

Decolonial Ecolinguistics in the Oral Tradition of *Seblang* as a Form of Osing People's Resistance

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Abstract

As global environmental crises continue to grow, greater attention to indigenous ecological knowledge is urgently needed. This study explores the ecological narratives embedded in the oral tradition of *Gending Seblang Olehsari* within the Osing community, Banyuwangi, East Java Province, Indonesia, through a decolonial ecolinguistic perspective, and examines its role as cultural resistance against hegemonic environmental discourse. In positioning this study within contemporary ecolinguistic and decolonial scholarship, the research emphasizes the urgency of recovering marginalized ecological epistemologies that have been systematically silenced by colonial and modern development paradigms. Employing qualitative methods, the research analyzes oral texts, engages in participatory observation of rituals, and conducts in-depth interviews with community leaders. This methodological design allows the study to capture not only linguistic structures, but also the socio-cultural, historical, and cosmological dimensions through which environmental meaning is produced and sustained in everyday community practices. The findings demonstrate that *Gending Seblang* embodies ecological symbols, such as *kembang gadhung* (toxic flower) and *ombak umbul* (ocean wave), which reflect the Osing cosmology of harmonious and sustainable human-nature relations. These symbols operate as ecological signifiers that encode ethical principles of restraint, reciprocity, and interdependence between human and non-human life forms, offering an alternative worldview to anthropocentric environmental models. Metaphors including *Seblang Lukinta* (trance upon nature's bed) and *Layar Kumendhung* (critique of ecological colonialism) function as linguistic strategies to preserve local knowledge while resisting exploitative Western logic. Through these metaphors, the Osing people articulate a counter-narrative that challenges the reduction of nature into mere economic resources and reasserts indigenous cosmology as a valid and authoritative system of ecological knowledge. The study concludes that this oral tradition is not merely intangible cultural heritage, but a living knowledge system significant for ecological decolonization movements. As such, *Gending Seblang* should be understood as an active site of epistemic resistance that continues to shape community identity, environmental ethics, and political consciousness. These insights provide a new perspective on integrating local wisdom into environmental policy and sustainability education. Ultimately, this research demonstrates that the preservation of oral traditions is inseparable from the pursuit of ecological justice, particularly in the context of accelerating environmental crises and the enduring legacy of colonial environmental governance.

Keywords: cultural resistance; decolonial ecolinguistics; ecological narrative; *gending seblang*; local wisdom.

INTRODUCTION

Ecolinguistics is an interdisciplinary field that examines the reciprocal relationship between language, ecology, and the environment (Ashraf et al., 2025; Rasheed, 2023). According to Ghourbanpour (2024) in *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By*, language not only serves as a means of communication, but also shapes the way humans perceive, interact, and judge nature. Ecolinguistic analysis seeks to uncover how discourses can encourage exploitative behavior towards the environment, while exploring alternative discourses that support ecological sustainability. In the context of the global ecological crisis, environmental discourse is often dominated by Western narratives that ignore Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK) (Leipold, 2021; Merz et al., 2023; Widiastuty & Anwar, 2025). The decolonial approach in ecolinguistics emerged in response to elevate marginalized local epistemology, including through oral traditions that holistically record human-nature relations (Forte, 2024; Paramita, 2025; Shah et al., 2025). Decolonial ecolinguistics also seeks to decolonize environmental discourse by elevating and validating Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK), which is reflected in the language, metaphors, and oral traditions of indigenous peoples.

Against this theoretical background, local indigenous traditions provide concrete sites for examining how decolonial ecolinguistic principles are realized in practice. In Indonesia, the Osing community in Banyuwangi, East Java Province, offers an interesting example through the *Gending Seblang Olehsari* (the *Seblang Olehsari* Song) ritual, a village cleansing tradition that is not only spiritual but also contains a deep ecological narrative (Ramadhan et al., 2023; Sinthumule, 2023; Relva & Jung, 2021). Its point of uniqueness appears as a differentiator with similar traditions in other regions, for example, ceremonies *Seren Taun* (annual traditional ceremony) in Sundanese society places a greater emphasis on gratitude for the harvest and respect for *Nyi Pohaci Sang Hyang Asri* (The Goddess of Rice) with a core symbol of rice and barn. Meanwhile, the *Mantra Suku Bahari* (Mantra of the Sea Tribe) ritual of the Mandar community in West Sulawesi, as studied by Sunarti (2017), focuses on human relations with the sea as well as the personification of wind and waves for safety at sea, without the trance dimension that is a medium of communication with ancestors as in Seblang. Meanwhile, in Seblang, there is a unique integration between trance, specific flora symbolism, and a veiled critique of ecological colonialism in the lyrics in each stanza. The Seblang chant, which is chanted in the annual ritual, contains natural symbols, such as *kembang gadhung* (*gadhung* flowers or *Dioxorea hirsuta*) and *layar kumendhung* (cloudy clouds), which reflect the ecological wisdom of the Osing people in maintaining the balance of nature. However, this tradition has not been widely studied through the lens of decolonial ecolinguistics, which emphasizes cultural resistance to exploitative modernity. In fact, the oral texts in *Gending Seblang*, such as the metaphor "*ombak umbul ring segara*" (waves rushing in the sea) can be read as a criticism of environmental degradation caused by colonial-extractive logic.

