

Differences in The Lexical and Pragmatic Meaning of The Word "Sangu" in Sundanese and Javanese

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ABSTRACT

The difference in the meaning of vocabulary between regional languages is an interesting linguistic phenomenon to study, especially in words that have the same form but are used in different language systems. One example of this phenomenon is the word sangu in Sundanese and Javanese. This study aims to analyze the differences in the lexical and pragmatic meanings of the word sangu in both languages. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a semantic and pragmatic approach. The research data was obtained from Sundanese and Javanese dictionaries and examples of speech from speakers in the context of everyday interactions. The results show that lexically, the word sangu in Sundanese is generally interpreted as 'rice' or 'staple food', while in Javanese, the word sangu is more often used to refer to 'provisions' in general. Pragmatically, these differences in meaning are influenced by the context of use, cultural background, and language habits of the speakers. These findings indicate that understanding the meaning of words across regional languages requires attention to linguistic and cultural aspects in order to reduce the potential for misunderstanding in communication.

Keywords: Lexical meaning, pragmatic meaning, sangu, Sundanese language, Javanese language.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with diverse ethnicities, cultures, and languages. There are approximately 718 languages spread across 34 provinces, making Indonesia the country with the second largest linguistic diversity in the world after Papua New Guinea. This diversity reflects a rich linguistic heritage that has developed through interactions between communities from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds over a long period of time.

As a country with a large number of regional languages, Indonesia has a very diverse vocabulary, especially in regional languages. The vocabulary of regional languages not only reflects the linguistic system, but also the cultural background and perspective of its speakers. This diversity is evident not only in the differences in language form, but also in the differences in the meanings of words that are phonologically the same but are used in different languages. In addition to regional languages, Indonesian as the national language has also undergone a process of vocabulary enrichment through borrowing from various languages, one of which is Sanskrit. This process of borrowing words was carried out to meet lexical needs and was influenced by various factors, such as trade, religion, cultural contact, and technological developments (Maneechukate, 2016).

The phenomenon of similar word forms with different meanings is also commonly found in regional languages, one of which is Sundanese and Javanese. These two languages have a number of words that are phonologically similar but differ in meaning. This difference is often not realized by speakers due to limited knowledge or language experience, and is only realized when there is direct communication between speakers. This phenomenon shows that the meaning of language is not universal, but rather depends heavily on the linguistic system and cultural context of each language.

Research on the comparison of regional language vocabulary in Indonesia, particularly between Sundanese and Javanese, has been conducted extensively by researchers. These studies generally focus on the similarities and differences in the vocabulary of the two languages in terms of form and general lexical meaning. (Rosyadi et al., 2017), for example, compared the vocabulary of Javanese and Sundanese in the border region using a descriptive linguistic approach and found variations in word form and meaning influenced by differences in the language system and the social environment of the speakers.

In addition, comparative research with a broader language coverage was also conducted by (Luthfiyyah & Widiastuti, 2021) who studied cognate vocabulary in several languages on the island of Java, including Sundanese and Javanese, to see the degree of kinship and lexical similarities between regional languages. The results of this study show similarities in vocabulary forms, but do not discuss in depth the differences in contextual meaning or pragmatic use in everyday communication. Another study by (Rosyadi ZA et al., 2025) on vocabulary variation in the Madurese language also shows that differences in word meanings are greatly influenced by the social and cultural factors of the speakers, although the study still focuses on vocabulary variation in general. Meanwhile, research by (Wagiati & Zein, 2020) which examined the interaction between Sundanese and Javanese in the Pangandaran region, emphasized dialectology and language contact, so that the analysis of specific lexical and pragmatic differences in meaning of a word was not the main focus.

One interesting example of the phenomenon of similar word forms with different meanings is the use of the word *sangu* in Sundanese and Javanese. Phonologically, the word *sangu* has the same form, but semantically it has different meanings. In Sundanese, the word *sangu* means 'rice' or 'staple food', while in Javanese the word *sangu* is generally interpreted as 'pocket money', either in the form of rice or money.

This difference in meaning has the potential to cause misunderstandings in communication, especially in interactions between Sundanese and Javanese speakers.

The difference in meaning of the word *sangu* can be understood not only through the lexical meaning listed in the dictionary, but also through the pragmatic meaning that arises in the context of language use. Pragmatic meaning is related to the speech situation, cultural background, and the speaker's purpose in communicating. Therefore, analysis of the word *sangu* needs to consider both aspects, namely lexical meaning and pragmatic meaning, so that understanding of the difference in meaning becomes more comprehensive.

Based on the above explanation, it can be concluded that although there have been many studies comparing Sundanese and Javanese vocabulary, research specifically examining the differences in lexical and pragmatic meanings of a particular word is still relatively limited. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the differences in lexical and pragmatic meanings of the word *sangu* in Sundanese and Javanese, and it is hoped that it will contribute to linguistic studies and raise awareness of the importance of cultural context in communication between speakers of regional languages.

METHODS

The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method with a semantic and pragmatic approach. This method was chosen because the study aims to describe and analyze differences in word meanings based on language usage, rather than to test hypotheses quantitatively. The semantic approach was used to examine the lexical meaning of the word *sangu* as listed in the Sundanese and Javanese dictionaries, while the pragmatic approach was used to analyze the meaning of the word *sangu* based on the context of its use in speech, taking into account the speech situation, cultural background, and communication purpose.

