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Conceptual metaphors of Merarik marriage in Sasak society: A cognitive linguistic study

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how the Sasak community constructs the meaning of Merarik (traditional Sasak marriage) through conceptual metaphors from a Cognitive Linguistics perspective. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through naturalistic observation of everyday conversations in Pringgajurang Utara Village, East Lombok. The dataset consisted of 40 Sasak-language expressions related to Merarik. Data were analyzed by identifying the source and target domains and the conceptual mappings underlying each expression. Credibility was established through methodological triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. The analysis identified 20 conceptual metaphors, categorized as ontological, structural, and orientational, with ontological metaphors occurring most frequently. The most productive metaphors were Merarik is a Journey, Merarik is an Honor, and Merarik is a Fence. The findings show that the Sasak community conceptualizes Merarik through concrete physical, social, and cultural experiences, understanding marriage not only as a social institution but also as a process of learning, responsibility, social regulation, and cultural identity. These findings support the view that abstract concepts are understood through more concrete experiences and demonstrate how conceptual metaphors reflect culturally embedded understandings of marriage. This study contributes to culturally grounded Cognitive Linguistics by highlighting the relationship between language, cognition, and local cultural practices in the conceptualization of marriage

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INTRODUCTION

Marriage is widely recognized as a fundamental social institution that regulates relationships between individuals and serves as a foundation for family and social life. From an anthropological perspective, marriage comprises norms and social practices that govern relationships between men and women, including the rights, obligations, and social expectations associated with these roles (Murdock, 1949). Beyond a formal union, marriage functions as a mechanism for social and cultural reproduction, through which communities transmit values, norms, and social roles across generations. Contemporary perspectives further view marriage as an institution that is continuously negotiated within specific social contexts and shaped by economic, ideological, and social changes (Cherlin, 2004). Consequently, marriage practices are closely influenced by a community's cultural values and reflect how its members perceive and organize social relationships (Damayanti et al., 2025).

The cultural dimensions of marriage are particularly evident in Indonesia, where diverse ethnic groups maintain distinctive marriage traditions. One prominent example is *Merarik*, a marriage practice of the Sasak community in Lombok. Although often translated as “elopement,” *Merarik* represents a complex social and cultural system involving honor, kinship relations, customary legitimacy, and community values (Haq et al., 2019; Mahyuni & Ahmadi, 2020). From a cultural anthropological perspective, such practices embody collective value systems that shape social structures and power relations within a community (Geertz, 1973). Therefore, reducing *Merarik* to a simple act of elopement overlooks its cultural complexity and risks obscuring the broader social realities of Sasak society.

The meanings associated with *Merarik* are not only expressed through customary practices but also embedded in the everyday language of the Sasak community. Expressions such as “*dendek Merarik juluk misal e ndek man sanggup impan anak dengan*” and “*kedek-kedek e bae juluk, lamun e wah Merarik jak ngkah e mauk*” suggest that *Merarik* is understood through various ideas, including responsibility and limitations on personal freedom. From the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, such expressions can be viewed as products of social construction that shape how individuals interpret marriage in everyday life (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). As repeated forms of social discourse, these expressions not only reflect community values but also contribute to the reproduction of shared understandings of *Merarik*.

This phenomenon can be examined through Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which views metaphor not merely as a rhetorical device but as a cognitive mechanism for understanding abstract concepts through more concrete experiences

(Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Within this framework, conceptual metaphors are realized through metaphorical expressions and reproduced through discourse, shaping collective understandings within a speech community (Steen et al., 2011; Wu, 2012). Recent developments in metaphor studies further emphasize that metaphorical meaning is influenced by embodiment, social interaction, and cultural context (Gibbs, 2017; Kövecses, 2020). Metaphors are dynamically constructed through language use in real social settings (Semino, 2008), while their variation across communities reflects distinctive systems of cultural knowledge and experience (Sharifian, 2017). These perspectives provide a useful framework for examining how the Sasak community conceptualizes *Merarik* through everyday language.

The use of metaphorical language in discussions of *Merarik* suggests that the Sasak community understands marriage through concrete experiences drawn from everyday life. Meanings associated with *Merarik*, such as responsibility, obligation, maturity, and limitations on personal freedom, are frequently conveyed indirectly through metaphor. This indicates that *Merarik* is not perceived merely as a social institution but is conceptually constructed through culturally shared experiences and understandings. Examining these conceptual metaphors is therefore important for revealing how meanings of marriage are constructed, negotiated, and reproduced within the Sasak community.

