

Exploring the Elements of Numbers and Measures in Indonesian National Songs as a Reflection of the Nation's Collective Identity

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Abstract

This study analyzes the linguistic function of quantifiers (satu, banyak, raya, selama) in Indonesian national anthems as instruments of ideological construction. Employing a qualitative descriptive design combined with Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, this research quantifies these lexical elements and examines their semantic roles. The analysis reveals that quantifiers operate beyond grammatical functions to form a 'myth' that naturalizes concepts of unity and patriotism. Spatial and temporal quantifiers are strategically used to bridge the archipelago's diversity into a singular national imagination, serving as rhetorical tools for collective identity formation.

Keywords: Quantifier; national songs; Indonesia; collective national identity

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1.0 Introduction

To interpret the results of the nation's struggle, the government established songs of struggle through the Decree of the Young Minister of Education, Teaching and Culture No. 1, dated August 17, 1959, as National Songs, then in 1963 published by Balai Pustaka. Until now, the decree has been implemented by the government, society, and the world of education. It can be seen from the preservation of national songs during state ceremonies and the peak of national holidays (Mintargo, 2017). According to Hutagaol et al. (2021), national songs have been present and greeted the Indonesian people since the era of the struggle against colonialism until now.

The Indonesian national football team players sang the song "Tanah Airku" after defeating China with a score of 1:0 at the Gelora Bung Karno Main Stadium on Thursday, June 5, 2025. Indonesian national team players gathered in the middle of the field. They sang the song Tanah Airku after defeating China with a score of 1-0 at the Bung Karno Main Stadium (SUGBK), Jakarta, Thursday (5/6/2025) night. Indonesian national team supporters also sang along with the players.

According to Della (2022), national songs have constructive lyrical content to instil love for the homeland and nation, patriotism, and nationalism. The national song was created by the nation's heroes who have a high spirit of patriotism so that the rules of the national song can be orientated to the future.

The national song is a medium of cultural expression that functions not only as a means of entertainment but also as a means of character building and national identity. According to Faridah et al. (2023), national identity is a complex concept involving factors such

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as history, culture, values, and attitudes that bind citizens within a country. National character forms a strong foundation for the development of a solid national identity. The values and attitudes internalised by individuals and communities become the foundation for strengthening collective bonds that transcend individual differences.

Songs of struggle and educational songs play a role in fostering awareness of nationalism in Indonesian society, as conducted by Mintargo (2017). The study of the function of songs in Indonesian society was carried out through the sociology of music approach by applying contextual and constructive musicological analysis. The conclusion of this research is that Indonesian national anthems are expressions of the nation's fighters. Musically, the melodies are made simple, using Bahasa Indonesia texts. Sociologically, these songs were created due to pressure from the colonisers.

Research by Hutagaol et al. (2021) discusses the role of lyrical (verbal) and musical (non-verbal) aspects in national anthems as a rhetorical tool for national ideology (in this case, the ideology of the Indonesian nation). The method used is qualitative, which more specifically falls under the umbrella of phenomenological research. The author chose the song "*Maju Tak Gentar*" by C. Simanjuntak. From a semiological point of view, it is known that lyrics are at the first level of significance (denotative) and music is at the second level of significance (connotative). Since the lyrics can be directly identified as the rhetoric of national ideology, the author needs to analyse the music in the anthem further. This can be done by linking the characteristics of myth in Roland Barthes' theory with the musical aspects of the song "*Maju Tak Gentar*". Music in the national anthem is a form of nonverbal narrative that can be used as a rhetorical tool for the nation's ideology.

National songs contain values of struggle, nationalism, and unity expressed through dense and meaningful diction choices. Based on the results of research by Mintargo (2017), national songs use Indonesian texts. That is, not other languages. This is because Bahasa Indonesia is the identity of the nation (Faudillah et al., 2023), as stated in the 1945 Constitution, namely Article 36 and its legislation, namely Law (UU) Number 24 of 2009 concerning Flags, Language, and State Emblems, as well as National Songs.

