

The Meaning of the Lamaholot Regional Language Based on the Thoughts of Ludwig Wittgenstein in the Philosophy of Language

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the meaning of the Lamaholot regional language based on the perspective of Ludwig Wittgenstein's language philosophy, especially the concept of meaning in use and language games, as well as interpret the sacred phrase "Boru Tana Bojang Kebo Kili Batu" as a representation of the socio-cultural reality of the Boru people in East Flores. The research method used was a descriptive qualitative approach with literature studies, where primary data comes from Wittgenstein's works, especially Philosophical Investigations, and secondary data from various literature related to the Lamaholot language, culture, and philosophy of language. The data analysis technique was carried out interpretively by relating the use of language in the context of traditional ceremonies and social interaction of the Lamaholot community with Wittgenstein's framework of thought. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of two periods of Wittgenstein's thought to uncover layers of regional language meanings that have not previously been studied philosophically. The results of the study showed that the Lamaholot language not only functions as a means of communication, but also as a symbol that describes reality (image theory) and has a meaning determined by its use in various socio-cultural contexts (language games). The phrase "Boru Tana Bojang Kebo Kili Batu" contains philosophical values about fertility, unity, and harmony that are reflected in people's lives. This research contributes to the development of the study of language philosophy in the local context and provides recommendations for efforts to preserve regional languages as intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords:

*Philosophy of Language;
Lamaholot language; Ludwig
Wittgenstein*

INTRODUCTION

According to Jaspersen, language grows when conversation takes precedence over shouting (Cassirer, 1987). Language is a communication tool that humans use in daily life to convey certain meanings (Chavez, 2022; Fedorenko, Ivanova, et al., 2024; Fedorenko, Piantadosi, et al., 2024; Meylani, 2024). Language itself reflects a person's existence on earth. As long as humans are in the world, language still exists. As initiated by Wittgenstein in image theory, language describes human reality. Everything that human beings speak about is always based on facts, as opposed to things that are beyond human reason, because language is limited as in Wittgenstein's idea of the limits of language.

Each word that is issued contains many meanings that allow people to understand well what is being said (El-Astal, 2023; Ratten, 2023). Language is formed when a combination of

letters that then form a word and is elaborated into a sentence and then spoken using a dialect that is in accordance with the context of a society (Ali, 2022; Azzeh et al., 2025; Boulesnam & Boucetti, 2025). Words are not meant to express the properties of objects. The task of the word is not to describe things but to evoke human emotions. In addition, it is not only to convey ideas or thoughts but to encourage people to take certain actions (Cassirer, 1987).

The Lamaholot language is a typical language of the people of East Flores which has been rooted in every aspect of the life of its people. Each region in East Flores district has one common language but different dialect. Every word spoken has a meaning that is very close to people's lives. This regional language is not only co-existing with humans but also with the environment so that everyone must be careful when speaking words. The closeness between man and nature is closely intertwined through the language spoken in certain rites. So that each word has a meaning both mystically and socially in interaction. Language is not used only for communication but for symbolization. This is because symbols are representations of ecology and reality so that they correspond to the context of society, place, time in relation to ways of thinking and acting. In this paper, the author will explore the meaning of the language of Lamaholot in the view of Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Previous research relevant to this study is first, Simon Sabon Ola's (2023) research on kelolo speech in the Lamaholot ethnic group which focuses on the structure and function of oral literature in traditional ceremonies; second, Rikardus Pande's (2021) research on the function of the variety of languages of fish sellers in the Oka Market which examines language variations in buying and selling interactions; and third, Yosefina Helenora Jem's (2020) research on philosophical values in the traditional expressions of the Lamaholot community which reveals the philosophical meaning of human relationships with God, others, and nature. The three studies have similarities in studying the Lamaholot language or the use of language in socio-cultural contexts, but the difference lies in the focus of the study and the theoretical framework used. Ola's research focuses on one type of traditional speech, Pande's research examines the Indonesian language in the context of trade, and Jem's research uses a general philosophical approach, while this study specifically analyzes the meaning of the Lamaholot language based on the philosophical perspective of Ludwig Wittgenstein's language, especially the concept of meaning in use and language games.