Previous studies have demonstrated the usefulness of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) in examining how marriage is conceptualized across different cultural contexts. In Indonesia, Kusmanto (2016) identified the metaphors "*Marriage Is a Journey*" and "*Marriage Is Building a Kingdom*," while Ananda explored the Idealized Cognitive Model underlying the conceptualization of marriage. Similar findings have been reported in other cultural settings. Hussain et al. (2022) identified metaphors such as *Marriage Is Food* and *Marriage Is Slavery* among the Hazaragi community in Pakistan, whereas Özabaci et al found that marriage is frequently understood as a responsibility and a struggle in Turkish society. These studies demonstrate that although conceptual metaphors operate through universal cognitive mechanisms, their linguistic realization and cultural meanings vary across communities (Kövecses, 2005). However, previous research has largely focused on identifying metaphor types and conceptual mappings using literary texts, cultural narratives, or elicited data. Consequently, limited attention has been given to conceptual metaphors emerging from naturally occurring everyday conversations and their role in shaping culturally embedded understandings of marriage.

Although *Merarik* has received considerable scholarly attention, existing studies have primarily examined it from social, cultural, legal, and anthropological perspectives (Haq et al., 2019; Ilhami & Rohmaniyah, 2023; Mahyuni & Ahmadi, 2020). Its linguistic-cognitive dimension remains relatively underexplored. Likewise, studies of metaphors in the Sasak language have generally focused on proverbs, *sesenggak*, and other traditional expressions rather than everyday discourse related to specific cultural practices. Although Hakim (2025) demonstrated that Sasak metaphors reflect the community's cultural values and abstract experiences, the study did not investigate the use of metaphor in relation to *Merarik*. Therefore, there remains a gap in understanding how the Sasak community constructs and communicates the meaning of *Merarik* through conceptual metaphors embedded in everyday speech.

This study addresses this gap by examining conceptual metaphors of *Merarik* in naturally occurring conversations among members of the Sasak community. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on metaphor identification or broader marriage concepts, this study investigates how conceptual metaphors emerge in everyday discourse and how they reflect the cultural experiences associated with *Merarik*. The novelty of the study lies in its use of natural speech data to explore the relationship between language, cognition, and a specific cultural practice. Accordingly, this study aims to (1) identify the conceptual metaphors used to understand *Merarik*, (2) analyze the mappings between source and target domains, and (3) examine the cognitive, social, and cultural values reflected in these metaphors. By doing so, the study contributes to culturally grounded Cognitive Linguistics and enriches the understanding of *Merarik* as a culturally embedded institution interpreted through language.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, specifically Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The research data consists of 40 Sasak language expressions that represent the concept of *Merarik*, a traditional Sasak wedding ceremony. Data were collected between May and June 2025 through naturalistic observation of everyday conversations among residents of Pringgajurang Utara Village. Data collection followed a naturalistic observation approach in which expressions related to *Merarik* were recorded whenever they occurred in everyday interactions. Therefore, data were recorded in field notes whenever expressions related to *Merarik* appeared in conversations among family members, neighbors, or other informal interactions. These expressions were obtained from 17 speakers, comprising 12 women and 5 men aged 21–70, from various social backgrounds, including farmers,

housewives, laborers, and private-sector workers. Expressions were selected as data if they involved a shift in meaning from concrete experiences to more abstract concepts and were used to explain *Merarik* indirectly. The identification of metaphorical expressions was informed by the principles of the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) proposed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007), whereby expressions were considered metaphorical when a concrete experiential meaning was used to understand or explain the more abstract concept of *Merarik*.

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. First, the collected expressions were transcribed in the Sasak language and translated into Indonesian by the researcher, a native speaker of Sasak. Second, the contextual meaning of each expression was identified based on the situation in which it occurred and the speaker's intended meaning. Third, each expression was analyzed by identifying its source and target domains to uncover the underlying conceptual mapping. Based on these mappings, conceptual metaphors were formulated and subsequently classified according to the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

Because more than 50% of the expressions allowed multiple metaphorical interpretations, special attention was given to selecting the most appropriate conceptual metaphor. When multiple interpretations were possible, the primary metaphor was determined based on the dominant contextual meaning of the expression and subsequently verified through member-checking procedures. The entire analytical process was documented in an audit trail consisting of the original expression, translation, context, interpreted meaning, source domain, target domain, and resulting conceptual metaphor.

The validity and credibility of the data were ensured through several procedures. Methodological triangulation was conducted by combining naturalistic observation and validation interviews. After the initial analysis was completed, the researcher's interpretations were verified through interviews with four additional informants who were not part of the initial group of speakers, comprising three men and one woman, with backgrounds as two teachers, one farmer, and one young person. This process served as member checking and interpretive validation by comparing the researcher's interpretation with participants' understandings of the expressions. Additionally, the results of the metaphor categorization were discussed with several peers (peer debriefing). Feedback indicating inconsistencies between the metaphor categories and their context of use was used to revise the analysis results, making the interpretation more accurate and representative of the conceptualization of *Merarik* within the Sasak community. Participants were informed about the study and verbally

consented to the use of their expressions for research purposes. Personal identities were anonymized throughout the study.