Regarding Bahasa Indonesia, one of the interesting linguistic aspects to study is the use of number and measurement elements, which in linguistic studies are referred to as quantifiers (*kata penyukat*). The term '*kata penyukat*' was first used by Madong Lubis in his book *Pramasatra Landjut* (1950). Lubis (1950) says that behind the number word, there is a noun that shows the size or number. Some of these measures specify price, some indicate time, and some specify length and content. *Tiga ringgit, empat rupiah, enam jam, lima belas menit*. The words '*ringgit*', '*rupiah*', '*jam*', and '*menit*' are not number words, but names of measures, names of units, or quotations. These words are often used symbolically in national songs to convey a deeper meaning of nationality. Therefore, we would like to explore the elements of number and measurement in the lyrics of Indonesian national songs and analyse how they represent the nation's collective identity.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 National Identity

The elements of national identity can be formulated into three parts: (a) fundamental identity, namely Pancasila, which is the philosophy of the nation, the basis of the state, and state ideology; (b) instrumental identity, which contains the 1945 Constitution and its legislation, the Indonesian language, the state emblem, the state flag, and the national anthem "*Indonesia Raya*"; and (c) natural identity, which includes the Archipelago State and pluralism in ethnicity, language, culture, and religion and belief (religion) (Faudillah et al., 2023).

One of the elements of national identity is the Bahasa Indonesia. According to Law No. 24/2009, Indonesian is the official national language used throughout the territory of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Law Number 24 of 2009 on the Flag, Language, and State Emblem, and National Anthem stipulates that the flag, language, and state emblem, as well as the Indonesian national anthem, are means of unification, identity, and a form of national existence that symbolises the sovereignty and honour of the state as mandated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Sulistyono and Priliana (2024) showed how the idea of a dream home reflects personal and cultural identity, while Septian (2024) revealed village landscapes as microcosms of collective values. Both highlight how space communicates identity. Similarly, this study interprets quantifiers in national songs as symbolic "spaces" in language that construct unity and national identity.

2.2 Quantifier (*Kata Penyukat*)

The term '*penyukat*' comes from the word '*sukat*', which means (1) measure, (2) measuring (length, area, content), or '*sukatan*', while '*penyukat*' is (1) a person who '*menyukat*', or (2) a tool for '*menyukat*' (Tim Pusat Bahasa Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2007). Ramlan (1985) defines '*penyukat*' as a word that lies behind a number word and a phrase called a 'number phrase', which may lie before a nominal word. Other experts refer to the quantifier using different terms. Keraf (1989) calls it an auxiliary number. The explanation is that in mentioning the amount of an item, Bahasa Indonesia does not only use the word number, but always uses a word that describes the nature or type of the item. Such words are called number auxiliaries. According to Kridalaksana (2008), an auxiliary is a word or form that shows a class of nouns, which usually follows a number word, for example, *buah, keping* in *dalam sebuah rumah, and sekeping logam*.

Moeliono (1993) refers to the quantifier as a noun classifier. According to him, Bahasa Indonesia has a group of words that divide things into specific categories according to their appearance. Humans, for example, are accompanied by *orang* classifier; animals by *ekor* classifier, and letters by *pucuk* classifier. Such categorisation is based solely on the conventions of the people who use the language. Humans and animals get a special position with the existence of *orang* and *ekor* classifiers for that group, respectively. Other beings come with different classifiers.

Agreeing with Moeliono, Verhaar (1996) also calls the quantifier a classifier noun. Verhaar says that many languages, including Indonesian, have a "classifier" noun system: a classifier of noun classes in place of "attributes". Japanese has two number word (or numeral) systems between 1 and 10, one for noun classifications that do not need a classifier and the other for noun classifications that do. Tok Pisin only has four classifier nouns (original meaning between brackets): *hap* 'broken' ('half'), *kain*, *kain-kain* 'kinds', *kiau* 'seeds' ('eggs'), and *lain* ('group'). English has several classifier nouns, numeric for (+Count): *two pairs of trousers*, numeric for (-Count): *three yoke of oxen*, and non-numeric for (-Count): *much information*.

