

LULLABYING IN JAVANESE CAREGIVER-INFANT INTERACTION: A DISCURSIVE-INTEGRATIVE PRAGMATIC APPROACH

Lagu Pengantar Tidur dalam Interaksi Pengasuh dan Bayi dalam Masyarakat Jawa:
Pendekatan Pragmatik Diskursif-Integratif

R. Kunjana Rahardi^{a*}, Winci Firdaus^b

^aUniversitas Sanata Dharma

Jalan Affandi, Mrican, Caturtunggal, Depok, Sleman, Yogyakarta

^bBadan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional

Jl. Gatot Subroto No.10, Kec. Mampang Prpt., Kota Jakarta Selatan, Jakarta 12710

kunjana@usd.ac.id, winci.firdaus@brin.go.id

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Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menggambarkan fungsi-fungsi pragmatik dari aktivitas meninabobokan dalam konteks budaya Jawa, dengan menelaah bagaimana praktik kebahasaan dalam pengasuhan bayi pada tahap awal berperan dalam membangun ikatan emosional, mentransmisikan nilai budaya, serta melakukan sosialisasi perilaku. Dengan menggunakan kerangka pragmatik kualitatif berorientasi diskursif-integratif, penelitian ini menerapkan analisis wacana multimodal terhadap lagu-lagu nina bobo yang dikumpulkan dari media sosial digital, khususnya TikTok. Data dikumpulkan melalui metode observasi yang dipadukan dengan teknik pencatatan. Selanjutnya, data dianalisis menggunakan metode analisis kontekstual. Hasil analisis mengungkap lima fungsi pragmatik dari aktivitas meninabobokan dalam praktik pengasuhan Jawa. Kelima fungsi tersebut adalah: (1) lagu penenang yang menggunakan bahasa metaforis untuk menyampaikan perlindungan dan kenyamanan; (2) refrain onomatope yang memanfaatkan pengulangan ritmis untuk menarik perhatian dan menimbulkan ketenangan; (3) unsur ludik dan rujukan budaya yang menghubungkan bayi dengan warisan Jawa; (4) keintiman vernakular yang secara halus membimbing perilaku melalui tuturan penuh kasih dan bersifat kolokial; dan (5) lagu nina bobo bernuansa “nonsense” yang dipadukan dengan referensialitas domestik untuk menciptakan interaksi yang menenangkan sekaligus menarik. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa aktivitas meninabobokan merupakan sebuah performa pragmatik yang kompleks dan berakar kuat pada nilai-nilai Jawa seperti kerendahan hati, harmoni sosial, dan kasih sayang, yang tidak hanya berfungsi untuk menenangkan, tetapi juga sebagai mekanisme khas budaya dalam pendidikan moral dan sosial pada tahap awal kehidupan.

Kata-kata kunci: nina bobo Jawa, pragmatik diskursif-integratif, sosialisasi bahasa, transmisi budaya, pengasuhan bayi.

Abstract

The objective of this research was to depict pragmatic functions of lullabying within the Javanese cultural context, examining how linguistic practices in early infant caregiving facilitate emotional bonding, cultural transmission, and behavioral socialization. Utilizing a qualitative, discursive-integrative pragmatic framework, the research employs multimodal discourse analysis on verbal lullabies collected from digital social media platforms, notably TikTok. Data were collected using the observation method combined with the note-taking technique. Subsequently, the data were analyzed through the application of a contextual analysis method. The results of the analysis reveal five pragmatic functions of lullabying in Javanese caregiving practices. These five functions are as follows: (1) shooting

songs using metaphorical language to convey protection and comfort; (2) onomatopoeic refrains that leverage rhythmic repetition to capture attention and induce calm; (3) ludic and culturally embedded references connecting infants to Javanese heritage; (4) vernacular intimacy that subtly guides behavior through affectionate, colloquial speech; and (5) playful nonsense lullabies infused with domestic referentiality to create soothing yet engaging interactions. These findings reveal lullabying as a complex pragmatic performance deeply rooted in Javanese values such as humility, social harmony, and compassion, serving not only as a means of soothing but also as a culturally specific mechanism for early moral and social education.

Keywords: *Javanese lullaby, discursive-integrative pragmatics, language socialization, cultural transmission, infant caregiving*

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INTRODUCTION

Language use in caregiving contexts offers critical insight into the interplay of culture, affect, and communication. Among these, lullabies form a distinct speech genre that integrates language, melody, and emotion within highly intimate and culturally codified interactions. While often perceived as simple tools for soothing infants, lullabies constitute complex pragmatic acts, encoding social norms, emotional expectations, and cultural ideologies. Their function extends beyond emotional regulation, serving as channels for transmitting values, relational roles, and communicative patterns. Within pragmatics, lullabying may thus be seen as an intentional, context-sensitive act of meaning-making, deeply shaped by the sociocultural fabric in which it occurs (Trehub et al., 1993).