RESULTS

Analysis of the 40 Sasak-language expressions related to *Merarik* revealed three categories of conceptual metaphors proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980): ontological, structural, and orientational metaphors. As shown in Figure 1, ontological metaphors were the most dominant category, accounting for 55% of the data ($n = 22$), followed by structural metaphors (42.5%, $n = 17$), while orientational metaphors occurred only once (2.5%). This pattern suggests that *Merarik* is primarily understood through concrete entities, objects, and experiences, which made the abstract concept of marriage more comprehensible.

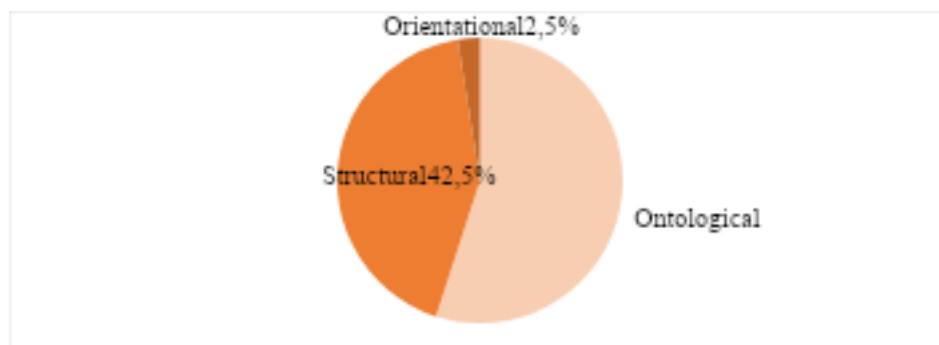


Figure 1: Distribution of conceptual metaphor types in discourse on *Merarik* ($n=40$)

To further examine the distribution of metaphorical concepts, Figure 2 presents categories of metaphors that occurred at least twice in the dataset. The most productive metaphors were *Merarik is a Journey*, *Merarik is an Honor*, and *Merarik is a Fence*, each appearing four times. Several other metaphor categories occurred less frequently, while metaphorical concepts represented by only a single occurrence are not discussed in detail, except for the orientational metaphor category due to its unique status in the dataset.

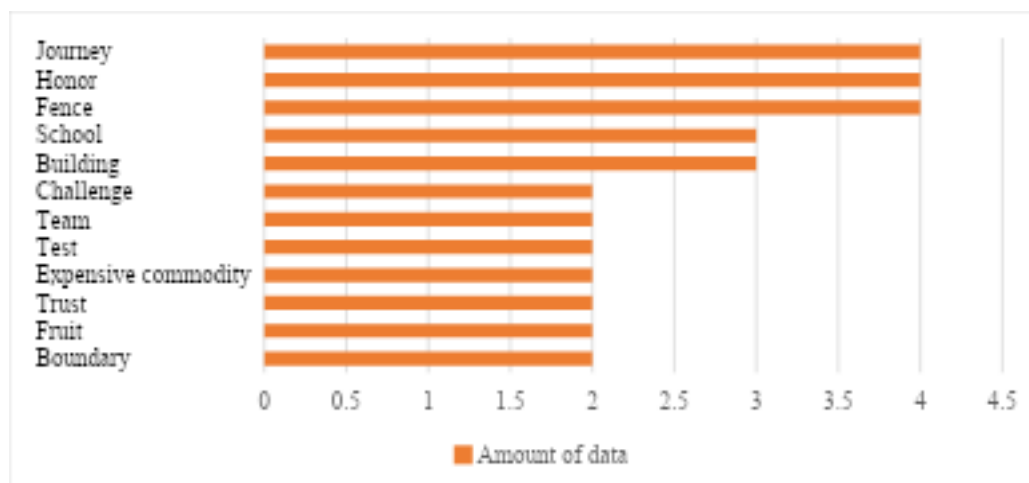


Figure 2: Distribution of conceptual metaphor concepts (frequency ≥ 2)

Figure 1 shows that ontological metaphors dominate with 22 instances (55%), followed by structural metaphors with 17 instances (42.5%), and orientational metaphors with 1 instance (2.5%). Meanwhile, Figure 2 displays 12 metaphorical forms that appear at least twice. *Merarik* is a Journey, *Merarik* is an Honor, and *Merarik* is a Fence; each appears four times as the most productive form. Due to space limitations, the discussion focuses primarily on the most recurrent metaphor categories, while less frequent metaphors are discussed more briefly.

Structural metaphor

A structural metaphor is a type of conceptual metaphor that conceptualizes one domain by mapping the relational structure of another domain onto it (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In the present dataset, eight structural metaphors were identified, accounting for 17 of the 40 expressions (42.5%). These metaphors conceptualize *Merarik* through structured experiences such as journeys, schools, teams, challenges, and tests.