According to Kroeger (2005), the word 'classifier' in English is called a *classifier*. Lyons (1995) calls a *classifier* a matchmaker, which is a system of classifying nouns for counting and discriminating found in many Southeast Asian languages. Classifiers are formulated by Kroeger (2005) as free words, often nouns, that fill a special position in a noun phrase but do not appear to contribute to the meaning of the NP. English does not have a classifier; closed order allows frozen structures such as *a pair of scissors* and *five heads of cattle*. The function of a classifier is the same as that of a measure word, as in *two pounds of salt*, i.e., it follows the amount (or sum) of an object's weight. This pattern is very prolific in English and in almost all languages. However, remember that the measure word is the core of the NP in terms of grammatical structure. This is not the case for the classifier.

Kroeger (2005) says that in Chinese noun phrases, as reported by Li and Thompson (1981), the classifier is obligatory when the noun is predicted as a sum or as a particular quantifier, including *beberapa*, *setiap*, etc. Based on Cope (1976) and Sneddon (1996), Kroeger (2005) summarizes the commonly used classifier words in Malay or Bahasa Indonesia, namely *orang*, *buah*, *ekor*, *biji*, *batang*, *keping*, etc.

3.0 Methodology

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design using a semiotic approach. Data were purposively selected from the lyrics of three canonical songs: *Satu Nusa Satu Bangsa*, *Tanah Airku*, and *Indonesia Raya*. The analysis followed a three-step protocol: (1) identification and quantification of quantifiers (kata penyukat) to determine frequency; (2) semantic classification into numeric, spatial, and temporal categories; and (3) interpretative analysis using Roland Barthes' theory of 'Myth' to decode how these denotative markers construct the connotative meaning of national identity. Qualitative descriptive research is a research method that seeks to provide explanations, information, descriptions, and answers in more detail about the problems to be studied (Della, 2022). This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive-interpretative approach.

This research uses a method with three stages as proposed by Sudaryanto (1993), namely the data provision stage, the data analysis stage, and the stage of presenting the results of data analysis. The primary data source is the lyrics of three national songs selected based on their popularity and depth of nationalism message, in which there is the use of the quantifier, namely "*Satu Nusa Satu Bangsa*" created by L. Manik, "*Tanah Airku*" created by Ibu Sud, and "*Indonesia Raya*" created by W.R. Soepratman. Data collection techniques were carried out through documentation studies of song texts; in contrast, data analysis was carried out by identifying and classifying words or phrases containing elements of number and size and interpreting their meaning in the context of the nation's collective identity. The results of the data analysis are displayed in a table of words, forms, and meanings, and then the results are interpreted and presented descriptively and qualitatively.

4.0 Findings

There are three forms of quantifiers in Bahasa Indonesia: the basic form quantifier, the compound form quantifier, and the compound form quantifier. These three forms are based on the word form according to Chaer (1989). The basic form is a word form that has not undergone a morphological process (Chaer, 1989). The morphological process is defined by Ramlan (1997) as the process of forming words from other units, which are the basic forms. In Bahasa Indonesia, there are three kinds of morphological processes, namely affixation, repetition, and compounding. The following is the form of the quantifier in the lyrics of Indonesian national songs.

Table 1. Distribution and Semantic Roles of Quantifiers in Selected National Songs

No	Song Title	Quantifier (Lexeme)	Category	Frequency	Semantic Function (Connotation)
1.	<i>Satu Nusa Satu Bangsa</i>	Satu (One)	Numeric	3	Unifier: Transforms diversity into a singular political entity (Singularity).
		Selama-lamanya (Forever)	Temporal	1	Eternal Sovereignty: Suggests the nation exists beyond infinite time.
2.	<i>Tanah Airku</i>	Selama (During)	Temporal	1	Lifelong Loyalty: Measures devotion through the span of a human life.
		Jauh (Far)	Spatial	1	Boundless Connection: Emotional attachment persists despite physical distance.
3.	<i>Indonesia Raya</i>	Banyak (Many)	Volumetric	1	Comparative Scale: Highlights the uniqueness of the homeland against others.
		Orang (People)	Classifier	1	Social Validator: External acknowledgment of the nation's beauty.
		Raya (Great)	Spatial	4	Grandeur: Constructs an image of vast geopolitical dominance.
		Semuanya (All)	Volumetric	1	Inclusivity: Demands total participation of body and soul in nation-building.

