



CONSTRUCTING BEAUTY IN BUGIS ATTRACTION MANTRAS: A MULTILEVEL ETHNOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF *CENNINGRARA* RITUAL LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This study examines the construction of cultural meaning, particularly the concept of beauty, in *Cenningrara* mantras of the Bugis community through a multilevel ethnolinguistic approach. The mantras are understood as ritual language functioning as a symbolic system and performative acts embedded in social practice and cultural interaction. The study employs a qualitative ethnolinguistic design integrating multilevel linguistic analysis (lexical, phrasal, and sentential levels), performative analysis based on speech act theory, and semiotic analysis grounded in Peircean theory. The data consist of eight mantra texts collected through fieldwork with five Bugis informants in Sarang Tiung, South Kalimantan, derived from oral elicitation and practitioners' written notes and cultural documentation. Validity is ensured through triangulation and member checking techniques. The findings reveal layered meaning construction across linguistic levels, where beauty emerges as a multidimensional construct integrating physical, social, symbolic, and spiritual dimensions, highlighting the significant role of ritual language in shaping perception, emotion, and social relations.

Keywords: *ethnolinguistics, Cenningrara mantra, Bugis society, cultural meaning, ritual language*

1. Introduction

Mantras represent one of the earliest forms of oral literature, existing long before societies developed theoretical concepts regarding the nature, value, and meaning of literature. In many traditional communities, oral literature functions not merely as a medium of expression but also as a means of transmitting cultural knowledge and systems of meaning embedded within social life (Vansina, 1985; Ong, 2002; Finnegan, 2012). As part of oral tradition, mantras possess distinctive characteristics due to their perceived performative power, in which language does not merely represent reality but actively produces certain effects within social practices (Austin, 1962; Searle,



1969). In practice, mantras are used in various contexts, ranging from ritual ceremonies to everyday life. Within the Bugis community, one form of mantra that remains recognized is the *Cenningrara* mantra, commonly understood as an incantation associated with attraction, encompassing both physical and inner dimensions in social interaction.

Despite the strong cultural significance of Bugis mantras, existing studies have largely focused on their functions and contexts of use. Such approaches tend to be descriptive and have not sufficiently explored how the linguistic structures of mantras contribute to the construction of meaning. Furthermore, there remains a lack of systematic research integrating analysis across multiple linguistic levels such as lexical, phrasal, and sentential levels with the cultural interpretations that underpin them. As a form of ritual language, mantras do not simply convey meaning directly; they also embody complex symbolic systems. This gap highlights the need for a more comprehensive analytical approach to better understand the relationship between linguistic form and meaning construction within cultural practices.

Based on this gap, the present study aims to analyze the *Cenningrara* mantra using a multilevel ethnolinguistic approach. The study focuses on identifying the linguistic structures of the mantra and examining how these structures contribute to the construction of the concept of beauty in Bugis culture. By integrating linguistic analysis with cultural interpretation, this research offers a more holistic application of the multilevel ethnolinguistic approach in the study of ritual language, particularly in explaining the relationship between linguistic structure and cultural value systems. In addition, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of ritual language as a complex cultural practice and to contribute to the development of ethnolinguistic studies as well as the preservation of local cultural knowledge.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Oral Tradition and Ritual Language

Oral tradition constitutes a cultural system that functions as a medium for transmitting knowledge, values, and belief systems across generations, while also serving as a primary mechanism for maintaining the collective identity of a community. From this perspective, oral tradition is not merely understood as a form of expression, but as a mode of symbolic communication embedded in social practices, in which language functions as a cultural resource actively shaping and representing social reality (Vansina, 1985; Bauman, 2012; Duranti, 1997). In theoretical developments, Agha (2007) emphasizes that language in social practice operates through processes of *enregisterment*, whereby particular linguistic forms become social markers carrying ideological values. This suggests that oral tradition not only transmits cultural content but also reproduces the relationship between language, identity, and social relations. In line with this, Kang (2003) demonstrates that language practices are always situated within ideological constructions, meaning that meaning is produced and negotiated within dynamic social spaces.

Various forms of oral tradition, such as myths, folktales, and ritual expressions, function as collective memory that is continuously reproduced and reinterpreted within changing social contexts (Assmann, 2011; Halbwachs, 1992). In this regard, Shakirova (2020) highlights that oral tradition constitutes a dynamic semiotic system in which meaning remains open to reinterpretation. This perspective is reinforced by Yelle (2006), who argues that ritual language is not merely representational but also possesses performative force capable of producing social and cognitive effects. Therefore, oral tradition can be understood as a system of cultural communication that operates through both symbolic and performative mechanisms.