Merarik is a journey

Merarik is a Journey, the most productive conceptual metaphor in the structural category (4 data points). The source domain of 'journey' is mapped to the target domain of "*Merarik*," so that marriage is understood as a long, directional process with provisions, leadership, and a destination. This reflects how the Sasak people view marriage not as a fleeting event, but as a life journey that demands genuine readiness. Representative expressions that reflect this metaphor include:

D09: *Dndek noak lek smeme ne lemak* (Do not disobey your husband later.)

D13: *Mun e wah siep jak Merarik e bae* (If you are ready, then get married.)

D15: *Harus t pinter petak dngan meme, sak solah, sah pecu, sak beu tenak t jok akhirat* (We must choose a good husband who can guide us to the afterlife.)

These expressions illustrate different components of the journey metaphor. Expression D13 emphasizes readiness (*siep*), suggesting that marriage requires adequate preparation before the journey begins. Expression D09 portrays the husband as a guide in family life, while D15 extends the metaphor by conceptualizing marriage as a spiritual journey directed toward well-being in the afterlife. Collectively, these expressions present *Merarik* as a long-term process that requires preparation, guidance, and commitment rather than as a single ceremonial event.

Table 1: Conceptual domain mapping: *Merarik is a journey*

Source Domain (Journey)	Target Domain (<i>Merarik</i>)	Conceptual Mapping
Starting point	Pre-marital readiness	Marriage begins with self-readiness
Journey provisions	Financial, mental, emotional readiness	Without provisions, marriage cannot begin
Journey leader	Husband as head of household	Husband determines the direction of the family
Journey process	Daily married life	Marriage is a long, continuous process
Journey destination	Harmonious and happy family	Marriage aims at mutual well-being

The conceptual mapping presented in Table 1 demonstrates that the metaphor “*Merarik is a Journey*” is constructed from several interconnected elements, including readiness, guidance, process, and destination. Rather than portraying marriage as a single ceremonial event, the expressions consistently conceptualize *Merarik* as a continuous life process that requires preparation before marriage, guidance during married life, and the pursuit of long-term personal and family well-being. These findings indicate that the journey metaphor provides a coherent conceptual framework through which the Sasak community understands the institution of marriage.

Merarik is a School

The metaphor “*Merarik is a School* “ was identified in three expressions. This metaphor conceptualizes marriage as a learning environment in which individuals develop personal qualities, practical skills, and emotional maturity through everyday marital experiences.

Representative expressions include:

D05: *Merarik nukn ye taok t belajar* (Marriage is a place to learn.)

D40: *Merarik nu ye taok t latih kesabaran t* (Marriage is a place where our patience is trained.”)

D35: *Misal t wah Merarik jak taon d doang meriap* (Once you are married, you will eventually learn how to cook.)

These expressions portray marriage as a continuous learning process. Expression D05 explicitly identifies marriage as a place of learning, while D40 emphasizes the development of patience through marital experiences. Expression D35 illustrates the acquisition of practical household skills during married life. Together, these expressions conceptualize *Merarik* as an educational process that shapes character, competence, and personal maturity.

Table 2: *Conceptual domain mapping: Merarik is a school*

Source Domain (School)	Target Domain (<i>Merarik</i>)	Conceptual Mapping
School institution	Institution of marriage	Marriage is an institution for character formation
Teacher / educator	Experience of married life	Daily life teaches many things
Learning process	Adjusting to a partner	Partners learn from and understand each other
Competencies acquired	Patience, household skills, maturity	Marriage builds life capacity

The conceptual mapping indicates that *Merarik* is understood as a lifelong learning process in which experiences within marriage contribute to personal growth and the development of practical and emotional competencies.

Merarik is a Team

The metaphor “*Merarik is a Team*” was identified in two expressions. This metaphor conceptualizes marriage as a collaborative partnership in which husband and wife perform complementary roles to achieve shared family goals.

Representative expressions include:

D22: *Mlet t ite endah adekn sak arak priapan t lek bale* (We also want to get married so there is someone who cooks at home.)

D24: *Gaeen nte metak snine adekn sak arak rungu kemu* (Find a wife soon so there will be someone to take care of you.)

Both expressions emphasize complementary responsibilities within married life. Rather than describing marriage as an individual undertaking, they portray husband and wife as partners whose different roles contribute to maintaining the household and family welfare.

Table 3 : conceptual domain mapping: marriage is a team

Source Domain (Team)	Target Domain (<i>Merarik</i>)	Conceptual Mapping
Team members	Husband and wife	Partners are mutually complementary team members
Division of tasks in team	Division of household tasks: husband earns income; wife manages the home	Each member has their respective duties
Team goal	Family welfare	Cooperation toward a harmonious family

The conceptual mapping demonstrates that *Merarik* is understood as a cooperative relationship in which shared responsibilities and mutual support contribute to achieving collective family well-being.

Merarik is a Challenge

The metaphor “*Merarik is a Challenge*” was identified in two expressions. This metaphor conceptualizes marriage as a demanding undertaking that requires courage and readiness to face both social and personal consequences.