(Source: Author, 2025)

4.1 Lyrics of "Satu Nusa Satu Bahasa"

Satu nusa satu bangsa

*Satu bahasa kita
Tanah air pasti jaya
Untuk selama-lamanya*

4.2 Lyrics of "Tanah Airku"

Tanah airku tidak kulupakan
'kan terkenang *selama* hidupku
Biarpun saya pergi *jauh*
Tidak 'kan hilang dari kalbu
Tanahku yang kucintai
Engkau kuhargai

Walaupun banyak negeri kujalani
Yang mahsyur permai dikata *orang*
Tetapi kampung dan rumahku
Di sanalah kurasa senang
Tanahku tak kulupakan
Engkau kubanggakan

4.3 Lyrics of "Indonesia Raya"

Hiduplah tanahku
Hiduplah neg'riku
Bangsaku, rakyatku, *semuanya*
Bangunlah jiwanya
Bangunlah badannya
Untuk Indonesia *Raya*

Indonesia *Raya*
Merdeka Merdeka
Tanahku Negriku yang Kucinta
Indonesia *Raya*
Merdeka Merdeka
Hiduplah Indonesia *Raya* 2x

5.0 Discussion

5.1 Satu Nusa Satu Bangsa

The song features the word 'satu' repeated three times, each referring to the words 'nusa', 'bangsa', and 'bahasa'. The use of the number 'satu' symbolises the unity and integrity of the pluralistic Indonesian nation, namely in the phrase 'satu nusa, satu bangsa, and satu bahasa'. *Satu Nusa* symbolises the unity of Indonesia as a single territorial entity despite its vast archipelagic composition. According to official data, Indonesia consists of approximately 17,380 islands (Badan Informasi Geospasial, 2024). Meanwhile, *Satu Bangsa* reflects the idea of Indonesia as a collective community sharing common origin, culture, language, and historical consciousness under one national identity. The Central Statistics Agency (Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS) records that Indonesia is home to more than 1,300 ethnic groups, each with distinct cultural characteristics (Indonesia.go.id, 2023; Tempo.co, 2023). These figures reinforce the ideological meaning of unity expressed through the phrase *Satu Nusa Satu Bangsa*. *Satu Bahasa* refers to the shared use of the Indonesian language as a system of sound symbols that enables communication, cooperation, and collective identity among citizens, despite the nation's rich linguistic diversity. Applying Barthesian semiotics, the recurrence of 'Satu' functions as a second-order semiotic system. It transforms the empirical reality of Indonesia's 17,000 islands (plurality) into a constructed 'Myth of Unity' (singularity). The quantifier does not merely count; it suppresses difference to enforce a cohesive national narrative. According to Ethnologue, Indonesia has 715 regional languages, making it the second most linguistically diverse country after Papua New Guinea, which has 840 regional languages (Ethnologue, 2023). Meanwhile, official data from the Language Development and Fostering Agency reports that 718 regional languages, excluding dialects and sub-dialects, have been identified and validated in Indonesia (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, 2024). This linguistic plurality underscores the unifying function of *Satu Bahasa*, represented by Bahasa Indonesia.

Measures of time can be characterised by seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years, and centuries. The phrase 'untuk selamanya' means an infinite length of time, all the time. It can be said that the measure of time is until the end of time/apocalypse. From a civic perspective, this song teaches a fundamental value in Pancasila, especially the third principle: *Persatuan Indonesia*. The repeated mention of the word 'satu' is an affirmation of the importance of national integration in the diversity of ethnicity, religion,

language, and culture. In the context of civic education, this song can be used as a starting point for discussions about the importance of maintaining the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia, fostering a spirit of tolerance among citizens, and instilling constitutional responsibility as citizens who uphold unity over group interests. Thus, this song becomes an educational tool to instill a sense of belonging to the nation and homeland as a whole and evenly.

