the different funeral practices among Islamic communities across regions in Indonesia then further brings us to the language part, where it employs an important role within communities, for it reflects the cultural values being upheld by the people. One of the concerns of the study of language of culture or ethnolinguistic is language socialization. As outlined and described in Duranti, Ochs, & Schieffelin (2012) and Ochs & Schieffelin (2017), language socialization refers to the process in which individuals learn to use language in ways that are deemed appropriate by their social and cultural environment. This process involves learning the language, and this process starts in childhood and continues throughout one's life and is influenced by the individuals' encounters with social and/or cultural contexts. Therefore, language socialization—by nature—is closely tied to cultural practice.

Furthermore, the language socialization framework developed by Duranti, Ochs, and Schieffelin (2012) and Ochs & Schieffelin (2017) emphasizes the dual process of acquiring linguistic competence and sociocultural knowledge through interaction within a community. This approach posits that language serves as both a medium of socialization (socialization through language) and an object of socialization (socialization to language). Socialization is an ongoing, interactive process that extends beyond childhood, occurring in diverse settings such as family, religious institutions, and peer interactions. The framework highlights the role of cultural practices, power structures, and ideology in shaping linguistic behaviors and communicative norms. Contemporary applications of this theory include studies on child language acquisition, multilingualism, religious and ritualistic practices, and digital communication.

C. METHOD

As ethnolinguistic research, this study used qualitative strategies in the data collection and data analysis. In collecting the data for analysis, the researcher firstly observed the practice of talqin in Central Kajen, Giri village, Kebomas sub district, Gresik city. During the observation process, the researcher attempted to obtain the transcription of the speech used in talqin practice.

After performing observations, the researcher interviewed the advisor of the village community known as Lurah in order to obtain some insights about the meaning of the speech and the mannerism delivered through the reading process and diction of the speech.

In the village, Lurah holds a significant role in the community for his role as the elder who serves as the leader and advisor of the people. A Lurah is perceived as the source of knowledge to the people. Due to his highly respected status, the Lurah of the village usually becomes the one who delivers the talqin speech. If he is not able to attend the funeral, his position would be replaced by the Modin of the community, who is essentially a representation of the leader of the small mosque (*musholla*) in the area. Last but not least, the researcher interviewed some members of the community about what they know and/or what they feel about the talqin practice.

This study attempts to describe the practice of talqin and relates it to the concept of language socialization within the community. Henceforth, language socialization theoretical framework was used as the approach by the data analysis, by which the microlevel analysis of the data would be related to the macrolevel contexts. Following the framework, this study started from microlevel analysis of the data. It was done by first translating the talqin speech which is written in Pegon, a Javanese language written in the shape and form of Arabic language with some variation markers, into English. It was further followed by the analysis of the text based on its linguistic features. For the next part, the researcher continued to the macrolevel analysis. The data gathered from the interviews was described and analyzed in order to obtain more information about the social practice and the cultural context within the community. At last, the researcher drew the connection between the results from both levels of analysis.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Microlevel Analysis

The talqin practice is conducted after the body is completely buried, by which someone responsible—usually the Lurah—would deliver the talqin speech. The original speech in Javanese and the speech which has been translated into English is shown as the following.

ORIGINAL SPEECH (JAVANESE):

Hai Fulan! Saiki siro wes mati ngaleh marang ngalam kubur, yaiku ngalam barzakh, siro aja nganti lali perkoro kang siro sungkemi nalika siro pisah karo kita kabeh.

Yaiku nyakseni yen temen ora ana pengeran kang haq, kajaba gusti Allah ta'ala. Lan nyakseni yen gusti Muhammad iku utusane gusti Allah ta'ala.

Hai Fulan! Sing ati-ati, yen siro ditakoni malaikat loro kang dipasrahi nyubo marang sira. Sira aja kaget lan aja gemeter ngertio! Sak temene kang bakal nakani siro iku pada makhluke Allah.

Hai Fulan! Yen malaikat luru mengko takon marang siro mangkene: Sapa pengeranmu? Apa agamamu? Sapa nabimu? Apa I'tiqadmu? Lan apa kang sira sungkemi nalika sira mati? Yen sira ditakoni mangkono, jawab! Pengeranku iku gusti Allah. Yen di kaping pinduni takoni jawab maneh! Gusti Allah iku pengeranku, yen ditakoni kaping teluni takoni, iya iku pitakon kang pungkasan, sira jawaba kang teges, aja gemeter, lan aja kuatir, gusti Allah iku pengeranku, agama islam iku agamaku, gusti Muhammad iku nabiku, kitab Quran iku panutanku, solat sembayang iku kewajibanku, wong islam kabeh iku sadulurku,

nabi Ibrahim iku bapakku, aku urip lan mati netepi ucapan “Laa ilaaha illa Allah, Muhammad rasulullah salla allahu alayhi wasallam”.