In Javanese society, lullabies carry significant cultural weight. Structured in traditional poetic forms and rendered in stratified language registers, these songs reflect a communicative ethos rooted in hierarchy, subtlety, and social harmony. The lexical, prosodic, and gestural features of Javanese lullabies are not incidental; they represent pragmatically motivated choices for expressing affection, transmitting expectations, and fostering emotional bonds (Baker & Mackinlay, 2006). Yet, despite their rich communicative complexity, lullabies remain underexplored within pragmatic scholarship, particularly from a culture-specific perspective that accounts for indigenous values and relational dynamics.

Most existing research on lullabies focuses on their psychological, pedagogical, or musical aspects, often neglecting their pragmatic dimensions. Concurrently, mainstream pragmatic studies have primarily centered on adult interaction in Western contexts, overlooking child-directed speech and non-Western communicative practices. This creates a notable gap in understanding how caregivers in cultures like Java construct meaning, manage affect, and perform socialization through lullabying. A culture-specific pragmatics approach is thus essential to uncover the culturally situated communicative strategies at play—strategies that may differ fundamentally from universalist assumptions in conventional pragmatic theory (Rock et al., 1999; Unyk et al., 1992).

Given the erosion of oral traditions under the pressures of globalization and digital media, studying lullabying practices also holds relevance for linguistic heritage and cultural sustainability. As lullabies are among the earliest genres through which infants are introduced to language, emotion, and relational norms, understanding their pragmatic structure enriches our knowledge of how communicative competence and cultural identity are co-constructed from birth (Hemati & Nazari, 2014; Pryor, 2020; Swann et al., 2022). This inquiry also contributes to broader discussions on linguistic socialization, intergenerational transmission, and the cultural grounding of early interaction.

Despite the sociocultural significance and communicative richness of lullabies in Javanese culture, their pragmatic dimensions remain insufficiently theorized and empirically documented. Most studies have overlooked how Javanese caregivers linguistically and contextually construct lullabies as intentional, culture-bound acts of affective and moral communication. This study aims to (1) identify and describe the pragmatic strategies employed by Javanese caregivers in lullabying newly-born infants; (2) analyze how these strategies reflect culturally specific values, intentions, and communicative norms; and (3) contribute to the development of a culture-specific pragmatics framework that accounts for early, affect-driven speech acts within indigenous caregiving contexts.

THEORETICAL BASIS

Pragmatic inquiry has undergone a profound evolution over the past few decades, expanding its analytical reach beyond speaker intention and implicature to encompass the sociocultural matrices that shape communicative practice. Foundational contributions from Hymes (1972), Wierzbicka (1991), and Kecskes (2014) have emphasized that pragmatic meaning is inseparable from the cultural systems within which it operates, giving rise to ethnopragmatics (Matisoff & Wierzbicka, 2006; Wierzbicka, 2012). This paradigm redefines meaning not as an abstract universal, but as an emergent outcome of cultural logics, relational expectations, and situated discourse. Within this framework, speech genres such as lullabies—long overlooked in mainstream pragmatics—invite renewed scrutiny as affectively charged, socially meaningful communicative acts that mediate identity, care, and moral socialization.

Lullabies, often dismissed as simple musical artifacts, constitute complex pragmatic performances encoding instruction, affect regulation, and ethical guidance. Herlina and Sulistyowati's (2023) semiotic-pragmatic analysis of *Tak Lela-Lela Ledhung* demonstrates that poetic repetition and culturally resonant imagery function not only to soothe but also to transmit values of endurance, restraint, and familial obligation (Bratha, 2022; O'Callaghan, 2008). These lullabies thus serve as affective scripts through which children are gently initiated into the moral and emotional order of Javanese kinship. Their patterned use of message, channel, and function aligns with Hymes's (1974) and Dell's (1979) ethnography of speaking, underscoring a finely tuned orchestration of cultural and pragmatic competence.

Within this ethnopragmatic orientation, Rahardi's (2021) study on *mboten* ("no") elucidates the dynamic interplay of hierarchy, relational distance, and pragmatic nuance in Javanese discourse. His findings reveal that pragmatic intention in Javanese is rarely explicit: refusal, deference, or hesitation are encoded through phatic expressions and mitigated speech acts. Similarly, Rahardi's (2020) and Rahardi's (2019) explorations of *monggo*—a term oscillating between invitation and polite deflection—demonstrate the elasticity of Javanese pragmatics, where indirectness and ambiguity are socially strategic.

