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Serdang Malay's Flora Lexicon of *Masam* (Sour) Category: The Representation of Environmental Treasury

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Abstract

This paper is aimed at analyzing Serdang Malay's richness in the flora lexicon of the *masam* (sour) category. The method is qualitative in which the data were obtained from interviews, participant observation and documentation. This study uses ecolinguistic parameters, namely, interrelation, interaction, interdepedence, diversity, and environment. The results indicate that there are only three *masam* categories consisting of 21 lexicons. The lexicons in first category include *gelugur* acid (*asam gelugur*), *binjai* acid (*asam binjai*), star fruits, tamarind, nutmeg, *kasturi* lime (*limau kasturi*), citrus (*limau nipis*), and *purut* lime (*limau purut*). The second category is well known for appetizers, namely, orange (*limau manis*), grapefruit (*limau bali*), jelly guava (*jambu bertih*), water guava (*jambu air*), guava bell (*jambu lonceng*), guava boll (*jambu bol*), milk guava (*jambu susu*), and guava (*jambu klutuk*). The last category is considered as mild *halua* (sweets), such as *kecapi* fruit, ambarella fruit (*kedondong*), *rukam* fruit, lacy fruit (*buah renda*), and *boni* fruit.

Keywords: flora lexicon, sour category, Serdang Malay community

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1. Introduction

As a cultural medium in the region or in the center of Malay culture in Deli Serdang and Serdang Bedagai regencies, the Serdang Malay language [or BMS (Bahasa Melayu Serdang) for short] has reached its peak for centuries (Faridah et.al, 2014: 52). The language used by Serdang Malay community (hereinafter abbreviated as MMS or Masyarakat Melayu Serdang) was premier in the Serdang Sultanate in the 17th century to the 1946 Social Revolution. The Serdang Sultanate covered almost all of Deli Serdang and Serdang Bedagai regencies and its influence even reached Tanah Alas and Singkel (Sinar, 2007). Of course, this sultanate saved its precious wealth in the verbal tradition and the wealth was recorded in the Malay language which became

the formal language in the Sultanate. The language which was having the ultimate role at that time built Malay culture and civilization successfully.

The MMS initially took great care of the natural environment and preserved the forest. The environment was very well maintained and forests had only be encroached if necessary, for example, for preparing cultivation, establishing a new hamlet (*huma*), or for making boats and musical instruments, or medicinal herbs. Old Malay words said "If there is no sea, abdomen is empty; if there is no forest, the body is destroyed; if densed forest is destroyed, institution breaks up and custom disappears".

All societies require their language preserved, used in the communication, and ably adapted to all social and environmental changes (Fishman, 1972: 24); the MMS is hoped to be the same. On the other hand, native speakers of a language are constantly changing because they are influenced by various factors such as social and cultural changes, and changes in speakers' language environment (Faridah, 2016: 13).

The fastest changes are found in the lexicon level (Lindo and Bundsgaard, 2000: 10-11) because life environment changes and as a result, the language that has ever lived in the speech community also changes over time. Such changes are influenced by three dimensions, such as, ideological, sociological, and biological dimensions. Nowadays, research in ecolinguistics is carried out because the role of language is very important in the recording of a number of lexicons which are increasingly shifted and even disappeared from time to time. The the shift and disappearance are due to the destruction of the environment which become the living space for the lexicon.

The interdependence between BMS community and the surrounding environment is also reflected in the lexicons used by MMS, especially with the flora lexicon of *masam* category. A number of linguistically named and encoded plants in MMS are familiar to the public in the past and inherited by old generation orally. This can be found in the well-known Malay poem (*pantun*) *Asam kandis asam gelugur, ketiga asam siriang-riang, menangis mayat di pintu kubur, teringat badan tidak sembahyang* 'The kandis acid, the gelugur acid, the third acid is the siriang-riang, weeps the corpse at the door of the grave, remembers he not pray for'.

