

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN THE DIALOGUE OF THE STORY OF BARIDIN AND RATMINA: A FUNCTIONAL PRAGMATIC APPROACH

Charmelia Nuraini

Institut Prima Bangsa

charmelianuraini7@gmail.com

Mar'atu Nafilah

Institut Prima Bangsa

maratunafilah08@gmail.com

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Abstract:

This research aims to examine the pragmatic relationship between language and culture as reflected in the dialogue of Baridin and Ratmina, a traditional Javanese narrative, focusing on the use of honorifics, politeness strategies, face-threatening acts, and code-mixing to negotiate power, social distance, and emotional expression. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach grounded in functional pragmatics, with data collected from six selected narrative scenes and analyzed through discourse analysis without involving direct participants. The findings reveal that honorifics function as pragmatic tools to both mitigate and intensify face-threatening acts, as Baridin employs personal address forms to challenge social hierarchy while Ratmina reasserts her social status through direct rejection and sarcastic laughter. In addition, code-mixing serves as a symbolic marker of modern aspirations and social distinction while reinforcing criticism of behavior considered inappropriate within traditional cultural contexts. This research is applicable in the fields of linguistics, literature, and cross-cultural communication, offering insights for educators, researchers, and students in understanding pragmatic strategies within narrative discourse, particularly in traditional texts that reflect social hierarchy and cultural values. The novelty of this study lies in its integration of functional pragmatics and cross-cultural understanding in analyzing written literary dialogue, demonstrating how pragmatic negotiation of power, identity, and cultural transition is represented beyond spoken interaction.

Keywords: Code-mixing, Cross-cultural understanding, Functional pragmatics, Javanese honorifics, Politeness strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional narratives are increasingly positioned as communicative media with intricate ideological and sociocultural content within modern language pragmatics studies. Folklore is viewed as a discursive space where language practices mediate power dynamics, identity struggles, and cultural values rather than merely as an aesthetic form (Kusumaningrum, 2022; Wulandari, 2025). Research indicates that oral and written narratives, particularly through language strategies such as politeness, greeting selection, and code-switching, are crucial in upholding and redefining social hierarchies and communication norms in multilingual societies like Java (Lestari & Zainuddin, 2024; Wijayanti, 2023). The foundation of human communication is language use, which promotes comprehension and interpersonal connection (Almoayidi, 2024). However, when people from various cultural backgrounds interact, communication problems frequently occur, and cultural norms and conventions play an important role in determining how discourse is perceived (Almoayidi, 2024; Usanov, 2025). To bridge current knowledge with ongoing research in this context, a thorough literature analysis is crucial (Abdallah, 2024; Okoli, 2015).

Accordingly, the contemporary functional pragmatics approach incorporates a variety of cross-theoretical viewpoints, ranging from the formation of interpersonal meaning in systemic-functional linguistics to the concepts of politeness and face value in modern cross-cultural encounters (Terkourafi, 2015; Sugiharto, 2023). In contrast to the traditional paradigm, this method places a strong emphasis on the role that social context, cultural ideology, and identity dynamics play in understanding the pragmatic reactions of speakers and the purposes of speech in a variety of contexts, including folklore (Prasetyo, 2022; Lestari & Zainuddin, 2024). As demonstrated in philosophical enquiry communities, where narrative imagining through universal stories can enhance students' knowledge of conflict, this method is pertinent to comprehending how narrative can be used as a tool to manage conflict and foster critical thinking (Fournel et al., 2024).

Additionally, technological advancements have given this study a new perspective. It has been demonstrated that incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) into language instruction, for instance, through role-playing and games, improves student engagement and speaking abilities (Myers, 2025). Nonetheless, aspects such as anxiety and uneven participation remain challenges that require more active teacher intervention (Myers, 2025). Furthermore, the spread of large language models (LLMs) has highlighted the need for cultural awareness in AI systems to ensure inclusivity, with growing research on incorporating cultural awareness into text-based and multimodal LLMs (Pawar et al., 2025). Communication in the digital age, such as that in online Uzbek, also shows how cultural values manifest in online interactions and how language adapts to the digital environment (Vohidova, 2024).