The performative dimension of Javanese oral literature offers an illuminating parallel. Rahyono's (2022) work on ritual speech acts reveals that deference, moral instruction, and social alignment are accomplished through indirect, metaphorical formulations designed to preserve cohesion and hierarchy. Lullabies share this architecture: commands are veiled in metaphor, expectations are couched in melody, and emotional instruction is stylized through poetic rhythm.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness provides a useful, though culturally limited, lens through which to interpret such phenomena. Their distinction between positive and negative face, and the associated strategies for mitigating face-threatening acts, foregrounds the rational management of interpersonal relations (Clift et al., 2012; Izadi, 2016). However, as Levinson (1983, 2013) later acknowledges, the model's universalist assumptions—rooted in Western notions of autonomy—require recontextualization. In Javanese communicative ethics,

politeness derives from a communitarian ethos emphasizing relational balance, humility, and empathic restraint.

This reconceptualization aligns with second-wave, or discursive, pragmatics, which views politeness as an emergent, context-sensitive accomplishment rather than a static inventory of strategies (Haugh, 2003; Li & Wang, 2016; Terkourafi & Bezuidenhout, 2021; Kami et al., 2019). Discursive and culture-specific pragmatics converge in emphasizing that speech acts derive their pragmatic force from local ideologies of communication and relationality. From this perspective, Javanese lullabies exemplify how pragmatic meaning is co-constructed through discourse, prosody, and gesture, embedded within the moral economy of care.

Despite these theoretical advances, lullabies remain marginal in pragmatic scholarship, particularly in non-Western contexts. Conventional research tends to reduce them to folklore or psychological devices, overlooking their communicative intentionality and sociocultural function (Stephenson, 2008; Syahrul et al., 2023). Yet in societies like Java, lullabies mediate between personal emotion and collective ideology, articulating the caregiver's affective stance through culturally specific semiotic strategies. As instruments of linguistic socialization, lullabies introduce infants to the tonal, rhythmic, and moral contours of their language community. Pragmatically, they enact soothing, admonition, and guidance through poetic indirection, fostering in the child a sense of belonging and sensitivity to relational nuance (Anderson, 1972; Bråten, 2001; Geertz, 1957).

The Javanese lullaby is a microcosm of ethnopragmatic richness—a communicative act that fuses affect, artistry, and ideology. Through an integrative pragmatic-discursive lens, it can be understood as a site where language, emotion, and culture intersect to construct both individual subjectivity and communal harmony. Building upon prior studies of Javanese speech acts and oral performance (Barrett et al., 2011; Wierzbica et al., 2015), this perspective reframes lullabying as a form of cultural pedagogy—one that enacts social bonding, moral orientation, and affective containment through the subtle pragmatics of voice and verse.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative interpretive design rooted in the ethnographic tradition and aligned with the paradigm of culture-specific pragmatics (Wierzbicka, 1991; Goddard & Ye, 2014). A qualitative approach is most appropriate for investigating the culturally embedded, affective, and communicative meanings of Javanese lullabying, as it enables a nuanced interpretation of context-dependent speech acts, prosody, and nonverbal cues. The research aims to uncover how Javanese caregivers pragmatically construct lullabies as intentional acts of caregiving, emotion regulation, and intergenerational cultural transmission, reflecting the sociocultural logic of *rukun* (harmony) and *andhap asor* (humility).

The primary data consist of naturally occurring lullaby performances by Javanese-speaking caregivers, primarily mothers and grandmothers, directed toward newborn infants. These performances encompass both verbal components—lyrics, poetic structures, lexical choices, and speech acts—and nonverbal dimensions such as intonation, prosody, gesture, facial expression, gaze, and touch. The lullabies observed are either spontaneously composed or derived from traditional *tembang dolanan* and *tembang pengantar tidur* that remain prevalent in Central Java. Data sources were purposively selected from caregivers residing in Yogyakarta, Surakarta, and parts of East Java, regions known for preserving traditional Javanese registers and oral performance. Selection criteria included fluency in Javanese, active involvement in infant caregiving, and familiarity with local lullaby repertoires.

To ensure ecological validity, data collection employed non-intrusive ethnographic audio-video recordings of real-life caregiver–infant interactions in domestic settings. This

method allowed lullabies to be documented in their natural contexts, capturing both linguistic and paralinguistic features *in situ*. Complementary methods included semi-structured interviews with each caregiver—conducted in Javanese, with translation when required—to elicit metapragmatic commentary on linguistic choices, affective intent, and cultural reasoning. Participant observation further enabled immersion in caregivers’ routines, enriching the contextual understanding of communicative behavior. Detailed fieldnotes and a comparative corpus of documented traditional lullabies from oral archives and cultural institutions supported triangulation and interpretive depth.

