

Mother Tongue as a Seasonal Map: Educating Time at Sea Through the Mandar Language Lexicon

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Abstract

This research investigates the role of the Mandar language as a seasonal framework that conveys knowledge about maritime time, utilizing an ecolinguistic perspective that encompasses biological, sociological, and ideological aspects. Through in-depth interviews with traditional fishermen from Gili Tapan, Labuhan Sangoro Village, and Ngali Island, combined with documentation of local terms linked to seasons and wind directions, the study reveals that the Mandar lexicon captures extensive ecological knowledge. Key terms like Anging Bara, Anging Timor and Tasi Mare not only describe environmental conditions but also aid in navigation, preserve cultural heritage, and reflect spiritual beliefs. From a biological standpoint, language reveals adaptive strategies aligned with natural cycles, influencing fishing practices and safety. Sociologically, it facilitates the transmission of knowledge across generations, particularly among coastal youth. Ideologically, the Mandar language conveys ecological respect through taboos and phrases that promote harmony with the environment. These linguistic expressions are crucial for maintaining cultural identity and social cohesion while supporting sustainable marine management. Furthermore, they act as ecological indicators that enhance community resilience in the face of climate change and environmental challenges.

Keywords: Mother Tongue, Seasonal Map, Educating, Mandar Language.

INTRODUCTION

The mother tongue is more than just a communication tool that connects individuals; it serves as a mirror of culture, local knowledge, and ecological relationships crucial to the life of a community. In an increasingly globalized world, language becomes a bridge that connects experiences, traditions, and knowledge passed down from generation to generation. In coastal areas rich in cultural diversity, such as Mandar in Gili Tapan, Sumbawa Regency, the role of the mother tongue becomes particularly significant, especially in communities that heavily rely on maritime activities. In this context, language serves as a complex natural map, helping communities not only in fishing activities but also in comprehensively and deeply understanding and interacting with their surrounding environment (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

The lexical terms embedded in the Mandar language are not merely a series of spoken words; rather, these terms contain valuable and complex ecological information. Each term is closely related to natural phenomena that can directly affect fishing activities. This includes detailed information

about various seasons, wind directions, sea current conditions, and signs arising from sudden changes in the sky. All this information becomes an essential guide for fishing communities in determining the best and safest times to go to sea (Nababan, 1991). For example, they carefully observe changes in wind direction and wave patterns, which, if ignored, could affect their catch results.

In a broader framework, the mother tongue also functions as an informal education system handed down through generations within the social structure of the community. Terms like west wind, east wind, pambolongang (referring to the shape of sea waves), and tasi mate (indicating safe weather conditions for going to sea) not only serve as markers of natural phenomena but also carry social values, local wisdom, and profound spiritual aspects (Duranti, 1997). Each of these terms contains a legacy of knowledge and experience from previous generations, making them an inseparable part of the cultural identity of the Mandar people.

The state of study on the relationship between language, environment, and culture has evolved through the approach of ecolinguistics, which emphasizes that language does not stand

alone but is influenced by, and influences, the ecological context in which it is used (Stibbe, 2015). Several studies have highlighted the role of local languages in documenting ecological knowledge, as demonstrated by Budianto (2020) in coastal communities in Kalimantan and by Mustamin (2021) in the Bajo community. However, research specifically addressing the Mandar language lexicon as an educational system for the timing of fishing that reflects ecological seasonal changes is still very limited. This is a gap that this research aims to bridge, providing theoretical and practical contributions on how the mother tongue functions as a living ecological map.

Previous research has also shown that in maritime communities, local terms not only describe natural conditions but also constitute an ecological knowledge system that guides communities in their survival (Gadamer, 2004; Crystal, 2000). Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach that combines linguistics, anthropology, and ecology is highly relevant for exploring this relationship more deeply, especially in the context of the Mandar language, which is rich in symbolism and interconnectedness with sea seasons.

Based on the background above, this study arises from the urgency to preserve local knowledge that is threatened by modernization and language shift. This research aims to explore how terms in the Mandar language function as a seasonal map that educates about time at sea, using an ecolinguistic approach that encompasses biological, sociological, and ideological dimensions.