The Lamaholot language has been carried out in various perspectives, both from the point of view of oral literature, social function, and philosophical values. However, there is still a research gap that has not been filled, namely the study of the meaning of the Lamaholot language which is analyzed in depth using the framework of Ludwig Wittgenstein's language philosophy, especially the concept of meaning in use and language games. Previous research has not specifically linked the linguistic practices of the Lamaholot people to two periods of Wittgenstein's thought at once, namely the theory of images in the *Tractatus* and the concept of language games in the *Philosophical Investigations*.

The novelty of this research lies in an analytical approach that integrates two periods of Ludwig Wittgenstein's thought, namely picture theory and the concept of language games, to comprehensively reveal the meaning of the Lamaholot language, including a specific analysis of the sacred phrase "Boru Tana Bojang Kebo Kili Batu" which has never been studied before. Based on this, this study aims to analyze the meaning of the Lamaholot language based on the concept of meaning in use, examine the practice of language games in the

context of traditional ceremonies and social interactions, and interpret typical phrases of the Boru people as a representation of socio-cultural reality. This research is expected to provide theoretical benefits for the development of the study of language philosophy in the context of regional languages, practical benefits as a reference for the preservation of the Lamaholot language for the community and local governments, and academic benefits to encourage further research on regional languages based on philosophical perspectives.

METHODS

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with the library research method. This approach was chosen because the research aims to understand and analyze the meaning of the Lamaholot language in people's lives using the perspective of the philosophy of language thought from Ludwig Wittgenstein. The data sources in this study consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data is in the form of works by Ludwig Wittgenstein who discuss the philosophy of language, especially the concept of meaning in use and language games in the book *Philosophical Investigations*. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from various books, scientific articles, and other literature sources related to the Lamaholot language, philosophy of language, and cultural studies of the people of East Flores. The data collection technique was carried out through documentation studies, namely by reviewing literature that is relevant to the research topic. The author identifies, reads, and studies various sources related to the use of the Lamaholot language in the social and cultural life of the community. The data analysis technique is carried out by interpretive analysis using a philosophical approach. The data that has been collected is analyzed by interpreting the meaning of words or expressions in the Lamaholot language, then relating it to Wittgenstein's concept of language philosophy regarding the use of language in the context of social life (language games). Through this process, the author seeks to understand how language not only functions as a means of communication, but also as a symbol that represents cultural, social, and community values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

History and Works of Ludwig Wittgenstein

Ludwig Wittgenstein was born in Vienna (Austria) on April 24, 1889. His father was of Jewish descent who had embraced Protestant Christianity and his mother was Catholic. His father was an engineer who within ten years managed to lead a large steel industry. His father and mother were talented in music and their house became a kind of music center in Vienna which was visited by Johannes Brahms, among others. Music plays an important role in Ludwig's life. According to his friends, he is good at whistling classic *koserto-koserto*. His relationship with music is often evident from the examples he gives in his philosophical works (Bertens, 1981).

In 1906 Wittgenstein began studying at a technical college in Berlin. In 1908 he continued his engineering studies in Manchester (England). There he conducted research in the field of aircraft engineering, especially jet engines and propellers. In 1912 he entered Cambridge University and studied philosophy under Russell. After his father died, Wittgenstein returned to his hometown and joined the Austrian army as a volunteer. He was assigned to various places, including on the eastern front and southern front. During these

years, he wrote a book on philosophy which he completed in 1918. He was then taken prisoner of war by the Italian army. Finally, thanks to Russell's help, he was released in 1919, after which he met Russell in The Hague. Thanks to the meeting, the manuscript was finally published in the magazine *Annalen der Naturphilosophie* with the title "*Logischphilosophische Abhandlungen*".