This research is rooted in a decolonial ecolinguistic approach, a critical perspective that combines the analysis of ecological discourse with a postcolonial framework (Nasrullah et al., 2025; Cheng, 2022). *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By* asserts that language not only represents the human-nature relationship, but also forms a value system that can support or undermine ecological sustainability. Meanwhile, Omodan (2024) in *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* offers a decolonial lens to critique the hegemony of Western knowledge about the environment, while also opening up space for the epistemology of indigenous peoples. This dual approach is relevant to reveal how *Gending Seblang Olehsari* as an oral text of the Osing people functions as a counter-narrative that rejects the reduction of nature to mere objects of exploitation, as seen in the metaphor of "*omak umbul ring segara*" (turbulent waves in the sea), which implies autonomous natural dynamics.

This study also interacts with research on oral literature as a medium of ecological knowledge, especially a study written by Sunarti (2017), on the nautical mantras of the Mandar community, which was published in the Indonesian Linguistic Journal. Sunarti (2017) shows how traditional spoken texts often encode ecological principles through distinctive language structures, such as the use of nature's personification "The wind speaks through the leaves". A similar pattern is found in *Gending Seblang*, such as in the array of "*Kembang menur melik-melik ring bebentur*," ("Withered jasmine flowers in the corner of the house,") which reflect the vulnerability of the

ecosystem. This finding is in line with Setiawan (2025) argument in *Wisdom Sits in Places*, which has been published in a journal, that indigenous peoples often store ecological wisdom in the form of toponyms or ritual poems, which serve as a "life map" to sustainably manage natural resources. Specifically, this research refers to authentic documents about *Gending Seblang*, including Prasetyo (2021) field notes on the relationship between this ritual and the agricultural cycle of the Osing community. This empirical finding demonstrate the potential of *Gending Seblang* as a decolonial ecological archive, offering an alternative to the anthropocentric Western environmental narrative.

This research answers two fundamental questions: (1) How does the ecological narrative in *Gending Seblang* represent the cosmological relationship of the Osing people with nature? and (2) In what ways does this oral tradition serve as a decolonial resistance to the discourse of the hegemonic environment? The first question focuses on textual analysis, such as the metaphor "*Seblang Lukinta*" (*Seblang ya lukinta*), which describes the *Seblang* ritual as a medium of union between humans and ancestral spirits through trance, where nature acts as a "bed" or sacred space. Meanwhile, the second question explores the political dimension of *Gending Seblang* as a form of resistance to exploitative modernity, such as through the phrase "*Ratu sebrang kang nungsang pendaka*" (The queen of the opposite [side] looking to the East) which may imply a critique of ecological colonialism (Junejo, 2022; Nsah, 2023; Prabawati & Sudibyo, 2023).

The first objective of this study is to unravel the ecological meaning in *Gending Seblang* using the Decolonial Ecolinguistic approach to understand how the Osing people conceptualize the environment through language. The analysis will include linguistic structures, natural symbols (e.g. "waves of the ocean ring"), as well as the context of ritual performance that reinforces ecological messages (Izzah, 2025; Wanselin et al., 2023; Zhang, 2022). The second goal is, in particular, in maintaining a sustainable local knowledge system in the midst of globalization pressures. By examining the resistive function of *Gending Seblang*, this study will show how cultural practices are not only the inheritance of values, but also political actions that challenge the dominant development narrative (Eichler, 2021; Kakiuchi, 2017; Wulan & Setiawan, 2024). These two goals are interrelated: the meaning of the text (the first goal) becomes the basis for understanding cultural resistance (the second goal). This approach is in line with Sunarti's (2017) study on the maritime mantra, which shows how oral texts encode environmental ethics as well as resistance strategies.

This research is expected not only to fill an academic gap in the study of decolonial ecolinguistics, but also to provide a new perspective on the role of language and oral traditions in the ecological decolonization movement (Fernanda et al., 2024; Robinson et al., 2021; Sumarwati, 2022). The implications include policy recommendations to protect oral traditions as part of an environmental conservation strategy based on local wisdom (Abas et al., 2022; Ortiz-Prado et al., 2024). Thus, this study confirms that *Gending Seblang* is not just a cultural heritage, but a system of living knowledge that the Osing people continue to fight for (Aktürk & Lerski, 2021; Bile et al., 2024; Yeh et al., 2021).

METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study was the oral text of *Gending Seblang Olehsari*, which comes from the tradition of the Osing community in Banyuwangi. The focus of the research was the ecological narratives contained in the lyrics of *Gending*, including metaphors, natural symbols, and linguistic structures that represent the cosmological relationship between humans and nature. Material objects also include the context of ritual performance, in which these spoken texts are brought to life, as well as their role as a medium of resistance against hegemonic environmental discourse. Thus, this study not only analyzes the text in writing, but also relates it to cultural practices and ecological values inherited by the Osing people.

This research used a qualitative design with a decolonial ecolinguistic approach. This approach was chosen to reveal the ecological meaning and political dimension in *Gending Seblang Olehsari* through critical discourse analysis. The research design was exploratory-interpretive, allowing researchers to delve into the socio-cultural and historical context behind the oral text. In addition, this research integrated a decolonial perspective to explore how oral traditions function as a form of resistance to environmental narratives dominated by Western epistemology.