Representative expressions include:

Do1: *K benin sak bait anak dngan* (“Very brave to take someone else’s daughter.”)

Do8: *Piran lalo paling cewek nu?* (“When are you going to take the girl?”)

Expression Do1 emphasizes the courage required to assume responsibility for another person's daughter through marriage. Expression Do8 refers to *memaling*, the traditional practice of taking the bride as part of the *Merarik* process, highlighting the social risks and customary challenges associated with marriage. Together, these expressions portray marriage as an undertaking that demands courage, commitment, and readiness to face customary obligations.

Table 4 : Conceptual domain mapping: *Merarik is a challenge*

Source Domain (Challenge)	Target Domain (<i>Merarik</i>)	Conceptual Mapping
Risk action	<i>Merarik</i> practice (<i>memaling</i>)	Getting married requires courage to face customary and family consequences.
Consequence/Risk	Responsibility of taking another's child	Marriage demands nerve and readiness to bear a new life burden.
Difficult terrain/Obstacles	Process of fulfilling marriage requirements	Customary stages are seen as physical and social missions to be conquered.

The conceptual mapping indicates that *Merarik* is perceived as a demanding process requiring individuals to confront both personal responsibilities and customary expectations.

Merarik is a Test

The metaphor *Merarik is a Test* was identified in two expressions. This metaphor conceptualizes marriage as an ongoing assessment of an individual's emotional resilience, sense of responsibility, and ability to manage family life.

Representative expressions include:

Do2: *Arak an t dedere lasing, Merarik jak luek lalok pikiran t* (It is better to remain single; marriage brings many worries.)

D36: *Luek lalok coben t Merarik* (There are many trials in marriage.)

Expression Do2 contrasts the perceived freedom of single life with the responsibilities and pressures associated with marriage. Expression D36 explicitly characterizes marriage as a series of trials that extend beyond the couple, encompassing relationships with extended family and the surrounding community. Together, these expressions conceptualize marriage as a continuous process of testing one's emotional strength and ability to navigate complex social relationships.

Table 5: Conceptual domain mapping: *Merarik* is a test

Source Domain (Test)	Target Domain (<i>Merarik</i>)	Conceptual Mapping
Arena of test	Married life	Marriage tests the capacity and character of individuals
Test questions/Material	Financial problems, children, and family relations	Household problems are instruments for testing self-capacity.
Mental burden/Pressure	Complexity of post-marriage life	Marriage evaluates a person's level of mental resilience
Passing the test	Success in maintaining the household	A lasting marriage signifies passing life's test.

The conceptual mapping demonstrates that *Merarik* is understood as a prolonged evaluative process in which individuals continually develop resilience while responding to the psychological, social, and practical demands of married life.

Ontological Metaphors

Ontological metaphors conceptualize abstract experiences as concrete entities, objects, or substances (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In the present dataset, ontological metaphors constitute the largest category, accounting for 22 of the 40 expressions (55%). These metaphors represent *Merarik* through tangible objects and entities, allowing abstract aspects of marriage, such as dignity, responsibility, readiness, and social regulation, to be understood in concrete terms.

Merarik is an Honor

Merarik is an Honor was the most frequent ontological metaphor, occurring in four expressions. The data conceptualize marriage as a public manifestation of family dignity, demonstrated through customary ceremonies and recognized by the wider community.

Representative expressions include:

- D16:** *Luek-luek jauh gendang belek lemak sak e Merarik ne* ("Bring many gendang belek performers when you get married.")
- D32:** *Piran kemu? T gae begawe* ("When will you get married? So we can hold a begawe ceremony.")
- D34:** *Lemak sak d Merarik side ampok k milu nyongkolan* ("I'll join the nyongkolan procession when you get married.")

These expressions consistently associate marriage with public ceremonies such as *begawe* and *nyongkolan*. Rather than functioning merely as wedding rituals, these ceremonies symbolize the dignity of the bride's and groom's families and provide opportunities for that dignity to be publicly recognized by the community.

Table 6: *Conceptual Mapping of Merarik Is an Honor*

Source Domain (Honor)	Target Domain (Merari	Conceptual Mapping
Valuable possession	Family dignity	Marriage represents family honor.
Measure of honor	Wedding ceremonies	Public celebration symbolizes family prestige.
Owner of honor	Bride's and groom's families	Marriage reflects collective family dignity.
Public recognition	Community participation	Honor gains meaning through public acknowledgment.

The conceptual mapping indicates that *Merarik* is understood as a social institution through which family dignity is expressed and validated within the community.

Merarik is a Fence

The metaphor *Merarik is a Fence* was identified in three expressions. This metaphor conceptualizes marriage as a protective boundary that distinguishes socially and religiously legitimate relationships from those considered inappropriate. Representative expressions include:

D20: *Mbe-mbe e lei jauk e mun wah sah jak* (You may go anywhere once you are legally married.)