The research data consisted of the word *sangu* and its meanings in Sundanese and Javanese. The data sources consisted of written and oral data. The written data was obtained from Sundanese and Javanese dictionaries as the main references in determining lexical meanings. The oral data was obtained from examples of Sundanese and Javanese speakers who used the word *sangu* in everyday communication.

Data collection was carried out using documentation and observation-recording techniques. The documentation technique was carried out by collecting data from relevant written sources, while the observation-recording technique was carried out by listening to speakers and recording the use of the word *sangu* in specific contexts. Data analysis was carried out in several stages, namely: identifying the lexical meaning of the word *sangu* in both languages, classifying data based on the context of use, analyzing pragmatic meaning differences by considering the speech situation and cultural background of the speakers, and drawing conclusions about the lexical and pragmatic meaning differences of the word *sangu* in Sundanese and Javanese. The results of the analysis are presented descriptively and analytically in the form of a narrative accompanied by examples of speech data to clarify the research findings.

RESULT

The word *sangu* is one of the words that has a similar phonological form in Sundanese and Javanese, but has different meanings. To understand these differences comprehensively, it is necessary to analyze the

lexical meaning based on dictionary references and the pragmatic meaning through the use of words in context.

Lexically, based on the *Kamus Basa Sunda* (RA Danadibrata, 2005), the word *sangu* in Sundanese is defined as *kadaharan poko*, *utamana sangu béas*, which means ‘staple food, especially rice’. This definition shows that the word *sangu* in Sundanese directly refers to rice as the staple food of the Sundanese people. This meaning is concrete and consistent, as it refers to a physical object that is consumed daily.

Meanwhile, in *Bausastra Jawa* (Poerwadaminta, 1939), the word *sangu* is defined as “provisions,” which are things that are brought along for travel or certain activities, whether in the form of food or money. Unlike in Sundanese, the lexical meaning of *sangu* in Javanese does not specifically refer to rice, but to the general concept of provisions. Thus, despite having the same phonological form, the word *sangu* in the two languages has significantly different lexical meanings.

This difference in lexical meaning is evident in examples of the word's use in sentences. In Sundanese, the word *sangu* is used to refer to rice as a staple food, as in the sentence “*Indung keur masak sangu di dapur*,” which means “Mother is cooking rice in the kitchen.” This sentence shows that *sangu* is understood as rice that is being cooked for consumption. In contrast, in Javanese, the word *sangu* is more often used in the context of provisions, as seen in the sentence “*Aja lali nggawa sangu sadurunge lunga*,” which means “Don't forget to bring provisions before leaving.” In this sentence, *sangu* does not explicitly refer to rice, but rather to provisions brought before traveling, which can be food or money.

In addition to the difference in lexical meaning, the word *sangu* in Javanese has also undergone a pragmatic change in meaning. In everyday communication, especially in modern contexts such as school or travel, the word *sangu* often has a narrowed meaning of ‘money for provisions.’ This can be seen in the statement “*Ibu wis menehi sangu kanggo sekolah*,” (Mother has given pocket money for school). In this context, *sangu* is understood as money given for expenses at school, not food or rice. This shift in meaning is influenced by changes in the social habits of speakers, where provisions are no longer always in the form of food brought from home, but more often in the form of flexible money.

Unlike in Javanese, in Sundanese the word *sangu* does not show a significant shift in meaning. The lexical meaning of ‘rice’ remains consistent with the pragmatic meaning in various speech situations. An example can be seen in the sentence “*Can aya sangu di imah*,” which means “There is no rice at home.” In this sentence, *sangu* is still understood as rice, in accordance with the dictionary meaning and the habits of Sundanese speakers.

Thus, analysis of the word *sangu* shows that phonological similarity does not always imply semantic similarity. In Sundanese, the word *sangu* retains its lexical and pragmatic meaning as a staple food. Conversely, in Javanese, the word *sangu* not only has the lexical meaning of ‘provisions’, but also undergoes a pragmatic narrowing of meaning to ‘money for provisions’ in accordance with the context and social customs of its speakers. This phenomenon confirms that the meaning of words is dynamic and greatly influenced by the linguistic context and cultural background of the community that speaks them.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the word *sangu* in Sundanese and Javanese is similar in terms of phonological form, but different in terms of lexical and pragmatic meaning. Based on dictionary references, the lexical meaning of the word *sangu* in Sundanese refers to ‘rice’ or ‘staple food’, while in Javanese the

word *sangu* is understood as ‘provisions’ in general. This difference shows that there are differences in the meaning systems of the two languages even though the words are the same.

In addition, pragmatic analysis shows that there are changes and refinements in meaning that occur according to the context of language use. In Javanese, the word *sangu* has undergone a pragmatic narrowing of meaning to ‘money for provisions’ in the context of everyday communication, especially in school and travel situations. Conversely, in Sundanese, the meaning of the word *sangu* is relatively stable and does not undergo significant shifts in meaning, either lexically or pragmatically.

These differences in meaning have the potential to cause misunderstandings in communication between Sundanese and Javanese speakers if the cultural context and speech situation are not well understood. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of understanding lexical and pragmatic meanings in regional language comparison studies. This study is expected to enrich the study of regional language semantics and pragmatics and serve as a reference in understanding the dynamics of word meanings in cross-cultural contexts.

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