Data analysis integrated pragmatic discourse analysis, ethnopragmatic interpretation, and semiotic-multimodal analysis. Utterances were segmented into speech acts following Searle’s taxonomy and interpreted within Javanese cultural scripts. Thematic coding identified recurrent pragmatic functions—such as soothing, advising, instructing, and bonding—while prosodic and gestural dimensions were examined through multimodal discourse analysis to reveal how nonverbal signals reinforce verbal meaning. Analytical modeling employed the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) framework (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2014) to construct cultural scripts representing caregivers’ conceptualizations of lullabying as a culturally normative communicative act. Comparative analysis between caregivers’ metapragmatic reflections and their actual performances illuminated both alignment and divergence between intention, expression, and cultural expectation.

DISCUSSION

The study reveals that Javanese caregivers employ a range of linguistically and culturally sophisticated strategies in lullabying newborns, positioning lullabies as multidimensional instruments of affective bonding, socialization, and cultural transmission. Analysis identifies five interrelated modalities of lullabying: *shooting songs* that metaphorically project soothing intentions; *onomatopoeic refrains* that use rhythmic sound patterns to engage and calm; *ludic utterances* imbued with symbolic meaning; *vernacular intimacy* that encodes behavioral socialization through gentle address; and *playful nonsense lullabies* suffused with domestic imagery. Each modality reflects a nuanced pragmatic negotiation within the caregiver–infant dyad, demonstrating how sound, meaning, and emotion coalesce within Javanese epistemologies and moral values. Far from being mere melodic expressions, lullabies operate as purposeful communicative acts through which caregivers inculcate ideals of humility, harmony, and empathetic reciprocity. This pragmatic artistry transforms lullabying into a culturally grounded form of social pedagogy, wherein language, affect, and tradition converge to cultivate the infant’s emotional attunement, moral sensibility, and emergent sense of belonging within the Javanese cultural world.

Lullabying a newly-born baby by means of shooting song

Lullabies in Javanese culture represent deeply cultural and linguistic practices that fuse emotion, pedagogy, and spirituality within the intimate space of caregiver–child interaction. Far beyond their melodic surface, they function as ritualized discourses that encode social norms, emotional regulation, and aspirations for the child’s moral and spiritual development. Grounded in a third-wave pragmatic framework, specifically the discursive–integrative approach, this study conceptualizes lullabying not merely as a form of speech but as a semiotic act of meaning-making through which affect, identity, and cultural continuity are co-constructed. The analysis centers on the well-known Javanese lullaby “*Tak Lelo Lelo Lelo Ledung*,” widely circulated in oral tradition and on digital platforms such as TikTok, where maternal voices articulate care, morality, and affection through poetic rhythm and symbolic imagery. Presented alongside English translations, the text reveals how lullabying operates as

both a discursive mode of cultural inscription and an emotional script that binds linguistic artistry with the ethics of caregiving and the transmission of Javanese values across generations.

Data 1: LSS1



Data source:

<https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSANKqXVP/>

Tak lelo lelo lelo ledung
[Let me lull you gently with a soothing song]
Cup menenga aja pijer nangis
[Hush now, be still, do not keep on crying]
Anakku sing ayu rupane
[My child, whose face is adorned with beauty]
Yen nangis ndak ilang ayune
[If you cry, your beauty may fade away]
Tak gadang bisa urip mulyo
[I pray that you will live a noble and dignified life]
Dadiyo wanito (priyo) kang utomo
[Become a virtuous woman (or man) of distinction]
Ngluhurke asmane wong tuwa
[Uplift and honor the name of your parents]
Dadiyo pandekaring bangsa
[Become a valiant warrior of your nation]
Wis cup menenga anakku
[Now hush, be calm, my dearest child]
Kae mbulane ndadari
[Look, the moonlight of the celestial maiden appears]
Kaya butho nggegilani
[Like a terrifying giant looming in the night]
Lagi nggoleki cah nangis
[Roaming to find the child who cries]
Tak lelo lelo lelo ledung
[Let me soothe you again with this lullaby]
Enggal menenga ya cah ayu
[Quiet down now, my sweet beautiful child]
Tak emban slendang batik kawung
[I cradle you with a kawung-patterned batik shawl]
Yen nangis mundak ibu bingung
[If you cry too long, your mother will fall into worry]

Within the framework of third-wave pragmatics, which foregrounds the entanglement of discourse, identity, and sociocultural context, lullabies emerge not merely as affective linguistic performances but as culturally situated acts of relational negotiation. The Javanese utterance “*Tak lelo lelo lelo ledung*,” opening a well-known traditional lullaby, exemplifies how caregiver–child intimacy intertwines with deeply rooted epistemes of Javanese identity and moral transmission. Rather than serving as a purely phatic or soothing device, this refrain

operates as a performative ritual—a discursive gesture that activates a culturally codified space of emotional reassurance, moral orientation, and intergenerational continuity.

