

Language and Emotion in *Syair Pelarian dari Kejaran Opas*: A Psycholinguistic Study

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KEYWORDS

ABSTRACT

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This study analyzes the expression of emotion in the poem "Escape from the Pursuit of Opas" by Syekh Sidi Jamadi using a psycholinguistic approach grounded in Chaer's (2009) framework on the relationship between language and the human psyche, combined with the Sapir-Whorf perspective that emphasizes the relationship between language and thought. The research problem focuses on how the language used in the poem reflects the poet's psychological condition, emotional experiences, and inner struggles when facing social pressures and colonial threats. Previous studies have mostly discussed classical poetry from the aspects of stylistics, semiotics, religion, and phonology, but have not examined the relationship between language and the poet's inner state psycholinguistically, so there is a gap that needs to be filled. This study aims to understand how language choices convey emotions such as fear, anxiety, despair, resignation, and hope. The method used is descriptive qualitative with data in the form of verses of the poem analyzed through in-depth reading, identification of emotional diction, and contextual interpretation following Chaer's (2009) psycholinguistic categories. The results of the study show that the poet's language through repetition, metaphor, and choice of emotionally rich diction reflects his inner state and thought process. This study confirms that language does not only function to narrate external events, but also to represent psychological and emotional experiences, demonstrating the relevance of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in understanding the cognitive and affective dimensions of traditional Minangkabau poetry.

Keywords: psycholinguistics, Sapir-Whorf, emotion, classical literature, poetry.

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Introduction

Literary works are the result of an author's process of thinking and imagination, expressed in written form. They contain ethical values, aesthetic qualities, and creativity that reflect the writer's perspective on life. According to Muriyana in Hilmi et al. (2023), literary works are born from a person's imagination based on what they feel. In the process of creation, various elements play a role, such as knowledge, ideas, beliefs, abilities, and the creator's way of thinking. Literary works have broad benefits in life because, through fictional stories, readers can understand and discover various forms of truth that are presented beautifully and meaningfully.

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One form of literary work that is closely related to culture and community life is traditional poetry. Traditional poetry follows specific rules, such as the number of lines, stanzas, syllables, and rhyme patterns. One popular form of traditional poetry is *syair*, which is characterized by four lines in each stanza, consisting of eight to ten syllables, and a uniform rhyme scheme (a-a-a-a) (Suryani in Hilmi et al., 2023).

Language is an essential element in literary works because through language humans can think, interact, and express their feelings. Language is not merely a tool of communication, but also a reflection of human thought and emotion. Wardhaugh (1972) states that the function of language is as a means of human communication, both spoken and written. According to Kinneavy in Michel (1967), language has five basic functions: expressive, informative, exploratory, persuasive, and entertaining. These functions indicate that language serves as a medium to convey inner expressions such as happiness, anger, sadness, disappointment, or admiration (Chaer, 2009). This close relationship between language and the human psyche forms the basis of psycholinguistic studies.

Psycholinguistics is a field that combines two disciplines: psychology and linguistics. Psychology examines human behavior and mental processes, while linguistics studies the structure, meaning, and use of language. Through this approach, psycholinguistics seeks to explain how individuals understand, produce, and interpret language based on cognitive processes in the mind. Chaer (2009) explains that both linguistics and psychology study language, but from different perspectives: linguistics focuses on language structure, while psychology examines language behavior and processes. Thus, psycholinguistics positions language as a reflection of inner activity and human thought processes.