Ritual language, as a component of oral tradition, is characterized by high symbolic density and strong functional orientation. Ritual utterances are employed in specific contexts for particular purposes, such as protection, healing, or the formation of social relations. Tambiah (1985) asserts that ritual language does not merely describe reality but also creates social effects through speech acts. This perspective is further developed by Pamungkas (2024) and Asnar (2026), who demonstrate that ritual language in local traditions functions as a medium connecting cultural symbolic systems with social practices. Accordingly, mantras, as part of ritual language, should be understood as dynamic cultural practices continuously reproduced through the interaction between language, meaning, and social function.

2.2 Mantra as a Performative and Semiotic System

Mantras are conceptualized as linguistic and cultural phenomena analyzed through two primary frameworks: the performative and the semiotic. The performative approach positions mantras as forms of speech acts, in which language not only conveys information but also performs social actions with illocutionary force and perlocutionary effects (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). In theoretical developments, Agha (2007) emphasizes that ritual utterances possess indexical power that links language to social structures and cultural ideologies, indicating that mantras function not only at the linguistic level but also within broader social domains. Kasanova (2024) adds that the effectiveness of ritual utterances depends on symbolic legitimacy derived from collective recognition, suggesting that the power of mantras lies not solely in their linguistic structure but also in the social context of their use.

Kang (2003) asserts that linguistic performativity always operates within dynamic social interactions, where meaning is continuously negotiated in language use. On the other hand, the semiotic approach in this study is grounded in the model of Peirce (1931–1958), which conceptualizes signs as a relationship among the representamen, object, and interpretant (Eco, 1976; Chandler, 2017). In ritual contexts, Yelle (2006) highlights that signs are not merely representational but also possess efficacy, that is, the capacity to produce changes in social and cognitive reality. This perspective is reinforced by Shakirova (2026), who demonstrates that symbols in oral traditions operate through affective and collective mechanisms.

The integration of performative and semiotic approaches enables a more comprehensive understanding of mantras as symbolic actions. Butler (1997) shows that performativity constructs reality through repeated discursive practices, while Silverstein (2003) emphasizes the importance of indexicality in linking language to social context. Irvine and Gal (2000) explain the role of language ideology in shaping meaning, Keane (2003) highlights the relationship between signs and moral values, and Enfield (2009) views language as a social practice embedded in collective interaction. Accordingly, mantras can be understood as utterances that simultaneously function as social actions and as systems of signs operating within cultural structures.

2.3 Bugis Cultural Values and the Concept of Beauty

Bugis society possesses a structured system of cultural values, in which the concepts of *siri* (honor) and *pesse* (empathy) serve as fundamental principles regulating social relations and individual identity (Pelras, 1996; Mattulada, 1985). These values function not only as social norms but also shape how individuals represent themselves in social interaction. From the perspective of linguistic anthropology, Agha (2007) emphasizes that cultural values are internalized within language practices, positioning language as a primary medium for the reproduction of cultural



ideology. Thus, language does not merely reflect social reality but also actively participates in shaping and sustaining it.

Kang (2003) further argues that cultural values are not static but are continuously produced through recurring discursive practices in everyday life. In this context, the concept of beauty in Bugis culture is not understood solely as a physical attribute, but as a social construct associated with honor, social legitimacy, and the quality of interpersonal relations. Pamungkas (2024) asserts that in local traditions, beauty is always linked to broader moral systems and social structures, in which the body and appearance function as social signs carrying ideological meaning.

In line with this, Asnar (2026) demonstrates that representations of the body constitute a semiotic construction that connects symbols, values, and social structures. Within this framework, beauty can be understood as the result of a complex process of cultural symbolization, where meaning is formed through the interaction of social norms, cultural practices, and systems of signs. Language, in this regard, functions as a symbolic system that encodes and reproduces these values in social interaction (Halliday, 1978; Agha, 2007), making the relationship between language and culture central to understanding the construction of beauty in Bugis society.

2.4 Framework: Multilevel Ethnolinguistics

This study employs a multilevel ethnolinguistic approach that integrates linguistic analysis with cultural interpretation to understand the construction of meaning in mantras. The analysis is conducted at three levels: lexical, phrasal, and sentential, which interact in producing overall meaning. At the lexical level, the analysis focuses on the semantic and symbolic meanings of words associated with cultural elements, such as the body, nature, and spiritual concepts (Duranti, 1997). This approach aligns with Ande et al. (2025), who argue that linguistic units in ritual language cannot be separated from their social functions and embedded cultural values, making lexical analysis fundamental to understanding meaning construction.

