



Linguistics

Cultural Transmission through the TikTok Application, Study on *Pop Minang* as a Local Language Song

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A B S T R A C T

This article aims to explain how cultural transmission occurs in the flow of globalization through the TikTok application. The culture is referred to as Minangkabau culture. People identifying themselves as Minangkabau populate the contemporary Indonesian province of West Sumatra and are found in immigrant communities throughout the archipelago, Malaysia, Australia, and further afield, and they are known for their Islamic piety, matrilineal kinship system, astute trading abilities, proclivity to migrate, democratic practices, and spicy food (Fraser J. A., 2015, p. 3). This research focuses on Pop Minang, a genre of regional language songs used in content on the TikTok application. Songs that are broadcast on the social media application TikTok also become transmitters of traditional culture for the younger generation in that culture and even the cultures of other peoples. The results of this study are in contrast to previous studies, which claim that TikTok and globalization have a negative impact on the younger generation (Kurniawan, 2018; Sairin, 2004) and support the opinion that globalization is a process of glocalization or the interaction and merger between local cultures and global processes (Turner, 2015, p. 5).

I. INTRODUCTION

This article aims to explain how cultural transmission occurs in the flow of globalization through the TikTok application. Several studies state that TikTok has an unfavorable impact on the younger generation in Indonesia, such as a sense of nationalism that is feared to be eroded, and behavior that is inconsistent with local wisdom has increased (Kurniawan, 2018, p. 83). However, if explained again, TikTok has become one of the media in transmitting culture (at least local languages) to the younger generation through local language song content which cannot be obtained through MTV or even though it is easily accessible via YouTube but not as easy as access by TikTok. Therefore, I will analyze how TikTok is a means of cultural transmission, such as local languages, especially the Minangkabau language, one of the regional languages among Indonesia's more than 700 regional languages.

The culture referred to Minangkabau culture, one of the ethnic cultures in Indonesia, originating from the west coast of the island of Sumatra, Indonesia. People identifying themselves as Minangkabau populate the contemporary Indonesian province of West Sumatra and are found in immigrant communities throughout the archipelago, Malaysia, Australia, and further afield and they are known for their Islamic piety, matrilineal kinship system, astute trading abilities, proclivity to migrate, democratic practices, and spicy food (Fraser J. A., 2015, p. 3). The Minangkabau cultural community has a *merantau*¹ tradition from ancient times, resulting in high mobility of the population. As a bonus from globalization, the tradition of migrating ethnic groups is not only within the territory of the Indonesian state but goes beyond national borders to neighboring countries, such as Malaysia, so many young people who live in overseas areas do not understand Minangkabau culture anymore.

After more than three decades, the expansion of products from developed countries as a form of the globalization process has led to a trespassing mentality and heartless behavior in Indonesia, especially among young people (Sairin, 2004, p. 145). Nearly two decades have passed since the publication of the Sairin research results; there has been a social change. The consumptive social act of the individual is the primary basis for social change (Phillips, 1996, p. 148). Products of globalization, such as television shows and many social media applications, seem to have influenced the younger generation's interest in traditional culture. If previously MTV was a center for the young generation's music information, now in the 2020s, it has turned to social media applications such as YouTube to TikTok.

II. METHOD

This research is culturally anthropological work that focuses on studying and sharing ways of behaving typical of a particular human group (Nanda, 2019, p. 22). This research was conducted by observing the video of the *Pop Minang* genre song that appeared on the main homepage of the TikTok application in June 2023, also known as the video category "FYP" (For Your Page). *Pop Minang* is not only embedded in social life but is also imbued with profound value and meaning; for instance, it engenders a kind of "cultural intimacy" where its listener imagines themselves belonging to be a bounded community through shared sentimentality (Fraser J. , *Pop song as custom: Weddings, ethnicity, and entrepreneurs in West Sumatra*, 2011, p. 224). The first FYP video that appears on the TikTok application homepage is a popular video that is calculated by calculating the algorithm, and the following video is a popular video that is on the same topic as the previous FYP video if the TikTok user further accesses the first FYP video, for example by giving "like", sending it to other users, comment, or click on the video's hashtag (Cotter, 2022, pp. 1-15).

