Language and Ecology in Ecolinguistics Perspective: A Case Study on Tunjuk Ajar Language in Riau, Indonesia

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Language and Ecology in Ecolinguistics Perspective: A Case Study on Tunjuk Ajar Language in Riau, Indonesia

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Abstract. This study aimed to find out the lexicon of Tunjuk Ajar language related to environment. Tunjuk Ajar is one of the variations of traditional expressions used by Melayu Riau society. It is one of the forms and language styles used especially in oral communication. This study used qualitative descriptive approach. The data were collected from the text book of Tunjuk Ajar Melayu written by Tenas Effendy. The result of the research was that Tunjuk Ajar language practice in Melayu Riau society was formed by lexicon of flora and fauna such as the hutan, keladi, padi, laut, binatang, and itik. The meanings are closely related to the cultural values, and norms of the Riau society which reflect the interrelationship between the human beings and the nature. The cultural values of the Tunjuk ajar language contain the values in education, moral ethics, and togetherness. All of these values become the orientation of each individual in Melayu Riau Society.

1. Introduction
Language and environment are closely connected one another as the existence of a language which is influenced by the surrounding natural environment where the language is exploited [9]. In the early classical period, human beings perceived a language as solely a medium of communication. Owing to the advancement of modernity, it has been one of the significant objects to study in the development of knowledge of the language itself [11]. Such development has been clearly observed with the emergence of linguists who had conducted numerous studies on the relationship between language and environment: the labeling of objects or animals which are correlated with the sounds produced by surrounding environment, such as the sounds of thunder, gurgling of water, and roars of animals.

The sounds exposed to the environment have been spotted by human’s senses which are then processed in their mind and have become a series of names they have referred to [6]. Finally, they arrived at a conclusion that language is born from nature; therefore, the implementation of language studies is always closely related to the environment where the language is used. This has been an embarking point to the emergence of some terminologies onomatope, metafora, lexicon, and part of speeches, analogy versus anomaly, etc [6].

In general, linguistic studies are merely focused on the issues related to the internal aspects of linguistics: phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. As the linguistics develop, language studies are not concerned only with the conventional linguistics. Rather, it has extended to the relation of language and environment which is called Ecolinguistics. The definition of environment here covers someone’s mindset which has been led to the real world where the language is exposed. It is
due to the fact that the subject of natural environment of a language is the society who exploit the language itself [4].

Ecolinguistics studies are engaged with the theories, methodologies, and empirical studies of language which contribute to all levels of linguistics, particularly connected or linked to ecology. The scope of ecolinguistics is quite large as it enables to encompass some disciplines as in the following:

a. Finding the proper language theories
b. Studies on the texts and language systems
c. Studies on the universalities of language which are relevant to the environmental issues.
d. Language studies related to constructive approach,
e. Learning a language connected to the ecoliteracy, such as the learning of ecology understanding to the kids and adults [11].

In 1912, Safir wrote about language and environment starting that physical environment of a language consists of geographical character as a topography of a country. It is closely influenced by climate, including flora and fauna, the rain fall, and natural resources which have been the source of livelihood and economy of people which is verbally recorded [11]. He further stated that the vocabulary of every language is different one another depending on both socioculture and the environment where the languages are used. Such differences are only related to the lexical units rather than the rules and principles of the language [11].

The vocabulary of a language not only relies on or influenced by the physical environment of the language, but the social community of the language users also has significant role in forming certain vocabulary. The social environment here refers to the power of the community to construct the life and mind of every individual, such as religion, belief, ethics, and political awareness.

Based on the clarification of these two environments, the completeness of vocabularies may indicate knowledge, interest, job and belief of the language users as well as the place of the language or where the speech society inhabit. Language users who live in the mountainous regions tend to have vocabularies dominated by things related to valley, soil types, bird habitats, types of plants, honey habitats and wildlife living in the area. For example, the Noocka Indian tribe who economically rely on the forest diversity posses severely limited vocabularies on marine. On the contrary, those who live along the coastal areas automatically have many vocabularies on marines like Paiute tribe in Arizona. They are very familiar and have created the names of fishes: algae, sponges, sand and all of the marine contents [9]. Furthermore, Sapir argued that the language spoken by someone extremely depends on both his behavior and manner which are reflected on the vocabularies formations he utters. Such hypothesis is commonly called Sapir-Whorf Hypotesis which was firstly introced by Whorf in his article in 1956

Biologically, Humanbeing possesses the same capability in the capacity of learning his own language. Such capability is the same as the capability of someone when learning to stand and walk. All of these capabilities do not depend on the intelligence level. Ecologically, human being by nature is a unique ecology creature as everyone has different experiences one to another eventhough grow up in the same environment and the same language [3]. Such personel experience is always closely related to the environment. It is also environment who construct the human cultural and the pattern of language use which is then recorded in his cognitive device [5].

