



EGALITARIAN LANGUAGE PRACTICES IN SUROBOYOAN DIALECT IN LARA ATI FILM: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia is a country with an extraordinary diversity of regional languages, one of which is Javanese, which has many dialects. One of the interesting dialects to study is the Suroboyoan dialect, which is used by the people of Surabaya and reflects egalitarian, open, and straightforward cultural values. This value of equality is seen in language practices, especially the universal use of ngoko regardless of age or social status. Different from the hierarchical traditional Javanese speech structure, this dialect presents a more equal communication model. This study aims to examine the form of egalitarian language in the movie Lara Ati (2022) by Bayu Skak, using an anthropological approach. The anthropological approach is used in this study to understand language as a representation of culture, social values, and relations between members of society. The film was chosen as an object because it functions as a cultural text that stores social representations, including linguistic practices that reflect the identity of the speaking community. The method used is descriptive qualitative, with data in the form of speech of the characters in the film transcribed, categorized, analyzed, and contextual interpretation of the dialogues between characters. The results show that egalitarian language in this film not only reflects the open and equal social dynamics of Surabaya society, but also becomes a symbol of Arek Suroboyo's cultural identity. The findings contribute to the development of anthropological studies, especially in understanding egalitarianism through language studies. In practice, this research bolsters preservation efforts by documenting and analyzing the use of the Suroboyoan dialect of Javanese. The egalitarian value reflected in this language symbolizes the identity of the inclusive and dynamic Surabaya community, and can inspire the strengthening of other local cultures in Indonesia. Thus, Lara Ati is not only entertaining, but also an important cultural document worthy of scientific study. These findings strengthen anthropological studies related to the role of language in representing social and cultural values, and encourage the preservation of local culture through popular media.

Keywords: Egalitarian Javanese Language, Film, Suroboyoan Dialect, Anthropological studies, Arek Surabaya culture

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with a very high cultural and linguistic diversity. Of the 719 regional languages identified (Lewis et al., 2015), Javanese is one of the largest regional languages and has the most speakers in Indonesia. Apart from being a means of communication, Javanese is also a symbol of the cultural identity of its speakers. One

variant that has its own uniqueness is the Suroboyoan Javanese dialect, which is the dialect used by the people of Surabaya and its surroundings. This dialect is known for its egalitarian, straightforward, and blunt communication character, in contrast to Javanese speech patterns in general which are hierarchical and very concerned with social structure.

The phenomenon of egalitarian language in Surabaya society cannot be separated from the social and cultural character of this city which developed as a maritime city and trading center. Surabaya has long been a meeting place for various ethnicities and cultures, resulting in a more open, fluid and egalitarian communication pattern. Arek Suroboyo culture as a distinctive identity of the Surabaya community shows a rejection of feudalism, rigid social hierarchy and status-based symbolic domination. This is reflected in the widespread use of ngoko language without regard to differences in age, social status, or position between speakers. The Suroboyoan language becomes an important instrument in representing the values of equality, solidarity and togetherness in urban Surabaya society.

According to the anthropolinguistic perspective, this phenomenon is interesting to study more deeply. Anthropolinguistics not only studies language as a symbol system or formal structure, but also understands language as a cultural practice that reflects ideology, social values, and power relations in society. The egalitarian language in Suroboyoan dialect is a manifestation of how people build identity, negotiate the value of equality, while rejecting hierarchical symbolic domination.

Interestingly, this egalitarian language practice is not only found in daily communication, but also represented in popular media, one of which is film. Film as an audio-visual media has great power in representing the culture, social values, and linguistic practices of its speakers (Klarer, 2004; Puspita & Yarno, 2017; Sidabutar, 2019). Movies can be cultural texts that store social representations, including dialects, speech styles, and communication structures that develop in society.

Bayu Skak's *Lara Ati* (2022) is one of the media that represents the egalitarian language character of Surabaya society. With the dominant use of Suroboyoan dialect in the characters' dialog, this film is not only an entertainment, but also a cultural document that holds social values typical of East Java's urban society. The widespread use of ngoko language, non-hierarchical greetings such as “rek” and “cak”, and a straightforward communication style are the main characteristics represented in this film.