With this book, Wittgenstein considered his career as a philosopher to be over. After that he took a course to obtain a diploma to teach. His wish was fulfilled until he taught elementary school in a remote village in Vienna. Then he quit because of family matters. He also kept in touch with his friends in Cambridge. Finally, thanks to the support of his best friend, Wittgenstein revived his philosophy. Thanks to his work in the book *tractatus*, he was awarded a doctorate of philosophy and began teaching at Trinity College (Bertens, 1981).

After *Tractatus* Wittgenstein no longer published a single piece of writing. One of the books intended to be published is *Philosophical Investigations* in German as well as its English translation. Then some of his personal notes or for his college preparation were also published. *Philosophische Bemerkungen* (from 1930) (1965), *Philosophical Grammar* (from 1932-1969), *Blue and brown book* (from 1933-1935) (1969), *Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics* (from 1934-44) (1967), *Lectures and Conversation on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief* (from 1938-1966), *Seat* (from 1945-48) (1967), *On Certainty* (from 1950-51) (1969), *Bemerkungen über die Farben/Remarks on Colour* (1950-51) (1977), *Wittgenstein's Readings: Cambridge* (1930-32) (1980), *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge* (1932-35) (1979) (Bertens, 1981).

Ludwig Wittgenstein's Thoughts on the Meaning of Language

Talks about eating language in his book *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein elaborated in two parts, namely the theory of meaning in the use and play of language.

1. Meaning in use

For Wittgenstein, the problem of language was first of all the problem of using certain sounds. Thus beyond the use in reality of a sign becomes dead. A sign can live and become meaningful precisely in its use. So that language can be meaningful if language can pronounce a sign. The use of a sign is the breath of life of the sign concerned. The transition from the question of meaning to meaning in use is based on the understanding that the meaning of a word is the object it symbolizes. The word indicates something that is sensed to exist. For example, goats, sheep, trees and many more. In contrast to words that do not indicate objects such as already, after, is allowed. Therefore, don't ask what it means, but how the word is used (Sutrisno & Hardiman, 1922).

2. Language games

Language is not a simple phenomenon but a very complex phenomenon. Inside are countless language games. With the same language, a person is able to display something, give commands, ask, thank you and so on. Language is like a needle that doctors always carry when on duty. Language has its own existence. Everyone has the right to use language anywhere and at any time (Sutrisno & Hardiman, 1922). There are many language games but there is no fact that they are the same as each other. Language games have a different essence. Each game states one specific statement. From various language games there are similarities in family but may determine the limits of understanding of the game. However, what is

possible to know if it is a game or not is by tracing the boundaries. The boundaries of the language are blurred and difficult to understand.

Context of the Lamaholot Regional Language

The Lamaholot language is one of the regional languages spoken by the people of East Flores and Lembata. So that the people who use this language are called the Lamaholot people as it is commonly mentioned. Etymologically, the word Lamaholot is a fragment of two words, namely "lama" means place or area, while "holot" means adhesive, glue, which is attached together. So in simple terms, Lamaholot means an area that unites all its people (123dok.com, 2022).

Even though it is in one language, each region still shows its own dialect. For example, there are 4 language groups in the entire East Flores region. The four language groups include Malay, Boru-Hewa, Kedang and Lamaholot. According to the genealogy, the Lamaholot language is divided into 3 branches, namely West Lamaholot, Central Lamaholot and East Lamaholot. The West Lamaholot language has reached the status of in accordance with the Swedish Morris language, namely the Pukanu, Ile Mandiri, Ritaebang, Lewo Tobi, Nusa Tadon Adonara, Ile Ape, Lamalera and Lebatukan. areas included in Central Lamaholot are Labalekan, Mingar, Lewuka, Lewokukun and Painara. Meanwhile, East Lamaholot is a language whose speakers in the past were isolated from the rest of the country, this was experienced by the people of Eastern Lamaholot, including Lewoeleng and Lamatukan.

