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Kuning Herb in Karo Traditional Medicinal: An Ecolinguistic Study

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the method used is descriptive qualitative, which aims to explore and understand the meaning and views of the community towards traditional healing practices that are developing among the Karo community. This study shows that the practice of traditional *kuning* medicine in the Karo community is not only a form of disease treatment, but also a manifestation of ecological knowledge and local wisdom reflected in language. Through ecolinguistic studies, it was found that the lexicon used to refer to various types of medicinal plants in the *kuning* potion contains interrelated cultural, ecological, and linguistic values. A total of 22 names of medicinal plants that were successfully identified have local names that are typical in the Karo language, such as bahing (ginger), mburle (bangle), and ladza (black turmeric). Each lexicon not only indicates a particular plant species, but also contains information about the parts of the plant used, the medicinal function, and the symbolic meaning in community practices.

Keywords: *Kuning* Herb, Karo traditional medicinal, Ecolinguistic

ABSTRAK

Dalam penelitian ini, metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif, yang bertujuan untuk menggali dan memahami makna serta pandangan masyarakat terhadap praktik pengobatan tradisional yang berkembang di kalangan masyarakat Karo. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa praktik pengobatan tradisional *kuning* pada masyarakat Karo bukan hanya sebagai bentuk penanganan penyakit, tetapi juga sebagai wujud dari pengetahuan ekologis dan kearifan lokal yang tercermin dalam bahasa. Melalui kajian ekolinguistik, ditemukan bahwa leksikon yang digunakan untuk menyebut berbagai jenis tanaman obat dalam ramuan *kuning* mengandung nilai-nilai budaya, ekologis, dan linguistik yang saling terkait. Sebanyak 22 nama tanaman obat yang berhasil diidentifikasi memiliki sebutan lokal yang khas dalam bahasa Karo, seperti bahing (jahe), mburle (bangle), dan ladza (kunyit hitam). Setiap leksikon tersebut tidak hanya menunjukkan spesies tumbuhan tertentu, tetapi juga menyimpan informasi tentang bagian tanaman yang digunakan, fungsi pengobatan, dan makna simbolik di dalam praktik masyarakat.

Kata kunci: Ramuan *kuning*, Obat tradisional Karo, Ekolinguistik



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1. Introduction

Each community has a local culture that is characteristic and develops according to the environment in which they live. This culture covers various aspects of life, including how people maintain health and overcome disease. One real form of this local knowledge is the practice of traditional medicine. Traditional medicine is a hereditary practice that uses natural ingredients, especially plants, as a means of healing various types of diseases. This practice not only functions as a form of medical care, but also reflects the belief system, cultural values, and ecological knowledge of the local community.

According to the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (BPOM, 2014), traditional medicine is a concoction that comes from plants, animals, or minerals, and is used based on the experience and beliefs of the community. Although modern medicine continues to develop rapidly, many people still rely on traditional medicine because it is considered more economical, practical, and in accordance with local values. This practice is known as ethnomedicine, which is traditional medicine that is rooted in culture and people's perceptions of health and disease [1][2][3]. Ethnomedicine studies the treatment system based on local understanding of disease etiology, diagnosis, and healing processes [4][5][6]. Ethnomedicinal systems into

two main types: personalistic systems and naturalistic systems. Personalistic systems attribute disease to supernatural disturbances such as spirits or spirits, while naturalistic systems explain disease as a result of an imbalance of elements in the human body [7][8][9].

In addition to the ethnomedicinal approach, traditional healing practices can also be studied through an ethnolinguistic approach. Ethnolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that studies the relationship between language and culture. Anthropological linguistics that focuses on the relationship between language and linguistic attitudes in a cultural context [10][11][12]. One important concept in ethnolinguistics is language relativity, namely the view that the structure of language influences a person's perspective on the world through the grammatical categories and semantic classifications contained in the language. This view cannot be separated from the influence of culture that shapes and is shaped by language. Ethnolinguistics as the study of language elements such as vocabulary, phrases, clauses, and discourse in social and cultural contexts [13][14][15]. This study includes the use of language in various cultural practices such as ritual ceremonies, folklore, and other cultural activities, which aim to maintain and develop social structures and collective identities of society. Ethnolinguistics a branch of language ecology, which analyzes language choices, thought patterns, and ways of speaking in relation to cultural discourse, ritual language, and the creation of meaning in society [16][17][18].