From a discursive–integrative standpoint, the repetition and melodic tonality of “*Tak lelo lelo lelo ledung*” establish a ritualized interactional frame in which the speaker (typically a mother or elder) enacts care, authority, and pedagogy simultaneously. The ostensibly non-referential refrain functions as a metapragmatic marker, indexing the lullaby genre while invoking affective registers and social expectations. Within Javanese cultural schemata, it cues relational roles and affective alignments that subtly situate the child within a moral and cosmological order grounded in familial obligation and spiritual aspiration. Thus, while pragmatically directed toward inducing sleep, the utterance also discursively frames the child’s emergent identity within Javanese ethical and emotional hierarchies.

Distinct from earlier structuralist or cognitive paradigms, third-wave pragmatics enables an understanding of how utterances both shape and are shaped by ideologies of sociality, hierarchy, and emotion. Within this view, “*Tak lelo lelo lelo ledung*” belongs to a broader semiotic system where motifs such as the *slendang batik kawung* and aspirations for the child’s noble future (*urip mulyo, dadi priyo utomo*) reflect Javanese moral economy. The lullaby thereby functions as an act of cultural encoding in which values like obedience, resilience, and ancestral honor are not didactically taught but gently inscribed through recurring discursive rituals. As orally transmitted micro-discourses, such lullabies serve as mnemonic technologies preserving linguistic form, affective ethos, and embodied subjectivity—living testimonies of how Javanese cultural memory and identity continue to be negotiated and regenerated within the intimacy of everyday interaction.

Lullabying a newly-born baby by means of onomatopoeic refrain

This traditional Javanese lullaby exemplifies the intricate interplay of language, culture, and emotion in caregiving, combining repetitive rhythmic sounds with culturally meaningful language to create both soothing and instructive effects. The onomatopoeic refrain “*Dang glen dang gendang glon dang*” evokes the sound of kendang drums, embedding the lullaby within the sonic landscape of Javanese music and establishing an affective rhythm that calms the infant. Beyond its pacifying function, the lullaby conveys cultural values and identity: the mention of a *pacol* (hoe) situates the child within an agrarian ethos emphasizing diligence, humility, and connection to nature, while the line “*Masio aku gundul mbah, tapi aku ayu mbah*” (Even though I am bald, grandma, I am still beautiful) affirms self-worth and inner beauty, reflecting Javanese moral teachings. Through these linguistic and symbolic choices, the lullaby operates as a discursive practice that simultaneously nurtures emotional regulation and transmits core cultural norms, revealing how Javanese lullabying integrates affective, ethical, and social education in intimate caregiver–child interactions.

Data 2: LAR1



Data source:

<https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSANEh9qw/>

Dang glen dang gendang glon dang
[Rhythmic sounds echo like soft drums]
 Dang glen dang gendang glon dang
[Rhythmic sounds echo like soft drums]
 Tuku pacol mbah
[Grandma, I bought a hoe at the market]
 Gagange kayu mbah
[Its handle is made of wood, grandma]
 Masio aku gundul mbah
[Even though I am bald, grandma]
 Tapi aku ayu mbah
[Still, I am beautiful, grandma]

The lullaby's opening refrain, "Dang glen dang gendang glon dang," functions as more than playful vocalization; it evokes the sound of traditional Javanese percussion, particularly the kendang. In Javanese cultural praxis, rhythm carries both aesthetic and affective significance, with repetition pragmatically employed to regulate and soothe an infant's emotions. This sonic strategy establishes a calming environment, demonstrating how auditory patterns serve as foundational tools for caregiver-infant communication. The subsequent lines, "Tuku pacol mbah / Gagange kayu mbah," situate the child within a domestic and agrarian context. The reference to a hoe with a wooden handle, while ostensibly mundane, encodes moral and cultural values such as diligence, humility, and respect for the material world. Through these seemingly ordinary objects, the lullaby embeds the infant within a socio-cultural framework that valorizes labor, connection to the earth, and practical wisdom as foundational virtues.

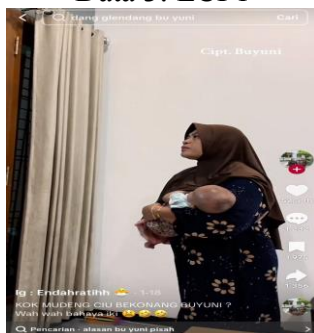
The phrase "Masio aku gundul mbah / Tapi aku ayu mbah" articulates a cultural paradox, juxtaposing vulnerability with affirmation of beauty. Here, baldness metaphorically represents simplicity and fragility, while the assertion of beauty conveys Javanese moral principles emphasizing inner worth over superficial appearance. Functioning pragmatically, this line promotes self-acceptance and models humility, reinforcing the cultural ethos of modesty as integral to personal and social identity. From a third-wave pragmatic perspective, the lullaby operates as a discursive ritual that intertwines affective, educational, and cultural functions. By explicitly addressing "mbah" (grandparent) and naming tangible objects like the pacol and its wooden handle, the lullaby transmits intergenerational knowledge and embeds the child within shared cultural schemas. Beyond soothing, it performs layered communicative acts that foster emotional regulation, moral enculturation, and identity formation, illustrating how traditional Javanese lullabies function as compact yet potent vehicles for cultural continuity and social pedagogy.