Minang language (also called Minangkabau language) is the regional language of the Minangkabau tribe. Minangkabau is a popular ethnic group in the study of Southeast Asian anthropology because of the matrilineal system of this tribe, the history of colonialism, and its relationship with capitalism and post-colonial modernization. There are several differences between the archetypal of traditional and modern Minangkabau society. Minangkabau in the modernist model is the merchant, who is geographically mobile, pious in their adherence to Islamic ritual obligation, living in an elementary family household, and impatient of obligations to fellow villagers and *suku* mates; then the traditional image is the Nagari-based rice farmers and craftspersons, living in the grand Minangkabau houses (*rumah gadang*) in extended-family groupings, spending their free time in village ceremonies, performing communal labor on roads and in the fields, and respectful of the *Pangulu* and kinship obligations (Kahn, 2020, p. 5).

Minangkabau culture cannot resist the influences caused by globalization. Moreover, the culture of migrating, which has been ingrained in this society has resulted in very high mobilization and migration so that friction with other cultures is very high. In multicultural situations or far from cultural centers, language becomes the glue that binds individuals to their culture. Language is the most flexible and pervasive among the many symbols of the cultural production of identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, p. 369).

Pop Minang is an important platform for discussing spoken and written Minang language because it consists of moral lessons, and the lyrics are written in the esoteric Minang language. *Pop Minang*'s inclusion of such indirect and highly refined language qualifies it as primarily a verbal art (Barendregt, 2002, p. 444). Furthermore, Barendregt explained that *Pop Minang* is also a bond for Minangkabau people who live far from their hometowns. When a major earthquake or other major tragedy occurs in the Minangkabau homeland, the *Pop Minang* music video gives the public voice about the disaster's emotional dimensions and describes in visual detail the situation caused by the disaster (Fraser J. , 2013, p. 152).

Since the second decade of the 20th century, the *Pop Minang* genre has been represented in audio-visual recording media-gramophone discs, cassettes, CDs, and VCDs. Thus, Minangkabau identity has been redefined and (re)represented ethnic culture in audiovisual media in a multiethnic country like Indonesia also engages in reaffirming cultural differences rather than eliminating differences between them (Suryadi, 2003, p. 73). Technology develops and media changes from time to time, such as *Pop*

Minang media, which are listened to through media from media-gramophone discs, cassettes, CDs, and VCDs to DVDs, then moves to cyberspace, the internet, from videos on channels YouTube channel, distribution via social media WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, to TikTok. *Pop Minang* is present in various media following the times.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Pop Minang in the TikTok application hashtag is also known as Minang Songs and has quite several variations such as #laguminanghits (#minanghits songs), #laguminangviral (#minangviral songs), #popminang, #popminangterbaru (#thenewestpopminang). When compared to *Pop Jawa* or Javanese Songs, *Pop Minang* gets more views. In fact, the Javanese are the largest ethnic group in Indonesia with a population exceeding 40.22% of the Indonesian population (Schmid, 2017, p. 13) while the Minangkabau are only 3% of the Indonesian population. As a comparison, until this research was conducted, #lagujawa received 1.6 billion views and with the hashtag #popjawa 4.9 million views while #laguMinang received 1.7 billion views and with the hashtag #popminang 28.3 million views.

There are three songs in the *Pop Minang* genre that have received the most attention and have been widely used for other users' video posts among songs in this genre on the TikTok application in the past 1 year. The three songs are (1) a song with the title *Gasiang Tangkurak* (2) *Taragak Pulang* and (3) *Pariaman*.

(1) Gasiang Tangkurak

Gasiang Tangkurak is a song composed by a *Pop Minang* artist, Syahrul Tarun Yusuf, in the 1970s and has been popularized and arranged repeatedly by local Minangkabau singers (Annisa & Pratama, 2022, pp. 11-19). *Gasiang tangkurak* is a mystical ritual in Minangkabau society performed by shamans to make the target person behave as the shaman's client wants, such as falling in love, going crazy, or behaving in another way. The lyrics of this song contain an explanation of the *gasiang tangkurak* ritual. This song not only transmits the Minangkabau language but also transmits Minangkabau traditional rituals.