The story of Baridin and Ratmina offers a rich narrative backdrop for pragmatic exploration. This traditional narrative originates from the cultural region of Cirebon, located on the northern coast of West Java, and is deeply rooted in Javanese cultural traditions (Kurniawan & Khoeriyah, 2023). The story is widely recognized in Cirebonese society and has been preserved through various oral and written forms, including folklore, traditional theater performances, and

literary adaptations (Saputra, 2023). The narrative revolves around the tragic love story between Baridin, a young man from a modest background, and Ratmina, a woman of higher social standing, which ultimately reflects the tension between personal desire and communal expectations in Javanese society (Aliyah & Warnisa, 2024). The story reflects the social hierarchy, values, and communicative norms prevalent in Javanese society, particularly through the employment of greeting forms such as "mbok," "mang," and "nok," which not only reflect societal structures but also serve as affective techniques and interpersonal negotiation of emotions (Nurhayati & Susanto, 2021; Prasetyo, 2022). In Cirebon society, the story remains highly popular and is frequently performed in various media, including radio dramas, stage performances, and local films, which contributes to its continued relevance in contemporary cultural discourse (Saputra, 2023). Academic studies have also examined the narrative's structural patterns, revealing consistent stages of encounter, moral conflict, tests of loyalty, and resolution that represent values of religiosity, loyalty, simplicity, social control, and Cirebon cultural identity (Kurniawan & Khoeriyah, 2023). The narrative context within society and digital media has shifted the meaning of the story and opened up opportunities for revitalization through visual media (Aliyah & Warnisa, 2024). In a society undergoing modernisation and global influence, the phenomenon of code-switching between Javanese and English in character conversation illustrates the dynamics of linguistic identity (Nurhayati & Susanto, 2021; Prasetyo, 2022). As evidenced by changing politeness tactics, sarcastic humour, and forms of direct rejection in social interactions, the characters' speech lexical choices reveal the ambivalence between adhering to customary norms and the desire to express personal autonomy (Rahardjo, 2020; Zamzami & Ningsih, 2020). Similar to the analysis in "The Hungry Tide," where changes in identity and language indicate the impact of migration and post-colonialism, these narratives may also show how cultural conflict affects characters and their language (Yıldız, 2014).

To analyse the pragmatic functions of utterances in six narrative scenes of the story of Baridin and Ratmina, this study employs a functional pragmatic approach. Triangulation of literature sources and cultural interpretations, data normalisation, open and axial coding, and narrative transcription were among the analytical techniques employed (Abdallah, 2024; Okoli, 2015; Zheltukhina et al., 2016). It is anticipated that this study will advance the theoretical and methodological understanding of cross-cultural pragmatics studies and deepen our understanding of the socio-cultural functions of language in traditional narratives that are still evolving in the modern era by examining linguistic representations of power, social distance, and emotional intensity (Wijayanti, 2023; Lestari & Zainuddin, 2024). In language education for peace and sustainable development, this knowledge is also essential for creating "critical communicative agents" (Matz & Römhild, 2024).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative textual analysis approach to investigate the pragmatic roles that language and culture play in the narrative dialogue of Baridin and Ratmina. This approach is consistent with previous research examining dialogue as a component of dramatic discourse that reflects the relationship between language, people, and culture (Zheltukhina et al., 2016), as well as linguistic studies utilizing pragmatic analysis to comprehend the harmony between language and culture (Usanov, 2025). The qualitative design is particularly suitable for this study as it allows for an in-depth examination of linguistic phenomena within their natural cultural context, focusing on the meanings and functions embedded in the characters' speech rather than on quantifiable measurements.

1. Data Source

The primary data for this study consist of verbatim transcriptions of six selected scenes from the Baridin and Ratmina narrative. The narrative itself originates from the cultural region of Cirebon, West Java, and has been preserved in various forms, including oral storytelling traditions, written manuscripts, and modern theatrical adaptations (Kurniawan & Khoeriyah, 2023; Saputra, 2023). For the purpose of this study, the data were drawn from a published written version of the narrative, specifically a dramatic script adaptation that has been widely used in Cirebonese theatrical performances (Aliyah & Warnisa, 2024). This version was selected because it preserves the authentic linguistic features of the original narrative, including the use of Javanese honorifics, code-switching, and culturally specific politeness strategies, while remaining accessible for systematic textual analysis. The script is written primarily in Cirebonese Javanese with instances of Indonesian and English code-mixing, reflecting the multilingual nature of contemporary Cirebonese society.

The selection of the six scenes was conducted through purposive sampling, focusing on dialogues that prominently feature honorifics, compliments, reprimands, and code-switching. This sampling strategy ensures that the linguistic phenomena most relevant to the study's objective, which is revealing pragmatic dynamics in character interactions, are given primary emphasis. The scenes were chosen based on their representativeness of key narrative moments. These moments include the initial encounter between Baridin and Ratmina, Baridin's direct proposal, the rejection scene, the ritual fasting scene, the confrontation with elders, and the tragic resolution. Each of these scenes contains significant pragmatic markers that illustrate the negotiation of power, social distance, and emotional expression within the Javanese cultural context. It is important to note that this study concentrated exclusively on a thorough examination of the available narrative texts and did not employ surveys, interviews, or direct participant observation for data collection.