Various studies have been conducted to examine the lexicon or names of medicinal plants in the context of culture and language, such as research on the Dayak Deah community with an ethnolinguistic approach [19][20]. Which analyzes the dimensions of the Banjar community's antidotes. Lexicon of treatment in Sundanese through an anthropolinguistic approach. Research on the ethnomedical lexicon of skin diseases in the Sukadana Malay community. There is also research that examines the ecollexicon of Batak Toba medicinal plants [21][22]. Other research examines the practice of making traditional *kuning* medicine in Berastagi. However, studies that specifically examine the lexicon of medicinal plants in the practice of *kuning* of the Karo community from an ethnolinguistic approach are still very limited [23][24].

The ethnolinguistic approach is relevant to study traditional healing practices that are rich in cultural values and symbolic meanings recorded in the language of the community. One community that is a real example of implementing traditional healing practices based on culture and language is the Karo ethnic group. The Karo ethnic group in North Sumatra is rich in local wisdom in the use of plants as traditional medicine ingredients [25]. They have a unique health knowledge system, including the use of medicinal plants, the practice of *oukup* (spiced steam bath), *kesaya* (traditional massage), *dampel-dampel*, *surung-surung* (smoking), and the use of mantras recited by a guru (a person who is believed to have healing abilities). Their philosophy, which reads *lit bisa lit tawar* ('if there is a disease, there must be a cure'), reflects a deep belief in the balance of nature and the existence of natural solutions in their lives.

One of the traditional healing practices typical of the Karo is *kuning*, which is a treatment by applying a herbal concoction called *kuning* to the part of the body that is experiencing health problems. This concoction is made from a mixture of medicinal plants such as leaves, roots, and spices, which are processed traditionally and are believed to be able to overcome complaints such as rheumatism, fever, and muscle pain [26]. The term yellow in this context not only refers to the color of the concoction, but also has a symbolic meaning that reflects efficacy and high value, similar to the meaning of "gold" in Karo cultural symbols. The practice of *kuning* is a form of ecological adaptation of the Karo people to the cold climate conditions of the highlands. They know two types of yellow concoctions, namely *kuning melas* (giving a warm effect) and *kuning mbergeh* (giving a cold effect), which are classified based on the ingredients and the body's reaction after use [27]. This classification shows the existence of a local knowledge system that is recorded and passed down through language and collective experience.

From an ecolinguistic perspective, the practice of *kuning* can be understood as part of the ecological discourse of the Karo people. Language not only acts as a means of communication, but also as a tool for recording and inheriting local ecological knowledge. Vocabulary related to traditional medicine, including terms for herbal ingredients, how to make them, and types of diseases and therapies, reflects the community's understanding of nature and the surrounding environment. Therefore, a study of the lexicon in the practice of *kuning* medicine is important to understand how language is used to preserve traditional knowledge and maintain cultural continuity.

Thus, the integration of ethnomedicinal and ethnolinguistic approaches in the study of traditional medicine of

the Karo people allows for a deeper understanding of the relationship between language, culture, and health. This also emphasizes the importance of preserving local languages as a container for the sustainability of traditional knowledge that is full of ecological values and local wisdom.

2. Method

In this study, the method used is descriptive qualitative, which aims to explore and understand the meaning and views of the community towards traditional healing practices that are developing among the Karo community. The research method is systematic steps taken to achieve the expected goals, with a rational, empirical, and systematic scientific approach [28][29]. This study aims to understand how language and culture interact in the context of traditional medicine that is still preserved by the Karo people.

This research was conducted in Penampen, Tiganderket District, Karo Regency. The data sources in this study consist of two main categories, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from the main source through in-depth interviews with traditional medicine practitioners of the Karo community, such as shamans and teachers, who have knowledge of various herbal medicines and healing practices. In addition, direct observation of the implementation of treatment was also carried out to understand more deeply how this traditional medicine practice is carried out in the daily lives of the community. Secondary data was obtained from literature studies that included various references on traditional medicine of the Karo community, as well as previous studies relevant to this topic. These secondary data are useful for completing and enriching the understanding of the cultural, linguistic, and ecological contexts that influence traditional healing practices in Penampen, Tiganderket, Karo Regency.