The study of *Lara Ati* is important, not only to understand the representation of egalitarian language in popular media, but also to examine how social values such as equality and solidarity are reproduced through linguistic practices. In addition, this study also contributes to the preservation of local culture, especially the communication culture of the Surabaya community, which is currently facing the challenges of globalization and cultural homogenization.

This research was conducted using anthropolinguistic approach and qualitative descriptive method. The focus of the research is to analyze the form and function of egalitarian language in the film *Lara Ati*, as well as to understand how language represents the cultural identity of Arek Suroboyo. Thus, this article is expected to contribute to the development of anthropolinguistic studies, preservation of local culture, and enrich the understanding of the dynamics of language and culture of urban communities in Indonesia.



METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with an anthropolinguistic approach, which combines linguistic and cultural studies to understand language use as a representation of social values. The main focus of the research is to analyze egalitarian language practices in Bayu Skak's *Lara Ati*, as a reflection of Arek Suroboyo's cultural identity.

Data Source

The data in this study are the speech of the characters in the movie *Lara Ati* (2022) which uses Suroboyoan dialect Javanese. This movie was chosen because it predominantly uses Suroboyoan dialect and represents the socio-cultural dynamics of Surabaya society. The researcher analyzed scenes that were purposively selected, namely scenes that explicitly display egalitarian language practices, such as the use of ngoko language across age or social status, typical greeting styles, and speech that reflects openness and social equality.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collected through:

- Watching the movie *Lara Ati* repeatedly.
- Transcription of dialog between characters relevant to the focus of the research.
- Identification and classification of utterances that contain egalitarian language characteristics.
- Documentation in the form of a data table, which contains dialog excerpts, scene context, and preliminary analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out descriptively qualitatively through stages:

- Data reduction: Selecting utterances that are relevant to the indicators of egalitarian language.
- Categorization: Categorizing the utterances based on the form of egalitarian language (e.g. universal ngoko usage, non-hierarchical greetings, typical Surabaya particles).
- Contextual interpretation: Interpreting the meaning of the utterances by considering the socio-cultural context in the movie and the characteristics of Surabaya society.
- Literature triangulation: Validating the analysis results with theoretical references related to anthropolinguistics, sociolinguistics, and Surabaya cultural studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Anthropolinguistics is an interdisciplinary branch of science that examines the relationship between language, culture, and society. Duranti (1997) defines anthropolinguistics as the study of how language is used in a socio-cultural context, and how language practices reflect and shape the social structure, mindset, and collective identity of a community. Furthermore, Foley (1997) mentions that anthropolinguistics not only studies language as a symbol system, but also sees language as a social practice full of cultural meaning. Thus, anthropolinguistic analysis includes the study of language symbolism, language variation in social contexts, power relations reflected in speech, and the role of language in the formation and negotiation of cultural identity. Sibarani (2004) also asserts that anthropolinguistic studies aim to understand the intricacies of culture

through language, because language is a representation of values, norms, and ideologies that live in society. In practice, anthropolinguistics sees language as a reflection and construction of culture, including how social structures such as hierarchy, equality, or solidarity are realized in everyday speech patterns.

In the context of Surabaya society, the use of egalitarian language in Suroboyoan dialect is a concrete example of linguistic practices that reflect local cultural values, namely openness, honesty, and social equality. Through an anthropolinguistic approach, the phenomenon of egalitarian language can be analyzed not only from a linguistic perspective, but also as part of the dynamics of culture, ideology, and identity of East Javanese urban communities. Anthropolinguistics also plays an important role in understanding how language in popular media, such as movies, becomes a means of reproduction and transmission of cultural values. In this case, the film *Lara Ati* can be positioned as a cultural text that represents the egalitarian language practices of the Surabaya community while strengthening the identity of *Arek Suroboyo* in the midst of globalization and modernization. Thus, anthropolinguistic theory is a relevant foundation in this study, as it is able to explain the interrelationship between language, culture, and social identity represented in *Lara Ati* through the use of egalitarian Suroboyoan dialect.

