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On Emblematic Meanings of Traditional Medicinal Herbs: Local Wisdom Values in the Perspective of Culture-Specific Ecopragmatics

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A B S T R A C T

The research on emblematic meanings of traditional medicinal herbs is descriptive qualitative research. The data of the research were mostly obtained from texts containing descriptions of local wisdom values found in the names of traditional medicinal herbs. The data were also obtained from the researcher's intuitive ideas as a member of the community where the local wisdom is shared and lived by. The data were obtained by using two methods, namely observation, and speaking methods. The observation method was carried out by using a note-taking technique, while the speaking method was carried out by using the recording technique. The conversation between the researcher and the research informants was recorded and then transcribed to find the required data. The participatory interview method employed an in-depth interview to obtain the description of local wisdom values specifically. The proliferation of data was concluded by classifying and typing the data after being identified from the sources. Data analysis was carried out using the distributional method with a direct element division technique to cover the linguistic dimensions of this ecopragmatic research. The data was also analyzed and interpreted by using the identity method to cover the pragmatic dimensions in this research. The research results show that: (1) the emblematic meanings are truly found in several traditional medicinal herbs in some parts of Indonesia; (2) the emblematic meanings of the traditional medicinal herbs are classified based on their shapes, uses, directions of the plant's flower, the smell of the plants, and the origins.

I. INTRODUCTION

Local wisdom values remain an important research subject to be conducted in the industrial revolution 4.0 where technology is playing a huge part in our everyday life (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Amidst the technological advances, local wisdom values have been gradually abandoned. Research on local wisdom values contained in traditional medicinal herbs and plants is an effort to meet the demand of globalization.

In the researcher's perspective, the current industrial revolution has ironically strengthened the spirit of globalization amidst the thrill and

excitement of globalization (Mungmachon, 2012), (Rahardi, R. Kunjana., Setyaningsih, 2019). Local wisdom values have never ceased to exist in human civilization despite the advances of technology that have pervaded every facet of our public life. Even though local wisdom values will not diminish by time, it is possible that those values also pose ambiguity.

The ecopragmatic research was conducted to reveal the ambiguity of local wisdom values contained in the emblematicity of the traditional medicinal herbs and shrubs (Rahardi, R. Kunjana., Setyaningsih, 2019), (Wimberley, 2017). Against this backdrop,

the research questions are formulated as follows: “What are the emblematic meanings found in the culture-specific names of medicinal herbs and shrubs?”

The underlying theory of this research is the ecolinguistic and pragmatic theory (R. K. Rahardi, 2019), (Do Couto, 2014). The first theory rose to prominence in 1970s when Einar Ingvald Haugen, an American linguist, objected to the formalist’s perspective, especially the structuralists, that language is always counted as one and homogenous (Wodak & Meyer, 2016), (Lin & Lin, 2019). In the formalist perspective, language is a mental phenomenon, instead of a social phenomenon. As a mental phenomenon, language study must not relate a language and its society and culture. To argue against the formalist perspective, Haugen and his colleagues developed their theory of language study, known as the functional theory. Language is claimed as a social phenomenon. Thus, language cannot be separated from their functions (Anchimbe & Janney, 2011), (Miller, 2009). Therefore, language must be understood as heterogeneous linguistic variations.

The heterogeneous linguistic variations occur because language is integral to its social and societal contexts (Mey, 2006). The social context of the language always has a horizontal dimension, while the societal context has a vertical dimension. The study of language by taking into account the social and societal contexts in which the language is embedded as its ecology is defined as ecolinguistics (Mey, 2017), (Diercie Dwyarie & Tjahjani, 2019).

Initially, ecolinguistics is understood as an interdisciplinary branch of linguistics which involves extralinguistic dimensions. Therefore, ecolinguistics covers several interdisciplinary fields of language (Peace & Mühlhäusler, 2006). When the interdisciplinary fields in ecolinguistics are related to nature, then it calls natural ecolinguistics or envirolinguistics (Senanayake, 2016). However, when the fields are related to cultural, psychological, dialectal, communal dimensions, the fields are referred to as metaphorical ecolinguistics, or commonly known as ecolinguistics. Thus, the umbrella term to understand this study is the separation of fields in the linguistic study involving extra lingual aspects (Gumperz, 2008), (Jucker & Taavitsainen, 2010).

