



## An Analysis of Rhymes and Meanings In The Funeral Song Lyrics Of Laku Merin In Tetun Language Spoken In Lasiolat Village, Belu Regency

Maria Goreti Moru <sup>1,\*</sup>, Novriani Rabeka Manafe <sup>2</sup>, Elisna Huan <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nusa Cendana University, Student, Kupang, Indonesia

<sup>2,3</sup> Nusa Cendana University, Lecturer, Kupang, Indonesia

Email First Author \*: [etymoru@gmail.com](mailto:etymoru@gmail.com)

| ARTICLE INFO  | ABSTRACT  |
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| <p>Article history</p> <p>Received : Nov, 30<sup>th</sup> 2025</p> <p>Revised : Dec, 14<sup>th</sup> 2025</p> <p>Accepted : Dec, 22<sup>nd</sup> 2025</p> <p><b>OPEN ACCESS</b></p> | <p>This research is entitled “An Analysis of Rhymes and Meanings in the Funeral Song Lyrics of <i>Laku Merin</i> in Tetun Language Spoken in Lasiolat Village, Belu Regency.” The purpose of this study is to identify the types of rhymes found in the <i>Laku Merin</i> lyrics and to analyze the meanings contained within them. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method with data collected through interviews, documentation, and recording. The informants are traditional leaders and native speakers of the Tetun language in Lasiolat Village. The findings reveal that the <i>Laku Merin</i> lyrics contain three types of rhymes, including identical rhymes, end rhymes, and perfect rhymes. Furthermore, based on Geoffrey Leech’s theory of meaning, the lyrics express several types of meaning, namely connotative, social, affective, and reflected meaning. These findings indicate that <i>Laku Merin</i> is not merely an expression of grief in funeral ceremonies but also serves as a medium of consolation, respect for the deceased, and preservation of the Tetun language and cultural identity of the Lasiolat community.</p> |
| <b>Keywords:</b>  | <i>Rhymes, Meaning, Laku Merin</i>  |

### 1. Introduction

Language is an essential tool for human communication, enabling the transfer of ideas, emotions, and information. In oral culture, language plays a crucial role in preserving traditions, including rhymes. However, many traditional literary works are now being forgotten by the younger generation, who often perceive them as no longer relevant. One such cultural heritage that needs preservation is *Laku Merin*, a tradition of pantun or rhymes sung during funeral ceremonies in Timor Island, especially in Lasiolat Village, Belu Regency.

*Laku Merin* provides emotional support for grieving families and serves as a final tribute to the deceased. Despite its high cultural value, this tradition faces significant challenges that threaten its preservation. One of the primary reasons for the decline of this tradition is the

lack of proper documentation of *Laku Merin* poems. The tradition relies heavily on individual memory, resulting in the gradual loss of verses over time. Additionally, chanting *Laku Merin* requires specific skills, which not all elders possess. Furthermore, urbanization and globalization have caused this tradition to be increasingly marginalized, especially among the younger generation, who are becoming less aware of its meaning and cultural value.

Based on the background of the research, the study is guided by two main questions. The first what are the types of rhymes used in *Laku Merin* lyrics, which includes identifying the types of rhyme used in the lyrics of *Laku Merin*. The second is what are the types of meanings used in the lyrics of *Laku Merin*, which involves analyze the meanings contained in the lyrics of *Laku Merin*.

The main theories in this study are the Rhyme theory and the Meaning theory to analyze the lyrics of the funeral song *Laku Merin*. Rhyme analysis is based on Wesling's (1980) concept, which defines it as the regular repetition of sounds to create aesthetics and reinforce the message in literary works. Meanwhile, the analysis of meaning in the song lyrics will refer to Geoffrey Leech's (1981) classification of meaning, specifically to identify the meaning contained in the lyrics of *Laku Merin*.

## 2. Research Method

In this research the writer used descriptive qualitative method. The descriptive qualitative method is used for analyzing interviews that are relevant to the research questions. This approach was chosen to facilitate an in-depth analysis of the rhymes and meanings of the *Laku Merin* funeral song lyrics, focusing on providing a comprehensive description of the phenomenon without converting it into numerical data, and considering the cultural and social context in Lasiolat Village, Belu Regency. The study was conducted over one month in Lasiolat Village, which is directly relevant to the research focus.