At the phrasal level, the analysis centers on combinations of words that form metaphorical and symbolic expressions, including patterns of parallelism and linguistic aesthetics (Jakobson, 1960). This perspective is supported by Hymes (1974), who emphasizes that the meaning of an utterance is determined not only by its linguistic structure but also by its context of use and the social norms governing the speech event. Therefore, phrasal constructions in mantras should be understood as part of broader cultural communication practices, in which symbolism and aesthetics function to construct more complex layers of meaning.

At the sentential level, the analysis focuses on complete utterances as performative acts with specific social purposes, drawing on speech act theory to identify illocutionary force and perlocutionary effects (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Within a broader framework, Agha (2007) conceptualizes this approach as a form of *indexical layering*, in which meaning emerges through the relationship between linguistic forms and social structures. Kang (2003), Yelle (2006), and Shakirova (2026) further assert that meaning in ritual language is produced through layered interactions among linguistic structures, social practices, and symbolic systems. Accordingly, a multilevel approach is essential for capturing the full complexity of meaning construction.



3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative ethnolinguistic approach to examine the relationship between linguistic structure and cultural meaning in *Cenningrara* mantras within Bugis society. This approach is grounded in the view that language is not merely a neutral system of signs, but a symbolic and performative practice through which meaning is actively constructed, negotiated, and reproduced within specific socio-cultural contexts (Duranti, 1997; Foley, 1997). In this sense, linguistic expressions found in ritual discourse cannot be separated from the cultural values, belief systems, and social relations that shape and give them significance. Accordingly, this study does not limit its analysis to the formal structure of language, but extends to the ways in which linguistic forms function as a medium for constructing meanings related to beauty, attraction, and interpersonal influence. To achieve this, the analysis integrates multilevel linguistic examination covering lexical, phrasal, and sentential structures with performative and semiotic perspectives, thereby enabling a more comprehensive and systematically grounded interpretation of how meaning emerges through the interaction between linguistic form and cultural context.

3.1 Materials

The data in this study consist of eight *Cenningrara* mantra texts that are still practiced within Bugis society in Sarang Tiung Village, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. These data were collected between January and March 2026 through direct fieldwork involving both oral elicitation and the documentation of written materials. In order to avoid ambiguity regarding data sources, this study clearly distinguishes the origin of each mantra text. Of the eight texts analyzed, five were obtained through direct oral elicitation from informants during in-depth interviews and ritual demonstrations, while the remaining three were derived from practitioners' written notes. These written texts were provided by two ritual practitioners, one male and one female, who maintain personal records of mantra texts used in their practice. The combination of oral and written data allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the tradition, as it reflects both performed and documented forms of mantra usage.

The informants were selected purposively based on criteria relevant to the objectives of the study, including their status as native speakers of the Bugis language, their recognized knowledge of mantra practices within the community, their active involvement either as practitioners or as custodians of cultural knowledge, and their willingness to participate in the research process. The five informants consist of three ritual practitioners two males aged 52 and 61, and one female aged 47 and two community elders one male aged 58 and one female aged 50 who function as cultural custodians responsible for preserving and transmitting traditional knowledge. Their roles and experiences provide both practical and interpretive insights into the use and meaning of *Cenningrara* mantras in social life.

All oral data were recorded using a digital audio recorder (Zoom H1n), with a smartphone used as a secondary recording device to ensure data security and completeness. The recordings were transcribed verbatim by the primary researcher, who possesses functional proficiency in the Bugis language, and subsequently reviewed by a native-speaking informant to ensure the accuracy of linguistic representation. The transcription process employed a simplified orthographic convention adapted to Bugis phonological features and was accompanied by interlinear glossing and translation into Indonesian and English. To further ensure accuracy, the glosses and translations were verified through repeated consultation with informants, allowing for the correction of potential misinterpretations and the refinement of meaning.



To enhance the validity of the data, each mantra text was subjected to a process of cross-verification by comparing different versions obtained from multiple informants as well as between oral and written sources. This triangulation made it possible to identify both stable patterns and variations within the tradition, thereby strengthening the reliability of the dataset. Although the number of texts analyzed in this study is limited to eight, this is considered sufficient within a qualitative research framework because the data reached a point of thematic saturation, where no substantially new linguistic patterns or symbolic meanings emerged from additional data. Furthermore, *Cenningrara* mantras are relatively restricted cultural practices that are not widely performed, which limits the availability of data in natural contexts and justifies the scope of the dataset.