Furthermore, in their development, both the natural and metaphorical ecolinguistics cannot be separated from the pragmatic study, which essentially refers to the study of meaning. Speaking of language and ecology implies the study of language and its contexts (R. K. Rahardi, 2019), (Ephratt, 2011).

The involvement of context is not limited to social and societal contexts, as previously understood. However, contexts also refer to cultural and situational contexts. In other words, ecolinguistics cannot be separated from the pragmatic study because it is closely connected with the speaker’s meaning. Such an ecolinguistic study is referred to as ecopragmatics (Wimberley, 2017), (Rahardi, R. Kunjana., Setyaningsih, 2019), (Nambiar, Hashim, & Yasin, 2018).

Thus, it is important to differentiate between contextual and conceptual meanings, as well as between connotative and denotative meanings. In addition, meaning can be divided into two: arbitrary and emblematic (Schlenker, 2018), (R. K. Rahardi, 2019). Emblematic meaning is closely connected with onomatopoeia, which includes emblematic sounds, emblematic shapes, emblematic use, and other emblematic aspects (Campisi & özyürek, 2013), (K. Rahardi & Setyaningsih, 2019). Take the example of the gecko sound.

In Javanese, gecko is called ‘tokek’. Tokek produces the emblematic sound ‘kek, kek, kek’, from which it gets its name. Another example is a plant called “kembang kentut” or “a farting flower”.

It gets the name because when touched the flower will emit a strongly bad odor that smells like a fart. Sunflowers look like a sun when the flower blooms, which explains how it gets its name. Another shrub is called tanaman asar or an ‘Asr’ plant because it always blooms around which time the Asr praying time is called, at around 3.00 p.m. Those are examples of how emblematic aspects can be found in every facet of community life. In this research, such facts are helpful to serve as tools to analyze and interpret the research object.

The research aims to describe the emblematic meanings of the names of herbs and shrubs of a given culture, in this case, Javanese. It carried out in the perspective of ecopragmatics and will benefit for: (1) document the cultural and local wisdom values contained in the emblematic names of the

traditional herbs and plants to be preserved; (2) raise awareness among the community if the close connection between linguistic dimensions and local wisdom and cultural values of a given community; (3) develop multidisciplinary linguistic research combining ecology and pragmatics as a new branch of linguistics.

II. METHODS

Ecopragmatic research on the emblematic meanings of traditional medicinal herbs is descriptive qualitative research (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). The data is obtained from texts of various types that contain descriptions of local wisdom values found in traditional medicinal herbs and plants. In addition to such texts, it is possible that the researcher, who is the native member of the cultural group, can provide data by describing his intuitive knowledge in this research (Sudaryanto, 2015).

An interview was carried out with a community figure who understood local wisdom values, especially those related to traditional herb plants, to obtain sufficient data on this ecopragmatic research. Based on the description of the data sources, it is clear that the locative research data source includes the texts containing the description of local wisdom values, the community figures who understand the local wisdom values contained in the traditional medicinal herbs, and the researcher who uses his intuitive ability as a data provider.

The research data were obtained using two methods, namely observation, and speaking methods. The observation method was carried using the note-taking technique, while the speaking method was carried out using the recording technique. The interview between the researcher and the informants was recorded (Mahsun, 2005). The interview method was participatory using the in-depth interview technique in this ecopragmatic research to describe the local wisdom values (Rahardi, R. Kunjana., Setyaningsih, 2019). Lastly, the data were classified and typified after being identified from the data sources. After all the data were available, the next step was to apply the data analysis method. The data analysis implemented the distributional method and direct element division method to cover the linguistic dimensions of this research. In addition, the data were analyzed

using the analysis method, especially extra lingual aspects, to cover the pragmatic dimensions in this research (Salzmann, Duranti, & Goodwin, 1993).