As explained, the Lamaholot people really maintain the authenticity of their language even though some regions have different dialects, even there are different words, but they still have the same culture. The Lamaholot language is used in every moment except in formal matters. The Lamaholot language is a form of local wisdom that is valuable both in terms of education and in terms of social. Every community that speaks the Lamaholot language has a kinship bond that presupposes that the Lamaholot people come from the same womb with all kinds of cultural aspects as well. The Lamaholot community believes that unity can be strengthened by jointly maintaining local wisdom that becomes an identity in life together. The regional language that is often spoken has a mystical and magical value. If it is said wrongly, it will cause a terrible catastrophe both for the person and for the entire village. So that both in the context of interaction and in the context of customary or when there is a kind of traditional ceremony.

The Use of Regional Languages in Social Interaction

In his book *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein emphasized how language describes reality. Language can describe anything, whether it is captured by the senses, but language also has limitations, namely language is not able to describe the highest reality. In the context of the Lamaholot community, language is the main means of establishing relationships. The use of regional languages is used in various life contexts but how to speak according to the context of that time. Here are some concrete contexts of regional languages being used correctly.

Language in traditional ceremonies

The language used in the customs is very different from the everyday language of the Lamaholot people. Indigenous language is meant to interact but interaction with something invisible or abstract. So it is true what Wittgenstein said that language itself has limitations. One of the boundaries of language is to speak of the highest form that has never been

captured by the senses. Customary languages are usually difficult to understand logically because indigenous languages are indeed a fairly ancient language so that only certain people are able to master them. A traditional language where the linguistic elements are sacred and have magical power (Ola, 2023). So that the customary language can only be spoken by people called tribal chiefs or customary elders. So that the customary language can only be spoken by people called tribal chiefs or customary elders. If there is a mispronunciation, there will be a catastrophe that befalls the village or the person. Because the indigenous language contains swearing, it must be spoken by the right person and at the right time and place.

Language in everyday conversation

Diversity of speech can be found in certain communities of people with the intention of conveying messages in daily communication. People express their thoughts, feelings, or desires so that the variety used also differs according to the topic, the relationship of the conversation, the person being talked about and the interlocutor (Pande, 2021). The everyday language of the Lamaholot people is a common language used by whom, whenever, and wherever. The everyday Lamaholot language is easy to understand by the Lamaholot people even though they sometimes have different accents. For example, the Boru people speak to the Lewotobi people, both can understand each other, but the dialect used is different.

Every word spoken daily in the Lamaholot language has a meaning that is not much different from the Indonesian language but what distinguishes it is how the language is a characteristic of the Lamaholot people. The richness of meaning depends on how one uses the language properly and correctly. In dialogue, the Lamaholot people sometimes use language that can be said to be ancient or rarely used because of generational differences. Or even until now there are still many who are tied to regional languages so they do not understand Indonesian at all. This is a belief that regional languages have been integrated into people's lives.

Analysis of the Use of Certain Words or Phrases

In analyzing the meaning contained in the Lamaholot language, the author takes a phrase that is a strength for the Lamaholot community specifically used by the people in Boru Village. The phrase taken reads "Boru Tana Bojang Kebo Kili Batu". This phrase has a power related to the life system of the Lamaholot community, especially Boru Village, both in terms of culture and social. This phrase is also a characteristic of the user community because every precious moment this phrase is often spoken (Taba, komunikasi personal, 12 November 2023).

Boru Tana Bojang : has the meaning of authenticity while Kebo Kili Batu: The greatness of the village. From this phrase, people believe that there is a very deep philosophical meaning. The word boru itself means a fertile area that is a symbol of wealth, abundance or an abundant producer of natural wealth. In addition, the word boru itself means woman. So that the people who inhabit this place have a spirit of unity and brotherhood. This spirit continues to be maintained and lived to this day. The community has never created riots between each other both in the village and outside the village. The virtues possessed by the community are living in harmony, safety and peace. In addition, this spirit is carried out like a woman who maintains harmony in life together.

The meaning of this phrase provides a kind of description of the life of the village community. In simple terms, the phrase describes the real reality of the situation and situation

of society. If you look at it, it is true that the location of the village is in a mountainous area which is approximately 2000 meters above sea level, so it is not surprising that the wealth due to the fertility of the land guarantees the life of the people. And also the closeness to each other as a society is very visible where each community maintains harmony through social interaction every day. This phrase is usually spoken during the election of the village head or when conducting a village cooling ceremony. This phrase is not spoken by people who are not the traditional head of the village.