This song became popular on TikTok with many posted videos with the content and sound of this song. The hashtags for this song are #gasingtangkurak (14.6 million views), and there are many variations that also have a lot of views, such as #gasingtangkurakchallenge (4.8 million views), #gasingtengkorak (374.3k views), #gasingtangkurak (121.3k views), and #gasiangtengkorak (27.2k views). This song has been used in many video content on the TikTok application with more than 67,000 videos.

(2) Taragak Pulang

Taragak Pulang is a song created by a contemporary Minangkabau artist, Dira Sati, first popularized in 2017. This song is about someone's longing for the hometown he/she has long left behind to study or work. This song is popular on TikTok and is also liked by TikTok application users who come not only from the Minangkabau community but from various ethnic groups in Indonesia, even though they don't understand the language used. Therefore, in some of the video content in the TikTok application, this song is translated into Indonesian.

The hashtags for this song are #taragakpulang (78.8 million views), #taragakpulangbahasaIndonesia (41.1k views), #taragakpulangnasionaI version (41.1k views), and #taragakpulangcover (2.6k views) and have been used in 132,479 videos. Many comments from Netizens stated that even though they are not Minangkabau people, they also want to try to return home to the Minangkabau region as described in this song. This song is not only for the Minangkabau people but also for other ethnic groups.

(3) Pariaman

Pariaman is a song composed by a contemporary Minangkabau artist, named Anasben and was popularized for the first time in 2018 and is one of the songs in Kim's game. Kim combines games and songs and performs at weddings and various other festivities; Kim is similar to the European bingo (Suryadi S. , 2014, pp. 131-132). The lyrics of this song contain life in the *rantau*, love stories, and daily life, and the singer may modify the lyrics of the song when this song is sung.

This part of the song's lyrics is used as a challenge for TikTok application users who cannot speak Minangkabau. One example of the lyrics of this song being used as a challenge is;

oi lah masak nasi rang kapau, 'Rang Kapau food is cooked and ready'
cubadak jo samba randang, 'Jackfruit curry and rendang'
tadanga adiak maimbau, 'I heard you calling'
oi uda capeklah pulang, 'Honey, come home quickly'
ampek puluah datang 'It's 40 now'

The first and second lines are the *sampiran* (no meaning and only for aesthetics), then the third and fourth lines are the contents. This is a form of *pantun* (a form of traditional poetry), which is also commonly found in Malay culture. Meanwhile, the fifth row is a hint about Kim's game. They made videos with lip-sync content with part of the lyrics of this song with hashtags meaning 'can't speak Minangkabau' like #gakbisabahasaminang (19k views), #akungakbisabahasaminang (9777 views), #akugakbisabahasaminang (301 views). This song has been used in 255,953 video content on the TikTok app.

The users of the TikTok application who contribute (by watching, distributing, commenting, and creating content) to *Pop Minang* content are young Indonesians who come not only from the Minangkabau ethnic group but also from other ethnic groups such as the Javanese, Malays, and Banjarese. In the comments column, they asked about the cultural elements in the song, for example, "What is the meaning of *gasiang tangkurak*?" as well as questions about the meaning of words or sentences in the Minangkabau language. Besides content creators, other users provide answers and discussions about local languages and culture flow in the media. Any application user can access it.

Globalization and Cultural Transmission through the TikTok Application

Globalization is a significant transmitter of culture worldwide, which could be cultural imperialism as the United States often manifests in ways that export its media worldwide (Hale, 2014, p. 123). It is feared that cultural imperialism can result in the fading or loss of a culture or part of a culture. However, the study of globalization does not announce the end of culture or the end of differences that accentuate an identity. Instead, this study reminds us that culture is the effect of a social mediation process that constantly grapples with internal uncertainty and external provocations (Mazzarella, 2004, p. 360).

After Indonesia's independence, folk songs competed with Indonesian-language songs in the phase of growing the spirit of nationalism in the Indonesian people at that time. Then, with the presence of MTV, which broadcasts western songs for 24 hours non-stop, folk songs are increasingly facing stiff market competition. Due to globalization and the development of YouTube media, folk songs have become a more efficient medium for displaying the works of local musicians as well as getting back to more significant competition. Almost simultaneously with the popularity of YouTube for Indonesian people, K-Pop is present, and Indonesian people accept K-Pop enthusiastically (Yoon, 2019, pp. 176-192).

