Form and Meaning of Halal Bi Halal Tradition

Sigit Haryanto*, Djatmika, Wakin Abdullah, Dwi Purnanto, aLinguistics Postgraduate Program, Sebelas Maret University Surakarta 57126 Indonesia, b,c.dFaculty of Humanities, Sebelas Maret University Surakarta 57126 Indonesia, Email: a*sh288@ums.ac.id

Javanese society has halal bi halal tradition. It is an annual event, which has a relation to lebaran fitr. The doers come to the older by speaking in the Javanese language. In real use, many language variations would be found. The objectives of this study are finding the forms and the meanings inside this tradition. This ethnographic study used participant observation in collecting the data. The collected data was analysed by using componential analysis as a part of the ethnography method proposed by Spradley. The results of data analysis were presented descriptively. The results are as follows: (1) the first person used speech level krama to older people, and the second person used speech level ngoko and krama. The second person using krama to the first person is usually caused by the social position of the first person. The first person may have a high position and may be a stranger or guest in the events. (2) Concerning the meanings inside the tradition, there are two: respecting and keeping harmony in life. As a conclusion, this tradition is created to preserve the best cultural values in society through language use.

**Key words:** Language variation, halal bi halal tradition, ngoko and krama.

Introduction

Javanese society has many traditions (Fernandez, 2008). One of them is halal bi halal. It is an annual event. The tradition has a close relationship to Eid al-Fitr. It is commonly communicated through oral language, spiritual manifestation, and mandatory attendance (Anwar, 2013). The actors of this tradition are not limited to certain circles. They can come from various social levels. Regarding age, they may be children, teenagers, adults, and parents. Regarding occupation, they can be farmers, teachers, laborers, and other professions. Regarding gender, they can be male and female. From the fraternity, halal bi halal actors can be children, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc (Haryanto et al., 2018).
The tradition of *halal bi halal* has relates to visiting (Javanese: *sowan*), connection, and togetherness (Sairin, 1982). Commonly, those who visit are young people. They visit older relatives or neighbours. Shaking hands, saying good words, wishing Eid and apologising to each other. The elders will respond to apologies and offer prayers. The words used by young people are *krama* language, while elders will use *ngoko* language. To give more information, below are the examples of the linguistic expressions they use.

**Example 1.**

Grandchild: *Mbah ngaturaken sugeng riadin, sedaya kalepatan nyuwun ngapunten.*

‘Granny, happy Eid and may mistakes I have done be forgiven’

Grandmother: *Ya le, sepira luputku aku njaluk ngapura, dosaku lan dosamu muga-muga lebur Ana ing dina bakda iki, dongaku wae marang kowe muga-muga sekolahmu lancar, lan sing bekti marang wong tuwa’*

‘Yes dear, forgive me too for many mistakes I have done, I’m sorry, may my mistakes and yours be forgiven this Eid, my prayer for your study and obey your parents.’

Judging from the contents of linguistic expressions or the verbal actions uttered by the first and second persons above, there are two variations of Javanese, *krama* and *ngoko*. *Krama* is uttered by the first person while the second person uses *ngoko*. Grandchildren shall not use *ngoko* to grandmothers and it is not possible for the grandmother to use *krama* to their grandchild. The impossibility is due to social factors prevailing in Javanese society and the social norm that the young must respect the old.

The tradition of *halal bi halal* has several equivalent words, such as: *balalan, bakdan, halal bi halal, shawalan, or sungkeman* (Kardiyanto, 2005). The difference in names is related to the agreement between the actors in every region. The term *halal bi halal* in Javanese (JL) is interpreted as *ngabekti ngambung dengkul* (honouring on knee) (Prawiro, Atmodjo, 1996). For the community in Boyolali, this tradition is deemed as an important forum that should not be abandoned because this tradition is still considered to bring many benefits.

The *halal bi halal* tradition is not only carried out by the community of Boyolali. This tradition is also carried out regularly by the community of Surakarta and Yogyakarta because of the many positive values it has. Related to the positive values, Sairin (1982) argues that the meeting of the *clan* (lineage) in Shawwal month, one of the activities is *halal bi halal*, has a positive impact on the close relations between members of the *clan*. 
The study of *halal bi halal* will certainly be complete when it is associated with previous studies, whether they are related to sociolinguistics, the variety and function of Javanese language, Javanese language and culture, and Javanese culture in various perspectives. Based on those aspects, the results will be presented in-depth.