The transcription process involved converting the original dramatic script into a standardized written format suitable for pragmatic analysis. Since the script is primarily in Cirebonese Javanese, no translation into English was performed for the purpose of analysis, as the pragmatic functions are best understood in the original language. However, for the presentation of findings, key utterances were translated into English with careful attention to preserving their pragmatic meanings. All translations were reviewed by a cultural informant fluent in Javanese to ensure accuracy. The transcription also included annotations for non-verbal elements such as laughter, pauses, and vocal emphasis, which are essential for a comprehensive pragmatic interpretation.

2. Analytical Procedure

The analytical process consisted of several systematic steps designed to identify and analyze the pragmatic functions of utterances in the selected dialogues. The first step involved transcription and normalization. During this step, the dialogues were transcribed verbatim from the source text, standardized spellings were applied, and non-verbal elements

such as laughter and pauses were annotated. This step ensured that the data were prepared in a consistent format suitable for coding and analysis.

The second step employed open coding, where each utterance was coded according to its speech act type, including directives, expressives, commissives, and representatives. This initial coding allowed the researcher to categorize the illocutionary forces of the characters' utterances and identify recurring pragmatic patterns across the scenes. Each utterance was examined independently before being grouped into broader categories based on its communicative function and linguistic features.

The third step involved axial coding, where the initial codes were grouped into thematic categories that corresponded to the study's research focus. These themes included: (1) Honorific Indexing, which captured the use of address forms such as "mbok," "mang," and "nok" to signal power relations and social distance; (2) Face Threat and Mitigation, which examined strategies used by characters to challenge or protect social face; and (3) Code-Mixing as Prestige Marker, which analyzed the pragmatic functions of English insertions within Javanese discourse. This thematic grouping facilitated a structured analysis of how language choices operate as social and cultural indicators within the narrative.

The final step employed selective coding, during which the identified themes were synthesized into a coherent narrative that linked the linguistic findings to broader cultural insights. This step involved interpreting how the pragmatic strategies observed in the dialogues reflect and critique Javanese cultural values, social hierarchies, and the tension between modern aspirations and traditional norms. The selective coding process also connected the findings to existing theories of politeness, face management, and cross-cultural pragmatics, thereby situating the study within the broader scholarly discourse.

3. Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were implemented. Triangulation was achieved by cross-checking data interpretations with pertinent secondary literature in pragmatics and intercultural studies, including recent works that address similar phenomena in multilingual and multicultural contexts (Almoayidi, 2024; Usanov, 2025; Vohidova, 2024; Zheltukhina et al., 2016). This source triangulation allowed the researcher to validate the interpretations by comparing them with established findings from previous studies, thereby enhancing the credibility of the analysis.

An audit trail was maintained throughout the research process by recording reflective memos that documented the researcher's assumptions, analytical decisions, and interpretations over time. These memos served as a transparent record of the research journey, enabling external parties to follow and understand the methodological choices made at each stage of the study. The memos also facilitated reflexivity by allowing the researcher to critically examine how personal biases and preconceptions may have influenced the analysis.

Peer debriefing was conducted by reviewing the coding scheme and interpretations with a cultural informant fluent in Javanese and familiar with Cirebonese cultural norms. This informant provided valuable insights into the cultural appropriateness of the pragmatic interpretations and confirmed the accuracy of the translated utterances. The debriefing sessions also helped to identify any potential misinterpretations arising from cultural distance, thereby strengthening the validity of the findings. The combination of triangulation, audit

trail, and peer debriefing ensures that the study's findings are credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable within the qualitative research paradigm.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study examines how the "Baridin and Ratmina" story uses language choices, including the employment of honorifics, face-threat tactics, and code-mixing, as intricate social and cultural indicators. Our results shed light on the mechanisms that underlie the tension in the Javanese cultural environment between personal goals and group values.

A. Research Results

Implications for Cross-Cultural Understanding

The use of greetings such as "nok" and code-switching into English, such as "you are so beautiful" in Baridin and Ratmina's story, shows the tension between traditional Javanese cultural norms and modern individual expression. Baridin, who wants to express his interest in Ratmina, uses strategies that are considered impolite in the local cultural context.