The unit of analysis in this study encompasses three interconnected linguistic levels lexical, phrasal, and sentential which are selected to reflect the hierarchical organization of meaning construction. Lexical units are defined as minimal meaning-bearing elements, phrasal units as combinations of words that form meaningful groupings without full predication, and sentential units as complete clauses that function as communicative acts with specific pragmatic force. Through this multilevel framework, mantra texts are examined not only as linguistic structures but also as cultural artifacts that encode systems of symbols, values, and meanings related to concepts of beauty and attraction in Bugis society.

3.2 Procedure

The analysis of data in this study was carried out through a series of systematic and interrelated stages designed to ensure both analytical rigor and interpretive depth. The first stage involved transcription and verification, in which all recorded oral data were transcribed verbatim in order to preserve their original linguistic form. These transcriptions were then validated through a member-checking process, in which informants were consulted to confirm the accuracy and appropriateness of the recorded texts. This step was essential to ensure that the data accurately reflect actual usage in real communicative contexts and are not distorted by researcher interpretation. In addition, comparisons across different versions of the texts obtained from multiple informants were conducted as part of data source triangulation, thereby ensuring that the dataset represents a shared cultural practice rather than individual variation.

The second stage consisted of classifying linguistic units into lexical, phrasal, and sentential categories based on explicit structural and functional criteria. This classification enabled the identification of patterns in the organization of meaning and provided a foundation for subsequent analysis. The third stage involved performative analysis, which was conducted using the speech act framework proposed by Searle (1979). In this stage, each utterance was examined in terms of its illocutionary force, categorized into types such as representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations, as well as its felicity conditions and potential perlocutionary effects within specific social contexts. Through this analysis, the study demonstrates how mantras function as linguistic actions intended to influence emotions, attention, and interpersonal attraction.

The fourth stage involved semiotic analysis based on Peircean theory, focusing on the triadic relationship between sign, object, and interpretant. Linguistic elements within the mantra texts were analyzed to determine whether they function as icons, indexes, or symbols, and how these semiotic modes contribute to the construction of culturally specific meanings. This stage enables a deeper understanding of how abstract concepts such as beauty and attraction are symbolically



encoded within the language of the mantras. The final stage consisted of ethnolinguistic interpretation, in which the results of linguistic and semiotic analyses were integrated within the broader cultural context of Bugis society. This integrative step allows the findings to move beyond formal description toward a more comprehensive explanation of the relationship between language, cultural values, and social practices.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, multiple validation strategies were employed, including data triangulation across oral, written, and archival sources, member checking with informants, and peer verification of transcription and interpretation. The researcher's positionality was also taken into account, as the primary researcher possesses functional competence in the Bugis language and conducted the analysis in close collaboration with native speakers to ensure interpretive accuracy. Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process: all informants were informed of the purpose of the study and provided their consent prior to participation; their involvement was voluntary, and they retained the right to withdraw at any stage; and their identities were anonymized to protect their privacy. Furthermore, the research was conducted with sensitivity to local cultural values in order to avoid misrepresentation or exploitation of traditional knowledge. Through these procedures, the study ensures not only methodological rigor but also ethical responsibility in the documentation and interpretation of cultural practices.

4. Results

This study identifies eight *Cenningrara* mantras that are still actively used by the Bugis community in Sarang Tiung Village, representing living linguistic and cultural practices within specific social contexts. All tables in this section present the complete set of identified linguistic units rather than merely illustrative examples, thereby enabling a comprehensive reading of the data distribution.

From the overall data analyzed, a total of 36 linguistic units were identified, consisting of 14 units at the lexical level, 12 at the phrasal level, and 10 at the sentential level. This distribution indicates that meaning construction in *Cenningrara* mantras is not concentrated at a single linguistic level but is systematically distributed across a layered and hierarchical structure, where each level contributes differently to the overall meaning. The dominance of lexical-level units suggests that the foundation of meaning is built through basic symbols, which are then elaborated through phrasal structures and functionally realized in utterances at the sentential level. Therefore, meaning in mantras cannot be understood in a partial manner but must be viewed as the result of interactions among linguistic elements operating simultaneously within an integrated symbolic system.