From the results of the preliminary observations, *halal bi halal* in this research contains two aspects: Javanese language and society. Therefore, this multidisciplinary research is expected to uncover the traditional/cultural theme of *halal bi halal* that has become “uri-uri” (well-cared for and carried out) by the Cepogo Boyolali community. Both factors are studied concurrently and in-depth to obtain a more detailed result of Javanese culture from a sociolinguistic perspective, specifically the forms and the meanings inside that tradition.

**Literature Review**

**Language and Society**

Language as one of the cultural elements has a big role in social life. For instance, language can be used to express cultural realities (Kramsch, 1998), convey innovative ideas, educate polite behaviour (Endang Kurniati, 2012), find someone's social status (Markhamah, 2000a), and is a means to strengthen the propinquity of fellow community members. In relation to the role of language in society, Trudgill (2000) states that: "Language is not simply a means of communicating information - about the weather or any other subject. It is also a very important means of establishing and maintaining relationships with other people.” Language according to Trudgill is not merely a means to convey information about the weather or other forms. Language is also an important tool to build and maintain relationships with others. On page 15, in the same book, he emphasises the relationship between language and society, stating: "... there is a close inter-relationship between language and society.”
Language and society are two things that are complementary and inseparable (Jian, 2000). This implies that where there is a community, there is language. People who live in America, China, Arabia, England, Papua, Bali, Java or other places will use language in their daily lives as long as they have a constant relationship within them. A more concrete relation between language and society is the language used by individuals to show their social status in society, their geographical origin, the origin of their social community, and their cultural diversity.

The need to live a community certainly requires language as a solution (Wierzbecka, 1996). For example, in the economic domain, language is used as a means of binding sale and purchase agreements. Among religious groups, the congregation will submit and obey God's commands because of the rhetoric of their religious leaders. In the social domain, fraternity within the community can be established by polite communication among others. In the legal domain, individuals can litigate and go to prison because of telling lies, slandering, or defaming. It can be understood that language and society cannot be separated as they are related to one another, or, in other words, that it is impossible to understand society without understanding its language. Language and society are interrelated with one another as stated by Wardhaugh (2006): "There are several possible relationships between language and society, one is that social structure may either influence or determine linguistic structure and / or behavior, ... Language and society may influence each other."

**Halal bi Halal**

*Halal bi halal* originates from Islamic teachings, which is about the relationship between humans and God (*hablun min Allah*) and the relationship among humans (*hablun min an-nas*). This is stated in Al-Qur'an surah an-Nur verse 22, which states: "... and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you?" *Halal bi halal* deals with mutual forgiveness and is a Javanese trait (Suharsono & Susetyo, 2017).

The *Halal bi halal* tradition includes oral discourse, which is accompanied by meaningful nonverbal communication. The nonverbal communication includes the movements of hands, feet, eyes, head, lips and other body parts. This behaviour becomes a set that is inseparable from acts of speech. Based on researchers’ observations, this cultural phenomenon has form, function and meaning that are linguistically and culturally interesting and therefore this cultural event focuses on the perspective of sociolinguistic studies.

The tradition of *halal bi halal* has a close relationship with *Eid al-Fitr*. It is commonly communicated through oral language, spiritual manifestation, and mandatory attendance (Kardiyanto, 2005). The actors of this tradition are not limited to certain circles. They can come from various social levels. Regarding age, they can be children, teenagers, adults, and parents. Regarding occupation, they can be farmers, teachers, laborers, and other professions.
Regarding gender, they can be male and female. From the fraternity, halal bi halal actors can be children, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc. Halal bi halal is a product of Javanese local culture. The main objective is keeping harmony in life between the members of the society (Hidayat, 2013).

**Language Forms or Variations**

One discussion of sociolinguistics is about language forms or variations. They are usually mono, bi, and multilingual. People may mix the language when speaking to others or adjust the language choice for the participant. They are able to mix or choose according to their linguistic repertoire (Munandar, 2013).

Fernandez (2008) explains that language forms or variations focus on both, Users and Uses. Regional and social dialects are discussed in Users, and then style, register, and speech function belong to Uses. Talking about dialects is really talking about variations. A language may have more than one dialect. For example, the Javanese language has the Surakarta dialect, Banyumas dialect, Tegal dialect, and the Surabaya dialect. From this we know that the Javanese language has four variations.

The example of individuals that possess many language variations is Kalala. Janet (n.d.) illustrates that Kalala, who lives in Bukavu, an African City, is able to speak five variations. At home he speaks an informal style of She. When he wants to communicate with people from different group, he uses Swahili. At school, he learns standard Swahili. To younger children and to adults, he uses Kingwana. He also uses the slang language, indoubil, when he hangs out with their group.