Lullabying a newly-born baby by means of ludic expressions and cultural references

In Javanese oral traditions, lullabying extends beyond soothing infants to become a richly layered discursive practice that blends playful language, cultural imagery, and subtle social instruction. By integrating ludic expressions with everyday references, lullabies function simultaneously as tools for informal pedagogy, emotional bonding, and cultural transmission, immersing the child in a shared sonic and symbolic world shaped by community life and vernacular knowledge. The excerpt in Data 3 exemplifies this fusion, drawing on playful references to *ciu* (traditional alcoholic beverage), local geography (Bekonang), and physical humor (*sirah botak meleng-meleng*) to construct a textured, contextually grounded universe. Even if infants cannot grasp the propositional meaning, the rhythmic intonation, repetition, and embodied gestures create a communicative space where caregiver and child are mutually

engaged, demonstrating how Javanese lullabies enact affective, social, and cultural learning through imaginative, orality-rich speech acts.

Data 3: LCF1



Data source:

<https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSANO7H/>

Ciu gambar manok dek, aku melu opo yo entuk
[Ciu with a rooster on the label, dear—if I join in, would I be allowed?]
Ciu seko Bekonang dek, aku melu terbayang-bayang
[Ciu from Bekonang, dear—just the thought of it lingers in my mind]
Blang gentak sawo mateng
[The earth trembles, like ripened brown fruit shaken loose]
Sirah botak meleng-meleng
[A shiny bald head, gleaming and wobbling side to side]

The lullaby in Data 3 exemplifies a distinctive discursive practice within Javanese oral tradition, where playful language, cultural imagery, and ethical undertones converge into a richly layered communicative act. From a third-wave pragmatic perspective, particularly the discursive-integrative approach, meaning emerges not solely from lexical content but through embodied interaction, contextual resonance, and culturally mediated knowledge. In performing this lullaby, the caregiver transcends simple soothing, enacting a socially and culturally embedded ritual that introduces the infant to a symbolic world of humor, familiarity, and moral subtlety.

The line “Ciu gambar manok dek, aku melu opo yo entuk” operates on multiple pragmatic levels. Ostensibly playful, it references *ciu*, a traditional fermented drink labeled with a rooster motif, creating a child-friendly doorway into adult realities. The rhetorical question “may I join too?” dramatizes self-effacement, reflecting the Javanese cultural valorization of humility, while the ludic framing ensures that adult themes are conveyed through metaphor, rhyme, and rhythm. Such encoding transforms the lullaby into an intergenerational bridge, subtly instilling social and ethical norms alongside affective engagement.

Subsequent lines, such as “Ciu seko Bekonang dek, aku melu terbayang-bayang” and “Blang gentak sawo mateng,” demonstrate the lullaby’s capacity to intertwine concrete references with affective imagery and agricultural metaphors. Invoking Bekonang situates the narrative in a culturally specific locale, while the repetition and rhythm evoke longing and emotional nuance in socially acceptable forms. Likewise, the metaphor of trembling sapodilla fruit conveys growth, transition, and moral maturation, aligning with Javanese traditions that integrate ethical education with natural and everyday imagery, thereby cultivating patience, attentiveness, and awareness in the infant.

The concluding line, “Sirah botak meleng-meleng,” adds playful physical humor that fosters intimacy while affirming embodied reality. This whimsical depiction of a wobbly bald head models self-acceptance and humility, reinforcing ethical norms without didactic imposition. Taken together, the lullaby illustrates the integrative force of discursive pragmatics,

where linguistic form, cultural content, affective tonality, and embodied performance coalesce. It functions simultaneously as a tool for emotion regulation, cultural initiation, and moral education, guiding the child into a world where ordinariness is valued, joy is tempered with subtlety, and relational and ethical awareness is nurtured through playful, affectively resonant discourse.