One literary work that is interesting to analyze through a psycholinguistic approach is *Syair Pelarian dari Kejaran Opas* by Syekh Sidi Jamadi. This *syair* is a transliteration by Pramono (2021) that depicts the hardships of someone being pursued by colonial authorities. The work describes the reality faced by Syekh Sidi Jamadi—also known as Khatib Jamadi—when he became a fugitive due to accusations against him. This *syair* not only tells a story of escape, but also contains emotional expressions that reveal anxiety, confusion, despair, and hope. The language used does not merely function as narration, but also as a medium for expressing the poet's feelings and psychological burden. For example, in stanza number 15 on page 14, the following lines appear: "*Berpikirlah hamba di dalam hati / mengenal-ngenal kesalahan diri / zahir dan batin sudah dikaji / rasanya tidak sekali-kali.*"

This excerpt addresses the focus of the study on how language in *Syair Pelarian dari Kejaran Opas* reflects emotional expression and the poet's inner condition. The stanza reveals emotions of regret and self-introspection. The phrase "*berpikirlah hamba di dalam hati*" indicates reflective cognitive activity, while "*mengenal-ngenal kesalahan diri*" shows acknowledgment and deep moral awareness. The expression

“zahir dan batin sudah dikaji” illustrates an effort to understand oneself thoroughly, both physically and spiritually. Based on the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis, the structure and choice of language reflect the poet’s way of thinking and inner state, which is filled with regret. Thus, the language used in this syair is not merely an aesthetic expression, but also a representation of the poet’s emotional struggle and psychological reflection on the situation he experienced.

Previous studies on classical literary works have mostly focused on stylistic analysis, semiotics, religious values, denotative–connotative meanings, and phonological aspects, as conducted by Munfarida et al. (2025), Hilmi et al. (2023), Sinta Salsabila (2020), Ilmi (2021), and Ayla et al. (2025). These studies contribute to understanding the beauty of language and literary symbolism, but they have not extensively explored the relationship between language and the author’s psychological condition. Research by Dina Fitria Hasanah et al. (2023) and Meinar Trifidya Ningtias (2022) has applied a psycholinguistic approach, but their focus remains on modern media such as songs. Meanwhile, Sarwono and Yulistio (2019) discuss psychological meanings in Syair Abdul Muluk, but their analysis uses a hermeneutic approach rather than a psycholinguistic one that examines the relationship between language structure and the author’s inner expression.

This condition indicates a research gap in psycholinguistic studies of classical regional literary works, particularly Minangkabau syair. There has been no specific study that examines Syair Pelarian dari Kejaran Opas as a reflection of the author’s emotions and inner condition through a psycholinguistic analysis. Therefore, this study aims to understand how language in Syair Pelarian dari Kejaran Opas by Syekh Sidi Jamadi reflects emotional expression and the poet’s inner state through a psycholinguistic approach.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of linguistics and psycholinguistics by expanding the application of the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis and Chaer’s (2009) psycholinguistic framework beyond modern texts into the domain of classical Minangkabau literature. It demonstrates that traditional literary works can serve as valid objects of cognitive-linguistic analysis, thereby enriching theoretical discourse on the relationship between language, thought, and emotion. Practically, the findings of this study offer valuable insights for literary educators, scholars, and cultural researchers by providing a new reading methodology that uncovers the psychological and emotional dimensions embedded in classical poetry. This approach can also be applied to other regional literary works to deepen our understanding of the cultural and cognitive heritage preserved in traditional texts.

Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, as it aims to understand the meanings and emotional expressions contained in *Syair Pelarian dari Kejaran Opas* by Syekh Sidi Jamadi. A qualitative approach is chosen to describe linguistic and psychological phenomena in depth without relying on numerical calculations. The

researcher plays a direct role in interpreting the data and relating it to psycholinguistic theories used as the basis for analysis.

Variable Identification and Operational Definitions

The main variable in this study is the psycholinguistic elements related to emotional expression in the *syair* text. These elements include linguistic forms (diction, sentence structure, and figurative language) that represent emotions such as fear, anxiety, and inner struggle. In this context, psycholinguistics is understood as the relationship between language and psychological aspects reflected in the poet's language choices. The operational definition used refers to the analysis of linguistic markers that indicate the emotional state of the character or author through the text.