Language is an interaction product of human with his surround world, natural environment and the social world. The way someone creates speeches and develop his linguistic competence are directly observed in his experiences which are obtained from knowledge and experiences on environment and apply such experiences in specific communication with the others [5]. The closest and the most attached recording are about near by world, either cultural or natural features. The first function of imaginary therefore is to portrait the surrounding environment using a language because it is based on the imaginary stuck on the brain and human’s experiences [8].
The ecolinguists describe natural environment of a language where the community of language users live. The language by nature, is located in the brain or on the cognitive device of the speaker which serves to connect the speakers with the others, and with the near by environment: social and natural environment. The meaning of environment in this respect also include someone’s view which refers to the world or region where the language is exploited [4].

Language environment and ecology is basically occurred in two parts. The first part is the psychological environment: the impact of environment on the languages in the mind or cognitive device of the language users, and the second part is sociological environment: the relation between environment and community who use the language as their medium of communication. The language is perceived as one of the species living in the environment which survive and grow, it may be subject to either change or disappear, even die. If the number of language users increases, it will grow and sustainably develop. On the other hand, when the number of the speaker drastically decrease and its dominance is getting low, the language is in the verge of being pushed aside, evolved, disappeared or evolutioned [4].

The connection between language and nature may also be observed in the expressions of Tunjuk ajar Melayu [2]. (Pieces of Malay advice and wise words). The expression bijak menghitung buih di laut, bijak memegang tali air [2]. (Wisely count foams in the ocean, wisely hold the rope), may contain or express multi meanings. The lexicon “foam”, is a lingual code which is the basic unit of lexicon. Before being the core unit, the lexicon “buah” lexically has an external referential denotation which refers to certain entities [11]. The contained lexical meaning behind the lexicon name of certain space on the sea. In this respect, foam is part of water which is abundant in amount.

Knowledge and experiences of speakers in Tunjuk Ajar Melayu Riau on the marine environment that has much foam which are reflected based on expository, knowledge, even the experiences of speaker community is of course initially begun from the well-organized interrelation and interaction process with the sea water which have much foam. Referring to the lexical codes and the coverage of denotation meaning, and the agreed upon conotation meaning, the creation of its speakers in producing the wise words or proverbs.

The uniqueness of lexicons exploited in the Tunjuk Ajar Melayu (Malay wise words and advices) is an interesting issue to analyze and it could be language inferential which is correlated with the environment. This study is focused on the lexicon as components of language associated with natural environment of Riau Malay. The problem formulated in this study is how is the formation of lexicons related to natural environment exploited in the Tunjuk Ajar Melayu Riau?. This study sheds light on the description of lexicon classifications used in the languages of Malay advices and wise words. Such study is worthy to be conducted as one of references in the studies of Malay Riau language related to ecology. The language of Tunjuk Ajar Melayu (Malay advices and wise words) is one of the expressions applied by Malay Riau society to give advice or lesson in the social, politic, economy, and cultural life. The life of Malay society heavily depends on the natural and physical environment of their neighborhood. It does not only reflects their relation with environment, but also as a medium to construct the patterns and forms the variety of tunjuk ajar they have so far understood.

2. Methodology
This study an ecolinguistic study which is focused on the lexicon by connecting and including ecology componen, namely flora and fauna provided in the expressions of Tunjuk Ajar Melayu Riau. The data of this study were gathered by means of text book of Tunjuk Ajar Melayu (Malay advices and wise words) written by Tenas Efendy

This study was conducted in three stages: data collection, data analysis, and the presentation of data analysis results. The approach and method adopted in this study is qualitatif approach or qualitative descriptive. Such approach is the most proper and most preferred to choose for social science studies, particularly in anthropology, history, and political science fields. Linguistics as a social science may also adopt this method in language studies [9]. Furthermore, Miles explains qualitative study is a
reflection of words in numbering. It is a wide description resources and has a strong and solid foundation which does not involve variable and hypothesis on its analysis process [9].