The Concept of Egalitarianism

The concept of *egalitarianism* originates from the term *egalitarian*, which refers to the principle of equality or equal status within social life. According to Holtug and Rasmussen (2007), *egalitarianism* reflects a value system that rejects excessive hierarchy and positions all individuals on an equal footing, regardless of differences in social status, age, or background. In socio-cultural contexts, egalitarian values are closely related to the principles of social justice, human dignity, and the elimination of discrimination based on social hierarchy. From an axiological perspective, Trinarso (2021) categorizes *egalitarianism* as part of social values within Max Scheler's hierarchy of values. These social values emphasize justice, solidarity, and equality in interpersonal relations. In societies that uphold *egalitarianism*, social interactions are based on mutual respect and equality rather than domination, authority, or rigid stratification.

Traditionally, Javanese society reflects its social structure through the use of speech levels (*unggah-ungguh basa*), where language use varies according to social status, age, and interpersonal relationships (Poedjosoedarmo, 1968; Errington, 1988). This system manifests the deeply rooted hierarchical nature of Javanese culture, where social distinctions are clearly expressed in everyday language use. However, a different phenomenon is found in the urban culture of Surabaya. The Suroboyoan dialect spoken by the *Arek Suroboyo* community exhibits a more egalitarian communication pattern. The widespread use of *ngoko* (informal Javanese speech level) across interactions, regardless of age or social status, reflects the egalitarian values that are deeply embedded in Surabaya's social character (Trinarso, 2018; 2021). The *Arek* culture is recognized for its openness, honesty, spontaneity, and horizontal solidarity, minimizing rigid hierarchical boundaries in social interactions.

Trinarso (2021) further emphasizes that egalitarian values in *Arek Suroboyo* culture are not only reflected through language practices but also serve as a symbol of social identity that resists rigid stratification systems and promotes equal relations among individuals. This value is central to shaping the character of an urban society that is dynamic, inclusive, and adaptive to social changes. Thus, examining the phenomenon of *egalitarianism*, particularly in linguistic practices, is essential to understanding how



equality is represented, preserved, and socially constructed within community life. Research on egalitarian language practices offers insight not only into the dynamics of local culture but also into the role of language as a social instrument that reflects the ideology and values of its speakers

Film is a complex form of cultural text because it contains elements of narrative, symbols, visuals, and dialog that not only functions as entertainment, but also as a social reflection and cultural representation of society. Klarer (2004) asserts that films can be analyzed on par with literary works because they contain narrative and symbolic structures that represent social reality and certain cultural constructions. Film, as an audio-visual medium, has the advantage of conveying social messages, cultural values, and collective ideologies of society in a form that is more easily understood and accepted by the public across social backgrounds. Puspita and Yarno (2017) reinforce this view by referring to films as social documents that not only represent patterns of community life, but also contain moral messages, local cultural values, and communication practices that become the identity of the speaking community.

In addition, Sidabutar (2019) explains that movies have cognitive and affective influence on the audience. Through storylines, language use, and characterization, movies are able to shape perceptions, influence attitudes, and strengthen understanding of the cultural values represented. Therefore, films are not only seen as works of entertainment, but also as educational media, cultural preservation, and means of social documentation. In the context of this research, film is positioned as an important data source to analyze linguistic practices that reflect cultural values, especially in examining the representation of egalitarian values in Arek Suroboyo culture. The movie *Lara Ati* by Bayu Skak is an appropriate object of study because it features speech in a typical Suroboyoan dialect, as well as a space to understand the relationship between language, culture, and local identity through an anthropolinguistic approach. Thus, film studies not only contribute to the analysis of narrative or artistic structures, but also open up a broader study of how language, social values, and culture are reproduced, disseminated, and maintained in society through popular media.