Therefore, it is clear that the multidisciplinary research of the emblematic names of the traditional medicinal herbs can be solved using two analysis methods. In addition to the distributional analysis method and the pragmatic identity method, the researcher also applied the content analysis method. Furthermore, after the data were classified and typified properly, the analysis and interpretation were carried out. The results were explained and described using the informal and narrative description. The description method of this research is informal using verbal narrative, instead of statistical and mathematical symbols, as commonly used in quantitative research.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion of the emblematic meanings on traditional medicinal herbs in this paper will be classified according to their common characteristics, such as shape, nature, use, size, name, color, origin, blooming time, and direction of the plant's flowers as seen in the description below.

Emblematic Meanings Based on Characteristics

Iler or Painted Nettle

The traditional medicinal herb, *Plectranthus scutellarioides*, is locally known as *iler* whose emblematic meaning is based on the character of the plant's sap, which resembles drooling saliva. *Iler* is a Javanese word for drooling saliva produced when someone is sleeping or daydreaming. Since the plant has a similar characteristic, it is named *iler*. This garden plant is used to treat hemorrhoids, diabetes, fever, diarrhea, abscess, etc. The heart-shaped whorled leaves, alternately arranged along the stem, have puckered edges. The flowers are cream, white or greenish-white and are arranged in ancillary spikes in clusters tapering to the tip. The herbs can grow lavishly in fertile lands and lowlands. Let us see the following illustration.

Jambu Biji or Guava

Psidium guajava is commonly known as guava. It is locally known as *jambu biji*, which literally means "seeded guava". The emblematic dimension

of the fruit “jambu biji” lies in the character of the fruit, which has many hard seeds. The fruit gains its name due to its seeds. This fruit is used to treat diabetes, gastric pains, diarrhea, slight cold, incontinence, dengue, and aphtha. Guava is a type of hedging which has many branches, twigs, and hardwood. The following image illustrates the emblematic meaning.



Fig 1. Iler or painted nettle



Fig. 2. Jambu biji or guava

Teratai Kerdil or Water Lilies

Commonly known as water lilies, *Nymphaeaceae tetragona georgi* is locally known as teratai kerdil whose name reflects the character, i.e. dwarf lotus. Therefore, it can be confirmed that the name “teratai kerdil” is emblematic, instead of arbitrary. This traditional medicinal herb is used to treat hypertension, spasms, and alcoholism. The leaves float on the surface of the water, while on shallow waters the flowers stand erect above the water surface. The leaves are reniform, with toothed edges and green in color. The following image illustrates the meaning.



Fig. 3. Teratai kerdil or water lilies

Emblematic Meanings Based on Functions

Adem Ati or Bollygum

Commonly known as Bollywood, bollygum, sycamore, or brown beech, *Litsea glutinosa* is locally known as “adem ati”, which literally means “cool heart.” The name is both emblematic and onomatopoeic. The emblematic dimension lies in the properties of the plant to cool down or as anti-inflammatory. From the research, it was found that several traditional herbs are named based on their special properties. The following illustration confirms signification.



Fig. 4. Adem ati or bollygum

Bunga Tasbih or Canna

Commonly known as canna or platanillo, *Canna indica* is locally known as bunga tasbih. The name “bunga tasbih” is emblematic. The emblematic dimension lies in its small round fruit, which has many seeds used as prayer beads, or “tasbih.” Therefore, it can be confirmed that the properties or benefits of the fruit is to make prayer beads. In the envirolinguistic study, the naming of a plant that based on its characteristics is called emblematic. The following illustration may clarify it.



Fig. 5. Bunga tasbih or canna



Fig. 7. Kelor or drumstick tree

Daun Dewa or The Leaf of God

Commonly known as purple passion, *Gynura* is locally known as daun dewa, which literally means “the leaf of god.” The emblematic dimension of the herb lies in the name “dewa” or “god,” which is considered to have power and authority. Thus, “daun dewa” is considered to have several properties and uses to cure many diseases. Therefore, it can be confirmed that the naming of “daun dewa” is emblematic, instead of arbitrary.