The main sources of information for this study included: (1) authentic documents, such as the manuscript of *Gending Seblang Olehsari* which has been documented in the works of and Prasetyo (2021); (2) field records from observations of the *Seblang* ritual in Banyuwangi; (3) in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, ritual actors, and members of the Osing community who understood the symbolic meaning of *Gending*; and (4) secondary literature related to ecolinguistics, decolonial studies, and political ecology. The combination of these sources ensures a holistic and contextual analysis.

Data collection was carried out through three main stages. First, a documentary study of the *Gending Seblang Olehsari* text and related literature. In this step, the authors identified and collected written documents and analyzed the content of the *Gending* lyrics to identify natural symbols, metaphors, and linguistic structures. Second, participatory observation during the *Seblang* ritual to record the context of performance, social interaction, and symbolic elements that are not contained in the text. In addition, the researchers also recorded contextual details, such as interactions between participants, use of space, ritual objects, and responses to the environment. Third, the authors collected data from semi-structured interviews with key informants, such as traditional elders and traditional artists, to explore a deep understanding of the ecological meaning and value of resistance in *Gending*. To conduct this, the authors prepared interview guides containing open-ended questions related to natural symbols, ritual meanings, and experiences linked to ecological colonialism. To document the results of these interviews, the researcher also recorded (with consent) to ensure the data accuracy. The collected data were then verified through triangulation by (1) comparing data from interviews, observations, and documents; (2) combining findings from text analysis, field observations, and interviews; (3) discussing with co-researchers; and (4) asking the traditional chief evaluate the research manuscript to minimize interpretation bias and ensure its validity.

Data analysis followed the content analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA) models. The first stage involved encoding the *Gending* text regarding its ecological themes and natural symbols. The authors carried out the process of grouping the *Gending* text through the systematic identification of linguistic units that contain ecological content, such as words, phrases, or verses that refer to natural elements (flora, fauna, landscape, or natural phenomena). Then, the authors grouped them into certain categories based on ecological themes, such as "symbols of ecosystem vulnerability," "human-nature relations," or "criticism of environmental exploitation." Each natural symbol (such as the symbols regarding flowers, waves, and clouds) is encoded not only as a physical entity, but also as a cosmological representation of the Osing people, noting the context of its use, the metaphor inherent in it, as well as its relation to the values of sustainability or ecological resistance. The authors iteratively conducted this encoding process by comparing oral texts, translations, and ritual contexts to ensure consistency and depth of interpretation within a decolonial ecolinguistic framework. The second stage explores linguistic and narrative structures to identify patterns of decolonial resistance. Lastly, the third stage connects the findings to the framework of decolonial ecolinguistic theories (Ghorbanpour, 2024; Omodan, 2024) and the historical context of colonialism in Banyuwangi. The results of the analysis are presented in the form of a thematic table to map the relationship between natural symbols, ecological meaning, and political dimensions. The example of this visualization is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. An Example of a Thematic Table to Group the Decolonial Ecolinguistic Analysis

Native Language	Translation
<i>Contains original excerpts of the manuscript of the Gending Seblang Olehsari in the Osing language</i>	<i>Contains the transliteration of the translation of the Gending Seblang Olehsari Manuscript</i>

ANALYSIS

Representation of Cosmological Relations with Nature in the Ecological Meaning of *Gending Seblang Olehsari*

The results of this study were obtained through an in-depth analysis of the oral text of *Gending Seblang Olehsari* with a content analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach. The first stage involves grouping the text based on ecological themes and natural symbols, such as

kembang gadhung and *layar kumendhung*, which are not only understood as physical entities, but also as cosmological representations of the Osing people. This analysis is grounded in a decolonial ecolinguistic framework that emphasizes epistemic decentralization and the restoration of local cosmology, by recognizing indigenous languages as valid knowledge systems. The following are the findings that represent the cosmological relationship between humans and nature in *Gending Seblang*, starting from the analysis of "*Seblang Lukinta*".

Table 2. An Analysis of *Seblang Lukinta Gending*

Native Language	Translation
<i>Seblang-seblang ya lukinta / Sing kang dadi lincakana</i>	Seblang-seblang ya lukinta/Being in a trance on the bed

This lyric depicts the *Seblang* ritual as a medium of union with the spirits of ancestors through trance, where nature acts as a "bed" or sacred space. Findings show that the concept of "bed" as a metaphor for sacred space in *Gending Seblang Lukinta* has profound ecological and socio-cultural implications. Functionally, this metaphor reinforces the Osing people's awareness that humans are not the owners of nature, but part of a cosmic network involving ancestors, soil, and non-human beings. The *Seblang* ritual, with trance as a transcendental medium of communication, affirms that nature (represented by the "ritual bed/arena") is an active entity that must be respected, not merely an object of exploitation. This is in line with the principle of *Tri Hita Karana* in the adjacent Balinese culture, where human-nature-ancestry harmony is maintained through rites. However, this concept risks being marginalized by modernity that separates the sacred space from the productive space. For example, the conversion of land for mass tourism in Banyuwangi can shift the meaning of "bed" from cosmological space to a commodity. In addition, the stigmatization of the practice of trance as "primitive" by colonial medical discourse threatens the preservation of this knowledge. If not adapted into a conservation policy based on local wisdom, *Seblang*'s cosmology has the potential to become extinct or reduced to a mere aesthetic show.

