



Local Wisdom In Umpasa Tradition: An Ecolinguistic Perspective

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Abstract: *This study aims to delineate the values of local wisdom within the oral tradition of Umpasa from an ecolinguistic perspective. The ecolinguistic perspective is supported by communication ethnography studies. Data for this research were collected using observation methods, note-taking techniques (linguistics), complemented with ethnographic conversation methods and recording techniques (ethnography). Data analysis employed the extralingual correspondence method and contextual analysis techniques. The results of the analysis indicate that local wisdom within the oral tradition of Umpasa is manifested through tangible forms of local wisdom such as rocks and water, ulos motifs, and traditional houses; as well as through intangible forms of local wisdom such as proverbs, advice, and poetry. Each form of local wisdom manifests noble values that reflect the collective cultural appreciation of the society. This research examines the values of local wisdom embodied in the oral tradition of Umpasa within Batak society through an ecolinguistic approach and communication ethnography studies. The oral tradition of Umpasa is an inseparable part of the rich and diverse Batak culture, containing advice, proverbs, and songs laden with ancestral wisdom and teachings. Unlike physically tangible local wisdom, Umpasa exists as an intangible heritage transmitted orally, bringing deep understanding of the relationship between humans and nature and culture. These dimensions of local wisdom reflect the collective cultural appreciation of Batak society. The implications of this research involve understanding and promoting the preservation of local culture and enhancing appreciation for local wisdom within Batak society and beyond.*

Keywords: *local wisdom; umpasa; ecolinguistic*

INTRODUCTION

The oral tradition of Umpasa is an integral part of the rich and diverse Batak culture. Within this tradition, there are values of local wisdom reflected in various aspects of Batak community life. This study aims to explore and articulate these values through an ecolinguistic lens, focusing on how local wisdom is manifested in various aspects of the oral tradition of Umpasa. Local wisdom is the identity of a community reflected in its ideas, values, norms, behavioral patterns, and cultural artifacts. Amidst the advancement of time, local wisdom remains relevant as a guide in everyday life. One form of local wisdom rich in traditional values is the oral tradition of Umpasa in Batak society (Achmad Yuhdi & Getsby Lewi Debora Pandiangan, 2021).

The Umpasa tradition is part of the local wisdom of the Batak community manifested in the form of oral literature. Handed down from generation to generation, Umpasa contains advice, proverbs, and songs that encapsulate ancestral wisdom and teachings. Unlike physically tangible local wisdom manifested in artifacts such as traditional books, Umpasa exists as intangible heritage conveyed orally. Previous research on Umpasa has often viewed it from literary, historical, and anthropological perspectives. However, this study takes a new approach by highlighting the values of local wisdom contained within Umpasa without

analyzing it from literary or historical perspectives. The focus is on the cultural values reflected in Umpasa, utilizing ecolinguistic and communication ethnography perspectives (Aminuddin, 2020).

The ecolinguistic approach enables researchers to explore the connection between language and its environment. In the context of this research, the environment refers not only to the physical environment but also to the social and cultural realities of Batak society. Through ecolinguistics, this research delves into the dimensions of the physical, social, and cultural environment that influence and are reflected in the oral tradition of Umpasa (Aminuddin, 2019). The oral tradition of Umpasa is not just a collection of poetic words but also an explanation of the relationship between humans and nature and culture. This research brings a new perspective to understanding Umpasa, uncovering the hidden cultural values within it, and exploring its connection to the social, cultural, and natural environment. Thus, this research provides profound insights into local wisdom in Batak society, especially through the oral tradition of Umpasa.