2. Literary studies

2.1. Theories of ecolinguistics

Speakers of a language are constantly changing because they are influenced by various factors such as social and cultural changes, and the change of language speakers' environment (Edwards, 1985: 49). The rather same condition is stated by Lindo and

Bundsgaards (2000: 10-11) who argued that when the environment is changing, the language that exists in the lives in the people's speech also changes over time. The change is influenced by ideological, societal or sociological, and biological dimensions. This is in line with Haugen (1972 in Fill, 2001: 57) who stated that:

"Language ecology may be defined as the study of interactions between any given language and its environment. The definition of environment might lead to one's thought first of all to the referential world to which language provides an index. However, this is the environment not of a language but of its lexicon and grammar. The true environment of a language is the society that use it as one of its codes. Language exist only in the minds of its users, and it only funtions in relation to these user to one another and to nature, for example their social and environment. Parts of its ecology is therefore psycological: its interaction with other language in the mind of bi- and multilingual speakers. Another part of its ecology is sociological: its interaction with he society in which of it funtions as a medium of communication. The ecology of a language is determined primarily by the people who learn it, use it, and transmit it to others"

The language levels that are most rapidly changing are lexicons. Furthermore, the treasury of lexicons becomes the description of the knowledge, ideas, spiritual wealth, and the features as well as the characteristics of the speakers' socio-culture as proposed by Sapir (2001: 14).

The term *ecology* was first introduced by Ernest Haeckel (1834-1914) and is a branch of science that studies how living things can sustain their lives by establishing relationships between living things and non-living objects in the place of life or environment. The ecolinguistic, an interdisciplinary science, becomes the umbrella for all research on language (and languages) linked in such a way to ecology as Fiil (2001: 126) (in Lindo & Bundsgaard 2000) argued that its is an approach that studies the language and relates it to the environment. Three ecolinguistic parameters might include (1) interrelationships, interactions, interdepedencies, (2) the existence of certain environments, and (3) the diversity in the environment, either human beings or other creatures who live on earth at specific locations and they can be considered to become objects of research in language and environment (Fill and Muhlhausler, 2001: 1)

The study of flora ecolexicon especially the *masam* category in MMS, in this case, is intended to illustrate the knowledge and the understanding on the environment, both the nature and the socio-cultural environment in the forms of lingual codes. Along with

the language community's knowledge and understanding on the nature and socio-cultural environment, this could mean the availability of interaction and interrelation in the language community. Sapir then suggested that the vocabulary of a language most clearly describes the physical and social environment of its speakers. The complete vocabulary of a language can in fact be seen as a complex finding of all ideas, interests and positions that may concern the community and perhaps we can extend it to the character of the physical environment and the characteristics and culture of those who use the vocabulary (Sapir in Fill and Muhlhausler, 2001: 14).

3. Research methods

The method in this study is qualitative and to obtain data, interviewing 5 informants, participant observation, and documentation are involved. Furthermore, after the data collection about the *masam* category, the analysis is then carried out in the following steps: identifyingthe lexicon forms, determining the categories, giving meaning, data reduction, interpretation as well as preparing conclusion and starting analysis.

4. Discussion

4.1. Flora lexicon of masam category used for food flavoring ingredients

General flora lexicon could derive a number of specific lexicons of the *masam* category because biodiversity is closely related and recorded in the local language (Skubnate Kangas and Phillipson: 2001: 2-3). The derivative lexicon might refer to the *asam gelugur* (Latin: *Garcinia atroviridis Griff*) which is generally known by BMS speakers as acid whose shape is round and has serratures. Before being consumed, this acid is cut into slices which are then dried in the sun until they are completely dry. The *asam gelugur* which is not completely dry will not long last when stored. Two slieces of this dry *asam* can be consumed by putting them in the sour cooked vegetable (or *sayur asam*) and fish curry (*gulai ikan*) to attract people's taste to eat.

In case of the shape and category, the *asam gelugur* is classified as a compound lexicon and belongs to noun category. Semantically, the lexicon *asam* is classified as nonhuman and live object. The *asam gelugur* can be used by BMS to eliminate bitter taste of vegetables such as papaya flowers, papaya leaves, and bitter gourd (or peria) by boiling such vegetables with the *asam* with a purpose to vanish the bitter taste. Some miutes later the vegetables are lifted and cleaned. The lexicon *gelugur* is also

used as the name of an area in Medan and it is indicated that in the past, in that area, the *asam gelugur* was planted by local people.

In terms of shape and category the lexicon *asam binjai* (Latin: *Mangifera enesia*) is also classified as a compound lexicon and belongs to noun category. Semantically, this lexicon is determined as nonhuman and live object whose size is the same as two or three adult male's fists and whose aroma is fragrant. This *asam* tastes very delicious as sauce (sambal) mixture. There is a city in North Sumatera whose name is binjai and this name is believed that long time ago there were found *asam binjai* trees. Moreover, some names such as Serdang, Pakam, and Pantai Labu Beach refer to respectively serdang tree, pakam tree, and squash.