The language structure in *Seblang Lukinta*, especially the use of the term "*lukinta*" which is not defined in the Great Indonesian Dictionary, shows how Osing cosmology was built through a linguistic system that was autonomous from the dominance of the Indonesian/Dutch language. The word "*lukinta*" is not just nonsense, but a lexical gap deliberately created to protect sacred meaning from colonial epistemic intervention. This forms the underlying structure in which language as a fortress of resistance suggests that the untranslating of "*lukinta*" into colonial languages forces listeners to refer to the local context, thus maintaining the authority of indigenous knowledge. In the phrase *Sing kang dadi lincakana* (the trance) also associates trance with a specific place "bed", confirming that certain ecosystems (forests, rivers, etc.) have immovable spiritual agency. The trance on the "bed" also inverts anthropocentric logic in the deconstruction of the hierarchy of humans with nature, where human beings are "occupied" by the ancestors through the medium of nature, not by controlling it.

This correlation can be seen from the history of colonialism in Banyuwangi, where in the 19th century, the Dutch banned the *Seblang* ritual, because it was considered to interfere with plantation productivity. The resistance of the Osing people by preserving the *Seblang* language and rites shows how seemingly simple linguistic structures (such as the word "*lukinta*") are actually nodes of a complex network of ecological resistance. Thus, the cosmology in *Seblang Lukinta* is not only a cultural heritage, but is also a blueprint for building alternative environmental ethics in the midst of a modern ecological crisis.

Table 3. Analysis of *Seblang Kembang Menur*

Native Language	Translation
<i>Kembang menur / Melik-melik ring bebentur / Sun siram-siram alum / Sun petik mencirat ati / Lare angon / Gumuk iku paculana / Tandurana kacang lanjaran / Sak unting oleh perawan</i>	Jasmine flowers / Tiny in the corner of the yard / I flush wither / I pluck the heart / The shepherd's son / Hoe the hill / Plant the long beans / A string gets a girl

The jasmine flower is a symbol that represents human harmony with nature, where the care of the plant (watering it) actually causes withering, reflecting the concept of intervention that is not always beneficial. The metaphor of jasmine flowers shows local knowledge about the fragility of ecosystems. The findings of the decolonial ecolinguistic analysis on the "*Kembang Menur*" reveal that the ecological concept of the Osing people is not only descriptive, but also normative. The metaphor of a jasmine flower that withers when watered ("*Sun siram-siram alum*") emphasizes the principle of minimal intervention against nature, where humans do not always play the role of active managers, but rather as parties who must recognize the limits of the ecosystem. This has implications for traditional conservation practices based on restraint rituals, such as the prohibition of picking certain plants outside the context of the ceremony. In the contemporary context, this knowledge serves as a critique of the exploitative colonial agricultural model, while offering ecological alternatives based on local wisdom.

However, this dysfunction arises when this knowledge is fragmented by the modernization of the young Osing generation who are exposed to capitalistic logic, often ignoring the symbolic meaning of traditional rites, considering it a "superstition". In fact, if mapped systematically, concepts such as *alum* (withering due to excessive intervention) can be the basis for climate change adaptation policies, such as by limiting intensive irrigation in drought-prone land. Thus, this lyric is not just a cultural heritage, but a living epistemology that is relevant for ecological sustainability.

The linguistic and narrative structure of "*Kembang Menur*" reflects the causal relationship between language, ecological knowledge, and the social system of the Osing people. The use of *melik-melik* (small) and *bebanger* (corner) diction indicates a detailed spatial classification, in the small realm that is understood as an integral part of the cosmos. This correlates with the Osing structure of belief which views nature as a living entity (ecological animism). Thus, every action (such as watering or picking flowers) has spiritual consequences. This pattern is reinforced by a contradictory structure of the temple: the act of "watering" that is supposed to nourish actually causes withering. This contradiction is not a linguistic error, but rather a hidden message about the paradox of human intervention in the effort to control nature often turns destructive. This basic structure is connected to colonial history in Banyuwangi, where the Dutch introduced a monoculture irrigation system that ignored local knowledge of the water cycle. As a result, land degradation occurred, because the holistic structure of the Osing language (and knowledge) was forced to submit to colonial reductionist logic. In other words, the preservation of the ecosystem in Banyuwangi cannot be separated from efforts to decolonize the language and restore the original narrative structure as preserved in *Gending Seblang*.

Table 4. Analysis of the *Seblang Kembang Gadhung*

Native Language	Translation
<i>Kembang gadhung / Sak gulung ditawa sewu / Nora murah nora larang / Kang nawa wongadol kembang / Wongadol kembang/ Sun barisena ring Temenggungan / Isuniring payung agung / Lambeyanemebat mayun</i>	Gadhung flower / A thousand bidding / Not cheap not expensive / Who bids a florist / A florist / I line up in Temenggungan / I accompany a big umbrella / Her hand waving is very beautiful

Gadhung flowers (poisonous plants) are one of the tools used to criticize "sellers of the nation" who exploit nature and humans for material gain. The classification of *gadhung* as "toxic" reflects local knowledge of plants that colonial science ignored. The metaphor of "price" associates ecological value with morality (rather than capitalistic economics). Analysis of *Kembang Gadhung* reveals profound ecological and socio-cultural implications.