METHODS

This research employs an ecological linguistic approach that views language as part of the cultural and environmental ecosystem (Stibbe, 2015). The mother tongue is analyzed in relation to the marine environment and the local knowledge system of the Mandar community. Types and sources of data were obtained through in-depth interviews with traditional fishermen in Gili Tapan, Labuhan Sangoro Village, and Ngali Island, Dusun Lab. Terata, as well as through documentation of local terms related to seasons and wind directions. The data analysis utilizes

the dimensions of ecological linguistic dialectology. Ecological linguistic dialectology is an interdisciplinary study that combines the ecological linguistic approach which examines the relationship between language, humans, and the environment (Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2001) with dialectology, the science that studies language variation in geographical and social contexts (Chambers & Trudgill, 1998).



(Figure. Dialectological Ecolinguistics)

The biological dimension aims to explore how maritime lexicon reflects ecological knowledge, such as ocean currents, fish migration, storm seasons, and weather conditions (Maffi, 2005). The sociological dimension examines how these terms are passed down through social practices (for example, during conversations on boats, in stalls, or in study circles), as well as how the community understands and collectively uses these terms (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). The ideological dimension studies the ideological values inherent in these lexical terms, such as local wisdom, the human-nature relationship, and spiritual beliefs (Pretty et al., 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Here is the corrected text with improved grammar and clarity:

1. **Biological Dimensions:** Language as an Ecological Marker of Mandar Fishermen in Gili Tapan and Ngali Island using terms such as: a. **Anging Bara** (storm season, December–March) b. **Anging Timor** (calm season, April–October) c. **Tasi Mare** (calm sea) d. **Tasi Mate** (dead sea, dangerous for fishing) Language is a reflection of the experiences and knowledge of the community living within a particular ecosystem (Haugen, 1972;

Mühlhäusler, 1996). In the context of Mandar fishermen in Gili Tapan and Ngali Island, language functions not only as a communication tool but also as an ecological marker rich in meaning (Harris, 2015). The terms used by fishermen, such as "Anging Bara" and "Anging Timor," reflect their deep understanding of the natural cycles that influence fishing activities (Crate & Nuttall, 2009). Thus, language becomes a vital means of ecological navigation, assisting fishermen in decision-making related to weather and seasons (Hoffman & Gallardo, 2015).

2. The term "**Anging Bara**" refers to the storm season occurring from December to March. During this period, the sea conditions become very hostile, with high waves and strong winds that can endanger the safety of fishermen (Kartodirdjo, 1980). The use of this term not only reflects weather conditions but also indicates the fishermen's profound understanding of the weather patterns they have observed over the years (Dove, 2006). For instance, experienced fishermen can predict weather changes by observing wind direction and cloud patterns, allowing them to decide not to go fishing for their safety (Agrawal, 1995).
3. Conversely, "Anging Timor" describes the calm season that lasts from April to October. During this period, the sea is relatively calm, and fishermen can go to sea more safely (Sangadji, 2010). This term indicates the annual cycles faced by fishermen and how they adapt to these changes. In this context, language serves as a tool that facilitates collective knowledge passed down from generation to generation (Berkes, 2012). Young fishermen learn from the experiences of their elders, who teach the importance of understanding and respecting the forces of nature (Tengö et al., 2014).
4. Furthermore, the terms "Tasi Mare" and "Tasi Mate" also hold deep meanings for fishermen. "Tasi Mare" describes calm sea conditions, which are ideal for fishing (Dove, 2006). On the other hand, "Tasi Mate" refers to dangerous sea conditions where fishermen are advised not to go out to sea. In this instance, language serves as a warning and a guide, helping fishermen navigate the risks associated with their work (Ames, 2001). By using these terms, fishermen not only communicate about sea conditions but also share knowledge that can save lives (Mazzarella, 2012).
5. Analysis of the use of these terms indicates that the language of Mandar fishermen is not merely symbolic but also the result of complex interactions between humans and their environment (Harris, 2015). These terms reflect long-term observations of weather patterns and sea conditions, shaped by experience and tradition (Berkes, 2012). This illustrates that language can function as a tool for understanding and adapting to the environment, as well as a means of preserving local knowledge (Mühlhäusler, 1996).
6. One interesting example is how Mandar fishermen use these terms in everyday practice. When they gather at the harbor before going to sea, they often discuss current weather conditions and forecasts, both from personal experience and information shared by fellow fishermen. This discussion becomes critical since the decision to fish or not heavily relies on their understanding of these terms (Agrawal, 1995). In this context, language acts as a collaborative tool that strengthens the fishing community (Hoffman & Gallardo, 2015).
7. Additionally, the relationship between language and ecology can also be seen in how these terms influence the behavior of fishermen. For instance, upon hearing the term "Anging Bara," fishermen may postpone their trips until conditions improve (Dove, 2006). This demonstrates that language affects not only communication but also plays a role in decision-making related to survival and safety (Berkes, 2012). Thus, language becomes an integral part of the fishermen's culture that focuses on sustainability and harmony with nature (Tengö et al., 2014).
8. In a broader context, the use of language as an ecological marker among Mandar fishermen also reflects the importance of preserving local knowledge (Agrawal, 1995). In the face of climate change and the exploitation of marine resources, traditional knowledge