Hai Fulan! Hujjah takweruhake marang sira iku cekelono temen temen. Ngertio yen sira bakal manggoni ing ngalam kubur nganti bisuk dina qiyamah, yaiku dinane wong-wong ahli qubur pada ditange’ake.

Hai Fulan! Ngertio yen pati iku haq, mangken ing kubur, pitakone munkar nakir ana ing kubur, dinane tangi saking kubur, anane hisab, taraju, wot sirathal mustakim, naraka lan suwarga, iku kabeh haq mesti anane. Satuhune dina kiyamah iku mesti tumakane, lan satuhune gusti Allah bakal nange’ake wong kang ana ing kubur.

TRANSLATION (ENGLISH):

Hi Fulan! Now that you are dead, move to the realm of grave, which is the Barzakh, you must not forget about the things you obeyed when you have been separated from us all.

That is testifying truthfully that there is no real God besides Gusti Allah ta’ala. And testifying that Gusti Muhammad is the messenger of Gusti Allah ta’ala.

Hi Fulan! Be vigilant, if you are asked by two angels who are ordered to ask you. You should not be surprised, and do not tremble. Understand! That in fact, the questioners are also creatures/creations of Allah.

Hi, Fulan! When the two angels ask you later like this; Who is your God? What is your religion? Who is your prophet? What is your intention? And what do you obey when you die? When you are asked like that, answer! My Lord is Allah. If asked the second time, answer again! Gusti Allah is my God, and if asked the third time, then that is the last question, (then) you answer firmly, do not tremble, and do not worry, (and say), Gusti Allah is my God, Islam is my religion, Gusti Muhammad is my prophet, the Quran is my role model, prayer is my duty, Muslims are all my brothers, the prophet Ibrahim is my father, I live and die staying firm to the saying "Laa ilaaha illa Allah, Muhammad rasulullah salla allahu alayhi wasallam".

Hi, Fulan! This advice that I convey, hold true to the truth. Understand that you will be in the realm of grave until the Day of Judgment, the day when the dead will be resurrected.

Hi, Fulan! Understand that death is certain, (life) in the realm of grave, the question of Munkar Nankir in the grave, the day of resurrection from the grave, the existence of hisab (judgment), weighting scales, and the bridge of siratal mustakim, hell and heaven, all of them are real. That it is true that the Day of Judgment will take place, and it is true that Gusti Allah will resurrect those who are in the grave.

As seen on the text of the speech transcript, there are numerous specific Islamic/Arabic keywords being used. The explanation of each keyword can be seen on the Table 1 as follows.

Table 1. Keyword List

No	Keyword	Explanation
1	Fulan	A placeholder name in Arabic
2	Gusti	A title of honor in Javanese commonly addressed to considered higher beings such as God, Prophet, and aristocrats

3	Barzakh	The realm where the soul resides after death before later being resurrected on the Day of Judgment in the Islamic belief
4	Ta'ala	
5	Laa ilaa ha ilallah	A declaration in Arabic which translates to "There is no deity but God."
6	Muhammad Rasulullah salla Allahu alayhi wasallam	A declaration in Arabic which translates to "Muhammad [as] God's Prophet (<i>rasul</i>), peace and blessings of God be upon him."
7	Munkar Nankir	Two angels in the Islamic belief that are believed to be the ones who test the faith of the death in their graves
8	Hisab	The Arabic for "calculation", in the Islamic context refers to the calculation that will happen on the Day of Judgment in which all the deeds of every single soul will be calculated and all shall receive rewards and punishments according to their results
9	Taraju	The weighting scales that Muslims believe will do the hisab or calculation on the Day of Judgment
10	Siratal Mustakim	The bridge to Heaven

When taking a look at the text, it is clear to see that the whole speech is specifically addressed toward the dead only, and not the other funeral attendees as well as the audience. It is visible since at the beginning of every new topic introduced along the text, as the speaker greets the dead with "Hi, Fulan!" before continuing his speech further. Moreover, it can be said that the text is very much culturally specific since the text is fully written in Javanese, and there are many Islamic terms used in it. The text is opened with a declarative speech act that is declaring that the speaker and the dead are in different realms now, followed by series of advice with some insertions of prohibitions.