Table 1.

Distribution of Linguistic Units

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Lexical	14	38.9%
Phrase	12	33.3%
Sentence	10	27.8%



To provide a more specific account of the distribution of meaning at the lexical level, the data are further classified into semantic categories based on their types of reference and symbolic functions within the cultural context.

Table 2.

Distribution of Semantic Categories

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Body	3	21.4%
Nature	2	14.3%
Spiritual	3	21.4%
Material Culture	5	35.7%
Relational	1	7.1%

This distribution indicates that material culture and body-related lexical categories are the most prominent in the data. This finding suggests that the construction of beauty in *Cenningrara* mantras is strongly rooted in physical representation as well as in practices concretely realized through the use of attributes and body care. The dominance of material culture further shows that beauty is not understood merely as a bodily condition, but as the outcome of culturally regulated social practices.

At the same time, the presence of spiritual and relational categories demonstrates that the physical dimension does not stand alone, but is reinforced by broader symbolic legitimacy and social relationships. Therefore, this semantic distribution confirms that the construction of beauty is multidimensional, integrating physical, symbolic, and social aspects simultaneously.

4.1 Lexical Level: The Symbolic Foundation of Meaning Construction

Table 3

Data in the Form of Words or Terms

No	Word	Mantra Context	Description
1	<i>Cemme</i>	<i>Ku pammulai cemme</i>	Ritual bathing
2	<i>Wae</i>	<i>Wae sitinjakku</i>	Symbol of purity
3	<i>Rupa</i>	<i>Namaccaya ri rupakku</i>	Face as beauty
4	<i>Ulu</i>	<i>Namattapa ri ulukku</i>	Hair as attraction
5	<i>Kiteng</i>	<i>Sandrekka ri kitengnge</i>	Mirror (reflection)
6	<i>Fulana</i>	<i>(mention name)</i>	Target of mantra
7	<i>Nyawa</i>	<i>Nyawana (name)</i>	Emotional dimension
8	<i>Rencong</i>	<i>Mappake Rencong</i>	Lip cosmetic
9	<i>Bedda</i>	<i>Mappake Bedda</i>	Powder
10	<i>Cilla</i>	<i>Mappake Cilla</i>	Eyeliner
11	<i>Lipa</i>	<i>Mappake Lipa</i>	Sarong
12	<i>Waju</i>	<i>Mappake Waju</i>	Clothing
13	<i>Fatimah</i>	<i>Natabangkanga I Fatimah</i>	Religious ideal
14	<i>Barakka</i>	<i>Barakka La Ilaha Illallah</i>	Spiritual blessing



At the lexical level, word choice in *Cenningrara* mantras is not arbitrary but reflects a structured cultural conceptual system, in which each word functions as a symbol connecting physical, social, and spiritual dimensions. Lexical items such as *rupa* (appearance) and *ulu* (head) indicate that the construction of beauty begins with the body as an initial representation. However, this meaning is further expanded through symbols such as *wae* (water), representing purity, and *kiteng* (mirror), understood as a medium of self-reflection that emphasizes visual awareness and self-presentation within social space. Thus, symbols in the mantras are more oriented toward reflective and relational experiences rather than abstract cosmological associations.

In addition, the presence of elements such as *fulana* and *nyawa* indicates that meaning in the mantras is relational, as it is directed toward other individuals as targets of influence. The inclusion of religious elements such as *barakka* and references to the figure of *Fatimah* not only reflects Islamic influence but also demonstrates a symbolic integration between local and religious values. *Fatimah*, as an ideal female figure in Islamic tradition, is associated with purity, moral beauty, and spiritual legitimacy. Therefore, her invocation in the mantras functions as a source of symbolic authority that reinforces the spiritual dimension of beauty, positioning it not merely as an aesthetic quality but as one validated by religious values.

On the other hand, the use of material elements such as *rencong*, *bedda*, *cilla*, *lipa*, and *waju* shows that the body is understood as an active site of cultural practice. These objects are not merely cosmetic items or general attributes but are integral to social practices that regulate how individuals present themselves according to aesthetic and social norms in Bugis society. Accordingly, at the lexical level, beauty is constructed as a multidimensional concept that integrates physical, symbolic, social, and religious aspects.

To strengthen the linguistic analysis, the following interlinear gloss is presented from one of the data samples:

Ku pammulai cemmeku

1SG begin bathing-1SG

“I begin the ritual bathing”

This example demonstrates that the morphological structure of the Bugis language contains subject markers integrated into the verb form, indicating that the ritual action is not only expressed lexically but also grammatically signals the direct involvement of the speaker in the practice.