Lullabying a newly-born baby by means of vernacular intimacy and behavioral socialization

In contemporary Indonesian caregiving discourse, lullabies have transcended their traditional role as mere sleep-inducing melodies, emerging instead as intimate, vernacular performances that intertwine affective expression, playful language, and subtle behavioral guidance. The excerpt in Data 4 exemplifies this evolution, presenting a spontaneous maternal utterance that blends linguistic hybridity (“adek darleng”), humor, and emotional attunement. Departing from conventional poetic or melodic structures, the lullaby adopts an everyday, lived-tone style, reflecting the caregiver’s immediate experience and emotional state. Through rhythmic repetition and affectionate address, the mother cultivates relational closeness while gently embedding social expectations, as in the statement “kalau nggak nurut mamah pusing” (“if you don’t behave, mommy gets overwhelmed”), which operates not as a stern admonition but as a softened directive within a playful and nurturing frame. This form of lullabying illustrates how vernacular speech acts function as potent discursive tools, shaping early emotional norms, relational ethics, and socialization practices within the intimate space of mother–child interaction.

Data 4: LBS1



Data source:

<https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSANOVPb/>

Adek darleng adek darleng
 [Darling little one, darling little one]
 Tiap hari ngajak keliling
 [Every day you ask to go out wandering]
 Adek darleng adek darleng
 [Darling little one, darling little one]
 Kalau nggak nurut mamah pusing
 [If you don't behave, mommy gets overwhelmed]

The vernacular lullaby in Data 4 exemplifies how affective care, behavioral socialization, and cultural identity are pragmatically co-constructed in caregiver–infant interaction. The repeated refrain “Adek darleng, adek darleng” [Darling little one, darling little one] functions not only as a soothing melodic device but as a culturally loaded communicative act. From a discursive-integrative perspective within third-wave pragmatics, the utterance constitutes a situated performance in which meaning emerges through context, cultural scripts,

and embodied relational dynamics. Here, language operates as a mode of doing rather than merely saying, and emotional bonding is enacted through culturally intelligible forms of address that align with Javanese epistemologies of relational harmony.

The hybrid term “*darleng*,” adapted from English “*darling*” into local phonology, illustrates the interplay of global and vernacular registers in contemporary Indonesian discourse. Its intimacy is anchored in traditional oral practices of endearment while resonating with modern sensibilities, exemplifying the caregiver’s navigation of linguistic globalism alongside locally grounded affective norms. Pragmatically, such repetition and tonal modulation perform relational calibration, situating the child within an affective economy where love and guidance are conveyed through playfulness and emotional attunement. This aligns with the Javanese ideal of *tutug tembung*, in which speech is emotionally appropriate, affectively harmonious, and ethically gentle.

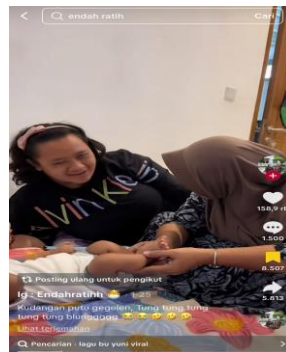
Behavioral socialization is subtly embedded in the line “*Tiap hari ngajak keliling*” [Every day you ask to go out wandering], which, while appearing observational, pragmatically functions as a directive. Within Javanese traditions of *tata krama*, indirectness signals ethical refinement rather than ambiguity. By framing the child’s requests as habitual, the caregiver sets relational limits without confrontation, modeling emotional regulation through softness and tact. Similarly, “*Kalau nggak nurut mamah pusing*” [If you don’t behave, mommy gets overwhelmed] frames obedience within intersubjective concern: the child’s behavior is situated in shared affective consequences, reflecting the epistemology of *rasa*, where sensitivity, harmony, and empathy are central to moral and relational understanding.

Viewed holistically, this lullaby exemplifies a performative negotiation of roles, expectations, and moral alignment. The caregiver enacts both vulnerability and nurture, inviting the preverbal child into a reciprocal affective dynamic. Through rhythm, repetition, and intimate address, the lullaby functions as a micro-ritual of moral socialization, transmitting values such as patience, compassion, and relational attunement. Pragmatically and epistemologically, it conveys knowledge not through abstract instruction but via culturally resonant affective practice, embodying the Javanese principle of *ngemong*—gentle, attentive guidance that intertwines care, pedagogy, and ethical formation.

Lullabying a newly-born baby by means of a nonsense-playful vernacular lullaby with domestic referentiality

In early childhood caregiving, lullabies function as multifaceted communicative acts that transcend mere soothing, serving as rich sites for cultural expression, socialization, and relational negotiation. Data 5 exemplifies a vernacular lullaby in which playful nonsense elements are interwoven with concrete domestic references, demonstrating how caregivers cultivate intimacy and subtly guide behavior through language that is both affectively engaging and contextually anchored. The repetitive onomatopoeic refrain “*Tung tung tung tung tung blung*” establishes a rhythmic sonic environment that captures the infant’s attention, while subsequent lines referencing *tewel* (young jackfruit) on the table and the father’s work responsibilities situate the utterance within the family’s socio-cultural world. This interplay of ludic sound and pragmatic content reflects a sophisticated communicative strategy that balances entertainment, emotional bonding, and gentle behavioral regulation. By integrating vernacular speech with everyday domestic realities, the lullaby encodes cultural norms and familial values, facilitating a discursive-integrative process that shapes the infant’s emerging social, moral, and affective orientation from the earliest stages of life.