contained in language can be key to addressing new challenges (Berkes, 2012). Therefore, it is crucial for younger generations to continue learning and internalizing these terms, so this knowledge does not fade away over time (Harris, 2015). This also emphasizes the importance of education that values and integrates local knowledge into the curriculum (Mazzarella, 2012).

9. The biological dimensions of the language of Mandar fishermen in Gili Tapan and Ngali Island highlight the significance of language as an ecological marker. The terms used reflect a deep understanding of natural cycles and function as guidance in decision-making. By observing and respecting the forces of nature, fishermen not only protect themselves but also preserve valuable knowledge for future generations (Berkes, 2012; Harris, 2015). Through language, they build a bridge between past experiences and future challenges, ensuring that their relationship with the sea remains strong and sustainable (Tengö et al., 2014).

2. Sociological Dimensions: Knowledge Transmission and Social Relations

The lexicon of this season is not taught in formal schools but is passed down through daily interactions. For example, fishermen's children accompany them to sea while listening to their parents explain the conditions of the ocean: "Mua mangiri'i anging timor, piitai dai ma'bu manipis, iyimi rio tanda macoa." In everyday life, knowledge is often acquired not just from formal educational institutions but also through social interactions happening around us. One of the most striking examples is in fishing communities, where knowledge about the ocean, weather, and fishing techniques is transferred from generation to generation (Aikenhead & Michell, 2011; Zent, 2009). In this context, the lexicon associated with fishing activities is not taught in classrooms but passed down through direct experience.

10. Fishermen's children are often taken out to sea by their parents, and during these trips, they listen to explanations about ocean conditions and important natural signs to pay attention to. For example, expressions in the

local language such as "Mua mangiri'i anging timor, piitai dai ma'bu manipis, iyimi rio tanda macoa" are not just words but represent knowledge that contains deep meaning about navigation and understanding of the environment (Nazarea, 2006). Language, in this context, functions as a social instrument that connects older generations with younger ones. Through language, values, norms, and local knowledge are conveyed in a more vibrant and contextual manner (Hornberger & King, 2001).

11. For instance, when a father explains to his child that the wind from the east signals bad weather, he is not just providing information but also teaching vital survival skills. This process creates strong emotional bonds between parents and children, reinforcing a sense of identity and togetherness within the community. The transmission of knowledge through social interaction also fosters close social relations within the community. In fishing societies, each individual has a clear role and is mutually dependent on one another. When children learn from their parents, they also learn to appreciate the roles of each member of the community (Berkes, Colding, & Folke, 2000). For example, a fisherman skilled in catching certain fish may share techniques with younger fishermen, ensuring that traditional knowledge continues to thrive.

3. Ideological Dimension: Local Wisdom and Spirituality

Some terms, such as *pambolongang* (the meeting of two currents that are considered sacred), reflect the belief in the "spirit of the sea," which must be respected. This indicates the ecological ideology of the Mandar community, which holds that nature is not an object to be dominated but a partner to be respected. Additionally, certain taboos exist regarding going to sea, often expressed through linguistic terms, such as *muane langka* (forbidden to go to sea that day), based on both spiritual and empirical knowledge.