In addition, the following structure illustrates the relational orientation in meaning construction:

Yeppa namanyameng nyawana

hopefully become-attached soul-3SG

“May his/her soul become attached”

This structure shows that linguistic action in the mantra is explicitly directed toward a specific target through possessive marking, thereby reinforcing the relational dimension in ritual language practices.



4.2 Phrasal Level: Aesthetic and Relational Construction

Table 4.

Data at the Phrase Level

No.	Phrase	Mantra	Description
1	<i>Namaccaya ri rupakku</i>	<i>Cemme</i>	Radiant face
2	<i>Namattapa ri ulukku</i>	<i>Cemme</i>	Shiny hair
3	<i>Makkita mappoji maneng</i>	<i>Cemme</i>	Social admiration
4	<i>Patabakkarakka ri rupakku</i>	<i>Pura' Cemme</i>	Facial aura
5	<i>Paccayarekka kumulolo fulana</i>	<i>Pura' Cemme</i>	Comparison to the moon
6	<i>Manenneng sining malolo</i>	<i>Tette Malolo</i>	Eternal youth
7	<i>Intang mabborong ditimukku</i>	<i>Rencong</i>	Lips like diamonds
8	<i>Tokkong dirupakku</i>	<i>Bedda</i>	Strength of the face
9	<i>Urenreng wirinna matakku</i>	<i>Cilla</i>	Eye attraction
10	<i>Lipana kupasang</i>	<i>Lipa</i>	Symbolic attachment
11	<i>Bajunna kupasang</i>	<i>Waju</i>	Social identity
12	<i>Yeppa namanyameng nyawana</i>	<i>Lipa/Waju</i>	Emotional influence

At the phrasal level, meaning is elaborated through metaphorical constructions that connect the body with natural symbols and aesthetic values. Phrases such as *namaccaya ri rupakku* and *namattapa ri ulukku* indicate that beauty is represented through imagery of light and radiance, which not only signify visual qualities but also social visibility that is, the extent to which a person can be seen and recognized by others. This is reinforced by the phrase *makkita mappoji maneng*, which emphasizes that beauty gains meaning through collective recognition.

Furthermore, metaphors such as *intang mabborong ditimukku* do not refer to “diamonds,” but to *intang* (stars) as symbols of light that stand out in darkness. In this context, the lips are represented as a center of attraction with the capacity to “shine” and draw attention in social interaction. This metaphor underscores that beauty is not merely visual but is also associated with the ability to produce specific social effects.

Similarly, the metaphor of the moon in phrases such as *paccayarekka kumulolo fulana* reflects Bugis aesthetic ideals that emphasize qualities of soft, cool, and captivating light. The moon functions not only as a symbol of beauty but also as a representation of self-control and grace, closely linked to the value of *siri'* (honor), in which appearance must be appealing without exceeding the boundaries of social norms.

In addition, phrases related to clothing such as *lipana kupasang* and *bajunna kupasang* demonstrate that social identity is constructed not only through the body but also through external symbolic attributes. Accordingly, at the phrasal level, beauty is constructed as the result of an interaction among aesthetics, symbolism, and social relations.

4.3 Cross-Level Analysis: The Transformation of the Concept of *Rupa*

Cross-level analysis demonstrates that the concept of *rupa* undergoes a transformation of meaning from physical representation to cultural symbol, and ultimately to an instrument of social action. At the lexical level, *rupa* represents the face as the physical foundation of beauty. At the



phrasal level, this meaning develops into an aesthetic symbol through associations with light and radiance, signifying social visibility. At the sentential level, the concept functions performatively to influence perception and social response.

This transformation indicates that meaning is not static but is gradually constructed through interactions across linguistic levels. Accordingly, beauty in *Cenningrara* mantras is not merely a bodily attribute, but the result of symbolic construction activated within social practice.

These findings further show that meaning in *Cenningrara* mantras is not constructed independently at each linguistic level, but rather through systematic and mutually reinforcing interactions. Lexical symbols serve as the conceptual foundation, which is then expanded through metaphorical constructions at the phrasal level and activated performatively at the sentential level to produce specific social effects. Thus, each linguistic level contributes to an integrated mechanism that enables meaning to develop from symbolic representation into effective social action within a cultural context.

4.4 Sentential Level: Performative Structure and Ritual Function

Table 5.