The research procedure commenced with Library Research to gather, read, and collect theories and concepts from various sources such as relevant books, journals, and theses. Subsequently, Field Research was carried out to collect primary data and information from informants. The research subjects, or informants, were two native speakers who served as traditional leaders of Lasiolat Village. The selection of these subjects was based on strict criteria, including a cultural background in Lasiolat Village, fluency in the local language, a social role as a traditional leader, direct experience with the song's context, and being over 60 years old.

The primary data collection and sources utilized three main instruments: face-to-face personal interviews in Tetun to obtain views and opinions; documentation in the form of audio and video recordings; and mobile phone recordings of the *Laku Merin* ritual lyrics, which served as the primary data. The collected data was analyzed using a descriptive qualitative method through systematic steps: (1) Identifying the collected data, (2) Transcribing the audio data into text format, (3) Translating the text into Indonesian and English, (4) Sorting and Classifying the data relevant to the research questions, and (5) Analyzing the data qualitatively and descriptively based on the classified problem statements.

### 3. Research Findings and Discussion

#### Research Findings

##### 4.1.1 The Types of Rhymes used in Laku Merin Lyrics

Based on the analysis of 44 lines (22 stanzas) of the lyrics of the *Laku Merin* funeral song collected through in-depth interviews with two traditional leader informants, this study successfully identified the rhyme structure and the types of meanings contained therein.

Based on the classification of rhyme according to Wesling (1980) and Goldstein (2020) as cited in Raupova (2024), the rhyme data contained in these lyrics can be explained as follows: The three types of rhyme are: identical rhyme, end rhyme, and perfect rhyme.

Table 1. Types of Rhymes

| Data | Types of Rhymes | <i>Laku Merin</i> Lyrics   | Translation                         | Lines |
|------|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| 01   | Identical Rhyme | <i>Kuda batar ba rai</i>   | If you plant corn in the ground     | 1-2   |
|      |                 | <i>Sei mai nikar</i>       | It still comes back                 |       |
|      |                 | <i>Kuda ema rai</i>        | If you plant a person in the ground |       |
|      |                 | <i>La mai ona</i>          | They don't come back                |       |
| 02   | Identical Rhyme | <i>La'o letek la loran</i> | I Walk the row along the slope      | 3-4   |
|      |                 | <i>Liba mean mesa</i>      | The red cloths are all together     |       |
|      |                 | <i>Liba metan la solat</i> | The black cloth is not mixed        |       |
|      |                 | <i>Liba mean mesa</i>      | All the red cloths are together     |       |
| 03   | Identical Rhyme | <i>Tur butuk an nalo</i>   | We sat and gathered together        | 7-8   |
|      |                 | <i>Butuk nu nu maran</i>   | Gathered like dry coconuts          |       |
|      |                 | <i>Kaak fali nu maran</i>  | I thought the dry coconut           |       |