In collecting data, three main methods were used, namely interviews, observations, and literature studies. Interviews were conducted with informants who have in-depth knowledge of traditional healing, such as practitioners, shamans, or communities who are often involved in healing practices. Direct observation allows researchers to observe the healing process, social interactions in healing ceremonies, and how cultural and ecological values play a role in each step of the treatment. Literature studies were conducted to find supporting references that enrich this study, as well as provide a broader picture of the research topic. After the data was collected, data analysis was carried out in three main stages [30]. Data reduction was carried out by selecting and grouping relevant data to answer the research questions. Then, the data that had been sorted was arranged in a form that was easier to understand through data presentation. Data presentation was carried out in the form of a narrative that describes the findings from interviews and field observations. The final stage is drawing conclusions and verification, which aims to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the research results, as well as to draw conclusions that can contribute to further understanding of the traditional healing practices of the Karo people [31][32].


3. Result and Discussion

The results of this study found 22 lexicons of plant names for making *kuning* potions, 6 lexicons of names of diseases that can be cured by *kuning* potions, and 9 lexicons of how to treat them. The discussion of the research results is as follows.

1. Lexicon of Plant Names for Making *Kuning* Potions

Through 20 meetings, three meetings will be held to provide information, starting with an introduction, learning objectives to be achieved, and the structure of the presentation. The teacher used a predominantly speaking structure in three meetings to convey the message. The presentation of the type of participation structure and performers is based on three analyses, which discuss domain analysis, taxonomic analysis and component analysis, to understand the character of the participation being performed. The following is a table and explanation of the lexicon of plant names for making *kuning* potions

Table 1. Lexicon of plant names for making *kuning* potions

Number	Plant Name	Scientific Name	Local Name	Phonetics	Part Used	Picture
1	Ginger	<i>Zingiber Officinale</i>	<i>Bahing</i>	<i>Bahij</i>	Rhizome	

2	Galangal	<i>Alpinia galanga</i>	<i>Klawes</i>	<i>Klawəs</i>	Rhizome	
3	Coriander	<i>Coriandrum sativum</i> L.	<i>Jera</i>	<i>Jera</i>	Seed	
4	Candlenut	<i>Aleuritas mollucana</i> (L) wild	<i>Kembiri</i>	<i>Kembiri</i>	Seed	
5	Nutmeg	<i>Myristica fragrans</i>	<i>Pala</i>	<i>Pala</i>	Seed	
6	Black pepper	<i>Piper nigrum</i>	<i>Lada</i>	<i>Lada</i>	Seed	
7	Galangal	<i>Kaempferia galanga</i>	<i>Kaciwer</i>	<i>Kaciwər</i>	Rhizome	
8	Pinang	<i>Areca catechu</i>	<i>Pinang</i>	<i>Pinanŋ</i>	Seed	
9	Tobacco	<i>Nicotiana tabacum</i>	<i>Bako</i>	<i>Bako</i>	Leaf	
10	Lemongrass	<i>Cymbopogon arduus</i> L Rendie	<i>Serei</i>	<i>Sərei</i>	Stem	

11	Onion	<i>Allium cepa L</i>	<i>Pia</i>	<i>Pia</i>	Umbi	
12	Garlic	<i>Allium Sativum</i>	<i>Lasuna</i>	<i>Lasuna</i>	Umbi	
13	Java chili	<i>Piper Retrofractum vahl</i>	<i>Cina jawa</i>	<i>Cina jawa</i>	Fruit	
14	Rice	<i>Oryza sativa</i>	<i>Page</i>	<i>page</i>	Seed	
15	Temu-temu	<i>Boesenbergia Rhizoma</i>	<i>Temu kunci</i>	<i>Təmu kunci</i>	Rhizome	
16	Lempuyang	<i>Zingiber zerumbet</i>	<i>Lempuyang</i>	<i>Ləmpuyan</i>	Rhizome	
17	Kuning gajah	<i>Curcuma xanthorrhiza</i>	<i>Kuning gajah</i>	<i>Kuniñ gajah</i>	Rhizome	
18	Bangle	<i>Zingiber Montanum</i>	<i>Mburle</i>	<i>Mburle</i>	Rhizome	
19	Kaffir lime peel	<i>Citrus hytrix</i>	<i>Kulit rimo mukur</i>	<i>Kulit rimə mukur</i>	Fruit skin	
20	Kembang sepatu	<i>Hibiscus Rosa-sinensis</i>	<i>Kembang sepatu</i>	<i>Kəmbaṅ səpatu</i>	Leaf	