Data at the Sentence Level

No.	Sentence	Mantra	Description
1	<i>Ku pammulai cemmeku</i>	<i>Cemme</i>	Ritual opening
2	<i>Makkita mappoji maneng lao ri iyak</i>	<i>Cemme</i>	Attraction
3	<i>Yeppa namanyameng nyawana</i>	<i>Pura' Cemme</i>	Emotional influence
4	<i>Ku alako ku cemmei to</i>	<i>Tette Malolo</i>	Ritual action
5	<i>Ile mata pakkibbiku</i>	<i>Rencong</i>	Visual attraction
6	<i>Ko tania iya makessing naita</i>	<i>Bedda</i>	Uniqueness
7	<i>Degage lainge makessing</i>	<i>Cilla</i>	Dominance of beauty
8	<i>Lipaku napasang</i>	<i>Lipa</i>	Attachment
9	<i>Bajukku napasang</i>	<i>Waju</i>	Identity
10	<i>Barakka La Ilaha Illallah</i>	<i>All</i>	Religious closing

At the sentential level, *Cenningrara* mantras exhibit a performative character in which language not only conveys meaning but also actively functions to produce specific social, psychological, and symbolic effects. To understand this function more systematically, the analysis applies speech act theory, distinguishing between locution (what is said), illocution (the function or intention of the utterance), and perlocution (the effect produced on the listener or target).

The sentence *ku pammulai cemmeku* locutionarily expresses the beginning of a ritual bathing activity. At the illocutionary level, however, it functions as a declarative speech act that symbolically marks the opening of the ritual, creating a boundary between ordinary and ritual conditions. In this sense, the utterance does not merely describe an action but performatively “activates” the ritual itself. Its felicity conditions depend on several factors, including the legitimacy of the speaker as a ritual practitioner, the alignment between the physical act (ritual bathing) and the utterance, and belief in the effectiveness of the practice. The perlocutionary effect



is the creation of psychological and symbolic readiness in the speaker to enter subsequent ritual stages, allowing the utterance to function as a mechanism of transition from the profane to the sacred.

The sentence *makkita mappoji maneng lao ri iyak* locutionarily states that everyone sees and likes the speaker. At the illocutionary level, it operates as an indirect directive speech act aimed at influencing others' perceptions and social attention toward the speaker. Rather than issuing an explicit command, the utterance employs an implicit strategy by projecting an ideal condition as if it has already occurred. Its felicity conditions depend not only on linguistic structure but also on belief in the power of the mantra and the appropriateness of the social context in which it is used. The perlocutionary effect includes the emergence of attraction, attention, or even attitudinal change in others, demonstrating that language functions as a tool for intervening in social reality.

Meanwhile, the sentence *yeppa namanyameng nyawana* reflects a commissive-intentional speech act oriented toward creating a specific affective condition in the target. Locutionarily, it expresses a hope or desire that the target's soul becomes attached. Illocutionarily, it functions as an attempt to symbolically "bind" an emotional relationship between the speaker and the target. Its felicity conditions relate to the speaker's intention, the consistency of ritual practice, and cultural acceptance of emotional attachment mediated through symbolic means. The perlocutionary effect is the formation of emotional closeness, attraction, or psychological attachment in the target, indicating that language serves as a medium for shaping interpersonal relations.

The sentence *ku alako ku cemmei to* demonstrates a close relationship between utterance and physical action in ritual practice. Locutionarily, it states the act of taking and performing the ritual bath. At the illocutionary level, it functions as a representative-performative speech act, where language not only describes action but also becomes an integral part of it. In this context, there is no clear separation between utterance and action, as both reinforce each other in constructing ritual meaning. Its felicity conditions depend on the alignment between speech and physical action, as well as cultural recognition of the practice as a legitimate ritual. The perlocutionary effect is the strengthening of the symbolic meaning of the action, granting the ritual legitimacy through both action and language.

Finally, the sentence *barakka La Ilaha Illallah* represents a religious declarative speech act that provides spiritual legitimacy to the entire sequence of the mantra. Locutionarily, it is a statement of faith in Arabic. Illocutionarily, it functions as both a request for blessing and an affirmation of the spiritual authority underlying the mantra practice. The use of Arabic here reflects a form of code-switching that is not arbitrary but carries strong symbolic significance, linking local Bugis practices with the broader Islamic tradition. Its felicity conditions depend on collective acceptance of the religious authority of Arabic and the belief that religious elements enhance the effectiveness of the mantra. The perlocutionary effect is an increased level of confidence in the success of the mantra, alongside the reinforcement of its overall performative force through spiritual validation.