METHODS

This research method is a qualitative study involving several distinctive characteristics. The researcher utilizes a natural environment setting as the research location, where the researcher themselves acts as the primary instrument. Data is collected through the oral tradition of Umpasa conveyed by traditional figures in the Batak region. The collected data is then analyzed inductively, followed by subjective data interpretation. In data collection, the researcher employs the observation method and note-taking techniques. Ethnographic conversations are also utilized to support data interpretation (Cresswell, 2010). Data analysis is conducted using the extralingual equivalence method and contextual analysis technique, which links cultural context in data interpretation. The data analysis process consists of seven stages. Firstly, data is recorded in transcription form. Secondly, data is translated into English, both literally and contextually. Thirdly, data is identified for interpretation. Fourthly, data is classified according to the research objectives, with codes created to facilitate analysis. Fifthly, cultural context is explained for each identified data. Sixthly, data is interpreted to find its meaning. Finally, the results of data analysis are confirmed through triangulation and reflection. By employing a qualitative approach and meticulous methods, this research aims to uncover the values of local wisdom inherent in the oral tradition of Umpasa in a profound and comprehensive manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of the data analysis, it can be concluded that the oral tradition of Umpasa contains two forms of local wisdom, namely tangible and intangible. Tangible local wisdom consists of three main elements that emanate noble values. These elements are stones and water, woven cloth (motifs), and traditional houses. In the natural environment of the Batak community, there are natural elements such as stones and water. Large stones, often hills of stone, are important water sources. The presence of stones and water in the topography of the environment provides a special perspective for the Batak community, who see them as an integral part of their lives. Symbolically, stones and water become representations of life values closely related to nature and the cosmos, bringing the entity Dawan to a profound understanding of their relationship with the universe (Pardede & Silalahi, 2020).

From the existing cultural context, the data above reflects two things. First, the Batak community pays great attention to and preserves their natural environment. There is a customary convention upheld, stating that every water source must be strictly protected. This means that the surrounding forests cannot be used for activities such as opening gardens, fields, or rice paddies. As a result, every community group adheres to these customary rules (Danandjaja, 2018).

Furthermore, the Batak community has a deep belief that nature is the "giver of sustenance." This belief is often mentioned in Umpasa utterances. In traditional narrations, the names of mountains or lakes are often mentioned as "givers of life sustenance" by the Batak community. In Batak culture, mountains and lakes are considered symbols of fertility, abundance, and sustenance. The fundamental principle held firmly by the Batak community is the need to preserve mountains and lakes along with their original forests because they are considered valuable sources of life (Sinaga & Arvianti, 2019).

From the above exposition, several high values associated with the local wisdom of "stones and water" can be recognized, including values of nobility, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation. These three values have strong relevance to the concept of ecosophy, which highlights the importance of ecological harmony in the relationship between humans and nature. In the context of nature conservation, the concept of ecosophy proposes that humans must actively act as policy makers aiming to balance ecological, linguistic, and cultural interests in the ongoing modernization era (Deda, 2018).

As a form of cultural art, the ulos motif in Batak society carries profound meanings that symbolize social kinship and diversity. In the distinctive ulos motifs of the Batak, there

are iconic depictions of various flora and fauna. More than just aesthetic elements, ulos motifs also express the identity of each sub-ethnic group and celebrate cultural diversity (Dokhi, 2016).

In the existing cultural context, it can be concluded that the giving of ulos from men to women symbolizes respect for the dignity of women. Ulos is considered an authentic symbol witnessing the agreement of both parties, both the parents and the couple themselves, in giving and receiving (Koentjaraningrat, 2019). Beyond mere material value, ulos holds deep significance in Batak culture, reminding every individual to honor marital commitments in accordance with tradition. The importance of Batak society's understanding of ulos lies in the difficulty of its production, which involves manual processes without the use of modern tools or factory threads (Haugen, 2017).

The pattern of ulos motifs in Batak culture carries various geometric shapes that contain profound philosophical meanings. These patterns include square shapes, triangles, and nets, each referring to specific philosophies such as symbolizing fields, traditional houses, and building structures (Uyenne, 2014). Additionally, the icons of flora and fauna commonly used in ulos motifs represent the unique natural richness of the Batak people, indicating the closeness of humans to their surrounding environment. From this description, it can be concluded that ulos motifs contain values of local wisdom, including respect for human dignity, symbols of social diversity, and ecological representations depicting the relationship between humans and nature (Foley, 2020).