|    |                 |                                   |  |       |
|----|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--|-------|
|    |                 | <i>Kasaun sala</i>                | Peel was wrong                               |       |
| 04 | Identical Rhyme | <i>Lia ita rua dale</i>           | The secrets we discussed together            | 27-28 |
|    |                 | <i>Keta <b>malu'a</b></i>         | Did not forget them                          |       |
|    |                 | <i>Kalan toba <b>malu'a</b></i>   | Through the night's sleep made one forget    |       |
|    |                 | <i>Loron manoin</i>               | The afternoon must have remembered           |       |
| 05 | Identical Rhyme | <i>Ema mane maun alin</i>         | Men who are younger and older siblings       | 25-26 |
|    |                 | <i>La'o loit <b>malu</b></i>      | walked hand in hand                          |       |
|    |                 | <i>Neten mata leit ida</i>        | Once something good was obtained             |       |
|    |                 | <i>La laur <b>malu</b></i>        | They did not care for each other             |       |
| 06 | End Rhyme       | <i>Dou tulak tabako</i>           | The dove perches                             | 29-30 |
|    |                 | <i>Nalo kamaen rua</i>            | You make it into two remnants                |       |
|    |                 | <i>Kamaen ida <b>mahelik</b></i>  | One is visible                               |       |
|    |                 | <i>Ida <b>malorek</b></i>         | The other is hidden                          |       |
| 07 | Identical Rhyme | <i>Uluk Ita rua</i>               | We were formerly                             | 11-12 |
|    |                 | <i>Nu takan <b>dadula</b></i>     | like betel leaves in a single bundle         |       |
|    |                 | <i>Kore kari <b>dadula</b></i>    | The bundle was released                      |       |
|    |                 | <i>Hori o mai</i>                 | when you came                                |       |
| 08 | Perfect Rhyme   | <i>Tama mutu laluan</i>           | Enter the cage together                      | 9-10  |
|    |                 | <i>Keta sui <b>malu</b></i>       | Do not use your horns against each other     |       |
|    |                 | <i>Keta kedok sai <b>malu</b></i> | Do not abandon each other                    |       |
|    |                 | <i>Sui sai <b>malu</b></i>        | Nor use your horns against each other        |       |
| 09 | Identical Rhyme | <i>Sae kuda maliku</i>            | The best horse was ridden                    | 15-16 |
|    |                 | <i>Kuda rin diak</i>              | until it was finished                        |       |
|    |                 | <i>Monu mota la <b>sukat</b></i>  | Falling into the river could not be measured |       |
|    |                 | <i>Ai la <b>sukat</b></i>         | nor could the wood be measured               |       |
| 10 | Identical Rhyme | <i>Taka sela ba kuda</i>          | As the saddle was fastened to the horse      | 19-20 |
|    |                 | <i>Bete lun <b>туру</b></i>       | the girl's tears fall                        |       |
|    |                 | <i>Bete keta lun <b>туру</b></i>  | Girl, don't let your tears fall;             |       |
|    |                 | <i>Ba mai kikar</i>               |  |       |

|    |                 |                                   |  |       |
|----|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--|-------|
|    |                 |                                   | I went and came back home                  |       |
| 11 | Identical Rhyme | <i>Leku-leku na bosu</i>          | When the bamboo clashes                    | 23-24 |
|    |                 | <i>Duduk tur <b>hein</b></i>      | the sago fiber waits                       |       |
|    |                 | <i>Duduk tur <b>hein</b></i>      | It Waits to satisfy                        |       |
|    |                 | <i>Hodi kabun aten la laen</i>    | the rumbling of its stomach                |       |
| 12 | Perfect Rhyme   | <i>Sunu hai rai lewan</i>         | When the field was burned                  | 31-32 |
|    |                 | <i>Kikit mai <b>bele</b></i>      | the eagle also comes                       |       |
|    |                 | <i>Lawa leruk mai <b>bele</b></i> | The heron birds also came                  |       |
|    |                 | <i>Kikit mai <b>bele</b></i>      | and the eagle also came                    |       |
| 13 | Identical Rhyme | <i>Bete atu tun uma</i>           | Girl, if you come down from the house      | 33-34 |
|    |                 | <i>Keta dadi <b>loko</b></i>      | do not become arrogant                     |       |
|    |                 | <i>Tur hasarae tehen</i>          | If you sit at the end of the earth         |       |
|    |                 | <i>Loko lei <b>loko</b></i>       | then you may be arrogant                   |       |
| 14 | Perfect Rhyme   | <i>Sosa taha <b>maliku</b></i>    | Buying the machete usually means something | 37-38 |
|    |                 | <i>Taha kaer <b>fatim</b></i>     | it means getting the machete's handle      |       |
|    |                 | <i>Sosa seluk la <b>nu'u</b></i>  | Buying something else is not like          |       |
|    |                 | <i>Taha kaer <b>fatim</b></i>     | bunying the machete's handle               |       |
| 15 | Identical Rhyme | <i>Fitun wai sia <b>sa'e</b></i>  | The morning star appears                   | 43-44 |
|    |                 | <i>Manuk la <b>sa'e</b></i>       | but the chicken has not yet perched        |       |
|    |                 | <i>Manu sei nein</i>              | The chicken is still waits to take         |       |
|    |                 | <i>Nanuru forek naun ikun</i>     | the residue from the peanut harvest        |       |
| 16 | Identical Rhyme | <i>Solok surat mai ami</i>        | Send the letter to us                      | 39-40 |
|    |                 | <i>Solok no <b>foto</b></i>       | send it with a photo                       |       |
|    |                 | <i>Leno surat na kesir</i>        | I am tired of reading the letter           |       |
|    |                 | <i>Leno lai <b>foto</b></i>       | I first take a look at the photo           |       |