In the context of the Mandar community, local wisdom and spirituality play a crucial role in shaping their ecological ideology. One striking term is *pambolongang*, which refers to the meeting of two currents regarded as

sacred. This term not only describes a natural phenomenon but also reflects the Mandar people's deep belief that the sea possesses a spirit that must be honored (Sahabuddin, 2016). They view the sea not merely as a resource to be exploited but as a partner that must be protected and respected. Thus, this local wisdom teaches that human interaction with nature should be conducted with full respect and awareness (Usop, 2019).

The belief in the "spirit of the sea" is evident in various practices and traditions of the Mandar community. For instance, before embarking on a fishing trip, they often perform specific rituals to seek permission from the "spirit of the sea." These rituals may involve prayers or offerings aimed at honoring the forces of nature (Syamsir, 2020). This indicates that the Mandar community possesses a profound understanding of the importance of maintaining a harmonious relationship with the environment. In this context, the sea is viewed not only as a source of livelihood but also as an entity with power and presence that must be respected.

Moreover, certain taboos must be observed when going to sea, often articulated through local terms. One example is *muane langka*, which means it is not allowed to go to sea on certain days. These taboos are based on both spiritual knowledge and empirical observations of natural conditions (Rahman, 2021). For example, if the weather appears bad or there are unusual signs from nature, the Mandar community will choose not to go to sea. This demonstrates their ability to combine spiritual knowledge with practical experience in determining the right time to fish.

This local wisdom is also reflected in how the Mandar community educates the younger generation about the importance of maintaining environmental sustainability. This educational process occurs not only in formal schools but also through oral stories passed down from generation to generation (Rahim, 2018). In these stories, moral messages often emphasize the importance of maintaining a good relationship with nature. For instance, the tale of a fisherman punished by the "spirit of the sea" for not respecting

fishing taboos serves as an effective method for instilling ecological values in children.

Furthermore, the local wisdom of the Mandar community is evident in their management of marine resources. They employ a sustainable management system, where fishing is conducted in a manner that does not harm the ecosystem (Amir, 2017). For example, they often limit the number of fish caught at one time and avoid fishing in areas that are in recovery. This demonstrates that the Mandar community has a solid understanding of the fish life cycle and the importance of maintaining ecosystem balance.

In a broader context, the local wisdom and spirituality of the Mandar community can serve as a model for other communities in managing natural resources. By prioritizing values that respect nature, the Mandar community demonstrates that environmental sustainability can be achieved not only through scientific approaches but also through cultural and spiritual understanding (Natsir, 2020). This is particularly important in light of global challenges such as climate change and environmental degradation.

However, challenges remain. The development of modernization and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources often threaten this local wisdom. Many traditional practices are beginning to be abandoned, and knowledge about certain taboos is fading as outside cultures infiltrate (Faisal, 2019). Therefore, it is essential for the Mandar community to continue preserving this local wisdom and integrating it with modern knowledge to create better solutions for the environment.

In conclusion, the ideological dimension of local wisdom and spirituality in the Mandar community reflects a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. Through traditional practices and a deep understanding of ecosystems, the Mandar community demonstrates that respect for nature is key to maintaining environmental sustainability. In facing modern challenges, it is vital for future generations to preserve these values so that local wisdom can continue to guide the balance between human needs and the

preservation of nature. In doing so, the Mandar community not only maintains its cultural identity but also contributes to global efforts to create a more sustainable world.

CONCLUSION

The Mandar language functions as a seasonal map for coastal communities. The living lexical terms in the mother tongue not only describe natural conditions but also educate and shape the ecological thinking of the community. Through an ecolinguistic approach, this research demonstrates that the mother tongue serves as a local wisdom-based educational tool that encompasses biological dimensions (marine ecological knowledge), sociological dimensions (cultural heritage), and ideological dimensions (values and beliefs). Therefore, the preservation of the mother tongue, such as the Mandar language, is crucial for maintaining the continuity of maritime knowledge that is adaptive to the environment.

SUGGESTIONS

It is suggested that local governments and educational institutions integrate the Mandar language into non-formal education curricula, particularly in coastal areas, to preserve its ecological, cultural, and ideological values. By embedding the mother tongue in environmental education and local wisdom-based learning modules, future generations can be equipped with adaptive knowledge about seasonal patterns, marine ecology, and traditional beliefs—ensuring the sustainability of both the language and the maritime environment it represents.

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