Overall, this analysis demonstrates that sentences in *Cenningrara* mantras function not merely as vehicles of meaning but as actions that actively shape social reality. The performative power of the mantra lies not only in its linguistic structure but also in its felicity conditions, which involve collective belief, cultural legitimacy, and the consistency of ritual practice. Thus, the effectiveness



of the mantra must be understood as the result of an interaction between language, action, and the surrounding belief system, making performativity in this context inherently contextual, collective, and inseparable from the cultural framework in which the mantra is practiced.

4.5 Integration of Cultural Values: *Siri'* and *Pesse*

Overall, the construction of meaning in *Cenningrara* mantras cannot be separated from Bugis cultural values, particularly the concepts of *siri'* (honor) and *pesse* (empathy), which serve as foundational principles in regulating social relations and individual identity. Beauty in the mantras is not limited to physical appearance, but also involves the ability to maintain personal honor in the presence of others, which lies at the core of *siri'*. Thus, attractiveness is evaluated not only in visual terms but also in relation to conformity with social and moral norms.

On the other hand, the relational orientation of the mantras aimed at fostering attraction and emotional closeness reflects the value of *pesse*, understood as empathy and social connectedness that underpin interpersonal interaction. Accordingly, *Cenningrara* mantras function not merely as aesthetic instruments, but also as cultural mechanisms that reproduce social values and shape interpersonal relationships within Bugis society.

5. Discussion

This study aims to analyze how cultural meaning, particularly the concept of beauty, is constructed in *Cenningrara* mantras through interactions across linguistic levels lexical, phrasal, and sentential within a multilevel ethnolinguistic framework. By integrating linguistic analysis with cultural interpretation, this study demonstrates that meaning in ritual language is not static, but is layered through the relationship between linguistic form, performative function, and the surrounding cultural value system.

The findings show that at the lexical level, symbols related to the body, nature, and spirituality form the conceptual foundation of culturally rooted beauty, which is then elaborated at the phrasal level through metaphors of light, stars, and the moon that represent beauty as social visibility. This indicates that beauty is not individual in nature but depends on collective recognition within social structures. These findings align with the view that ritual language constitutes a semiotic system that not only represents meaning but also constructs social reality through cultural symbols (Yelle, 2006; Chandler, 2017).

Furthermore, at the sentential level, meaning is activated through the performative function of language, where mantras not only express certain conditions but also function to create them through illocutionary mechanisms and perlocutionary effects. This analysis demonstrates that the effectiveness of mantras depends not only on linguistic structure but also on felicity conditions involving cultural legitimacy and collective belief. These findings reinforce the concept of linguistic performativity as proposed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), while extending it within an ethnolinguistic context in which language functions as social action capable of influencing interpersonal relations.

The implications of this study suggest that beauty in *Cenningrara* mantras cannot be understood merely as a physical attribute, but as a performative and relational social construct. Beauty gains meaning through social recognition connected to Bugis cultural values, particularly *siri'* (honor) and *pesse* (empathy) (Pelras, 1996; Mattulada, 1985). In addition, the use of cosmetic elements such as *rencong*, *bedda*, and *cilla* indicates that the construction of beauty is associated



with embodied practices that are gendered in nature. However, within the Bugis cultural context, these practices are not strictly confined to binary gender categories, as reflected in the role of bissu ritual specialists, who embody the complexity of gender identity. At the same time, the presence of religious elements such as La Ilaha Illallah reveals a historical layer in meaning construction, reflecting processes of Islamization and the integration of local and religious values within cultural practices.

Despite its contributions to understanding ritual language as a layered system of meaning, this study has several limitations that should be considered in interpreting the findings. The analysis is based on a relatively limited dataset of eight mantra texts, which may not fully represent the diversity and variation of *Cenningrara* traditions across the broader Bugis community. In addition, most of the data are derived from transcriptions, which constrains the ability to capture performative dimensions such as intonation, gesture, and audience interaction in actual practice. Although efforts were made to reduce subjectivity through triangulation and data verification, the interpretation of symbolic meaning remains partly dependent on the perspectives of both informants and the researcher. Therefore, future research is recommended to conduct direct observation of ritual practices, involve a broader range of informants from diverse backgrounds, and incorporate multimodal analysis to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between language, the body, and social context in mantra traditions.

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