Research Design

This research is a content analysis that focuses on the *syair* text as the primary data source. The analysis is conducted through three stages: (1) identifying prominent linguistic forms, (2) classifying language elements based on the emotions expressed, and (3) interpreting linguistic meanings from a psycholinguistic perspective. Each stage is directed toward uncovering the relationship between language forms and the psychological conditions the poet seeks to convey.

Subjects and Data Sources

The subject of this study is the text of *Syair Pelarian dari Kejaran Opas* by Syekh Sidi Jamadi, which has been transliterated into modern written form. Secondary data sources are obtained from books, journals, and previous research relevant to psycholinguistic studies and literary analysis. The data consist of words, phrases, and sentences that contain emotional expressions or reflect psychological conditions.

Instruments and Data Collection Techniques

The primary instrument in this study is the researcher, who acts as both the data collector and analyst. The researcher reads the *syair* text repeatedly to understand its context and emotional content. Data collection techniques include intensive reading, note-taking, and classifying linguistic forms that contain emotional elements. The recorded data are then organized into tables of emotional categories such as fear, sadness, anger, and inner struggle to facilitate the analysis process.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis is carried out using descriptive qualitative methods, presenting the findings in a narrative form. The classified data are then analyzed by relating them to Chaer's (2009) psycholinguistic theory on the relationship between language and the human psyche. The analysis process involves three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Through this technique, the study is expected to demonstrate how language in the *syair* reflects the emotions and psychological condition of the poet.

Results

1. Stanza 15, page 14

“Berpikirlah hamba di dalam hati / mengenal-negenal kesalahan diri / zahir dan batin sudah dikaji / rasanya tidak sekali-kali.”

1. In this excerpt, there is a clear expression of emotion in the form of regret and self-introspection. The poet uses gentle language and repetition to convey a calm inner state. The phrase “mengenal-negenal kesalahan diri” indicates a process of reconsidering past actions, while “zahir dan batin sudah dikaji” reflects an effort to understand oneself wholly, both physically and spiritually. Thus, the emotions expressed are regret, repentance, and moral awareness.
2. Through the Sapir–Whorf theory, the language used reflects the poet’s way of thinking and inner feelings. The soft diction and calm sentence structure indicate a reflective emotional condition filled with regret. Language in this stanza is not merely a tool of communication but also a mirror of the poet’s cognitive and psychological awareness.

2. Stanza 17, page 14

“Hati hamba sangat hibanya / karena hamba orang yang hina / tanya siasat tidak adanya / sekarang datang serdadu saja.”

1. This stanza expresses emotions of fear, anxiety, and self-deprecation. The phrase “sangat hibanya” conveys sadness, while “orang yang hina” reflects feelings of inferiority or shame. The line “sekarang datang serdadu saja” intensifies the sense of threat. Thus, the emotions include fear, anxiety, and shame.
2. Based on Sapir–Whorf theory, the language reflects the poet’s psychological state. The diction showing panic and inferiority indicates that the poet’s emotions are internalized in the language. Language here expresses both external situations and inner anxiety.

3. Stanza 19, page 15

“Raja Penghulu berkicuh hati / kepada hamba dagang yang umi / patutlah hamba kemari lari / takut di jiwa rasakan pai.”

1. This excerpt shows deep fear and anxiety. The poet describes fear toward authority (“Raja Penghulu berkicuh hati”) and avoidance (“patutlah hamba kemari lari”). The phrase “takut di jiwa rasakan pai” strengthens the emotional intensity. The emotions are fear, anxiety, and a sense of threat.
2. From the Sapir–Whorf perspective, the language reflects the poet’s psychological experience in facing danger. The structure and diction express intense fear, making language a mirror of emotional condition.

4. Stanza 27, page 15

“Habis termenung lalu berdiri / tidak dilihat kanan dan kiri / tampak bayangnya langit nan tinggi / terus berjalan tengah nan ramai.”