DISCUSSION

The results show that Bayu Skak's *Lara Ati* explicitly represents egalitarian language practices through the dialogues of the characters who use Suroboyoan dialect. This dialect is known as a variant of Javanese language that reflects the egalitarian, open, and straightforward culture typical of the Arek Suroboyo community. This finding not only confirms the existence of egalitarian communication patterns in Surabaya society, but also shows that popular media such as movies can be an effective means of representing and reproducing local cultural values.

Egalitarian Language as a Representation of Arek Suroboyo Culture in *Lara Ati*

The egalitarian language shown in *Lara Ati* (2022) is an authentic representation of the social dynamics and cultural identity of the people of Surabaya, especially the community known as Arek Suroboyo. This community is known to have a strong social character in terms of openness, courage to express opinions, spontaneity in action, and a high spirit of equality. These characters are then manifested concretely in their daily communication practices, one of which is through the use of the distinctive Suroboyoan dialect. In the context of traditional Javanese culture, the structure of communication is strongly influenced by the *unggah-ungguh basa* or speech level system, which

hierarchically differentiates the way of speaking based on age, social status, position, or relationship between speakers. This system generally divides the Javanese language into three main levels: ngoko (rough, familiar), madya (medium), and krama (refined and formal). This pattern reflects a hierarchical and cautious social structure, where status determines the choice of language variety (Poedjosoedarmo, 1968; Errington, 1988).

However, the Surabaya community displays a quite different pattern. They tend to blur these formal boundaries and emphasize horizontal relations between individuals. This phenomenon is strongly represented in *Lara Ati* through the widespread use of ngoko language across age or social status. Even in formal scenes, such as conversations with parents or superiors, the characters in the movie still use ngoko language without feeling like they are violating the norm.

Concrete examples can be seen in dialog quotes such as:

"Rek, lek kowe keep thinking, uripmu ra maju-maju!"

(The greeting "rek" and ngoko language are used between individuals who in traditional Javanese norms should use krama.)

The use of greeting words such as rek and cak is another characteristic of Suroboyoan communication. The word rek is used to address friends or other people regardless of age or status. The word cak is often used as a nickname or substitute for a name to show familiarity and equality. This greeting is not just a language, but a symbol of fluid, egalitarian and familiar social relations. In an anthropolinguistic perspective, this kind of language practice is a form of articulation of cultural values.

As Holtug & Rasmussen (2007) explain, egalitarian language reflects patterns of equal social relations, which are not determined by structural factors such as age, position, or social class. Therefore, the Suroboyoan language used in this movie is a clear reflection of the ideology of equality that lives in the Surabaya community.

In addition to showing the diversity of local languages, this movie also emphasizes how popular media can be a space for local cultural articulation. Through *Lara Ati*, values such as openness, assertiveness, and social equality that are the identity of the Arek Suroboyo community can be disseminated to a wider public. The language practices in this movie serve as documentation as well as a reminder that language is not only a means of communication, but also a means of inheriting values and binding communal identity. Thus, the egalitarian language in *Lara Ati* is not only a description of the linguistic reality of Surabaya society, but also an ideological symbol that marks a shift in Javanese communication patterns from hierarchical to more equal and open relations. This phenomenon strengthens the position of Suroboyoan dialect as a form of language that lives, develops, and represents the spirit of East Java's dynamic urban society.

Suroboyoan Dialect as an Ideological Instrument and Symbol of Cultural Identity

The Suroboyoan dialect presented in *Lara Ati* is not just a form of linguistic variation of the Javanese language, but represents a value system and construction of cultural identity that has been strongly embedded in Surabaya urban society. This dialect functions as a medium of ideological articulation and a symbol of social relations oriented towards equality, openness, and spontaneity in everyday life. Unlike the linguistic tradition of Central Java or Yogyakarta, which upholds politeness through a system of speech levels (*unggah-ungguh basa*), Surabaya people interpret language in a more egalitarian manner. They are not too fixated on hierarchical norms in language use, but make language a tool to negotiate fluid, direct, and equal social relations. As Peacock (in



Trinarso, 2018) explains, Arek Suroboyo culture tends to reject social structures that are too formal and rigid, and opts for straightforward and open expressions in social interactions.