Language variations also happen in Javanese society. In Javanese language, there are, in general, two variations or forms, namely: *krama* and *ngoko* (Markhamah, 2000b). *Krama* is a high variation and *ngoko* is a low variation (Kridalaksana, 2001). In general activity, people use *ngoko* for daily communication. When showing respect to someone, the variation choice is *krama* (Astuti, 2010).

**Methods**

The research site is in Cepogo District, Boyolali Central Java. Specifically, in Sukabumi and Mliwis villages. The research took place in June 2018. The type of the research is qualitative (ethnographic research) so this research emphasises process and meaning (Sutopo, 2006, p. 38). The analysis and interpretation of the results of research have been conducted concurrently with the collection of data about the language variations used, the actors, situations and meanings existing in the halal bi halal tradition. This research uses qualitative words, not
mathematical and statistical figures. With the location of the research that had been determined, this research is embedded research (Sutopo, 2006). The information needed includes three items: (1) linguistic sign information, (2) actors and situations, and (3) cultural significance.

The data of this research includes oral speech in the form of words, phrases and sentences reflected in halal bi halal. The data sources of this study were select informants who understood halal bi halal culture and written sources, which includes (1) important notes, (2) articles, (3) books, (4) magazines, (5) newspapers, (6) research reports, (7) documents, (8) papers, and (9) other important documents related to the topic of this study. The data collection techniques used were participant observation. The data validity of this qualitative research was administered with triangulation techniques, key informant reviews and member checks (Sutopo, 2006, p. 92). Data analysis was carried out with the content analysis technique proposed by Spradley, which is domain analysis. It then proceeded with taxonomic analysis of the events that occur in each domain. Furthermore, the data was analysed by compounding analysis, which finds the relationship between domains and categories (Santosa, 2014). The results of data analysis are presented with informal and formal techniques. Informal technique is a presentation with ordinary words, while formal technique is a presentation by signs or symbols (Sudaryanto, 2015, p. 241). The results of the analysis to be understood by readers were presented simultaneously in accordance with the context of the presentation, the description of the sentence followed by the symbol or sign, or conversely the sign/symbol followed by a description of the sentence.

Research Results and Discussion

Research Results

Language forms or variations in society referred to the languages used by actors in halal bi halal traditions such as: neighbours, friends, and important people in the community. The actors of halal bi halal in society consist of individuals, nuclear families and extended families.

Halal bi halal activities with neighbours are the first choice before visiting friends or important people. In general, it starts from the closest neighbours and then proceeds to a more distant neighbour. The neighbours visited are mostly elders. They visit in groups. It can be a nuclear family and or a combined nuclear family. Smaller groups are also found, such as groups of children. Children under 15 years visit neighbours one by one under no parental supervisions or guidance. One by one they said: budhe/pakdhe/mbah, sugeng riyadi sedeya kalepatan nyuwun pangapunten (aunt/uncle/grandfather/grandmother, happy Eid, may all our mistakes be forgiven). After halal bi halal finishes, they will be invited to eat and drink. The last step is a farewell followed by the giving of fitrah (money). Generally, they are given five
thousand rupiah per child. Most of children are motivated by (golek) money to do *halal bi halal*.

Language variations existing in *halal bi halal* in society are varied. This is certainly related to many aspects, such as the position of the first person (FP) and the second person (SP) in society. In general, those who visit neighbours are younger, but it also does not rule out the possibility that the older first person will visit a younger second person. When such an event occurs, usually the younger second person has a higher social level, for instance, the village head, the head of office, the principal, etc. When the older first person performs *halal bi halal*, they use Javanese *krama*. The second person, who is the host and younger, will use Javanese *krama* as well.

The use of *krama* code is also found in the event in which the first person is an unknown person or stranger. The researcher who was an active participant is certainly an unknown guest to the cepogo community. During *halal bi halal*, the researcher used *krama* code and they did not use *ngoko* code to the researcher even though the second person is much older than the researcher. *Krama* and *ngoko* variations are most likely to occur during *halal bi halal* in the community because those who visit neighbours are usually younger.