#### 4.1.2 The Types of Meaning used in Laku Merin Lyrics

Based on Geoffrey Leech's (1981) theory of meaning, the lyrics contain four main types of meaning: connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, and reflected meaning. Here, the data are presented below:

Table 2. Types of Meanings

| Data | Types of Meanings   | <i>Laku Merin</i> Lyrics   | Lines |
|------|---------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| 01   | Connotative Meaning | <i>Kuda batar ba rai</i>   | 1-2   |
|      |                     | <i>Sei mai nikar</i>       |       |
|      |                     | <i>Kuda ema rai</i>        |       |
|      |                     | <i>La mai ona</i>          |       |
| 02   | Connotative Meaning | <i>La'o letek la loran</i> | 3-4   |
|      |                     | <i>Liba mean mesa</i>      |       |
|      |                     | <i>Liba metan la solat</i> |       |
|      |                     | <i>Liba mean mesa</i>      |       |
| 03   | Reflected Meaning   | <i>Lia ita rua dale</i>    | 27-28 |
|      |                     | <i>Keta malu'a</i>         |       |
|      |                     | <i>Kalan toba malu'a</i>   |       |
|      |                     | <i>Loron manoin</i>        |       |
| 04   | Reflected Meaning   | <i>Ema mane maun alin</i>  | 25-26 |
|      |                     | <i>La'o loit malu</i>      |       |
|      |                     | <i>Neten mata leit ida</i> |       |
|      |                     | <i>La laur malu</i>        |       |
| 05   | Sosial Meaning      | <i>Uluk Ita rua</i>        | 11-12 |
|      |                     | <i>Nu takan dadula</i>     |       |
|      |                     | <i>Kore kari dadula</i>    |       |
|      |                     | <i>Hori o mai</i>          |       |
| 06   | Sosial Meaning      | <i>Tama mutu laluan</i>    | 9-10  |
|      |                     | <i>Keta sui malu</i>       |       |
|      |                     | <i>Keta kedok sai malu</i> |       |
|      |                     | <i>Sui sai malu</i>        |       |
| 07   | Affective Meaning   | <i>Sae kuda maliku</i>     | 15-16 |
|      |                     | <i>Kuda rin diak</i>       |       |
|      |                     | <i>Monu mota la sukat</i>  |       |
|      |                     | <i>Ai la sukat</i>         |       |

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|    |                   |                           |       |
|----|-------------------|---------------------------|-------|
| 08 | Affective Meaning | <i>Taka sela ba kuda</i>  | 19-20 |
|    |                   | <i>Bete lun turu</i>      |       |
|    |                   | <i>Bete keta lun turu</i> |       |
|    |                   | <i>Ba mai kika</i>        |       |