In most text, the dominating speech act is directive speech act, especially in the form of advising and prohibiting. The speaker is basically telling the dead what to do when the he/she is facing certain circumstances. For example, after declaring that they both are in different realms now, the speaker advises the dead that he or she "must not forget about the things [they] obeyed" as they enter the realm of grave. Moreover, as the main point of the whole speech, the speaker instructs or "prompts" on how to answer the questions that will be asked by the angels testing their faith.

Some prohibitions are found throughout the advices that the speaker said, "do not tremble" and "do not worry" to the dead while being questioned by the angels. The prohibition of "do not tremble" is even repeated twice in the text. This gives the impression that the whole 'being questioned' process itself is a frightening experience for the dead. It is further supported by the prohibition not to worry that even the dead needs "to be calmed" so that they could pass the test by the angels well. Overall, the whole speech gives the impression that life after death is dark and scary and the dead needs to be guided. This might be based on the presupposition of the speaker representing the Muslim community that the journey in the afterlife is hard and terrifying, thus everyone must prepare themselves as best as they can beforehand.

2. Macrolevel Analysis

The following paragraphs would be the description of the experience of being the audience of the talqin practice as stated by the representation of men in the community.

Mat (49) admitted that upon listening for the speech the first time, he was terribly scared about facing death. His image of the realm is described as a scary experience, as well as the unknown nature of the realm. He also imagined about being hurt, and that it will be clouded with dark (as in low light) area in it. As of today's current state of mind, he is still scared, but knows that it is something that he cannot avoid anyway, but the fear is not as big as the first time he heard it.

Hud (about 80) mentioned about the total giving up to the idea of death. He recognizes his old age, and admitted that him being healthy and well is more than enough reason to be thankful, because most of his friends and relatives are already gone, and that he now only waits for his turn to go. He also admitted about trying to live his life happily, and not thinking too much about the death, because it will come eventually.

Roni (21) said that the speech is very frightening and even gave him nightmares a few times, but once a few days pass, he will easily forget about it. What he fears the most is the image of him being tortured and hurt, and that when he thought about it, to forget about it is the only way he can do, despite the difficulty to do so. He admitted that he can only try to do good with his life, and can only pray for the best when he dies later. He said again that to forget about death is the only way he can be happy and not afraid about it.

Mr. Asyhad (60) further said that the speech also works as a stern reminder to the living about the existence of death. He mentioned that it may be indeed scary, but when the same people listen to it over and over again for the rest of their life, he argued that this form of repetition will—arguably—numb the feeling of fear, so the people will not need to bother about it anymore. He also said that he is genuinely sure that the dead can listen, because he learned a story about Prophet Muhammad who commanded his people to give salam (Islamic greetings) when visiting a graveyard. He said that this story indicated that the dead is capable of listening, because greeting functions as a form of opening interaction to another being, who is essentially 'alive'.

Mr. Asyhad who is native in the village is our main informant. He is the leader of Kajen region, as well as the general preacher, the imam, as well as the advisor of the area. He also currently holds the position of the leader in the Sunan Giri Mosque Foundation (Yayasan Masjid Besar Ainul Yaqin Sunan Giri), as well as the leader of social security organization (Ketua Dewan Kemanan Masyarakat) in Giri village. The practice of talqin has been conducted since the dawn of Islam came into the village. He also mentioned that the variation of the way how people recite the speech may differ, but the content and the message are still exactly the same. The speech is delivered at the moment after the body is buried under the soil.

The general school of thought, or a cult, of Islamic religion in the village follows the *ahlussunah wal jamaah* way, or to make it simpler, it is under the Islamic organization of *Nahdlatul Ulama*. In essence, the varieties of Islamic practice are what differ this society with the others, such as the existence of prayers for the dead ritual, a trip to the grave on certain times, blessing recitals to the prophets, a broadcasted Quran reading, this talqin practice, and many others.

The moment someone dies, the family will notice the head of the community, and then he will coordinate with the *Lurah*, make a public announcement in the nearest mosque, call for the

people to gather to help with the corpse treatment (bathed, clothed, and perfumed), as well as call paid diggers to locate and dig the soil where the body will be buried. This whole process usually takes three to four hours until the body is ready to be brought to the mosque and then formally prayed for the last time, before finally carried to the cemetery.