Table 1: Greetings and Rejections in Cross-Cultural Perspective

Dialogue	Language Strategy	Listener's Response	Cultural Analysis
"Eh, nok... You are so beautiful."	Familiar address + compliment (code-switching)	Ratmina: "Iiyuuuhh... What do you mean?"	The address was too personal; the compliment perceived as aggressive
"Nok Ratmina, I will go to your home and propose you."	Direct proposal	Ratmina laughs and mocks	Direct proposals are not acceptable without intermediaries in Javanese norms

The table shows that although Baridin intended to be polite and sincere, his manner of speaking clashed with expected cultural conventions. This mismatch led to negative perceptions and widened the social gap between the characters.

To provide a more comprehensive analysis, additional dialogue examples are presented below. These examples illustrate how honorifics, politeness strategies, and code-switching function within the Javanese cultural setting.

Example 1: The Use of "Nok" as a Face-Threatening Act

In the first encounter between Baridin and Ratmina, Baridin addresses Ratmina using the familiar term "nok." In Javanese culture, "nok" is typically used by older speakers to address younger women or by individuals who share a close personal relationship. However, Baridin and Ratmina do not share such a relationship, as they come from different social backgrounds and have not been formally introduced through proper intermediaries. By using "nok," Baridin attempts to reduce social distance and establish emotional closeness. However, this linguistic choice is perceived as presumptuous and inappropriate, as it violates the Javanese norm that requires the use of more formal address forms when social hierarchy has not been clearly established. Ratmina's response, "Iiyuuuuhh... What do you mean?" reflects her discomfort and serves as a pragmatic strategy to reject Baridin's improper familiarity while maintaining her social face.

Example 2: Ratmina's Sarcastic Laughter as a Face-Saving Strategy

When Baridin declares, "Nok Ratmina, I will go to your home and propose you," Ratmina responds with laughter and mockery. In Javanese culture, direct proposals without the involvement of family intermediaries are considered socially unacceptable. Ratmina's sarcastic laughter functions as a face-saving strategy that allows her to reject Baridin's proposal while avoiding direct confrontation. This laughter serves as a pragmatic marker that signals her awareness of Baridin's violation of social norms and her intention to restore social boundaries. By mocking Baridin, Ratmina reasserts her higher social status and reminds Baridin of the proper procedures for courtship in Javanese society, which require the involvement of family members and community elders as intermediaries. This example demonstrates that face-threatening acts are not only performed through explicit verbal rejection but can also be achieved through non-verbal cues such as laughter, which carries significant pragmatic weight in Javanese culture.

Example 3: Code-Switching as a Marker of Modern Aspirations

Baridin's use of English phrases such as "you are so beautiful" and "excuse me" represents a deliberate code-switching strategy that signals his aspiration toward modernity and higher social status. In the context of Javanese society, English is often associated with education, urban sophistication, and global orientation. By inserting English into his Javanese speech, Baridin attempts to present himself as modern, educated, and worthy of Ratmina's attention. However, this code-switching strategy backfires in the traditional village setting. The use of English is perceived as culturally inappropriate and showy, reinforcing the villagers' perception of Baridin as someone who does not respect traditional norms. This finding aligns with sociolinguistic research indicating that English code-switching in non-Western societies often indexes prestige and education but can also be perceived as a violation of local cultural values (Nurhayati & Susanto, 2021; Prasetyo, 2022; Wijayanti, 2023). The dual function of code-switching as both a positive identity marker and a pragmatic violation highlights the tension between modern aspirations and traditional values in Javanese society.

Example 4: The Role of Elders in Reinforcing Social Hierarchy

In the confrontation scene, Bapa Dam, a community elder, addresses Baridin using the formal honorific "mang" and reprimands him for his improper behavior. Bapa Dam's speech includes directives such as "Ora kena ngono, mang" which means "You cannot do that, young man." The use of the honorific "mang" by an elder serves as a marker of social

distance and authority. Bapa Dam's reprimand functions as a face-threatening act directed at Baridin, but it is socially sanctioned because it comes from a figure of authority. This example illustrates how honorifics are used not only to show respect but also to reinforce social hierarchy and maintain communal order. Bapa Dam's intervention represents the community's collective response to Baridin's violation of social norms, demonstrating that language choices in traditional narratives serve as mechanisms of social control that uphold cultural values.

Example 5: Baridin's Commissive Speech Acts in the Ritual Fasting Scene

In the ritual fasting scene, Baridin makes a solemn vow: "Aku bakal puasa nganti ketemu Ratmina," which means "I will fast until I meet Ratmina." This commissive speech act commits Baridin to a course of action that is framed through spiritual devotion. However, from a pragmatic perspective, this speech act produces perlocutionary effects that culminate in tragedy. Baridin's extreme emotional expressivity and his willingness to undergo physical suffering reflect his obsessive desire, which is considered inappropriate in Javanese culture where emotional restraint and communal harmony are prioritized. The tragic outcome of this scene reinforces cultural values that warn against unregulated desire and individualism. This finding supports the functional pragmatic view that speech acts extend beyond verbal interaction and can reshape social reality (Zheltukhina et al., 2016; Usanov, 2025; Prasetyo, 2022).