The philosophical meaning of traditional houses in Batak culture symbolizes unity in one homeland and one origin of life. Furthermore, traditional houses also contain metaphorical meanings about the social order within them, especially regarding internal organization (Stibbe, 2015). Usually, women are responsible for maintaining the traditional house, while men gather in certain rituals. The implicit message in Umpasa is that every member of the tribe has the same rights and obligations to participate in every event at the traditional house.

In the context of decision-making that affects common interests, the traditional house is a very appropriate place for consultation and consensus-building, including in resolving conflicts between tribes. This emphasizes that various events held at the traditional house reflect noble values such as brotherhood, solidarity, closeness, and unity (Fill, 2019).

In the oral tradition of Umpasa, intangible local wisdom encapsulates noble values such as proverbs, advice, and poetry that are integral parts of the cultural heritage of the Batak community. As seen in the content of the Umpasa oral tradition, besides word choices,

there is also the use of sentence structures that depict the most fundamental value, which is the truth of the content. The content of each story or topic discussed is always treated objectively. Thus, Umpasa reflects values such as honesty, sincerity, truth, and responsibility in communication (Simangunsong et al., 2021).

In the context of the Umpasa oral tradition, there is also the use of proverbs aimed at comparing one thing with another to create aesthetic effects and convey profound meanings or messages. Additionally, proverbs are also used to illustrate the philosophy of life. From the existing cultural context, it is evident that respect for parents in Batak society is reflected through speech, behavior, and actions. From an early age, children are taught to always use polite words when speaking to their parents. In cultural linguistic analysis, this is related to the concept of politeness and linguistic constructions regarding one's status (Duranty, 2019).

From the perspective of Linguistic Anthropology, in cultural practices like this, language becomes a mirror of complex human life, and speaking is part of human social and cultural activities. In this oral tradition, the burning fire can be likened to a symbol of a mother's love and spirit in raising and educating her children, while the glowing wood represents the illumination of the path of wisdom or a good example from a father to guide his children to become responsible individuals (Hamidy, 2018). From this interpretation, values of local wisdom such as politeness, authority, affection, parental education, and respect for parents can be recognized.

In interactions with inhabitants in several villages, through ethnographic conversations, it is revealed that values of obedience and loyalty are highly esteemed in the social and cultural life of the Batak community. Obedience to customary norms, active participation in communal activities, and commitment to religious practices are tangible examples of their appreciation for these values. From a philosophical perspective, in the context of appreciating the culture of the Batak community, the social dimensions related to obedience and loyalty provide important inspiration for humans to think, behave, and act in a humane manner. From this analysis, values of local wisdom such as obedience and loyalty reflected in these pieces of advice can be identified.

In the Umpasa oral tradition, there is a series of poetic expressions that display language performance with regular patterns (Junus, 2019). When uttered, the use of language in the Umpasa oral tradition often produces beautiful sound harmonies. In the context of literary studies, the Umpasa oral tradition can be considered a form of "customary poetry" because of its aesthetic characteristics and cultural significance.

CONCLUSION

This study illustrates how the values of local wisdom are reflected in the oral tradition of Umpasa in the Batak community. Through the ecolinguistic approach and the study of communication ethnography, this research provides a profound understanding of the relationship between language, culture, and the natural environment in the context of oral tradition. The implications of this research can help in understanding and promoting the preservation of local culture and enhancing appreciation for local wisdom in the Batak community and other societies. The overall discussion above concludes several important points. First, in the Umpasa oral tradition, there is tangible local wisdom that includes stones and water, woven fabric with motifs, and traditional houses. In this tangible local wisdom, noble values such as reverence, environmental conservation, cultural preservation, respect for human dignity, appreciation of diversity, and human-nature interconnectedness are reflected. Second, there is intangible local wisdom in the Umpasa oral tradition that includes proverbs, advice, and poetry. This intangible local wisdom reflects noble values such as unity, solidarity, brotherhood, love, politeness, authority, obedience, loyalty, mutual respect, and compassion. Both the noble values in tangible and intangible local wisdom reflect the collective cultural appreciation of the Batak community.

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