Functionally, the use of *gadhung* flowers (poisonous plants) as a metaphor for "sellers of the nation" reflects the local wisdom of the Osing people in identifying threats to the ecosystem and social order. The classification of *gadhung* as something "not cheap, not expensive" affirms the rejection of colonial capitalistic logic that tends to exploit nature without moral consideration. It serves as a cultural defense mechanism to maintain sustainability values. However, in terms of dysfunction, the reduction of the meaning of *gadhung* as a symbol of betrayal risks obscuring local botanical knowledge about the use of *gadhung* in traditional medicine or certain rituals. If not

appropriately contextualized, this narrative can reinforce the stigmatization of certain plants, which in turn reduces the diversity of natural resource utilization based on local wisdom. In addition, the dominance of moralistic interpretations (*gadhung*= traitors) has the potential to shift the focus from ecological conservation efforts to purely political narratives. These implications demonstrate the importance of a holistic approach in reading traditional texts, where ecological, linguistic, and social aspects must be understood holistically to avoid costly oversimplifications.

The linguistic and narrative structure in *Kembang Gadhung* is inseparable from the historical context of colonialism in Blambangan (the Banyuwangi area). The choice of the word "*gadhung*" (poisonous plant) to criticize the "seller of the nation" (*wong juall kembang*) is directly correlated with the experience of the Osing people who saw the local elite collaborate with the Dutch company to exploit the land and the people. This metaphorical structure is built on the basis of an underlying structure in the form of binary opposition: *gadhung* (poison/traitor) vs. other flowers (loyalty). This opposition reproduces resistance to colonialism while strengthening the collective identity of the Osing people as "guardians of nature". However, this structure also reveals internal tensions within society, where criticism of betrayal often focuses on human actors, while broader colonial systems of exploitation (such as monoculture and deforestation) are less highlighted. The correlation between language and ecology in this *Gending* also shows how the classification of nature in the Osing culture is not only descriptive, but also political, as certain plants are chosen as symbols to criticize injustice. Thus, the linguistic structure of *Kembang Gadhung* not only reflects ecological knowledge, but also serves as a symbolic tool of resistance against the colonial knowledge regime that degrades nature into a commodity. This shows how indigenous languages are able to maintain the complexity of human-natural relations while responding to external pressures.

Table 5. Analysis of the *Seblang Candra Dewi*

Native Language	Translation
<i>Candra dewi murta siyem / Mara mundur / Mara mundur kembang petetan</i>	The full moon goddess is second to none / Back and forth of flowers in maya / The angel is pleased to return / The ancestors resign / The full moon who peeks in shame / Back and forth with the flower of choice

The figure of the Full Moon Goddess represents a natural cycle that must be respected, in which human intervention (back and forth) is limited by cosmic laws. The myth of the moon goddess is a guide for the management of resources based on the lunar phase. The finding that the myth of Dewi Purnama (the Full Moon Goddess) or *Candra Dewi* functions as an implicit ecological rule has profound implications for the conservation and sustainability practices of the Osing community. Its function as a mechanism of natural regulation can be seen from the way this myth limits human intervention through the lunar cycle ("back and forth of choice flowers"), which indirectly regulates the timing of harvesting, planting, or resource exploitation. This is in line with the concept of *Tri Hita Karana* in Balinese-Osing cosmology, where the harmony of human-nature-God is maintained through rituals and taboos. However, its dysfunction arises when this knowledge is fragmented due to linguistic modernization and colonization. The young generation of Osing who no longer understand the symbolic meaning of "*kembang petetan*" (selected flower) risks ignoring customary prohibitions, thus accelerating the degradation of local ecosystems. For example, the loss of the practice of *ngemong* (guarding sacred plants) in Banyuwangi has led to the extinction of endemic species, such as the *wijaya kusuma* flower (*Epiphyllum anguliger*), which was once protected by myth. The implications of decolonial ecolinguistics here are the need to revitalize the Osing language as a medium of transmission of ecological knowledge, as well as a critique of Western conservation approaches that rely on written regulations without involving local cosmology.

The language structure in *Candra Dewi* reveals the hierarchical correlation between myths, language, and ecology of the Osing people. The surface structure (*gending*/song text) displays a symbolic narrative of the Full Moon Goddess governing the "flower of choice", but the underlying structure emphasizes a belief-based ecological compliance system. The causes and effects can be seen from: (1) Cosmology as a foundation: The myth of the Full Moon Goddess is not just a story,

but a projection of the Osing belief structure that views nature as a living entity. This explains why the phrase "*mara mundur*" (back and forth) is applied to flowers, i.e., a personification that forbids indiscriminate exploitation, (2) Language as a structural binder: Words such as *petetan* (undefined in the Great Indonesian Dictionary) function as linguistic markers that encode ecological prohibitions. The disappearance of these words in everyday language (due to the dominance of Indonesian language) weakens the structure of customary norms, (3) Colonialism as a trigger for disruption: The replacement of the concept of *the flower of choice* with the colonial term "natural resources" changed the relationship between humans and nature from a mutual relationship to an exploitative one. This analysis reinforces the decolonial ecolinguistic thesis that linguistic colonization is directly proportional to ecological damage. Thus, *Candra Dewi* is not just a ritual poem, but an ecological blueprint whose structure is designed to maintain cosmic balance, a system that is now threatened by the erosion of colonial language and epistemology.