3. Result and Discussion

A. The languages of Tunjuk Ajar Melayu that has lexicons on Flora

i. Hutan (forest)

*Bila tidak ada hutan, binasalah badan*
*When the forest losts, the life will end* [2]

The above expression use the word “hutan”. This words implies that Malay people is highly committed to preserve the forest. For Riau Malay people, forest is a place that serves as their livelihood. It is a place to be part of their life. Without forest, life will be miserable. Forest is therefore need to be preserved and maintained for the environment preservation and the sources of livelihood. The existence of forest is associated with humans’ life and natural environment which directly influenced to the belief, culture, language and society cosmology

ii. Keladi

*Ketuku batang ketakal :
Ketuku is ketakal tree*

*Duanya batang keladi muyang :*
*Both are keladi muyang tree*

*Kita sesuku dengan seasal :
we are from the same tribe and the same region*

*Kita senenek serta semoyang:
we are from the same grandmother and the same ancestors* [2]

The use of the word “keladi” in the above syair describes that the life of Malay community is strongly connected to Keladi Muyang which is a type of casava usually used as local ingredient. Malay people who like farming frequently make the most of surrounding nature in their neighborhood as a place to plant keladi muyang. The environment parameter has been the guidance of Malay society where interaction and interelation between the speaker and environment occur. The word “keladi” is therefore used in Syair Melayu where the verses tell about the Malay people who treat all human beings are family since they come from the same ancestors: Adam and Eve

iii. Padi

*Batang padi tumbuhnya rapat
Padi is planted at a close range*

*Buah berisitangkai merunduk
The fruits have trunks and kneel down*

*Orang berbudi mematuhi adat
Good people respect the traditon*

*Berbaik hati sesama mkhluk
doing good deeds to all creatures* [2]

The above syair use the word “padi”. The exploitation of this word is closely associated with the environment life of Riau Malay people. Padi is a type of plant which is staple food not only for Riau Malay community, but also all of Indonesians. None of Indonesians are not familiar with padi plant as such plant is the basic source which is cooked to be rice. The Malay society and Indonesian typically
B. The languages of Tunjuk Ajar that has Fauna lexicon

i. Laut (Sea)

Kalau tidak ada laut, hampalah perut
when there is no sea, people will get hungry [2]

The choice of lexicon “laut” implies that Riau Malay people are required to save the sea because it is the source of livelihood. When the sea is contaminated and polluted, there is nothing anymore to eat since it is the livelihood, when the livelihood losts, people will automatically get hungry. Most of Malay Riau society live in the coastal area. The marine environment has been the livelihood of Riau Malay society. The relation of Riau Malay society with the sea has been served to support both economy and political life of Malay society. Interrelation and interpendency among Malay society with the sea environment is reflected in the connection between language and social practice. The dialectical relation between language and social practice, in this dialectical connection, the social practice dominate the language [4].

ii. Binatang (Animal)

Kalau malu sudah bilang, hidupnya sama dengan binatang
when the shyness has gone, the life is the same as animal [2]

The use of the word “binatang” in the above sentence is inseparable from the effect of natural environment where Riau Malay society live. Riau Malay society who possesses wide natural environment has diverse biodiversity of animals which live there. The “binatang” lexicon demonstrates that Riau Malay society closely live with animals, particularly the pets. The symbol of the word “binatang” used in the Tunjuk Ajar Melayu, shows that animals has neither shyness nor morality.

iii. Itik (goose)

Kalau suka memelihara itik
if you like raising livestock of goose
Tentulah banyak dapat telurnya:
you will get the eggs
Kalau suka bersangka baik
if you like having positive thinking
Hidup selamat banyak mujurnya
life will be save and much fortunes [2]

The use of the word “itik” in the above syair demonstrate that there is connection of interrelation between Riau Malay society with the surrounding environment. Itik (goose) is animal which usually have been the livestock of Riau Malay society. It is very beneficial for Riau Malay society as well as its eggs which contain much nutrition and meat. The relation between “itik” (goose) with the surrounding environment of Riau Malay society has emerged the words related to “itik” in the language choice of Riau Malay society, it is because of the lingual unit of a language occurs when what we have seen in the natural environment where a group of society live [4].
4. Conclusion
The languages of Tunjuk Ajar Melayu is richly endowed with the lexicon related to the natural environment which refer to the entities of flora and fauna, such as the lexicons of fauna, among others: hutan (forest), keladi (casava), padi (paddy), and durians and the lexicons of fauna: laut (sea), binatang (animal), and itik (goose). The language symbols of the tradition of Riau Malay society in the form of tunjuk ajar is basically formed and the process of the interaction and interrelation occurrences with the natural environment surrounding their neighborhood. The use of the lexicons of flora and fauna of the languages in the Tunjuk Ajar has enriched the diversity of dialect and culture of Riau Malay society which can be potrayed in the cultural values which grow and develop in the Riau Malay society. The values contained in the Tunjuk Ajar Melayu are the values of education, ethics and morals and the togetherness. Such cultural values have been a solid foundation in the society life.

References