Seen from the shape and category the lexicon *asam wulung* (Latin: *Averhoa belimbi*) is classified as a compound lexicon and included as noun and semantically, this lexicon refers to nonhuman and live object. BMS speakers describes this lexicon as the fruit having green, or sometimes, white in colour. Its tree might have dense fruits being piled and stucked on the stem and branches. This fruit has many seeds inside although its size is as big as adult male's thumbs or fore finger and it is generally used to vanish bad smell of fish, to cook sour vegetables (*sayur asam*) and fish curry, to make sauce, and to boil *pepes* (leave-wrapped fish). In addition, this *asam* can also be used to clean spots from white clothes by rubbing it on the surface that is spotted and leave the clothes for about an hour in the water.

With reference to its shape and category the *asam jawa* (tamarind; Latin: *Tamarindus incida*) is a compound lexicon and categorized as noun or object and semantically, it is animate and nonhuman. The *asam* is understood by BMS speakers as a seedy and black fruit having mild texture. This fruit whose leaves are small and green is also used for making *rujak* (spicy fruit combination), *pecal* (mixed spicy vegetables), for vanishing fish bad smell as well as for making anchovy chilly sauce (*sambal ikan teri*). Its leaves can be processed for making facial powder and having been crushed its grains can also be processed as toothpaste for cleaning teeth naturally.

The lexicon nutmeg (Latin: *Myristica fragrans*) is a bitter fruit which is always used as a seasoning mixture for soup and stews (*semur*). Besides, BMS speakers utilize nutmeg for salving leg swollen or sprains and they grinding its seeds into powder. Its flesh can be made as *halua* (sweets) by carving it first and soak it with salt water to remove the bitter and sour taste and then it is boiled (Malay's *celur*). The boiled flesh is taken out in the open space to make it cool and then sugar is poured on it and leave it for several days. Two kilograms of nutmeg need two kilogram of sugar and BMS speakers believe that consumption of nutmeg sweets might keep their bodies healthy.

In terms of the shape and category, kasturi limes (*limau kasturi* or *jeruk kasturi*; Latin: *Cacas nucifera*) is a compound lexicon which is categorized as nouns or objects. Semantically, it is animate and nonhuman having small size and green colour. This lexicon can be processed by BMS to vanish bad fish odor or is also suitable to add sour taste to sauce. In addition, it can also be used to give a delicious flavor and a fragrant aroma when it is mixed with young coconut water. Viewed from its shape and category, the lexicon *limau nipis* (citrus; Latin: Citrus aurantifalia) is a compound categorized nouns or objects. Semantically, it is animate and nonhuman object which is understood by BMS speakers to have dark green colour and whose size is five times bigger than kasturi. It reserves water and has seeds and can be used to remove bad smell of fish, to change sauce to become sour, and to make *anyang* vegetable sour. Having been squeezed the citrus water plus ketchup might be drunk to remove cough.

The lexicon *limau purut* (Latin: *Citrus hystrix*) is a noun and semantically, it is animate and nonhuman object which has coarsely dark green colour and distinctive aroma. This citrus can be processed as traditional and herbal medicine when it is mixed with other ingredients for bathing. Of all the lexicons discussed above the percentage of young respondents' knowledge is that four respondents 'know and often use them' (or 3.33%), twenty five 'know little and seldom use tehm' (or 25,83%), thirty one 'know but not use them' (or 25%), and thirty 'neither know nor use them (or 25%). The percentage from older respondent is that seventy 'know and often use' (or 58.33%), thirty 'know but rarely use' (or 25%), and twenty 'knowing but do not use (or 16.66%).

From the percentage, older respondents still recognize and utilize those lexicons because they like the sour taste but unluckily, younger respondents have changed their taste so they neither know the lexicons nor the benefits. Nowadays, lime, citrus or orange trees are not anymore planted in the yards or in the fields. People who need them should buy from markets. The *asam binjai* has not even been found since five years ago.