Table 6. Analysis of the *Gending Seblang Tambak*

Native Language	Translation
<i>Tambak-tambake gadhung / Udane ngarso / Maliki tanjung / Sak tanjung juragan bawang / Yo egel yo egelane / Sak jogetan</i>	Deep pools / Causing the stars to fall / The stars of the onion warriors / Going around the house and dancing

This *gending*/song uses local terms, such as *tambak* (traditional pond) and *gadhung* (poisonous wild plant) to describe the ecological landscape of Banyuwangi, which contrasts with colonial terms, such as "modern rice fields" or "productive land". The findings of linguistic resistance in *Gending Seblang Olehsari* through local ecological vocabulary, such as *tambak* (traditional pond) and *gadhung* (poisonous wild plants) have profound implications for the preservation of ecological knowledge and cultural identity. The main function in using this vocabulary is to strengthen sustainable local knowledge systems by reaffirming the symbiotic relationship between society and nature. In the decolonial context, these terms serve as epistemic boundary markers that reject the reduction of nature to mere "resources" or "productive land" in colonial-modern discourse. For example, ponds *not* only refer to the physicality of the pond, but also include traditional fish farming practices that are low in emissions and based on seasonal wisdom.

However, dysfunction arises when this vocabulary is marginalized by hegemonic modern terminology, such as "intensive ponds" or "exploited land", which erodes its sacred and ecological meaning. Globalization and modernization of agriculture have the potential to shift people's understanding of *gadhung* from plants that have ritual value and traditional medicine to "weeds" that must be eradicated. Thus, the linguistic resistance in this *gending* is not only cultural, but also political, because it maintains a sustainable ecological framework of thinking in the midst of industrialization pressures.

The underlying structure of this linguistic resistance can be traced through the power of knowledge relationship between local systems and colonial discourse. The ecological vocabulary in *Gending Seblang Olehsari* is rooted in the cosmology of the Osing people who view nature as a living entity that has a spirit (ecological animism). This is contrary to the Western-anthropocentric paradigm that dominates modern environmental policy, in which nature is reduced to an object of exploitation. The main reason for this resistance was the historicity of colonialism in Banyuwangi, where the Dutch implemented a forced planting system that ignored traditional agroecological practices. As a result, songs such as *Tambak-tambake gadhung* function as living archives that encode knowledge about wetland management, crop rotation, and customary prohibitions (taboos) against overexploitation. This correlation between language and ecology can also be seen in how local terms maintain the principle of sustainability, for example by describing *gadhung* as a plant that is "neither cheap nor expensive" a rejection of the colonial market logic that measures the value of nature based on economic productivity. Thus, the structure of language in this *Gending* not only reflects, but also reproduces the egalitarian human-nature relationship, which is the foundation of the contemporary decolonial environmental movement.

Table 7. Analysis of the *Seblang Kembang Dirma*

Native Language	Translation
<i>Kembang dirma / Wiyayate mbok widadari / Ya kurma tundha pitu / Ganjarane wongo perang / Wongo perang ya sampinge ya kalak ijo / Ya pinunjang surat ati / Luntrik-luntrik tiba ndodok</i>	Dirma flower / This is the story of the angel / Seven layers of dates / This is a gift for the soldiers / The soldiers, wearing green <i>kalak</i> earring / The attack makes the heart happy / The dragonfly falls obediently

The personification of nature in *Gending Seblang Olehsari*, such as an "obedient" dragonfly or a "dancing" flower has profound ecological and cultural implications. Functionally, this approach strengthens the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature by elevating non-human beings as equal entities, rather than mere objects of exploitation. In the context of decolonial ecolinguistics, it serves as a counter-narrative to the Western anthropocentric discourse that dominates modern environmental policy. For example, when nature is personified as a subject with a will (like a dragonfly that "falls obediently"), local communities are invited to view ecosystems as living partners, not commodities. This is in line with the concept of panpsychism in indigenous ecophilosophy, which looks at consciousness in all elements of nature. However, dysfunction arises when this kind of narrative is ignored by the hegemonic knowledge regime. Development policies oriented towards resource extraction often ignore this worldview, resulting in the degradation of ecosystems and the marginalization of local knowledge. For example, mining projects in Banyuwangi that threaten sacred forests have legal justifications based on colonial economic logic, while *Gending* such as *Kembang Gadhung* are considered mere "myths". Thus, the personification of nature in the oral tradition is not only aesthetic, but also a tool of resistance that challenges the reduction of nature into a "resource" that can be exploited without limits.

The underlying structure of the personification of nature in *Gending Seblang* can be traced through two layers: local cosmology and colonial pressures. First, in the cosmology of the Osing Banyuwangi community, nature is a living entity with a soul (ecological animism). Dragonflies, flowers, or trees are not just inanimate objects, but part of a network of interdependent life. This concept is reflected in the structure of the *Gending*'s language that uses organic metaphors (e.g., "Flowers that are sunbathed like a bride"). The second layer is a response to colonialism, that introduces the human-nature dichotomy. When the Dutch implemented a forced planting system, nature was reduced to production land, while local knowledge was considered irrational. *Gending Seblang*, through personification, restores the autonomy of nature by giving it a "voice" and a "will". For example, the phrase which means "Waves are crashing in the sea" is not just descriptive, but affirms the dynamics of nature as an active force that must be respected. The correlation between this structure and decolonial resistance is seen when modern hegemonic narratives fail to read the meaning behind the personification. As a result, top-down environmental policies often clash with local wisdom-based conservation practices, such as the prohibition of cutting down certain trees in *Gending Padha Nonton Pupuse*. In other words, the personification of nature is a linguistic strategy to maintain an ecological epistemology threatened by globalization and modernization. This analysis shows that the personification of nature in *Gending Seblang* is not as much a poetic rhetoric as it is a decolonial strategy to restore an equal human-nature relationship. Implicitly, the preservation of oral traditions like this should be seen as part of a broader environmental movement, which rejects colonial epistemology and advocates for locality-based ecological justice.