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## Discussion

This section discusses findings regarding the types and meanings of rhymes in the lyrics of *Laku Merin* by linking them to existing theories and comparing them with relevant previous studies to provide a comprehensive academic foundation. The analysis reveals that the lyrics of *Laku Merin* primarily employ identical rhymes, end rhymes, and perfect rhymes. The use of identical rhymes, such as the repetition of the word “rai” (ground), aims to emphasize the finiteness of human life compared to nature. This finding is in line with Wesling's (1980) theory, which states that rhyme is not merely an aesthetic embellishment but a structural tool that reinforces the message of pantun or poetry through regular repetition of sounds. Additionally, the presence of perfect rhymes (for example, “malu” in data 06) creates a sense of harmony and resonance. This result is consistent with Seu's (2022) research, which found that traditional Tetun oral literature, such as *Hase Hawaka*, relies heavily on structured rhyme patterns to maintain the musical beauty of the performance. However, while Seu (2022) identified more complex patterns such as “double rhyme” and “broken rhyme,” *Laku Merin* seems to focus more on “identical rhyme” and “perfect rhyme.” This difference suggests that the ritual context of *Laku Merin*, as a funeral song, prioritizes emotional depth and simplicity to facilitate collective mourning, rather than the complex wordplay found in welcoming speeches, such as *Hase Hawaka*.

Based on Geoffrey Leech's classification (1981), the lyrics of *Laku Merin* convey four dominant types of meaning: connotative, social, affective, and reflected meaning. Connotative Meaning: The metaphor of planting corn versus planting humans (Data 1-2) illustrates the cultural perception of death as an eternal end. This supports the view of Fauziyah et al. (2024) that lyrics often use figurative language to convey complex emotional experiences that cannot be captured by literal language. Social Meaning: The use of “dadula” (betel leaf) as a symbol of unity (Data 11-12) reflects the social values of the Lasiolat community. This finding is in line with Leech (1981), who argues that social meaning arises from the context of the speaker's social relationships and community norms. Affective and Reflected Meaning: The lyrics evoke deep empathy (affective) and encourage

listeners to reflect on the cycle of life (reflected). As noted by Hirsch (2014), the interaction between sound (rhyme) and meaning (meaning) creates a “deep emotional resonance” that helps grieving people process their grief. In contrast to Seu (2022), who highlights connotative meaning as the most dominant in *Hase Hawaka*, this study finds that in *Laku Merin*, social and affective meanings are equally crucial because the song functions as a medium for social solidarity and emotional comfort during times of grief.

Although this study provides an in-depth analysis of rhyme and meaning, it acknowledges several limitations. First, the data is limited to 16 stanzas from one particular village (Lasiolat), which may not represent the full diversity of *Laku Merin* variations in other parts of Belu Regency. Second, this study focuses on textual analysis and does not explore in depth the musical or melodic aspects that may influence how meaning is perceived by the audience. Future research should consider comparative studies to identify linguistic variations among other Tetun tribes, as well as ethnomusicological approaches to analyze the relationship between vocal melody and the emotional impact of lyrics. In addition, investigating the socio-linguistic vitality of *Laku Merin* among the younger generation is essential for developing effective preservation strategies for this cultural heritage.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the results of research, this study concludes that the lyrics of the *Laku Merin* funeral song in Lasiolat Village have an oral literary structure that systematically integrates sound aesthetics with the philosophical depth of Tetun culture. Analysis of 16 stanzas shows that *Laku Merin* predominantly uses identical rhymes, followed by perfect rhymes and end rhymes. The use of identical rhymes, such as the repetition of the words “*rai*” (ground) and “*malu*”, is not merely a sound decoration but functions as a structural tool to emphasize the message of the certainty of death and the limitations of human life compared to nature. From a semantic perspective, Geoffrey Leech's theory reveals that these lyrics convey four crucial meanings: connotative meaning, which uses natural metaphors to explain the cycle of life; a social meaning represented by the symbol of “*dadula*” (*betel leaves*) to emphasize community unity; an affective meaning that expresses deep sadness; and a reflective meaning that invites listeners to reflect on the moral legacy and memories of the deceased.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the relevance of applying Wesling's rhyme theory and Leech's classification of meaning in analyzing the ethnic ritualistic oral literature. Practically, this research contributes to the documentation of Tetun cultural heritage, which



is currently threatened with extinction due to its dependence on the oral memory of traditional elders, whose numbers are dwindling. This documentation is important as a basis for preserving the cultural identity of the Lasiolat community and can serve as a reference for future ethnolinguistic research, especially in examining language variation and musicality in oral traditions in other parts of Belu.

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