D26: *Masih ne bbereyeen laguk nket nten tokon* (They are still dating, yet they sit too closely together.)

D28: *Dendek gawek sak ndek-ndek mun masih breyeen jak* (Do not behave inappropriately while you are still dating.)

Together, these expressions portray marriage as establishing a clear moral distinction between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Marriage is therefore represented as providing legitimacy and protection for relationships that were previously restricted.

Table 7: *Conceptual Mapping of Merarik Is a Fence*

Source Domain (Fence)	Target Domain (Merarik)	Conceptual Mapping
Protective fence	Marriage	Marriage provides moral and social protection.
Inside the fence	Married status	Legitimate relationships are socially accepted.
Outside the fence	Premarital relationship	Behaviour remains socially restricted.
Protective function	Social legitimacy	Marriage reduces social and moral conflict.

The data demonstrate that marriage is conceptualized as a protective institution that regulates interpersonal relationships through socially recognized boundaries.

Merarik is a Building

The metaphor *Merarik* is a Building occurred in three expressions. The data conceptualize marriage as a construction that requires adequate resources, careful preparation, and a stable foundation before it can be established successfully. Representative expressions include:

D19: *Ndekman arak modal juluk sik t Merarik* (I do not yet have enough capital to get married.)

D30: *Petak dngan meme sak wah bdoe bale langgak* (Find a man who already owns a house.)

D31: *Antih bae mapan juluk ampok Merarik* ("Wait until you are financially stable before getting married.)

These expressions consistently emphasize financial resources, home ownership, and personal stability as prerequisites for marriage. Rather than viewing marriage as an isolated event, the speakers describe it as something that must be carefully prepared before a household can be established.

Table 8: *Conceptual Mapping of Merarik Is a Building*

Source Domain (Building)	Target Domain (Merarik)	Conceptual Mapping
Building materials	Financial resources	Marriage requires material preparation.
Building foundation	Economic and emotional stability	Stable foundations strengthen the household.
House	Independent family	Marriage establishes a new household.
Solid structure	Established life	Marriage should begin after adequate preparation.

The conceptual mapping shows that *Merarik* is understood as a construction process whose success depends on sufficient preparation and stability.

Merarik is an Expensive Commodity

The metaphor *Merarik* is an Expensive Commodity was identified in two expressions. The data conceptualize marriage as something requiring substantial financial resources before it can be attained. Representative expressions include:

D03: *Ndekman arak keping sik t Merarik* ("I do not yet have enough money to get married.)

D25: *Ye masih ngumpulang keping sik Merarik* ("He is still saving money to get married.)

Both expressions emphasize financial preparation as an important prerequisite for marriage. Marriage is portrayed as an achievement that can only be realized after sufficient economic resources have been accumulated. Collectively, these expressions demonstrate that economic readiness constitutes an essential aspect of how *Merarik* is conceptualized.

Merarik is a Trust

The metaphor *Merarik is a Trust* occurred in two expressions. The data conceptualize marriage as the acceptance of responsibility for another person's well-being.

D04: *Lamun e wah sanggup impan anak dengan jak Merarik e bae* (If you are capable of supporting someone else's daughter, then get married.)

D18: *Ndek t man beni Merarik, ndek t man bdoe pgawean* (I am not yet ready to marry because I do not have a permanent job.)

Both expressions associate marriage with responsibility and the capacity to provide for one's family. Readiness for marriage is therefore evaluated not only in emotional terms but also through the ability to fulfil practical obligations. These findings indicate that *Merarik* is conceptualized as a commitment requiring responsibility, capability, and long-term accountability.

Merarik Is a Fruit

The metaphor *Merarik is a Fruit* appeared in two expressions. This metaphor conceptualizes marriage as the outcome of a gradual process of personal growth and maturity.

Representative expressions include:

D17: *Dndk Merarik juluk masih e kodek* (Do not get married yet; you are still too young.)

D29: *Wah toak e wah weyen e Merarik* (You are already mature; it is time to get married.)

These expressions associate readiness for marriage with maturity rather than chronological age alone. Marriage is therefore portrayed as the natural outcome of personal development.

Table 9: *Conceptual Mapping of Merarik Is a Fruit*

Source Domain (Fruit)	Target Domain (Merarik)	Conceptual Mapping
Unripe fruit	Immature individual	Not yet ready for marriage.
Growth process	Personal development	Readiness develops gradually.
Ripe fruit	Mature individual	Marriage follows personal maturity.
Harvest time	Appropriate time for marriage	Marriage should occur at the proper stage of life.

The conceptual mapping demonstrates that *Merarik* is viewed as the culmination of a gradual maturation process rather than an event determined solely by age.