The Role of Oral Tradition as a Medium of Cultural Resistance

The analysis will focus on linguistic resistance, unraveling colonial terms that support the exploitation of nature and oral traditions that serve as decolonial resistance to hegemonic environmental discourse, some of which are generated according to the following data:

Table 8. Analysis of the *Gending Seblang Layar Kumendhung*

Native Language	Translation
<i>Layar kumendung / Ombak umbul ring segara / Segarane ya tawang agung / Tumenggung nunggang</i>	The fleet sail / The fleet sail has been covered with clouds / the wave is covered / the wave is only in the ocean / the ocean is the company rulers / the rulers have ascended the throne

This *Gending*/song criticizes colonialism through the symbolization of nature (ocean) controlled by the company, while at the same time implying resistance by equating the colonizers with "dark clouds". The decolonial ecolinguistic analysis of the "*Kumendhung Layar*" *Gending* reveals profound implications for the function of language as a tool of ecological resistance. In the context of the Osing people, this *Gending* not only depicts natural phenomena (cloud-covered sails, rolling waves), but also exposes the systemic dysfunction of colonialism that undermines the ecological order. The ocean, which in local cosmology is understood as a dynamic and sacred living space, is transformed into an area of exploitation by the "company rulers". This shows how the Osing language functions as a critique of colonial logic that degrades nature into a commodity.

The implications are dual: on the one hand, it maintains the ecological consciousness of indigenous peoples by affirming that the ocean is not a "resource" but a sovereign entity (*tawang agung*). On the other hand, it also exposes the dysfunction of colonial power that creates a cosmic imbalance through the metaphor of "dark clouds" as a symbol of oppression. In the contemporary context, these findings are relevant for understanding language as an ecological decolonization strategy, in which local narratives can be used to counter the discourse of development that damages the environment. However, dysfunction arises when this knowledge is marginalized by the dominant discourse, thus threatening the sustainability of indigenous knowledge systems.

The linguistic and symbolic structure in "*Layar Kumendhung*" reflects the correlation between colonization and ecological degradation. The main cause of the resistance manifested in this *Gending* was the colonial hegemony over the living space of the Osing people, which is depicted in the phrase "*Segara tawang agung*" ("The ocean of the company's rulers"). The structure of the Osing language deliberately positions the ocean as a subject that is "forced" to be mastered, rather than a passive object, a form of grammatical agency that affirms the nature of nature as a living entity. Behind the surface structure (description of nature), there is an underlying structure in the form of an epistemic conflict: colonial knowledge that views the sea as an economic area collides with Osing's view that glorifies the sea as a spiritual space. The metaphor of "cloud-covered sail" is not only a picture of the weather, but a representation of the disconnection of the harmonious relationship between man and nature due to colonial intervention. This correlation is reinforced by the choice of the word "company" (not the official colonial term) which is deliberately used to deny the legitimacy of the colonial language. Thus, this *Gending* dismantles the power structure that underlies the exploitation of nature, as well as showing how indigenous languages are able to map these power relations through ecological symbols. These findings are in line with critical ecolinguistic theory (Omodan, 2024) which sees language as a battleground between dominant and subaltern knowledge.

Table 9. Analysis of the *Seblang Lilira Kantun*

Native Language	Translation
<i>Lilira kantun, sak kantuli / Lilira yuga / Ya sapanen ya dayoh rika / Mbok sur kuba milu tama</i>	Wake up the rest / You're the last, wake up son / Rebuke the powerless guests / The traitors are famous

The "Wake Up the Rest" *Gending* serves as a medium of cultural resistance that combines linguistic strategies and local cosmology to maintain ecological-social sovereignty. Its main implication lies in its ability to critique colonial structures indirectly through the metaphor of nature ("powerless guests") and the narrative of the younger generation as the "last hope". This decolonial function is effective because: (1) The *Gending* text not only records history, but also evokes memories of the invalidity of colonial power, which is manifested in the exploitation of nature and man, (2) Subversion of hegemonic discourse: The use of local terms, such as "guest" (not "invader") and "traitor" (not "collaborator") creates a counter-narrative rooted in community values. However, this text is also fragmented in modern ritual practices. The young generation of Banyuwangi who are exposed to globalization often fail to grasp the symbolic meaning of *Gending*, thus reducing its effectiveness as a tool of resistance. In addition, the pressure of the tourism industry risks reducing *Gending* to just an aesthetic performance, not a political medium. These

challenges point to the need to revitalize contexts beyond ritual, such as integration into formal education or community-based environmental movements.