Fig. 6. Daun dewa or the leaf of god

Kelor or Drumstick Tree

Commonly known as drumstick tree, *moringa oleifera* is locally known as “kelor”. The name is emblematic, in which the aspect being iconized lies in the benefit or function. The Javanese people believe that the kelor leaves can be used to remove someone’s magic charm, which causes him to have difficulty dying. After it is removed with the kelor leaf, the person may leave the earth peacefully. The name “kelor” may mean that the leaf helps people to go “lor” or north, the direction of which dead people are buried. The following image illustrates the point.

Tebu or Sugarcane

Sugarcane or “tebu” is emblematic. The emblematic aspect of the perennial grass lies in its properties to make our hearts contented. The word “tebu” stands for “antebing kalbu” or “conviction of the heart.” Therefore, it can be confirmed that the naming of “tebu” is emblematic. The following image illustrates the point.



Fig. 8. Tebu or sugarcane

Kenanga or Cananga

Commonly known as a fragrant tree, *cananga odorata* is locally known as kenanga. The emblematic dimension of the tropical tree lies in the properties, namely, to remember the dead family members. The base of the word “kenanga” is “kenang” or to reminisce. Indonesian people frequently visit the graves of their dead family members and put roses, jasmine, cananga, etc., on the tombstones. Therefore, the word “kenanga” has an emblematic dimension for its benefits to reminisce the dead in the grave. The following image illustrates the point.



Fig. 9. Kenanga or cananga



Fig. 11. Kacapiring or gardenia

Ketepeng Kecil or Sickle Senna

Commonly known as sickle senna, coffee pod, tovara, Cassia Tora is locally known as “ketepeng kecil”, or “small pod.” The name “ketepeng kecil” is emblematic. The emblematic dimension lies in the size of the plant. Thus, it can be confirmed that the name of the plant is emblematic, instead of arbitrary. The expert in the triangulation confirmed the finding of the research.



Fig. 10. Ketepeng kecil or sickle senna

Kacapiring or Gardenia

Commonly known as gardenia or cape jasmine, *gardenia jasminoides* is locally known as kacapiring, which literally means “glass plates.” The name “kacapiring” is emblematic and the emblematicity lies in the shape and appearance of its leaf. The shiny green leaves seem to be made of glass. In a certain cultural community, the evergreen shrub can be used to cure diabetes mellitus, aphtha, and constipation. It can be confirmed that the name “kacapiring” is emblematic, instead of arbitrary. The following image illustrates the point.

Emblematic Meanings Based on Color

Tahi Kotok or Mexican Marigold

Commonly known as Mexican marigold, *tagetes erecta* is locally known as tahi kotok, which literally means “chicken crap.” The name is emblematic, and the emblematic dimension lies in the color of the flowers, which is often associated with the color of chicken crap. In addition, this flower has a strong odor like a chicken crap. Therefore, it can be confirmed that the emblematic meaning of the traditional medicinal herb is seen from the shape and smell. The following image illustrates the point.



Fig. 12. Tahi kotok or mexican marigold

Bawang Putih or Garlic

The naming of bawang putih or “white onion” is emblematic. The emblematic meaning lies in its white bulb. The name “bawang putih” is different from that of “bawang merah” or “red onion” or shallot because the name indicates the color of the onions. Therefore, it is clear that the name “bawang putih” is emblematic, instead of arbitrary. The following illustration will confirm it. The triangulation expert also verifies the researcher’s statement.



Fig. 13. Bawang putih “white onion” or garlic

Daun Ungu or Caricature Plant

Commonly known as caricature plant, *graptophyllum pictum* is a shrub locally known as daun ungu or “purple leaf.” The name “daun ungu” is emblematic. The emblematic dimension lies in the color of the leaf, which is purple. As illustrated in the picture, the leaves of daun ungu are purple, and therefore the naming of the plant is emblematic, instead of arbitrary. The following image illustrates the point.



Fig. 14. Daun ungu or caricature plant

Jintan Putih or Cumin

In the researcher’s opinion, the name “jintan putih” is emblematic. The emblematic aspect of the plant lies in the color of the cumin seeds, which is white. Therefore, it can be said that the name “jintan putih” is emblematic, instead of arbitrary. The following image illustrates the point.