Merarik is a Boundary

The metaphor *Merarik Is a Boundary* occurred in two expressions. Unlike *Merarik Is a Fence*, which emphasizes moral protection, this metaphor highlights the restrictions and obligations experienced after marriage.

D23: *Lemak juluk ndek t man puas kedek* (I am not yet satisfied with playing around.)

D12: *Puasin dik e bae juluk sempun e ndekman Merarik* (Enjoy your freedom while you are still unmarried.)

Both expressions portray marriage as marking a transition from personal freedom to greater social responsibility. Marriage is therefore understood as redefining an individual's priorities, obligations, and behavioural expectations. These findings

indicate that *Merarik* is conceptualized as a social boundary separating the relatively unrestricted life of unmarried individuals from the responsibilities associated with married life.

Orientational Metaphor

Only one orientational metaphor was identified in the dataset, accounting for 2.5% of the analyzed expressions. This metaphor, *Merarik Is the Finish Line*, conceptualizes marriage as the ultimate destination of a romantic relationship. The metaphor is reflected in the following expression:

Dio: *K ngonek bbereyea, mun e ndek tkawin jak ngkahang e bae* (You have been dating for a long time. If you have no intention of getting married, it is better to end the relationship.)

The expression portrays romantic relationships as following a linear progression toward marriage. Courtship is understood as the initial stage of this progression, while marriage represents its intended endpoint. A prolonged relationship without a clear intention to marry is therefore viewed as lacking commitment and purpose. The metaphor highlights a spatial orientation in which movement toward marriage signifies progress, whereas remaining in an indefinite dating relationship represents a failure to reach the expected destination. These findings indicate that *Merarik* is conceptualized as the legitimate goal of a committed relationship, with marriage serving as the endpoint that gives meaning and direction to the courtship process.

Table 13 : *Conceptual domain mapping: Merarik is the finish line*

Source Domain (Finish Line)	Target Domain (<i>Merarik</i>)	Conceptual Mapping
Starting point (behind)	Dating period	Romantic relationship is the beginning of the journey toward marriage
Linear direction forward	Development and commitment of the relationship	The relationship must move forward toward marriage
Finish line/Goal (front)	Legal marriage	Marriage is the only valid goal of a relationship

The low frequency of orientational metaphors (1 instance, 2.5%) is understandable, as they tend to be more abstract and less culturally productive than the other two types (Kövecses, 2010). In the Sasak context, concrete experiences and

complex social relations are more frequently expressed through the physical (ontological) and structural (structural) domains than through spatial orientation alone.

DISCUSSION

An analysis of the types and forms of conceptual metaphors in Merarik's discourse reveals three interrelated layers of values that shape the Sasak people's cognitive framework for understanding marriage: cognitive, social, and cultural values.

Cognitive Value

Cognitively, the construction of metaphors in the *Merarik* discourse reflects the mechanism of mapping concrete experiences onto abstract concepts, which is central to conceptual metaphor theory ([Lakoff & Johnson, 1980](#)). In this dataset, the Sasak people use very familiar physical experiences, such as travel, school, buildings, fences, and food, to understand and express the complex and abstract institution of marriage.

The predominance of ontological metaphors (55%) indicates that, in the data collected here, the Sasak people tend to conceptualize marriage as a concrete entity that can be held, owned, and measured. This is a cognitive strategy that facilitates communication about abstract phenomena in everyday life. As [Kövecses \(2010\)](#) argued, metaphors are not merely linguistic tools but reflections of the conceptual structures underpinning the way the speaker community thinks.

The presence of metaphors related to struggle and challenges suggests that these expressions cognitively prepare individuals to approach marriage with full awareness of its complexity, rather than merely as an illusory romantic ideal. Conceptualization through the metaphor *Merarik* is a Challenge that functions as a psychological anticipation mechanism. Through embodied cognition, the Sasak people equate the abstract institution of marriage with concrete experiences that demand great energy, courage, and a readiness to face risks, such as the "bold" act of courting another man's daughter. By mapping marriage into the mental schema of a "challenge," individuals are presented from the outset with a cognitive representation of potential material and non-material obstacles. This minimizes the risk of culture shock or cognitive dissonance when they actually enter married life.

Social Values

From a social perspective, the metaphors in the *Merarik* discourse reflect the structure of social relations and roles prevalent in Sasak society. The metaphor “MERARIK IS A TEAM” illustrates the socially established division of gender roles. Although this construction reflects patriarchal values that warrant critique due to their potential to confine women’s agency solely to the domestic sphere, from a sociolinguistic perspective, it demonstrates how the speakers’ gender ideology and social structure are manifested in everyday language use.

The metaphor *Merarik* is an Honor specifically reveals a strong social dimension. The traditions of *begawe* and *nyongkolan* are not merely ceremonies but social mechanisms for building, maintaining, and demonstrating social status. [Berger & Luckmann \(1966\)](#) Explain that social reality is constructed through processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization. In the context of *Merarik*, honor, as a social construct, has been objectified as a mandatory ritual.