The linguistic and cosmological structure of this *Gending* is inseparable from the hierarchical colonial power relationship and the efforts of the Osing people to maintain the autonomy of local knowledge. The results obtained revealed that the term "powerless guest" emerged in response to the Dutch policy of claiming customary land as "state property" (*domaine verklaring*). The Osing people view this claim as a violation of their cosmology which views nature as a living entity (*homo ecologicus*). In addition, the choice of the words "*bangunlah*" (imperative, meaning "wake up") and "*nak*" (familiar greeting, meaning "son") reflects the egalitarian social structure of the Osing society, which is in contrast to the colonial hierarchy. It shows how language plays a role as a tool of identity defense. The exploitation of forests and the forced labor system in the colonial era also undermined the balance of local ecosystems. This *Gending* records the trauma through the symbolism of "traitors" who sell natural resources. The correlation between the destruction of nature and colonialism can be seen from the use of the metaphor of nature as a victim ("broken flowers", "wounded land") in its derivative texts.

Implications

This research makes an important contribution to the development of decolonial ecolinguistics, an approach that is still rarely applied in the context of indigenous peoples of Indonesia. By analyzing the ecological narrative in *Gending Seblang Olehsari*, this study expands the framework of Critical Ecolinguistic Theory (Dwipayana & Astawan, 2024; Ponton, 2024; Zhou, 2021), while simultaneously offering a new perspective on the relationship between language, ecology, and cultural resistance. The findings about the metaphor of nature in the Osing oral tradition are in line with Sunarti's (2017) research on the nautical mantras of the Mandar people, but provide a different nuance with a focus on the decolonial dimension in the local ecological narrative.

On a practical level, this study reveals the potential of *Gending Seblang* as a traditional ecological knowledge system that is still relevant to contemporary environmental issues. The natural symbols in the lyrics of gending, such as the menur (jasmine) flower and the umbul (sea waves), not only reflect the cosmology of the Osing people but also contain sustainability principles that can be adapted for environmental education. This is in line with the findings of Yasir et al. (2022) about ecological wisdom in Indonesian traditional rituals that are effective as a medium for nature conservation. Furthermore, the documentation of ecological values in these oral traditions can support community-based cultural revitalization programs, as shown in the research of Karim (2025) on the preservation of oral literature in East Java.

From a policy perspective, the findings of this study offer strategic recommendations for strengthening the protection of oral traditions as ecological-cultural heritage. This study encourages the integration of the wisdom of *Gending Seblang* into environmental management policies in Banyuwangi. It refers to the indigenous empowerment model that was successfully implemented in the research of Nur and Hikmah (2023) on local wisdom-based ecotourism. These policy recommendations are also in line with UNESCO's (2021) findings on the importance of preserving oral traditions as part of sustainable development. Thus, this research not only provides academic contribution, but also provides operational contribution, providing a roadmap to synergize cultural preservation with environmental conservation at the local and national levels.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that *Gending Seblang Olehsari* is not just an oral tradition, but a decolonial ecological knowledge system that lives in the Osing community. Through a decolonial ecolinguistic approach, it was found that the natural narratives in *Gending Seblang*, such as the metaphors of "*ombak umbul ring segara*" (waves crashing in the sea) and "*kembang gadhung*" (poisonous flowers) are a form of linguistic resistance against the hegemonic environmental discourse rooted in colonialism. Osing's cosmology views nature as a living entity equivalent to humans, in contrast to the anthropocentric logic of Western exploitation. For example, the concept of "bed" in *Seblang Lukinta* emphasizes that nature is a sacred space, not just a resource that can be

exploited. These findings provide an in-depth lesson on the importance of Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK) in dealing with the global environmental crisis. Indigenous peoples, such as the Osing, have developed models of ecological sustainability through language and rituals, which are threatened by modernization and extractive capitalism. The study also shows that the preservation of oral traditions should be understood as a political movement, not just a culture, as it offers an epistemological alternative to nature-destructive development. Thus, *Gending Seblang* is an example of how language and culture can be a tool for ecological decolonization, as well as inspiring environmental policies that are more inclusive of local wisdom.

This research makes three major contributions in the fields of ecolinguistics and decolonial studies. First, it expands the critical ecolinguistic framework to include a postcolonial perspective, resulting in a decolonial ecolinguistic approach that is relevant to the context of indigenous peoples. Second, an in-depth analysis of the metaphor of nature in *Gending Seblang* enriches the study of critical linguistics by showing how indigenous languages function as ecological archives and tools of resistance. These findings are in line with previous research on the maritime mantra, but provide a new nuance with a focus on the decolonial political dimension. Third, this research opens a space for dialogue between academics, environmental activists, and policy makers about the integration of local wisdom in nature conservation, as recommended by UNESCO (2021). Thus, this study not only fills theoretical gaps, but also offers an applicative framework for environmental education and community-based policy.

Although it provides significant findings, this study has some limitations. First, the analysis focused on the oral text of *Gending Seblang Olehsari*. Thus, it did not fully cover variations in ritual performance in other villages (such as *Bakungan*). Second, the decolonial ecolinguistic approach used is still relatively new, so it requires further testing in other cultural contexts to confirm its validity. Third, this study relies on historical documents and interviews with key informants, which has the potential to bias subjectivity in the interpretation of symbolic meaning. Fourth, the pressure of globalization and generational changes causes some of the young generation of Osing to no longer understand the philosophical meaning of *Gending Seblang*, so the data obtained may not fully represent contemporary ecological awareness. In the future, further research is needed to test these findings in a broader context, including comparative analysis with the oral traditions of other indigenous peoples in Indonesia.

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