1. This stanza reflects confusion, solitude, and determination. “Habis termenung lalu berdiri” shows reflection followed by action, while “tidak dilihat kanan dan kiri” indicates focus and determination. The emotions include reflection, determination, and inner tension.
2. According to Sapir–Whorf, the language reflects the poet’s psychological condition in a challenging situation. The diction shows concentration and awareness, reflecting a firm emotional state.

5. Stanza 31, page 15

“Ada bertanya taulan saudara / bahasa tuan dapat sansaro / kami mendengar temas rasanya / adakah bana kabar cerita.”

1. The emotions expressed are curiosity, longing, and slight anxiety. The questioning tone reflects social interaction and concern.
2. Language reflects social and psychological feelings, showing curiosity and concern as inner expressions.

6. Stanza 38, page 16

“Tidaklah lama hamba berhenti / dek rumah raja hampir sekali / tak lah malu rasanya diri / karena hamba terbilang lari.”

1. This stanza expresses anxiety, shame, and courage. The poet shows urgency and an attempt to overcome embarrassment.

2. Language reflects a psychological process of facing shame while continuing to act.

7. Stanza 41, page 16

“Inilah sakit untungku ini / masa terburu dalam negeri di siko rasanya tempat berhenti / musuhlah banyak kanan dan kiri.”

1. The emotions are fear, pressure, and vigilance. “Musuhlah banyak kanan dan kiri” highlights threat.
2. Language reflects psychological danger and anxiety.

8. Stanza 48, page 17

“Berjalanlah hamba waktu itu / ke Duyan Dangka kampung dituju / harap dan cemas dalam hatiku / karena badan dalam terburu.”

1. Emotions include hope, anxiety, and urgency.
2. Language reflects mixed feelings of hope and tension.

9. Stanza 70, page 18

“Dijaga-jaga hampirlah badan / dipandang lampu semuanya padam / senang sedikit hati di dalam / ibarat kambing lepas ke hutan.”

1. Emotions include relief, caution, and happiness.
2. Language reflects a complex emotional state.

10. Stanza 89, page 20

“Rupanya tidak pandang memandang / kepada mamanda bicaranya tunggang / takutlah kami malam dan siang / rasa tak dapat tempat bertenggang.”

1. Emotions are fear, confusion, and anxiety.
2. Language reflects unstable psychological conditions.

11. Stanza 115, page 22

“Banyaklah kita abarkan hati / supaya kasih Tuhan Ilahi / Tuhan pengasih sepanjang hari / mengapalah kita dihukum hati.”

1. Emotions include hope, sadness, and spiritual longing.
2. Language reflects a religious and reflective inner state.

12. Stanza 119, page 22

“Hamba bermenung seorang diri / terdengar madah siburung nuri / di puncak pohon yang tinggi / pandanglah langit lihatlah bumi.”

1. Emotions include solitude, contemplation, and admiration.
2. Language reflects reflective and philosophical thinking.

13. Stanza 120, page 22

“Bunda bahurai air mata / melihat hamba dalam sengsara / hamba menjawab dengan perlahan / bunda kandungku hati sabarkan.”

1. Emotions include sadness, empathy, and resilience.
2. Language reflects emotional interaction and empathy.

14. Stanza 126, page 23

“Takutlah kami malam dan siang / rasa tak dapat tempat bertenggang / orang yang lain tidak mengapa / karena mamanda sedang celaka.”

1. Emotions include fear, anxiety, and concern.
2. Language reflects constant psychological tension.

15. Stanza 138, page 23

“Sudah ditangkap opas polisi / bertambah jua susahnya hati / sebab dek awak celaka orang / kalau untungku sudahlah malang.”

1. Emotions include sadness, frustration, and despair.
2. Language reflects helplessness and pressure.

16. Stanza 179, page 26

“Malu sedikit dalam pikiran / benarlah hamba orang buruan / orang negeri seumanya tahu / bahasa hamba orang terburu.”

1. Emotions include shame, fear, and social awareness.
2. Language reflects social pressure and anxiety.

17. Stanza 180, page 26

“Habis rasanya sopan dan malu sudahlah nasib untung badanku / dua hari hamba di Sungai Laban / berbaring saja tidak berjalan.”