Gondala Merah or Red Betel

Commonly known as Celebes pepper or red betel, *piper crocatum* is locally known as “gondala”, which has white and red varieties. The name of this climbing vine is emblematic. The emblematic aspect lies in the color of the fruit juice. When squeezed, red gondala produces red juice, while

the white gondala produces white juice. Therefore, red and white gondala can be categorized as emblematic.



Fig. 15. Jintan putih or cumin



Fig. 16. Gondala merah or red betel

Jarak Ulung or Bellyache Bush

Commonly known as bellyache bush or cotton-leaf physicnut, *jatropha gossypifolia* is locally known as jarak ulung. The emblematic aspect is the color of the plant’s three-lobed leaves, which is “purple” or “ulung”. In the Javanese language, purple is called “wulung,” as in bamboo wulung or purple bamboo. The expert in triangulation confirms that the meaning is emblematic, instead of arbitrary. The following image illustrates the point.



Fig. 17. Jarak ulung or bellyache bush

Kamboja or Frangipani

Commonly known as frangipani, plumeria is locally known as “kamboja.” The names “kamboja putih” or white frangipani and “kamboja merah” or red frangipani are emblematic. The emblematic aspect is the color dimension, namely white and red. The following images illustrate the researcher’s statement of the flower’s emblematicity. The expert in triangulation explains that “white kamboja” and “red kamboja” are emblematic, instead of arbitrary. The following images confirm the hypothesis.



Fig. 18. Kamboja or frangipani

Kayu Putih or Weeping Paperbark

Commonly known as weeping paperbark, melaleuca leucadendra is locally known as kayu putih or “white treebark.” The emblematic dimension lies in the color of its thick, papery whitish or cream-colored bark and weeping branches. The expert in triangulation confirms that the name “kayu putih” is emblematic, instead of arbitrary. The image illustrates the statement.



Fig. Kayu putih or weeping paperbark

Kedelai or Soybean

Commonly known as soybean, glycine max is locally called kedelai, which are classified into “white kedelai” and “black kedelai.” The classification

based on the color dimension is emblematic. In a certain cultural community, the plant is used to cure diabetes, kidney, and rheumatism. The following image can be seen clearly.



Fig. 20. Kedelai or soybean

Kembang Kertas or “Paper Flower”

Bougainvillea is locally known as “kembang kertas,” or paper flower. The name “kembang kertas” is emblematic because the color of the flower resembles the color of the paper. Therefore, it can be said that “kembang kertas” is emblematic, instead of arbitrary, which can be seen in the following illustration. In a certain cultural community, the flower can be used to treat dysentery.



Fig. 21. Kembang kertas or paper flower

Buah Merah or Red Fruit

Locally known in Papua as kuansu, Indonesians know this fruit as “red fruit” or buah merah. The name “buah merah” is emblematic. The emblematic dimension lies in the naming, which is based on the fruit’s striking color. Therefore, it can be confirmed that the name “buah merah” is emblematic. The following image illustrates the point.



Fig. 22. Buah merah or red fruit

Tembelean or Shrub Verbenas

Commonly known as shrub verbenas, lantanas are known locally as tembelean. The name is emblematic because the color of the flower resembles the color of a chicken crap, or “tembelek.” Therefore, it can be said that the name “tembelean” is emblematic based on the color dimension. The following image illustrates the statement.



Fig. Tembelean or shrub verbenas

Asam Jawa or Javanese Tamarind

Commonly known as tamarind, *Tamarindus Indica* is locally known as asam jawa, or “Javanese tamarind.” The word “asam” or “asem” in the Javanese language means “sour.” Therefore, the name “asam Jawa” is emblematic, in which the emblematic dimension lies in the sour taste. It also indicates the origin, i.e., Java. It can be concluded that “asam” and “asam Jawa” are both emblematic. The following image illustrates the point.

Baru Cina Or Mugwort

Commonly known as mugwort or common wormwood, *Artemisia vulgaris* is locally known as “baru cina.” The word “cina” in the name indicates

the origin of the plant which came from China. Thus, the name “baru cina” is emblematic, in which the emblematic dimension lies in the origin of the plant. The expert in triangulation confirms the statement.