Table 2: Summary of Dialogue Examples and Pragmatic Functions

Example	Dialogue	Pragmatic Strategy	Cultural Analysis
1	"Eh, nok... You are so beautiful."	Use of familiar address "nok"	Violates the Javanese norm of formal address; perceived as presumptuous
2	"Nok Ratmina, I will go to your home and propose you."	Direct proposal + Ratmina's sarcastic laughter	Direct proposal is socially unacceptable; laughter functions as face-saving rejection
3	"Excuse me, mbok" + "You are so beautiful"	Code-switching into English	Signals modernity and education, but is perceived as culturally inappropriate
4	"Ora kena ngono, mang" (Bapa Dam)	Formal honorific "mang" + directive	Elder uses honorifics to reinforce social

			hierarchy and authority
5	"Aku bakal puasa nganti ketemu Ratmina"	Commissive speech act	Extreme emotional expressivity leads to tragic consequences

Contributions to Pragmatic Theory

The Baridin and Ratmina narrative illustrates that politeness strategies and face-threatening acts (FTAs) are not universal. For instance, using "nok," which typically signals politeness, becomes a face threat when uttered outside of a proper social context. Code-switching also demonstrates dual functions as a status marker but also as a cultural violation.

Table 3: Ambivalent Functions of Address and Code-Switching

Strategy	Example	Positive Function	Potential FTA
Address form "nok"	"Eh, nok... You are so beautiful."	Shows emotional closeness	Considered impolite or presumptuous
English code-switching	"Excuse me,"; "I will finish all right now!"	Indicates modernity and education	Perceived as culturally inappropriate

From a pragmatic perspective, the table strengthens Brown and Levinson's theory by showing that politeness and FTAs are culturally shaped. This study adds nuance by showing that, in traditional narratives, communicative strategies can backfire depending on speaker-listener relationships.

Relevance to Current Concerns: Digital Technology, Language, and Culture

Code-switching in Baridin and Ratmina reflects linguistic dynamics similar to what happens in today's digital communication. When someone uses foreign words in local settings without cultural awareness, it may come off as showy or inappropriate. This study provides a foundation for developing culturally aware AI systems such as Large Language Models (LLMs).

Table 4: Code-Switching and Digital Parallels

Dialogue	Code-Switching	Function	Digital Parallel
"You are so beautiful."	English insert	Symbol of modern identity	Comparable to social media language mixing
"Excuse me, mbok"	Mixed code	Blending politeness strategies	Seen in multilingual online etiquette
"I will finish all right now!"	Informal English	Expresses optimism and commitment	Informal digital tones may be misunderstood without context

The table shows that code-switching is not only a linguistic device but also a performance of identity. In digital spaces, similar misperceptions can occur. Therefore, LLMs and AI technologies must be trained to understand and adapt to local cultural values.

Restrictions and Upcoming Studies

This study has limitations, especially in terms of data representation and context. It analyzes only one version of the narrative and does not involve real-time spoken interaction or multimodal data like gestures or intonation, which limits the depth of pragmatic interpretation.

Table 5: Study Limitations and Future Directions

Aspect	Limitation	Implication	Recommendation
Narrative Representation	Only one version analyzed	Results are not generalizable	Conduct comparative studies across versions
Nonverbal Discourse	No gesture or intonation data	Incomplete pragmatic interpretation	Employ ethnographic fieldwork
Cultural Variation	Focused only on Javanese culture	Limited cultural diversity captured	Compare with narratives from other ethnic groups
Technology Use	No audiovisual data used	Lack of contextual richness	Incorporate digital media and AI tools for narrative analysis

This table recommends extending future studies through ethnographic approaches and technological integration. Broader data collection and analytical frameworks will yield richer insights into the relationship between language, culture, and communication.

B. Discussion

This study demonstrates that language use in the dialogue of Baridin and Ratmina functions not merely as a narrative device but as a pragmatic instrument for negotiating power, emotion, and cultural norms within a traditional Javanese context. The findings reveal that honorifics, face-threatening acts, and code-mixing operate simultaneously as markers of social hierarchy and expressions of personal intention. This supports the functional pragmatic view that language is fundamentally a form of social action shaped by cultural expectations rather than a neutral system of symbols (Zheltukhina et al., 2016; Usanov, 2025; Prasetyo, 2022). By embedding these pragmatic strategies in narrative dialogue, the story reflects broader social tensions between communal values and individual desires.