Changes in the inter-generations are also followed by changes in the selection of food, for instance, currently, younger generation of BMS speakers are less fond of sour food such as anyang, coconut crust sauce (*sambal kerak kelapa*), *tempoyak* sauce, sour fish curry (*gulai masam ikan*), and *rujak* because they are difficult to find and the first three are even not sold anymore and if necessary, they are prepared by mothers at home for their own sake. In contrast, new popular food, such as, pressed chicken (*ayam penyet*), fried duck, mie Aceh, bika Ambon, meatball, Kentucky fried chicken, pizza, and indomie are easily found.

Those changes actually cause the changes to the BMS speakers' environment because speakers no longer recognize the lexicons of traditionally natural culinary

and the speakers, especially younger speakers, only know the culinary that exists today. In case of plants, especially those for herbal medicine, younger generation also no longer know their benefits. When they are sick, the young generations generally go to the doctors or directly buy drugs.

Traditional toys, such as making car toys from orange peel, is no longer found and, instead, they play with electronic car toys or play them in electronic games. Traditional toys have the value of togetherness since children help each other in the making process. Now, the child world is dominated by electronic games, for instance war games, which bring individualism, lose the nature of mutuality and the sense of love to each other. There appears egoism and the desire to knock down opponents as shown in the war games.

4.2. Flora lexicon of masam category used for appetizers

In terms of shape and category, orange (*limau manis*; *Latin: Citrus sinensis*) is a compound of nominal category and semantically, it is animate and nonhuman object. It has sweet taste which is similar with the oranges from Karo highland but not from Pantai Buaya. The name *limau manis* refers to a condition that it is generally eaten after meals and to a village which is called Desa Limau Manis located in Tanjung Morawa subdistrict so it is assumed that the fruit was planted in the village. The *limau manis* and the *limau masam* can be associated to face conditions, for example, the first is related to happiness or friendliness but the second refers to bad mood or unfriendliness. The lexicon *limau bali* (Latin: *Citrus maxima* or *Borm*) is a compound noun which is semantically a nonhuman and animate object. The *limau* is well known by BMS speakers and has big size like a football. Its tree looks like the tree of *limau jeruk purut* and has not spikes on the tree. The *limau bali* can be eaten or made for rujak. Children always make car toys from the skin and from this lexicon, there can be found a metaphor such as 'oranges eat oranges' (*jeruk kok makan jeruk*)

Seen from the shape and category, the lexicon *jambu* is the root word and a noun. Semantically, it is nonhuman and animate object having deep inter-relation and inter-depedence and becomes a versatile and multi-functional plant. The lexicon *jambu bertih* (Latin: Syzgium malaclense) is a noun which is semantically a nonhuman and inanimate. It has red colour, small in size, sour taste, and little content of water. This fruit is used by BMS speakers for rujak combination and for sweets. The lexicon *jambu air* (Latin: *Syzgium aqueum*) is a noun and semantically is a nonhuman and inanimate object. It has a bit sour taste and red colour, and is bigger than *jambu bertih*. BMS speakers make this fruit into sweets; this fruit is easily falling down.

In terms of form and category, the lexicon *jambu lonceng* (Latin: *Anacardium occidentale*) is a noun which is semantically a nonhuman and inanimate. The name indicates its shape which looks like a bell. Meanwhile, the lexicon *jambu mawar* (Latin: *Syzgium Jambos*) is a noun which is semantically a nonhuman and inanimate and it has nice fragrance like roses. In case of form and category, the lexicon *jambu bol* (Latin: *Syzgium malaccense*) is a noun and semantically, it is nonhuman and inanimate which is known by BMS speakers as a type of guava containing not so much water. The shape is oval and bigger than *jambu air*; it looks like human nose in its size and has sour taste with vitamin C content.

The lexicon *jambu susu* (Latin: *Family Myrtacea*) is a noun which is semantically a nonhuman and inanimate. Its colour is milky and its shape resembles a bottle, and therefore, in Aceh it is called *jambu botol*. It is sour and slightly chipped, and is generally consumed as pickles. The tree is like a guava tree. On account of shape and category, the lexicon *jambu klutuk* (Latin: *Psidium guajava*) is a noun which is semantically nonhuman and inanimate, contains small seeds, and has green and red in colours. The red guajava can be used by BMS speakers to treat dengue fever by making it into juice and its leaves can be optimized for diarrhea herbal medicine by directly chewing and swallowing. It also has solid flesh with very little water but with a lot of calcium that can strengthen bones and teeth. Moreover, its leaves can also eliminate bitter taste in vegetables such as papaya leaves, papaya flowers, peria fruit by boiling them with such vegetables. Today, the guajava has been missing from community's cognition, especially those who are young. What they know is only the Taiwan guajava.