Data 5: LDR1



Data source:

<https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSA2DWtaY/>

Tung tung tung tung tung blung
 [Tung tung tung tung tung blung]
 Tung tung tung tung tung blung
 [Tung tung tung tung tung blung]
 Buka sitik jos
 [Open a little, dear]
 Jangan tewel di atas meja
 [There is young jackfruit (vegetable) on the table]
 Gaboleh rewel bapak lagi kerja
 [No fussing allowed, daddy is still working]
 Tung tung tung tung tung blung
 [Tung tung tung tung tung blung]
 Tung tung tung tung tung blung
 [Tung tung tung tung tung blung]

The lullaby excerpted in Data 5 illustrates how linguistic playfulness and quotidian references converge to form a culturally embedded, pragmatically rich communicative act. From a discursive-integrative pragmatic perspective, the utterance functions as a performative event shaped by interactive context, relational dynamics, and cultural knowledge. The repetitive onomatopoeic phrase “Tung tung tung tung tung blung” establishes rhythm and a soothing effect, while simultaneously framing domestic and social meanings. By blending nonsense syllables with explicit references to household items and family roles, the caregiver simultaneously calms the infant and introduces early social norms, creating a layered communicative space where affective bonding and behavioral guidance co-occur.

Embedded cultural knowledge is evident in references to “tewel” (young jackfruit), which situates the lullaby within the home’s material culture and reflects *laku prihatin*, the Javanese ethic of mindfulness and frugality. The line “tewel di atas meja” subtly evokes *tata krama*, emphasizing respect for household order and communal spaces. This attention to domestic detail demonstrates how cultural values are encoded in everyday speech, allowing the infant to begin internalizing ethical and relational norms through familiar, contextually grounded language.

Behavioral socialization is gently mediated through statements such as “Gaboleh rewel bapak lagi kerja” (“No fussing allowed, daddy is still working”), which pragmatically convey limits while preserving relational warmth. This reflects Javanese ideals of humility and deference, where guidance is administered through care and subtle negotiation rather than direct authoritarianism. By embedding behavioral cues within affectionate speech, the caregiver models early recognition of social roles and familial interdependence, promoting harmony and relational attunement in line with the concept of *ngemong*—nurturing through emotional sensitivity and guidance.

Epistemologically, the lullaby functions as a conduit for embodied, affective knowledge, privileging experiential learning over abstract instruction. Its combination of rhythmic nonsense and referential content creates a liminal space where affect, cognition, and social norms converge. Through this performative interplay, the infant is gradually enculturated into communal values, learning to navigate social expectations within a framework of emotional resonance, empathy, and ethical attunement. In this way, the lullaby exemplifies the discursive-integrative nature of Javanese early language practices, balancing emotional closeness with moral and social education.

CLOSING

In conclusion, this study has identified five distinctive modalities of Javanese lullabying—metaphorical ‘shooting songs,’ rhythmic onomatopoeic refrains, ludic expressions rich in cultural symbolism, vernacular intimacy facilitating behavioral socialization, and playful nonsense lullabies grounded in domestic contexts. These forms demonstrate that lullabying is a multidimensional communicative practice that soothes infants while transmitting cultural knowledge, moral values, and social norms. The findings highlight how affective, pragmatic, and culturally resonant strategies intertwine in caregiver–infant interaction, creating a performative space where emotional bonding, ethical guidance, and socialization co-occur.

The study’s reliance on digital data, primarily from social media, limits its representation of the diversity of lullaby practices across Javanese subcultures and socio-economic contexts. Nuanced variations in performance, tonal modulation, and embodied interaction, particularly in traditional or rural settings, remain underexplored. Future ethnographically grounded, longitudinal research could illuminate how these lullabying modalities are enacted, adapted, and transmitted across generations within broader familial and community dynamics. Crucially, the research demonstrates that Javanese lullabies function as microcosms of moral, affective, and social pedagogy. Through the interplay of nonsense sounds, vernacular intimacy, and culturally specific metaphors, early communicative acts convey ethical guidance, relational attunement, and culturally intelligible forms of instruction. Lullabies thus emerge not merely as soothing melodies but as potent vehicles for enculturation, modeling values such as humility, empathy, patience, and social reciprocity.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of integrating vernacular, affective, and contextually grounded approaches in early childhood communication research, as well as in educational and caregiving programs. By revealing the moral and cultural scaffolding embedded in everyday practices like lullabying, it advocates for culturally sensitive frameworks that recognize the formative role of intimate, affect-laden discourse in nurturing ethically and socially attuned individuals.

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