The use of honorifics such as *nok*, *mbok*, and *mang* illustrates how address forms index both intimacy and power distance in Javanese culture. Baridin's repeated use of *nok* toward

Ratmina indicates an attempt to reduce social distance and establish emotional closeness. However, this linguistic strategy is interpreted as inappropriate due to the absence of social legitimacy, such as family mediation or social equality. Previous studies have shown that honorifics do not function universally as polite expressions but depend heavily on speaker-listener relationships and situational context (Sugiharto, 2023; Almoayidi, 2024; Terkourafi, 2015). In this sense, the findings align with cross-cultural pragmatics research that emphasizes politeness as a culturally contingent practice rather than a fixed linguistic rule.

The reactions of Ratmina further highlight how face-threatening acts (FTAs) are culturally negotiated. Her sarcastic laughter and direct rejection function as deliberate pragmatic strategies to reassert social boundaries and protect her social face. This supports Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, which argues that speakers choose strategies based on relative power and social distance (Brown & Levinson, 1987), while also reinforcing later critiques that emphasize cultural variability in face management (Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Almoayidi, 2024; Rahardjo, 2020). In the Javanese context, Ratmina's response is not merely rude but socially sanctioned, as it restores normative hierarchy disrupted by Baridin's improper familiarity.

Code-Mixing as a Marker of Modernity and Social Distinction

Code-mixing into English in the dialogue functions as another significant pragmatic marker. Expressions such as "you are so beautiful" and "excuse me" signal Baridin's aspiration toward modernity and a higher social status. In the context of Javanese society, the use of English carries specific social connotations that affect the speaker's perceived position within the social hierarchy. English is widely associated with formal education, urban sophistication, and global orientation, making it a linguistic resource for individuals seeking to elevate their social standing (Nurhayati & Susanto, 2021; Wijayanti, 2023). Baridin's deliberate insertion of English phrases into his Javanese speech can be interpreted as an attempt to present himself as educated, modern, and worthy of Ratmina's attention, thereby challenging the traditional social hierarchy that places him below Ratmina in status.

However, the pragmatic effect of code-mixing in the narrative is not straightforward. While code-mixing may serve as a prestige marker in urban or formal settings, within the traditional village setting of the narrative, such linguistic choices are perceived as culturally inappropriate and pretentious. This finding is corroborated by sociolinguistic research conducted in contemporary Javanese communities, which demonstrates that English code-switching often indexes prestige, education, and global orientation in non-Western societies but can also be perceived negatively when used in contexts that prioritize traditional values and communal solidarity (Nurhayati & Susanto, 2021; Prasetyo, 2022). For instance, studies on language use in Javanese rural communities have shown that individuals who frequently use English in everyday conversation are often viewed as "showing off" or attempting to distance themselves from their community, leading to social sanctions and ridicule (Wijayanti, 2023; Kusumaningrum, 2022).

In the case of Baridin, his code-mixing intensifies the social tension between him and other characters. Ratmina's mockery and the derision from elders like Bapa Dam reflect the community's rejection of linguistic behaviors that deviate from traditional norms. This finding aligns with recent research by Aliyah and Warnisa (2024), who argue that Baridin's use of English reflects broader social tensions between modern individual expression and traditional communal values in Cirebonese society. The critique of Baridin's behavior in the narrative reinforces the idea that cultural norms are actively enforced through linguistic evaluation in community settings. Baridin's code-mixing, rather than elevating his status, actually reinforces his position as an outsider who does not respect the social conventions of

the community. This contradiction illustrates how code-mixing may simultaneously function as a positive identity marker and a pragmatic violation, depending on the social context and the speaker-listener relationship.

Furthermore, the effect of English usage on Baridin's social position can be understood through the lens of the Javanese social hierarchy, which is traditionally organized around principles of *unggah-ungguh* (proper behavior) and *andhap-asor* (humility). In Javanese culture, social status is not merely determined by education or wealth but also by one's ability to demonstrate respect for others and adherence to communal norms (Sugiharto, 2023; Kusumaningrum, 2022). Baridin's use of English, which sets him apart from the community, conflicts with the Javanese value of *andhap-asor* (humility), which requires individuals to behave modestly and not elevate themselves above others. By using English, Baridin appears to be asserting a status that the community does not recognize, thereby violating the principles of social harmony that are central to Javanese culture. This explains why his code-mixing is met with derision rather than admiration, as the community interprets it as a sign of arrogance and disregard for traditional norms.