Language variations that occur in *halal bi halal* in the community are more varied compared to nuclear families and extended families. The variation is caused by the greater number of actors and also more complex social factors. Visiting neighbours and the community during *halal bi halal* is usually done in groups, which can be from the nuclear family, extended family, or a combination of the two and causes various speeches. Related to the data in this event, the researcher recorded and took 220 data pairs. The forms or variations of the data are shown in table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Javanese krama</th>
<th>Javanese ngoko</th>
<th>Mixture of Javanese dan Arabic</th>
<th>Mixture of Javanese, Arabic, and Indonesian</th>
<th>Indonesian and Indonesian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FP</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>FP</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>FP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of *krama* code is higher (160 x) due to the increasing amount of data and second persons using *krama* code more than others. This is generated by the social dimension factor, which is mutual face-saving behaviour. In the example above, Mr. Village head and the Mr. Yamto both used *krama* code because the village head (second person) is younger, but he did not use *ngoko* code to Mr. Yamto, while Mr. Yamto as the older did not use *ngoko* code to the village head. The absence of *ngoko* code is influenced by social factors or position.
In the next example, there is also a mutual use of *krama* code. The first person certainly used *krama* code to the grandfather but the grandfather did not use *ngoko* code to respond. The use of *krama* by the grandfather is because the second person is an unknown guest and must be respected. Some of the events observed by the researcher showed that this occurred because the researcher acted as guest who is not familiar to the family, and will thus be answered with *krama* by the interlocutor in *halal bi halal*.

In this community setting, the first person did not use *krama* to the second person so the number is small, which is only 5. The first person generally uses *krama* code to the second person. If the first person uses *ngoko* code, this shows they are a misfit. They are excluded from the condition due to closeness, not formality. The use of *ngoko* code 125 times by the second person is caused more by familiarity, regardless of social status, and the position as stranger in the first meeting.

The variation in Javanese and Arabic languages use also increases side by side with the increase in the amount of data and the variation of the actors. Javanese and Arabic codes are used by both the first person and second person. The first person used it 50 times and 30 times it was uttered by the second person. For instance: *takoballahu minna wa mingkum, minal aidin wal fa idin, pak de ngaturaken sugeng riyadi, sedaya kalepatan kula nyuwun pangapunten*, which is responded by second person: *taqobal yakarim, ya mas sepiro luput ku aku ya njaluk ngapura, tak dongakke muga-muga apa sing dadi kekarepanmu tansah dikabulne Gusti Allah*.

Variations in Javanese, Arabic and Indonesian codes are also found. The first person usually uses Indonesian. They are mostly children of local residents who migrate to Jakarta or other places. Their remarks are as follows: *Pakde, minalfaizin wal faidzin, Ardi mohon maaf atas kesalahan yang Ardi buat pak de* (Uncle, may my mistakes be forgiven, I apologise for all mistakes I have done to you, uncle.’), which is then answered with: *ya pada-padaya mas, pakde juga minta maaf, tak dongakke muga-muga kamu jadi orang pintar* (Yes, me too dear, I am sorry, I hope you will become smart kid.’)

The following may also occur: *Taqaballahu mina wamingkum, mbak Tut ngaturaken sugeng riyadi sedaya kalepatan kula nyuwun pangapunten* (May Allah accept my deeds and yours, sister Tut, happy Eid, may my mistakes be forgiven), and then answer: *Ya sama-samaya om semoga keluarga om selalu bahagia dan dilindungi Allah* (Yes, me to, uncle, I hope your family is happy and blessed by Allah). The interesting point is that sister Tut can speak Javanese but chose to use Indonesian as preference.

The use of Indonesian codes also occurs in *halal bi halal* in Cepogo district. The first person said: *om, mohon maa flahir batin* (Uncle, I apologise for my mistakes), then answered: *ya sama-sama, saya doakan kamu jadi anak yang soleh, selalu berbakti pada orang tua* (Yes, me
too dear. I hope you will become virtuous and be devoted child to your parents’). Another example: *Bude selamat hari raya, mohon maaf lahir dan batin* (Aunty, happy Eid, may my mistakes be forgiven) and aunty answered: *ya, budhe juga minta maaf, saya doakan kamu selalu dimudahkan dalam belajarnya dan besok jadi pejabat* (Yes, I am sorry too, may God ease your journey, your study and I hope you will become official one day.’)

**Discussion**

**Language Forms or Variations and Social Factors**

Language forms or variations occur in society not only by linguistic factors, but also by non-linguistic factors, which are social and situational factors (Kurniati, 2010). Janet (n.d.) gives a more complete explanation of the occurrence of language variations. According to Holmes, the occurrence of language variations is more likely due to social factors, such as participants, settings, topics, and functions. Language variations and social factors are explained more clearly by giving examples of conversation between Ray, Mum, and the Principal:

**Ray** : Hi mum.
**Mum** : Hi. You're late.
**Ray** : Good afternoon, sir.
**Principal** : What are you doing here at this time?