The metaphor *Merarik* is a Fence is also rich in social significance. By positioning marriage as the boundary between what is permitted and what is not, the Sasak community uses the institution of marriage as a mechanism of social control. This reflects the function of marriage not only as a personal bond but also as a communal regulatory instrument that maintains social order and cohesion.

Cultural Values

In the cultural dimension, the metaphor in the *Merarik* discourse represents a distinctive value system within Sasak society, blending Islamic values, local customs, and the ecological experiences of an agrarian community. It is important to note that this cultural representation is based on data collected from Pringgajurang Utara Village; therefore, these findings cannot be generalized to the entire internally diverse Sasak community; there may be regional and subcultural variations not yet addressed in this study. The metaphor *Merarik* is a Fruit reflects the local wisdom of an agrarian culture that understands readiness for marriage through the analogy of fruit ripening; just as fruit picked before it is ripe is considered suboptimal and potentially harmful, so too is early marriage.

The most distinctive and innovative aspect of cultural convergence in Sasak discourse is the presence of religious-cultural syncretism, as reflected in the metaphor “*Merarik* is Test”. The appearance of the word “*coben*” (*ujian/cobaan*) in everyday speech is closely linked to the theological views of the predominantly Muslim Sasak community. In Islamic teachings, worldly life, including the institution of marriage, is viewed as a field of spiritual trials (*ibtilā’ or imtihān*) aimed at cultivating patience and

elevating one's level of faith. Through traditional Sasak marriage, domestic and social trials are integrated as a structured cultural medium to evaluate both an individual's spiritual maturity and social responsibility. This conceptualization indicates that for the Sasak community in this dataset, marriage serves as a cultural vehicle for shaping the ideal human profile: patient and trusting in God when facing problems (Islamic theological values), while steadfastly upholding marital commitments within the community (Sasak customary values).

The strong Islamic values in Sasak culture are also reflected in the metaphors "Merarik is a Fence" and "Merarik is a Journey". The concept of a fence separating the halal from the haram reflects the internalization of Fiqh values into everyday language. Meanwhile, the journey metaphor, which emphasizes the husband's leadership, reflects the Islamic construction of the husband's position as qawwam (leader and protector) within the household ([Mahyuni & Ahmadi, 2020](#)). The metaphor *Merarik* is Honor culturally reflects the social stratification system in Sasak society. Geertz (1973) states that ceremonies in society function as a means of expressing and reproducing socio-cultural hierarchies.

Overall, these findings reinforce [Kövecses \(2005\)](#) the argument that conceptual metaphors are universal in their mechanisms but vary culturally in their expressions. Sasak society employs the universal cognitive mechanism of mapping the source domain to the target domain, yet fills it with content that is highly distinctive, drawn from social experiences, customary traditions, and local Islamic values. Thus, the analysis of conceptual metaphors in the *Merarik* discourse not only enriches cognitive linguistics but also offers a deeper understanding of how the Sasak people perceive, practice, and pass on values regarding the institution of marriage to the next generation.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully identified 20 conceptual metaphors in the natural speech of the Sasak people regarding *Merarik*, which are categorized into three types: structural, ontological, and orientational. Ontological metaphors are the most dominant type, followed by structural metaphors, while orientational metaphors were found only in very limited numbers. These findings indicate that the Sasak community primarily understands *Merarik* through concrete experiences closely tied to daily life, whether physical, social, or cultural. Metaphors such as *Merarik* is a Journey, *Merarik* is a School, *Merarik* is Honor, and *Merarik* is a Fence demonstrate that *Merarik* is

understood not merely as a marital institution but also as a learning process, a responsibility, a regulator of social behavior, and a symbol of cultural identity. Mapping between the source and target domains reveals that the conceptualization of *Merarik* is constructed through the community's life experiences and then used to understand the abstract concept of marriage. This finding supports the main assumption of Conceptual Metaphor Theory that humans understand abstract concepts through more concrete experiences and demonstrates that the metaphors used by the Sasak community reflect their social and cultural values and their collective perspective on marriage.

This research contributes to the development of Cognitive Linguistics, particularly in understanding the relationship among language, cognition, and culture in a local context. Unlike previous studies that generally focused on written texts, proverbs, or the concept of marriage, this study examines conceptual metaphors that emerge in the everyday speech of the Sasak people regarding *Merarik*, a specific cultural practice. However, this study has several limitations. The research data comes only from one area, namely Pringgajurang Utara Village, so the results cannot be generalized to all Sasak communities, given their social and cultural diversity. Furthermore, the interpretation of metaphors still contains an element of subjectivity despite validation through member checking and peer debriefing. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the scope of the research area, compare Sasak communities from various regions, and examine marriage metaphors in other data sources, such as social media, regional literary works, and cultural texts, to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the construction of the meaning of marriage in Sasak society.

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