This emphasis on the use of local dialects indicates that language does not only function as a technical communication tool, but also as an ideological tool. In an anthropolinguistic perspective, language reflects social structures, cultural values, and even power relations in society (Duranti, 1997). In this context, the Suroboyoan dialect is a form of resistance to the hierarchical and symbolic social structure in traditional Javanese society. By using ngoko language and typical greetings such as *rek* or *cak* universally, Suroboyoan speakers indirectly assert the value of equality and reject symbolic domination based on age, position, and gender status. The movie *Lara Ati* is a strategic articulation space to represent this ideology. The dialogues of the characters are laden with the use of ngoko that crosses the boundaries of age and status, showing that egalitarianism has become part of the cultural values of Surabaya's urban society. The scenes in this movie not only record language practices, but also the way Arek Suroboyo people think and behave - that everyone has the right to voice their opinions without having to submit to the symbolic domination established by the traditional social system.

Furthermore, the egalitarian values in this movie can be studied through the perspective of Max Scheler's hierarchy of values. In this framework, Scheler places social values such as justice, equality, and solidarity as higher values than instrumental or merely formal values. When the people of Surabaya, through their language practices, prioritize honesty, openness, and equality, they are implicitly promoting higher social values. Thus, the movie *Lara Ati* not only records language practices, but also voices social values that are more progressive and relevant to the spirit of today's urban society. As a symbol of cultural identity, the Suroboyoan dialect is a strong distinguishing marker from other Javanese communities. It not only conveys the content of the message, but also carries with it the ideology inherent in each utterance. Thus, this movie has an important value not only as a work of entertainment art, but also as a social and cultural document that holds ideological traces of contemporary Surabaya society.

Film *Lara Ati* as a Cultural Text and Media for Local Language Preservation

Film as an audiovisual media has great power in representing the cultural values of society. In line with Klarer's (2004) view that film is a complex form of cultural text - containing narrative structures, symbols, and visuals that reflect social reality - *Lara Ati* is a concrete example of how local culture can be recorded, reproduced, and introduced to a wide audience through popular media. Puspita & Yarno (2017) assert that films act as social documents that not only record events, but also depict moral values, patterns of social interaction, and people's perspectives in dealing with everyday reality. Movies are not just a spectacle, but also a means of social education and cultural inheritance. Meanwhile, Sidabutar (2019) underlines the role of film in providing cognitive and affective influence to its audience, which means that films are able to influence the way of thinking and the way of perceiving reality, including in terms of language preservation and cultural identity.

In this context, Bayu Skak's *Lara Ati* positions itself not only as a work of entertainment, but also as an educational and cultural preservation medium. Through the dominant use of Suroboyoan dialect Javanese in the dialogue between characters, this film consistently maintains the existence of local languages that are often marginalized in the mainstream media flow which tends to be dominated by Indonesian or even foreign

languages. The dialogues in this film are not only natural and appropriate to the social context of Surabaya society, but also convey the egalitarian values, togetherness, and honesty typical of Arek Suroboyo culture. The use of greetings such as *rek* and *cak*, as well as the dominance of *ngoko* speech in conversations across age and social status, are tangible forms of resistance to cultural homogenization and symbols of pride in local identity. In this case, *Lara Ati* succeeds in becoming a platform to maintain language as part of the community's value system, not only as a means of communication, but also as a marker of identity and cultural expression.

Furthermore, when viewed from an anthropolinguistic approach, this film shows that language in films does not stand alone as a linguistic structure, but as a means of negotiating values, social relations, and ideologies. The language used by the characters illustrates how urban communities like Surabaya shape their identities through language, emphasize equal social positions, and voice the spirit of openness and freedom of expression. This makes *Lara Ati* a cultural text that has scientific value, not just artistic.