Fig.24. Asam jawa or javanese tamarind



Fig. 25. Baru cina or mugwort

Ketepeng Cina or Emperor’s Candlestick

Commonly known as the emperor’s candlestick or candelabra, *senna alata* is locally known as ketepeng cina. The name is emblematic, where the emblematic dimension lies in origin. Investigated further, the plant might have been from China.



Fig. 26. Ketepeng cina or emperor’s candlestick

Therefore, the traditional medicinal herb is called “ketepeng cina.” The following image illustrates the point clearly.

Kol Banda

The popular tropical ornamental plant *Pisonia alba* Spanoghe is locally known as “kol Banda.” The Indonesian name is emblematic because it contains the origin of the plant, i.e., Banda. Due to its emblematicity, this evergreen foliage clump, which is used as a medicinal herb, is not arbitrary. The following image illustrates the hypothesis.



Fig. 27. Kol banda

Patikan Cina

The name of the small branched, hispidly pubescent, prostrate annual herb “patikan cina” is considered as emblematic. The emblematic aspect lies in the origin of the plant, China. It is also worth noting that the epithet “cina” in Indonesian almost always means “tiny” or “small.” Therefore, it can be confirmed that the small size dimension is the emblematicity signifier. The following image illustrates the point.



Fig. 27. Kol banda

Emblematic Meanings Based on Blooming Time.

Kembang Pukul Empat or The Four O'clock Flower

Commonly known as the four o'clock flower or the marvel of Peru, *Mirabilis jalapa* is the name of the most commonly grown ornamental plant locally known as “kembang pukul empat.” The name is emblematic in which the emblematicity lies on the time when the flower droops every day, namely around four o'clock. In Indonesian, it is also known as “kembang asar.” Asar refers to the afternoon prayer call from a mosque to invite Muslims to pray. This flower blooms again in the morning. Based on the observation, there are only a few traditional medicinal herbs which have the emblematicity based on time. The following image will elucidate the point.



Fig. 29. Kembang pukul empat or the four o'clock flower

Kembang Sore or Indian Mallow

Commonly known as Indian mallow, *Abutilon* is locally known as kembang sore, which literally means “afternoon flower.” The name has an emblematic dimension, which refers to the time when the flower blooms in the afternoon. Hence, the flower gains its name. The following image clarifies the point.

Bunga Matahari or Sunflower

Commonly known as sunflower, *Helianthus Annuus* is locally known as bunga matahari which means the same. The name sunflower may derive from the flower's head's shape, which resembles the sun. However, in this research, the emblematic dimension of the name lies in the impression that the blooming plant appears to slowly turn its flower towards the sun as it moves across the sky. In the



Fig. 30. Kembang sore or indian mallow



Fig. 31. Bunga matahari or sunflower

researcher's observation, there is only one type of emblematic traditional medicinal herb whose name is associated with the direction of the plant's flower's movement toward the sun. The following image elucidates the hypothesis.

At the end of this discussion session, once again, it is truly worth to be emphasized that this research contributes to the development of ecopragmatics. The study of meanings cannot be separated from the aspects of ecology, both the naturalistic and the metaphoric ecology. In addition, this ecopragmatic research will also be beneficial to: (1) document the cultural and local wisdom values contained in the emblematic names of the traditional herbs and plants to be preserved; (2) raise awareness among the community if the close connection between linguistic dimensions and local wisdom and cultural values of a given community; (3) develop multidisciplinary linguistic research combining ecology and pragmatics as a new branch of linguistics.

IV. CONCLUSION

The plants discussed in this paper are emblematic in meanings. The emblematic meaning is determined based on the plants' characteristics, such as shape, nature, use, size, name, color, origin, blooming time, and direction of the plant's flower. The research results show that: a) the emblematic meanings are truly found in several traditional medicinal herbs in some parts of Indonesia; b) the emblematic meanings of the traditional medicinal herbs is classified based on their shapes, uses, directions of the plant's flower, the smell of the plants, and the origins. However, this research still has a limitation in terms of expert judgment from validators. In the next research with a similar topic, this limitation will be well-accommodated.

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