Then, the TikTok application was launched in 2016 by the Chinese technology company ByteDance. During the COVID-19 pandemic, TikTok has the potential to convey important health information and address these aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic as well (Basch, 2022, p. 369). During the pandemic, which required people to keep their distance, the use of social media increased and the public had more time to access social media so that content on social media became more familiar to the public, such as content about *Pop Minang*.

In *Pop Minang*, the songwriter not only uses the regional language, namely Minangkabau, but also includes elements that are actualizations of Minangkabau culture, such as rhymes, myths, Minangkabau habits and customs. By enjoying *Pop Minang*, viewers will not only know the Minangkabau language but also the habits of the Minangkabau people. By tracing out the Pop Songs, ethnic sentiments and expression that are shaped by social, political, economic, and cultural currents at the local, regional, and national level can be analyzed as a case study (Fraser J. A., 2015, p. 57).

Features in the TikTok Application make it easy for users to watch videos made by other users without the need to enter keywords because, in the FYP feature, various variations of videos are displayed randomly. TikTok is an extreme example of the power of algorithms in user experience and an example of

a trend that is quickly becoming apparent in other digital spaces and impacting user experience (Bhandari, 2022). Thus, even if the user does not think of viewing a video, the video may appear even though it is not very popular. TikTok, with an algorithm system that displays content that is not directly sought by users, results in users who initially did not know or were not interested in *Pop Minang* becoming fans because the content is broadcast repeatedly through their social media.

In this way, *Pop Minang*'s content is broadcast repeatedly so that it spreads quickly and repeatedly to every user of the TikTok application. First, application users see it, and after repeated viewings, they enjoy it. Then, finally, the user remembers what the content contains. This experience becomes knowledge for TikTok application users. In this case, cultural transmission takes place. This makes TikTok a medium for the cultural transmission process, which can be seen as a perpetuation of culture from the case of *Pop Minang*.

The Pop Minang phenomenon on social media is a positive form of globalization. "Globalization" refers to many economic, political, cultural, and technological processes through which capitalism and markets spread; state interactions at global, national, and regional levels of government; the movement of money, technology, people, media, and ideas across borders; cross-border and intercultural mixing and meaning; and the rise of information and communication technology and forms of connectivity supported by electronic media, deterritorialized sociality, and global villagism are contemporary processes, trends, and transformations that are often associated with Western or US economic, political, and cultural powers in terms of cultural imperialism (Mirrlees, 2013, p. 42).

The accusations against globalization related to cultural imperialism can at least be alleviated by the *Pop Minang* phenomenon in the TikTok application. The current, which has led to the younger generation's low interest in local culture, can be reversed by utilizing globalization to bring the younger generation back to know the previously ignored local culture. Technological developments and globalization must be conditioned on the goals to be achieved, in other words, used according to needs, not as a threat but as an opportunity.

IV. CONCLUSION

Media has also become the leading actor in cultural globalization-delivering people's cultural products (Wuryanta, 2012, p. 84). More specifically, as found in this study, songs broadcast on the social media application TikTok also become transmitters of traditional culture for the younger generation in that culture and even other cultural communities. This is the fact that globalization is not only Americanized but is a process of glocalization or the interaction and merger between local cultures and global processes (Turner, 2015, p. 5). Finally, regarding to case of *Pop Minang* in TikTok application, the TikTok application helps to perpetuate traditional Minangkabau cultures to younger generations, both internal Minangkabau society and external society, who otherwise cannot have such easy access to those contents.

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Notes.

¹*Merantau* is out-migration activities of the Minangkabau in the earliest era, the population moved in segmental groups from the *darek* (interior) to the *rantau* (outer areas) in search of virgin lands because of population pressure in the interior; after World War II, *merantau* has become a movement of (nuclear) families rather than of individuals (Kato, 1978, pp. 15-16). The purpose of migrating is to form the thinking, experience, and economic maturity of the Minangkabau people. The tradition of migrating the Minangkabau people is so well known that Padang Restaurants as a type of business for the Minangkabau people can easily be found in various parts of Indonesia, Malaysia, and also the Netherlands. Moreover, *rendang* is one of the traditional Minangkabau food in 2011, an online poll undertaken by CNN to 35,000 'love-food' readers across the globe voted *rendang* as one of the top 50 world's most delicious foods (Wijaya, 2019, p. 7).

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