Ripe guajavas fall naturally and BMS speakers manufacture by making them into sweets as what their great grandfathers did in the past. Due to the short belonging of land, local people do not plant them anymore and as a result, import fruits such as apples, pears, dragon fruit dominate local markets including Taiwan guajava; however, the local fruits, for instance *jambu bol*, *jambu bertih*, *jambu susu*, and *jambu klutuk* tend to disappear. In conclusion, the percentage of BMS speakers who know and eat these fruits is summarized as the following: with regard to elderly respondents, ten 'often know and eat' (8.33%), 25 'rarely know and eat' (20.83%), 50 'still know but do not eat (41.66%), ten 'do not know but still eat' (8.33%), and 25 'do not know but eat' (20.83%) and about young respondents, eight 'often acknowledge and eat' (6.66), 15 'rarely know and eat' (12.5%), 25 'still know but do not eat' (20.83%), 20 'do not know but remain to eat' (16.66), and 52 'neither know nor eat' (43.33%).

4.3. Flora lexicon of masam category used for light food

Viewed from the shape and category, the lexicon *kecapi* (Latin: *Spondias dulcis*) is classified as the basic noun form which is semantically nonhuman and inanimate. This lexicon is also called *sentul fruit* that has a slightly yellowish skin and tastes very sour. Another kind of this lexicon is *sentul kecapi* which has small shape and tastes sweet. The kecapi has dark green skin but its flesh is green and can be made as the sweets or *rujak* combination. Due to the lexicon *rukam* (Latin: *Fructus rukam*), it is a basic noun form and is semantically an animate nonhuman object. The lexicon is dark red when it is ripe but pink when it is raw having the small seeds like marbles and the sour taste. Its tree looks like a guava tree and Malays eat the sweets made from this fruit but also combine it in *rujak* mixture.

Viewed from the shape and category, the lexicon *renda* (Latin: *Pieces Laciniarum*) belongs to the basic noun form and is semantically a nonhuman and animate. Its colour is reddish-white but dark red when it is ripe, and its shape is smaller than the *rukam*. Thorns can be found in its stem, branches, and tips. When the season comes, it has very dense fruit so it looks like a flower tree because of red colour. fruit. In addition, this young fruit is also containing a lot of sap but decreasing when ripe. Seen from the shape and category, the lexicon *boni* (Lation: *Antidesma Bonius*) is very small like peppers, its leaves look like *asam glugu*r leaves, and the tree has very dense fruits. When ripe it is red but while young it is greenish red in colour. The BMS speakers always make sweets from this fruit.

Now, the *kecapi*, *rukam*, *renda*, and *boni* fruits are difficult to find so the less younger generation recognizes them. The *renda* fruit remains available but the traditional *kedondong* fruit having big shape is replaced with little kinds. Local people no longer plant the traditional one. Today generations does not like the sour foods but instead, they love sweet ones like ice cream, donuts, crackers (*kerupuk*) and chips (*keripik*). The sour *rujak* is no longer in demand although it contains various vitamins and calcium. It can be concluded that the percentage of BMS speakers who remain to know, like and dislike is narrated in the following data: ten of the old respondents 'often know and eat' (8.33%), 25 'rarely know and eat' (20.83%), 50 'know but do not eat' (41.66%), ten 'do not know but eat' (8.33%), and 25 'neither know nor eat' (20.83%); eight young respondents 'often know and eat' (6.66), 15 'rarely know and eat' (12.5%), 25 'know but not eat' (20.83%), 20 'do not know but eat' (16.66), and 52 'neither know nor eat' (43.33 %).

5. Conclusion

There remains to find a number of lexicons of *masam* category; the today's condition of MMS speakers indicates that they are still familiar with such lexicons and this is in line with their culture in consuming the culinary food. Due to the *masam* lexicons, 21 vocabularies are found and devided into three categories, such as (1) common category, for instance *asam gelugur, asam binjai, asam belimbing, asam jawa, pala, limau kasturi, limau nipis,* and *limau purut*; (2) appetizing category namely *limau manis, limau bali, jambu bertih, jambu air, jambu lonceng, jambu bol, jambu susu,* and *jambu klutuk*; and (3) light food category, for example *kecapi, kedondong, rukam, renda,* and *boni*.

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