1. Emotions include despair, fatigue, and resignation.
2. Language reflects surrender to circumstances.

18. Stanza 197, page 28

“Takut di hati wallahu a’lam / sebab dek awak orang buruan / untuk takdir Tuhan rayhan / di pekan itu lepaslah badan.”

1. Emotions include fear, anxiety, and surrender to fate.
2. Language reflects reliance on destiny.

19. Stanza 210, page 29

“Kereta Api lalulah tuan / hambatakut di tengah jalan / kereta lepas hamba berjalan / di Pasar Usang pada hadapan.”

1. Emotions include fear, vigilance, and tension.
2. Language reflects danger and alertness.

20. Stanza 301, page 36

“Hati di dalam tidak senangnya / suara laut terdengar jua / di kampung Bungus lepaslah tuan / agak baru kota di sinan.”

1. Emotions include unease, restlessness, and discomfort.
2. Language reflects environmental influence on emotion.

21. Stanza 338, page 38

“Rasanya kali tanaman lama / rantau nan jauh risau di muka / badan berbaring tidak lelapnya / terkenal badan dalam celaka.”

1. Emotions include longing, anxiety, and fatigue.
2. Language reflects psychological pressure.

22. Stanza 350, page 39

“Allah-Allah segala taulan / kalau dikenal masa buruan / jikalau hari menjelang malam / susah di hati wallahu a’lam.”

1. Emotions include fear, anxiety, and surrender to God.
2. Language reflects spiritual resignation.

23. Stanza 377, page 41

“Keluar hamba daripada pekan / membeli sedikit akan dimakan / kedalam anjut lalu disimpan / itulah sakit dalam buruan.”

1. Emotions include fear, vigilance, and pressure.
2. Language reflects constant danger.

24. Stanza 868, page 50

“Di mana dapat bersenang hati / akhir kelak nya berbilang tangsi / di pekan Kacang hamba berjalan / mengingatkan diri syai untung nya badan.”

1. Emotions include sadness, anxiety, and uncertainty.
2. Language reflects emotional reflection on fate.

25. Stanza 872, page 51

“Tetapi suka kenyang saja / di dalam hati remuk rasanya / daripada lapau turunlah hamba / kemasuk pakan kembali pula.”

1. Emotions include relief mixed with sadness and inner conflict.
2. Language reflects emotional contradiction.

26. Stanza 875, page 51

“Hanya sebuah anjut disandang / dek masa untung mendapat malang / di bukit Kacang lepaslah hamba / pandang di atas sangat luasnya.”

1. Emotions include resignation, anxiety, and slight relief.
2. Language reflects shifting emotional states.

27. Stanza 877, page 51

“Jikalau malang untung nya badan / tiada dapat akan sandalan / jalannya diburu kencang / kiri dan kanan tidak dipandang.”

1. Emotions include fear, panic, and despair.
2. Language reflects intense danger and urgency.

28. Stanza 883, page 52

“Sebelah kanan gunung berjojo / di dalam hati remuk rasanya / remuk rasanya di dalam hati / mengenal untung ke mana pai.”

1. Emotions include sadness, confusion, and despair.
2. Language reflects deep emotional pain.

29. Stanza 929, page 55

“Siko lah hamba tinggal dahulu / berhenti di sinan rasanya malu / karena awak dalam celaka / berhenti di sinan hati tak suka.”

1. Emotions include shame, discomfort, and anxiety.
2. Language reflects social and psychological pressure.

30. Stanza 939, page 55

“Orang yang senang kadapat seso / kok untung hamba sudahlah nyata / dua malam hamba tinggal di sinan / dahulu air kampungnya tuan.”