The findings on code-mixing in this study also resonate with broader discussions on language and social identity in multilingual societies. Research on code-switching in other non-Western contexts has shown that the social meaning of language choice is highly context-dependent, with the same linguistic practice carrying different connotations in different settings (Myers, 2025; Pawar et al., 2025). In the context of Baridin and Ratmina, code-mixing into English serves as a symbolic marker of the tension between tradition and modernity, a tension that is particularly pronounced in Javanese society as it navigates the pressures of globalization and cultural change.

The clash between modern linguistic aspiration and traditional cultural norms reinforces the narrative's broader thematic tension. Baridin's speech choices reflect individual emotional expression, while Ratmina and other authority figures embody communal expectations and social discipline. Similar patterns have been identified in previous analyses of traditional narratives, where linguistic deviation often symbolizes moral imbalance or social disruption (Kusumaningrum, 2022; Rahardjo, 2020; Zamzami & Ningsih, 2020). The findings of this study thus support earlier claims that folklore serves as a medium for cultural critique, using dialogue to dramatize the consequences of violating social norms.

The extreme emotional expressivity shown by Baridin, particularly in the ritual fasting scene, further emphasizes the pragmatic consequences of unregulated desire. His commissive speech acts, framed through spiritual devotion, produce perlocutionary effects that culminate in tragedy. From a functional pragmatic perspective, this demonstrates that speech acts extend beyond verbal interaction and can reshape social reality (Zheltukhina et al., 2016; Usanov, 2025; Prasetyo, 2022). The narrative outcome reinforces cultural values that prioritize emotional restraint and communal harmony over individual obsession.

In relation to contemporary communication, the findings resonate strongly with current discussions on digital discourse and artificial intelligence. Code-mixing and pragmatic misalignment in the narrative parallel similar phenomena in online communication, where linguistic choices may be misunderstood without shared cultural context (Vohidova, 2024;

Pawar et al., 2025; Myers, 2025). This highlights the importance of cultural awareness in language technologies, particularly large language models, which must account for pragmatic norms to avoid reinforcing bias or miscommunication.

Overall, this study agrees with previous research that views language as a culturally embedded practice while extending it by applying functional pragmatics to written narrative dialogue. Unlike studies focusing on spoken interaction, this research demonstrates that literary texts can provide equally rich data for pragmatic analysis (Zheltukhina et al., 2016; Prasetyo, 2022; Usanov, 2025). By systematically analyzing honorifics, FTAs, and code-mixing, this study contributes to cross-cultural pragmatics and underscores the continued relevance of traditional narratives in understanding language, culture, and social change.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the pivotal role that language and culture play in forming and navigating the dynamics of power, social distance, and identity in the Baridin and Ratmina narrative through the lens of functional pragmatics. By systematically analyzing specific linguistic choices, including the employment of honorifics, face-threatening acts, and code-mixing, this research has revealed the depth of societal criticism embedded within the narrative dialogue. The findings demonstrate that Javanese honorifics, such as *nok*, *mbok*, and *mang*, function not merely as indicators of respect but as pragmatic tools that can either reinforce or mitigate face threats depending on the social context and the speaker's communicative goals. The instance where Baridin approaches Ratmina with the familiar address "*nok*" illustrates an attempt to reduce social distance and establish emotional closeness. However, because this address form is used without proper social legitimacy, Ratmina interprets it as a face-threatening act. Her direct rejection, accompanied by sarcastic laughter, serves as a culturally sanctioned strategy to reassert social boundaries and denounce behavior considered inappropriate within Javanese social norms. This finding underscores that discourse perception is strongly influenced by cultural norms and customs, reinforcing the view that politeness is a culturally contingent practice rather than a universal linguistic rule (Sugiharto, 2023; Almoayidi, 2024).

Furthermore, Baridin's code-mixing between Javanese and English, particularly his use of phrases such as "you are so beautiful" and "excuse me," functions as a prestige signal that conveys aspirations toward modernity and global influence. However, within the traditional village setting of the narrative, such code-mixing intensifies perceptions of improper behavior, leading to derision from elders like Bapa Dam and mockery from Ratmina. This phenomenon illustrates the tension between expressing individual feelings and maintaining collective cohesion, a tension that is central to the narrative's thematic conflict. The study also offers methodological guidelines for evaluating written or spoken narratives without direct participant involvement, proposing a systematic approach to narrative dialogue analysis through data normalization, open and axial coding, and triangulation of literature sources and cultural interpretations.

Contributions to Cross-Cultural Pragmatics

This study makes several significant contributions to the field of cross-cultural pragmatics. First, it advances our understanding of how language functions as a form of social action within traditional narratives by demonstrating that honorifics, face-threatening acts, and code-mixing operate simultaneously as markers of social hierarchy and expressions of personal intention.