Wittgenstein has given the understanding that every language contains a profound philosophical meaning and is very close to reality or fact. In addition to Wittgenstein, one of the philosophers who also had a hand in linguistics was Gadamer. Gadamer with hermeneutics is able to provide an understanding of a correct form of interpretation of a text or language. Like this phrase, what hermeneutics is needed if you want to translate the meaning of one text or language in one region. According to Gadamer, language does not mean a singular thing. A language has many meanings and it deserves to be recognized. In the various meanings of the language there is also one meaning that is essential, fixed and universal. This means that language has distinctive properties in itself.

The phrase that is often spoken by the community contains a strong magical mystical meaning that it is difficult to speak it logically. In addition to having relationships between fellow humans, this phrase is also closely related to the highest concept. A concept that the community believes as a provider of fertility, abundant harvests and harmony that is lived by the local community. In this regard, regional languages are one of the most powerful bridges to connect the magical world.

Cultural and Social Implications

Language means something central to understanding reality through dialogue (Batmomolin, 2020). Understanding a language is not just an action but an activity with a definite intention like the phrase in the Lamaholot language. From this phrase it can be related to the context of people's lives both in terms of culture and in terms of society. Because language itself is never separated from its use from these two aspects. The following are the implications of this phrase in people's lives.

a. Cultural Aspects

From a cultural aspect, the phrase has a very deep magical mystical meaning. Although Wittgenstein's philosophy of language explains the limitations of language, people believe in closeness to the existence of the Most High. The community mentions "*Ama Lera Wulan and Ina Tanah Ekan*" who are always close and the community believes that the existence of the Most High is really real. This belief is felt by the name "*Boru Tanah Bojang Kebo Kili Batu*" which provides fertility, abundance and abundant natural wealth. This phrase is one of the calls when there is some kind of traditional ceremonial or village government ceremonies.

Wealth, abundance and fertility are answered by the phrase. So far, the community has never experienced a food crisis, even though from an economic point of view, it can be said to be of a low class. But because of the fertility of the soil, the community began to use the land to match. From this work, the community gets good results and is grateful for the income.

b. Social Aspects

Social science places more emphasis on things related to the use of language and how each group of people understands what is said from the language used. The basic thing that

must be learned is semantics that focuses more on the meaning of each word or phrase used in the interaction so that it can be understood well by the communicator (Batmomolin, 2020). Based on this phrase, the implications for the social aspect are very clear. This can be seen from the lifestyle and how the interaction is well established. The phrase not only describes fertility, wealth and abundance, but on the other hand describes a woman who always maintains harmony in life. Every member of the community emphasizes the attitude of mutual respect for anyone and always maintains harmony in relations between community members.

In daily life, social interaction is always based on the belief that the richness of the meaning of the phrase must always be held so that there are rarely disputes that divide relationships between members of society. From here, the role of the government and traditional elders is important in providing an explanation regarding the meaning contained in the phrase. This must be because every form of word or phrase has a close relationship with human life.

CONCLUSION

Ludwig Wittgenstein as a philosopher who had a great influence on the development of the philosophy of science, especially in the philosophy of language. Ludwig Wittgenstein's attention to language earned him the nickname of the philosopher of language. Ludwig Wittgenstein described well everything related to language including the meaning of each word and the limitations of language. As well as the regional language of Lamaholot that the author discusses in this article. From Wittgenstein's thought, the author tries to analyze eating from the regional word Lamaholot and relate it based on the cultural context and social relations in society. Based on the results of this writing, the author finally believes that the language used every day turns out to give a meaning that is in accordance with real reality. In addition, it contains a deep philosophical meaning if studied properly. So the need to develop regional languages as a wealth that has both cultural and social values. Regional languages must continue to be preserved because they are a peculiarity for every community that uses them. In addition, insights related to the use of language continue to be sharpened so that the language is able to guide a person in acquiring knowledge.

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