Only the men of the village are going to the cemetery and allowed to help the burial of the body. The women are obliged to stay home and sometimes prepare some food for the people when they return (only to those who wish to). This tradition is based on the understanding of the society that women are more prone to crying and bawling when they are sad, which will make the soul of the death to suffer, according to our informant, Mr. Asyhad. Forbidding them to stay home is likely an attempt to soften their sadness because at least, when they are at home, they cannot see the process of the burial ceremony with their own eyes, which could probably relieve the grief if they do watch it in person.

3. Talqin practice and language socialization

Ochs and Schieffelin (2017) argued that language socialization presents as long as there is “an asymmetry in knowledge and power and characterizes our human interactions throughout adulthood” during socialization to novel identities and practices. This can be related to the notion of hierarchy that exists in many variables within a cultural community. In the case of Javanese culture, assigned roles related to gender and age are apparent. Men are perceived as the superior members to the society, making women and children belong to the secondary roles. This hierarchal system is clearly exhibited by the funeral practice on the Javanese community in Giri village since the ones that can attend the funeral are limited to adult men.

On the experience of being the audience of talqin practice in the funeral service, men can be put into varying levels of socialization based on their age which shows another variable of hierarchy. The results of the macrolevel analysis shown by the interviews with men which each comes from different age groups perfectly exemplifies this. The testimonies from our informants Roni (21), Mat (49), and Hud (80) show how the culture perceives death through talqin is a gradual socialization process: being avoidant and in denial about the subject about death - starting to accept the concept of death - fully accepting and embrace the concept of death. It can also be related to the explanation of Mr. Asyhad (60) that listening to the same speech over and over again can cultivate the feeling of numbness towards the fearful theme of talqin practice. Based my point of view, this feeling of numbness does not indicate carelessness, but more like acceptance of death as something inevitable thus it is better to think about the strategies to embrace it as shown by Hud (80).

We can see from the results on microlevel analysis that the speech delivered in talqin practice basically exhibits the religious values concerning the belief about life after death upheld by the community. The use of Arabic variations without their translation to the original language of the speech conveys the Islamic identity that is shared by the members of community. Moreover, the use of the original language of the speech that is Javanese—not the national language Indonesian—shows the cultural community’s concern on preservation of their own cultural traditions. In relation to the language socialization, it can be inferred that one can be said to be an effective member of the Javanese language community by showing comprehension of Javanese language and Arabic key terms in Islamic teaching relevant to the religious identity of the community.

The framework of language socialization (Duranti, Ochs, & Schieffelin, 2012; Ochs &

Schieffelin, 2017) provides a lens to examine how talqin functions as both a linguistic and cultural transmission process within the Javanese funeral tradition. As Ochs and Schieffelin (2017) argue, socialization occurs in contexts where there is an asymmetry of knowledge and power, reinforcing hierarchical structures within a community. This is evident in the gendered and age-based restrictions on funeral attendance in Giri Village, where only adult men are permitted to participate in the talqin ritual. Within this exclusive setting, talqin serves as a structured form of religious and cultural socialization, wherein younger men passively absorb religious discourse while older men, through repeated exposure, internalize its meanings and implications.

The progression from avoidance and denial to full acceptance of death, as revealed in the testimonies of Roni (21), Mat (49), and Hud (80), exemplifies how exposure to talqin fosters a gradual cognitive and emotional adaptation to the concept of death. Moreover, at the microlevel, the linguistic features of talqin reinforce both Islamic and Javanese cultural identities—with Arabic phrases marking religious belonging and Javanese as a vehicle for maintaining local traditions. In this sense, mastery of talqin discourse, particularly comprehension of Javanese linguistic structures and key Arabic religious terms, signals effective membership within the community. Through this framework, talqin is not merely a ritualistic recitation but a structured mechanism of socialization, shaping an individual's religious and cultural identity over time.

D. CONCLUSION

Overall, this research on the practice of talqin has revealed the relation of the social practice to language socialization process within the Javanese community especially, in Giri village. The community's perception of death through talqin is a gradual socialization process from youth to adults: being avoidant and in denial about the subject about death - starting to accept the concept of death - fully accept and embrace the concept of death. Linguistically, talqin practice conveys the religious values concerning the belief about life after death upheld by the community. In relation to the language socialization, it can be inferred that the comprehension of Javanese language and Arabic key terms in Islamic teaching relevant to the shared religious identity within the community are deemed as key features to be accepted as a competent member of the community.

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