Ray uses 'Hi mum' with his mother. This is different from when Ray talks to the principal. Ray greets the principal with 'good afternoon, sir'. The use of informal and formal variations exemplified by Holmes shows that social factors play a role in the selection of variations. Mum and Principal make Ray choose variations. Ray's choice regarding when to use informal language and when to use formal language is related to the social factors that surround it.

The occurrences in *the halal bi halal* are almost the same as Holmes’ explanation. Interlocutors consisting of first person and second person must choose variations that are appropriate to the social context. The first person will choose *krama* code for the second person, while the second person will use *ngoko* code to the the first person. But in reality, it is found that the second person also uses *krama* code to first person. Obviously, social factors cause the second person to choose such code.

Social status is also a consideration for *halal bi halal* participants. *Halal bi halal* with someone whose status is higher will result in a different language choice than with someone with no status or position. Mr. Yamto (60 years old) did *halal bi halal* with the village head (50 years old). Generally, the younger will come to the elder house, but in this situation the elder came to the younger. This is due to the position factor in the community. The older did not use *ngoko*
Language Forms or Variations and Social Meaning

Language forms that occur in the halal bi halal tradition have various social meanings. Social meaning is related to joint consensus on behaviour agreed upon by community members. The social meaning that is reflected in the use of language variations in halal bi halal is as follows: the meaning of respect and the meaning of harmony.

Meaning of Respect

The cultural meaning which belongx to a large group grasped by the Javanese people are the meanings of respect (Geertz, 1961, p. 146). Respect is the behaviour of honouring persons who have a higher level in terms of age and social position. Related to the principle of respect, Suseno (1999) argues while speaking and carrying oneself, humans are expected to always show respect for others, according to rank and position. Respect for others can be seen from the way one speaks.

Respect is one of the Javanese principles. From spoken language, one can find the level of a particular person or a community. It is undeniable that it is also contained in Javanese language. In general, the Javanese language has two variations, krama and ngoko. Krama is used to appreciate the other person, while ngoko is used for intimacy. Respecting others with Javanese krama does not apply only to older people but is also given to people with higher status or strangers even if they are much younger.

Respect is the behaviour of appreciating people with a higher level of age and social position. Suseno (1999) states that humans in their way of speaking and carrying themselves always show a respectful attitude towards others, according to their status and position. This rule is called the principle of respect. This principle is a normative framework that determines the concrete forms of all interactions in Javanese society.

Meaning of Harmony

Pillars in the Javanese perspective are close to ‘no conflict’ status (Aly, 2005). Conflicts must be avoided, both with family and with neighbours because conflict will bring chaos and disharmony in life. Disharmony in society can be seen from everyday language. Keeping silent
from each other or talking impolitely can be used as an indicator of disharmony in the family or community.

*Halal bi halal* in Javanese society in general and especially in the Cepogo region maintains harmony, which is harmony in the nuclear family, extended family, and community. Harmony can be seen by language use, for example: asking forgiveness from both sides, visiting each other, praying for one another, and giving to one another.

The meaning of harmony also becomes an important part of Javanese life besides the meaning of respect. The pillar is related to efforts to avoid open conflicts between individuals and maintaining emotions to avoid inner conflict. Suseno (1999) states, in *Javanese Ethics*, that there are two rules that determine the pattern of relationships in Javanese society. The first rule argues that in every situation humans should behave in a way that does not trigger conflict. This rule is called the principle of harmony or the maintenance of "harmonious social appearances." The second rule states that humans in their way of speaking and carrying themselves must always show respect for others, according to their rank and position. The second is named the principle of respect. These two principles are the normative framework that determines the concrete forms of all interactions in Javanese society.

These principles are taught by parents since childhood, for example, *le karo sedulur kuwi sing rukun* (my son, all humans must get along well), *karo adikne sing ngalah* (succumb to your siblings). These two examples illustrate that Javanese people avoid any dispute in their live. A quiet and peaceful life without conflict between family members becomes the principle of their lives.

**Conclusions**

Language forms or variations that occur in Cepogo Boyolali community in *halal bi halal* are closely related to social factors, such as speakers, interlocutors, settings, and functions. Based on the results of the study the dominant language form or variation is *krama*. It is caused by all first persons using *krama*. The second person, in special occasions, used *krama* too.

*Halal bi halal* is a tradition that is able to be used as a representative of Javanese life. Life in society should involve respect for each other to maintain harmony in life. Using *krama* and *ngoko* code in *halal bi halal* is an effort to keep both running well. Respect for others in Javanese society is really respect for ourselves, so serving the family or neighbours as well as possible is mandatory. Conflict for Javanese society should be avoided. Visiting family or neighbours is a way of avoiding conflict and living a harmonious life.
REFERENCES