1. Emotions include resignation, sadness, and nostalgia.
2. Language reflects acceptance of fate and emotional memory.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the emotional expressions in *Syair Pelarian dari Kejaran Opas* represent the poet’s psychological condition while being in a situation of threat and escape. Diction such as “fear in the heart,” “a pounding chest,” “anger being pursued,” as well as physical depictions like hurried steps and anxious observation, suggest strong affective pressure. These findings reinforce the modern psycholinguistic view that language is a direct reflection of a speaker’s mental state and cognitive load (Harley, 2017; Fernández & Cairns, 2020). The language found in the *syair* is not merely a narrative tool, but also a window into the poet’s mental processes in interpreting traumatic experiences.

Compared to previous studies on emotional expression in Malay literary works, this research reveals an important distinction. For instance, Sari (2018) found that emotional expression in Malay pantun tends to be implicit and symbolic, often using natural metaphors to convey feelings. However, in the *syair* by Syekh Sidi Jamadi, emotions are expressed more directly, intensely, and concretely. This difference demonstrates that the social context and historical situation—namely, fleeing from colonial *opas*—encouraged the poet to express emotions without metaphorical concealment. Thus, this study expands the understanding that forms of emotional expression in traditional literature are strongly influenced by psychological conditions and external pressures.

From the perspective of linguistic relativity (Sapir–Whorf), the findings show that the poet’s way of interpreting fear and threat is shaped by Minangkabau cultural thought patterns. Boroditsky (2018) emphasizes that language influences how humans construct mental reality. In this *syair*, fear is expressed through bodily diction such as “pounding,” “almost collapsing,” and “a slight relief within,” indicating that emotional experiences are understood through bodily sensations and collective morality. This physical-emotional pattern rarely appears in previous studies of Minangkabau

literature, making this finding a novel contribution to understanding the relationship between language, culture, and cognition in traditional works.

The findings also highlight the function of repetition. Latifah (2022) shows that repetition in Malay *syair* generally serves aesthetic and rhythmic purposes. However, in Jamadi's *syair*, repetition functions as a marker of psychological instability. The repeated diction describing fear and escape intensifies the sense of urgency and reflects a mind caught in cycles of anxiety. This demonstrates a shift in the function of repetition—from aesthetic ornamentation to the representation of psychological trauma—an aspect that has received little attention in traditional literary studies.

Compared to previous research that predominantly focuses on the philological, aesthetic, or cultural structure of *syair*, this study offers a new theoretical contribution by positioning *syair* as an object of psycholinguistic analysis. It shows that traditional literary texts can be examined through a cognitive-linguistic approach to reveal emotional dynamics and the thought processes of past authors. By integrating emotional discourse analysis, psycholinguistic theory, and the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis, this research broadens the scope of Minangkabau literary studies and enriches our understanding of how language functions as a reflection of mental experience.

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that linguistic expression in *syair* cannot be understood merely as an aesthetic ornament, but also as a manifestation of psychological pressure, cultural experience, and the poet's cognitive construction. The significant differences between the findings of this study and previous research prove that psycholinguistic analysis can open new dimensions in the interpretation of traditional literature.

Conclusions

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that language in *Syair Pelarian dari Kejaran Opas* functions as a medium for expressing the poet's emotions and psychological condition. The choice of diction, repetition, and sentence structure reflects fear, anxiety, despair, resignation, and hope as the poet faces social and colonial pressures. This study demonstrates that language is not merely a tool of communication, but also a reflection of the author's thoughts and emotions, in line with the Sapir–Whorf theory.

A psycholinguistic approach is chosen over literary psychology because this study focuses on the direct relationship between language and the author's psychological condition, rather than merely interpreting the psychological aspects of characters or narratives. Psycholinguistics allows for an analysis of how language structure, diction, and expressive style reflect the poet's inner experiences, emotions,

and thought processes, thereby revealing a more concrete relationship between language and the author's psychology.

The contribution of this study is to broaden the scope of psycholinguistic research on classical Minangkabau literature by emphasizing the relationship between language and psychological conditions, thereby enriching the understanding of language as a representation of the human psyche in literary works.

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