Thus, the movie is not only worth appreciating from its aesthetic and entertainment side, but also from the academic and cultural side. It is a concrete example that popular media can be a space for resistance to globalization that erodes local culture, as well as a tool for preserving and strengthening regional identity in the midst of massive modernization.

Dynamics of Language, Culture and Local Identity in the Flow of Modernization

Surabaya as one of the metropolitan cities in Indonesia has a complex and dynamic social character. As a port city and trading center since the colonial period, Surabaya has become a meeting point for various ethnic groups, cultures, and social classes. The interaction between these groups creates a distinctive urban culture, one of which is reflected in the linguistic practices of the community. Although modernization and globalization have encouraged cultural homogenization – through the penetration of national languages and even foreign languages in everyday life – Surabaya's local culture still shows strong resilience. The egalitarian values, spontaneity and openness that characterize Arek Suroboyo's culture are still strongly held and manifested in everyday language, especially through the use of Suroboyoan dialect. Bayu Skak's *Lara Ati* represents this dynamic strongly. Through characterizations, storylines, and dialogues that highlight the reality of East Java's urban society, the film succeeds in showing that the Suroboyoan dialect is not eroded by the times. In the setting of 'modern life-work, family relations, and friendships-the local language is still used without a sense of inferiority. Instead, the use of the language becomes a means of self-expression and a strong social identity. This consistency is a sign that in an urban society like Surabaya, locality is not always defeated by modernity. Instead, locality can coexist, even enriching the collective identity of the urban community. This challenges the common assumption that globalization is always synonymous with the loss of local culture.

Research Contribution to Anthropolinguistic Studies

Theoretically and methodologically, this research makes a significant contribution to the development of anthropolinguistic studies, especially in Indonesia. Anthropolinguistics as a branch of science that studies language in relation to culture and social practices, finds a strong field of study in the context of the movie *Lara Ati*. The film provides narratives, symbolic representations, and dialog that can be deciphered as a reflection of the social life of the people of Surabaya.



By taking the movie as the object of study, this research opens a new analytical space for the anthropolinguistic approach - that popular culture texts can be used as a valid and meaningful data source in understanding social values and cultural identity. In this case, the movie *Lara Ati* not only presents casual speech, but also illustrates power relations, identity choices, and cultural resistance strategies against the domination of outside values. This consistency is a sign that in an urban society like Surabaya, locality is not always defeated by modernity. Instead, locality can coexist, even enriching the collective identity of the urban community. This challenges the common assumption that globalization is always synonymous with the loss of local culture.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of language practices in *Lara Ati*, it can be concluded that the use of egalitarian language through Suroboyoan dialect consistently represents the social character of Surabaya people who are open, straightforward, and uphold social equality. The characteristic use of ngoko language across age, social status, even in formal situations, is strong evidence that the communication culture of the Surabaya community has formed egalitarian and inclusive interaction patterns. This practice is also a sign that language not only functions as a means of communication, but also as a reflection of the ideology, value system, and cultural identity of the speaking community. In this case, the Suroboyoan dialect is not just a linguistic variation, but a symbol of resistance to the hierarchical social structure common in traditional Javanese culture. This emphasizes that local languages have the capacity to articulate modern values such as equality and social freedom, without losing their local cultural roots.

Lara Ati as a cultural text has played an important role in voicing these values through popular media. The dialogues between the characters not only reflect the social reality of urban Surabaya society, but also serve as a relevant and contextual medium of cultural representation. Thus, this film does not only function as entertainment, but also as an educative and documentative tool that strengthens the existence and value of local dialects in the midst of globalization and cultural homogenization. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of anthropolinguistic studies, especially in exploring the relationship between language, culture and local identity. The analysis of a popular movie like *Lara Ati* proves that mass media has great potential to be a valid and meaningful source of data in linguistic anthropology studies. This finding also serves as an argument that the preservation of local culture can be done creatively through representations in media that are close to the community. Thus, this study not only reveals egalitarian linguistic practices in Surabaya society, but also opens up opportunities for further research on the dynamics of local languages as constructions of social identities that continue to live and develop.

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