Unlike studies that focus primarily on spoken interaction, this research demonstrates that written literary texts can provide equally rich data for pragmatic analysis, thereby expanding the scope of pragmatic inquiry beyond naturally occurring conversation.

Second, this study enhances Brown and Levinson's model of politeness by showing how honorifics can both lessen and increase face danger depending on the speaker-listener role and the cultural context. The findings reveal that the same linguistic strategy, such as the use of "nok," can carry different pragmatic weights depending on whether it is used within or outside of proper social relationships. This nuance contributes to a more culturally sensitive understanding of face management, supporting critiques that emphasize cultural variability in politeness strategies (Sugiharto, 2023; Almoayidi, 2024). The study also provides an empirical foundation for understanding face value in narrative contexts, demonstrating how characters' linguistic choices reflect their understanding of social hierarchy and their strategies for negotiating identity and power.

Third, the findings on code-mixing contribute to sociolinguistic research on language and identity in multilingual societies. By demonstrating how English code-switching in a traditional Javanese setting functions as both a positive identity marker and a pragmatic violation, this study highlights the complex and context-dependent nature of language choice (Nurhayati & Susanto, 2021; Wijayanti, 2023). This finding has implications for understanding similar phenomena in contemporary digital communication, where linguistic choices may be misunderstood without shared cultural context (Vohidova, 2024; Pawar et al., 2025; Myers, 2025). The study thus underscores the importance of cultural awareness in language technologies, particularly large language models, which must account for pragmatic norms to avoid reinforcing bias or miscommunication.

Implications for Language Education and Sustainable Development

The knowledge generated from this study has practical implications for language education and sustainable development. Understanding how language mediates cultural values and power dynamics, even in classic narratives, is essential for developing "critical communicative agents" who can navigate encounters in an increasingly interconnected multilingual and multicultural world (Matz & Römhild, 2024). By analyzing how traditional narratives dramatize the consequences of violating social norms, educators can use such texts to foster critical thinking about cultural values, social hierarchy, and the role of language in maintaining or challenging power structures. This approach aligns with the goals of education for peace and sustainable development, which emphasize the importance of intercultural competence and communicative agency.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study has provided valuable insights into the pragmatic functions of language in the Baridin and Ratmina narrative, several limitations suggest directions for future research. First, the study analyzed only one version of the narrative, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Future studies could conduct comparative analyses across different versions of the narrative, including oral storytelling traditions, written manuscripts, and modern theatrical or

film adaptations. Such comparative studies would reveal how pragmatic strategies vary across different media and historical periods, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the narrative's linguistic and cultural dynamics.

Second, the study relied exclusively on textual data and did not incorporate nonverbal discourse features such as gestures, intonation, or facial expressions. Future research could employ ethnographic fieldwork or multimodal analysis to capture these nonverbal elements, which are essential for a complete pragmatic interpretation. For instance, analyzing video recordings of theatrical performances of the Baridin and Ratmina story would allow researchers to examine how gestures, tone of voice, and facial expressions contribute to the negotiation of power and social distance in ways that written text alone cannot capture. Studies integrating audiovisual data would provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of the pragmatic strategies employed in the narrative.

Third, this study focused exclusively on the Javanese and Cirebonese cultural context. Future research could extend these findings by examining how similar pragmatic phenomena operate in narratives from other ethnic groups in Indonesia or other multilingual societies around the world. Comparative studies across cultures would illuminate the extent to which the pragmatic strategies identified in this study are specific to Javanese culture or reflect broader patterns in traditional narratives. Such research would contribute to a more universal understanding of the relationship between language, culture, and social change in narrative discourse.

Finally, future studies could incorporate digital media and AI tools for narrative analysis. The increasing availability of digital corpora and computational linguistic tools offers new opportunities for large-scale pragmatic analysis of traditional narratives. Combining qualitative textual analysis with computational methods, such as natural language processing and sentiment analysis, could reveal patterns in honorific use, code-mixing, and face-threatening acts that are not readily apparent through manual analysis alone. Such methodological innovations would advance the field of cross-cultural pragmatics and deepen our understanding of how language and culture interact in narrative discourse.

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that the Baridin and Ratmina narrative offers a rich site for pragmatic exploration, revealing how language choices in traditional narratives serve as complex social and cultural indicators. By integrating functional pragmatics with cross-cultural understanding, this research has contributed to theoretical and methodological advancements in the field while offering practical insights for educators, researchers, and students. The study also highlights the continued relevance of traditional narratives in understanding language, culture, and social change in an increasingly interconnected world.

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