21	Gotu kola leaves	<i>Centella asiatica</i>	<i>Pegagan</i>	<i>Pəgagan</i>	Leaf	
22	Black turmeric	<i>Curcuma caesia</i>	<i>Laja</i>	<i>Ladža</i>	Rhizome	

2. Type of Disease

The following is a description of several types of diseases that are believed to be curable using traditional *kuning* herbs:

1. Headaches are characterized by the appearance of pain in the head area, which can occur suddenly or slowly, either on one side or all over.
2. Itching refers to a condition of skin irritation that causes a sensation of wanting to scratch continuously.
3. A cold is understood as an uncomfortable body condition due to uneven gas accumulation, usually accompanied by flu-like symptoms such as fever, runny nose, and headache.
4. Chest tightness is a condition in which a person experiences difficulty breathing or a feeling of pressure in the chest, which causes discomfort.
5. A sore throat occurs when the throat feels sore, dry, or itchy, and is usually triggered by certain infections, allergies, or irritations.
6. Aches and pains (*pegal linu*) refer to pain and tension that spreads to the muscles and joints in various parts of the body.

1. Process of Manufacturing

- a. Selection and cleaning of ingredients

The main ingredients used include:

- Rhizomes: ginger (*bahing*), turmeric (*kuning gajah*), temulawak, lempuyang, bangle
- Seeds and fruits: coriander, candlenut, pepper, nutmeg, rice, betel nut
- Leaves and stems: kaffir lime leaves (*rimo mukur*), *pegagan* leaves, lemongrass
- Bulbs: shallots (*pia*), garlic (*lasuna*)
- Additional: tobacco leaves, Javanese chili

All of these ingredients are washed thoroughly first to remove dirt and contaminants.

- b. Refining ingredients

- The washed ingredients are then ground, pounded, or grated manually until smooth and combined.
- This refining method is important because it will help release the active compounds from each plant

- c. Filtering

Mix all the ingredients that have been ground and filtered to separate the pulp and water.

- Herbal water is sometimes used for drinking or as a complement to herbal decoctions.
- Herbal dregs are used to make param or *kuning* to be applied.

- d. Mixing with flour

The dregs that have been separated from the water are mixed with glutinous rice flour (*pulut*). The function of this flour is as a binding agent so that the potion can be formed and does not spoil quickly.

- e. Forming the potion

The mixture of dregs and flour is formed into a flat circle.

- f. Drying

The potion that has been formed is dried in direct sunlight for several days until completely dry. This process is important to extend the shelf life and prevent rotting.

- g. Storage and Use

Once dry, the *kuning* potion can:

- If you don't want to use it yet, you can store it in an open room. It is better to put it in a jar and then close it. Keep it away from wet / damp places.

- If you want to use it, dissolve it in warm water and then apply it directly to the body (especially on the sore part)

4. Conclusion

This study shows that the practice of traditional *kuning* medicine in the Karo community is not only a form of disease treatment but also a manifestation of ecological knowledge and local wisdom reflected in language. Through ecolinguistic studies, it was found that the lexicon used to refer to various types of medicinal plants in the *kuning* potion contains interrelated cultural, ecological, and linguistic values. A total of 22 names of medicinal plants that were successfully identified have local names that are typical in the Karo language, such as *bahing* (ginger), *mburle* (bangle), and *ladza* (black turmeric). Each lexicon not only indicates a particular plant species, but also stores information about the parts of the plant used, the medicinal function, and the symbolic meaning in community practices.

In terms of the process, the making of the *kuning* potion is carried out through a series of traditional stages, namely washing the ingredients, grinding, filtering, mixing with flour, forming, drying, and storing. The composition of the ingredients and the processing method show the community's deep understanding of the hot or cold properties of a plant, which are classified into two types of *kuning* potions: *kuning melas* and *kuning mbergeh*. This reflects the local classification system of diseases and their treatments.

Overall, the practice of *kuning* is a cultural heritage that combines language, ecology, and traditional medicine. Language acts as a medium for the inheritance of ecological knowledge, while the local plants used are tangible evidence of the closeness of the Karo people to their natural environment. Therefore, the preservation of this language and healing tradition is important to maintain the continuity of cultural identity and local knowledge in the face of modernization and environmental change.

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