5.2 "Tanah Airku"

The song doesn't mention numbers explicitly but uses temporal phrases *like 'selama hidupku'* that contain elements of time. This phrase describes the intensity and duration of love for the homeland that is eternal, the length of time (between times) during life, not a moment. The word *'jauh'* means a measure of distance, not near. Even if one goes far away from Indonesia, one will not forget the homeland. The word *'penyukat banyak'* indicates a large number, not a few, while the quantifier *'orang'* clearly indicates a classifier for humans. In the context of this song, many countries have been visited that are as beautiful as people say, but still feel happy in their own village and home. The homeland of Indonesia will never be forgotten and will always be proud of.

The song "Tanah Airku" fosters national awareness through deep personal emotions towards the homeland. In civic education courses, values such as *nationalism, patriotism, and national identity* can be discussed through the lyrics of this song. The phrase *'I will not forget; I will remember all my life'* is a form of appreciation for the homeland as part of one's identity as an Indonesian citizen. This song can be used as a medium of reflection to build the commitment of students and university students to keep loving the nation even though they are abroad or facing the onslaught of globalisation. This song is relevant to building awareness among the younger generation so that they do not lose their national roots in modern transnational life.

5.3 "Indonesia Raya"

The quantifier *'semuanya'* means *'all'*, all the people of Indonesia, to build their souls and bodies. The quantifier *'raya'* in this song means *'big'*, *'broad'*, and *'grand'*. The word forms a symbolic image of Indonesia as a great and sovereign nation. In addition, the phrases *bangunlah jiwanya* and *bangunlah badannya* reflect the size of the development aspects that cover all elements of the nation.

The song "Indonesia Raya" is not just an anthem but also a representation of the ideals and vision of the nation as mandated in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution. From the point of view of civic education, the phrase *'bangunlah jiwanya'* and *'bangunlah badannya'* can be interpreted as an invitation to build a complete Indonesian human being, both spiritually (soul) and physically (body). In learning, this song opens up space to examine basic state values, such as *independence, popular sovereignty, and national dignity*. This song can also be an entry point to invite students to discuss the rights and obligations of citizens in realising an independent, united, sovereign, just, and prosperous Indonesia as mandated in the constitution.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The use of quantifiers as elements of number and size in Indonesian national songs has more than just a quantitative marker. The number word *'satu'* combined with *'nusa'*, *'bangsa'*, and *'bahasa'* (*country, nation, and language*); the time measurement words *'selama-lamanya'* and *'selama'*; the measurement words *'jauh'*, *'banyak'*, and *'raya'*; and the number of *'orang'* convey strong symbolic values about unity, national greatness, and love for the homeland. These elements play an important role in shaping the collective identity of the Indonesian nation through emotional and ideological language. This study shows that linguistic analysis of national songs can reveal how language works in shaping national consciousness. A suggestion for future research is to compare how the word *'penyukat'* is used in various forms of cultural expression (songs, poems, slogans) to form the nation's collective narrative. Related to anthropology, it can also examine how the word *'penyukat'* contains symbolic meanings rooted in the social and cultural values of Indonesian society. In addition, it also examines the younger generation's perception and understanding of the collective values conveyed by the word *'penyukat'* in national songs. In summary, quantifiers in national songs serve as rhetorical anchors that visualize the abstract nation-state into tangible measurements of time and space. However, this study is limited to textual analysis and excludes the musical dimensions (melody/rhythm) that reinforce these affects. Future research should integrate musicological analysis to explore how sonic elements amplify the semantic weight of these quantifiers in shaping collective memory. In summary, quantifiers in national songs serve as rhetorical anchors that visualize the abstract nation-state into tangible measurements of time and space. However, this study is limited to textual analysis and excludes the musical dimensions (melody/rhythm) that reinforce these affects. Future research should integrate musicological analysis to explore how sonic elements amplify the semantic weight of these quantifiers in shaping collective memory.

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Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This paper contributes to the field of linguistics and media arts studies by demonstrating how quantifiers in Indonesian national songs serve not only as linguistic markers but also as symbolic elements reinforcing national identity and collective consciousness.

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