

Iconic Meaning and Index Meaning of Traditional Culinary in Labuhanbatu: Ecolinguistic Study

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ABSTRACT

The Labuhanbatu is a regency of North Sumatera, its seat is Rantau Prapat. Not only famous for its oil palm and rubber plantations, but also famous for its variety of culinary delights and the uniqueness of its culinary naming. Usually culinary naming is based on iconic meaning and index meaning. This paper focuses on description iconic meaning and index meaning of traditional culinary in Labuhanbatu and also describes the relationship between aspects with iconic meaning and index meaning. In this research, the writer uses qualitative method with ecolinguistic review. The data of this research are Labuhanbatu culinary names. The method of data collection is done by in-depth interviews and literature study. The result of iconic meaning and index meaning of traditional culinary in Labuhanbatu's culineries are: (1) *anyang terubuk*, whose name have the iconic meaning is reflected in the fish's cooking process, which is '*anyang*' or chopped raw, and instead of using fire, it is cooked by smearing a concoction of seasonings on the fish (2) *pajri nonas*, whose name have the indexical meaning is found in the dish's name, which is reflected in the ingredients used. (3) *anyang buas-buas*, whose name have the iconic meaning of the name is shown in the way the dish is processed by '*dianyang*' or by cutting the leaves raw and cooking it by smearing the dish with a variety of spices. (4) *pongat jelok*, whose name have the indexical meaning of it exists because the dish holds the nature of bringing togetherness and has a particular philosophy to the community related to their customs. (5) *sarak terong*, whose name have the iconic meaning of it is shown in the main ingredient used. The ingredient is the eggplant which displays that the eggplant icon is the sign, and the

relationship between the signifier and the sign is scientifically accompanying.

Keywords: *ecolinguistic, iconic meaning, index meaning, Labuhanbatu culinary*

INTRODUCTION

The diversity of ethnic groups in Indonesia results in diverse cultures and customs. Daeng (2016:85) emphasized that these customs and traditions are excellent sources for fostering and developing regional cultures. Indonesia has many cultures reflected in its cuisine, fashion, and art. In terms of Indonesia's cuisine, every region has its signature dish. For instance, *rendang* from Padang, *rawon* from Surabaya, *pempek* from Palembang, and *kue bika ambon* from Medan. Those dishes have their unique features. It becomes the country's asset that needs to be protected and conversed to maintain its authenticity and existence from the globalization. Culinary has its value that is influenced by the social environment. It resulted in diverse dishes from each community seen from the utensils, ingredients, and the cooking process. Thus, culinary arts in each region are the community's identity in their respective regions.

Culinary in Indonesia have advantages over some neighboring countries in Southeast Asia. Besra (2012) explained that there was a mixture of foreign culture with local culture. Won't find it difficult to find a taste that suits the tongue because of cooking Indonesia has so many choices, ranging from spicy, salty, sweet and ingredients that are variety from fish, meat, vegetables, everything can be found in culinary of Indonesia. Traditional cuisine reflects the rich flavor of the dish, the ingredients, the process, and the flavor and represents the whole entity of the community's cultures. A particular community has consumed these dishes or served them in particular celebrations as the heritage from the previous generation. This dish has been made with recipes passed down from generation to generation. Thus, it makes the food distinct from other regions' dishes. Culinary becomes the local identity because it is part of the whole culture of the community, such as the way the dish is prepared, the role of the dish within the people, the serving technique, and the recipe that needs to be protected (Tyas, 2017:3).

Every region has its traditional cuisine and has become the area's icon. Labuhanbatu Regency, for instance, the regency is located in North Sumatra Province, and Rantau Prapat has become the capital of the regency. According to Wikipedia, Labuhanbatu Regency has 2,561.38 km² wide with 493,899 people, and the population density is 193 per km². The area was officially announced as a regency on 17th October 1945. This district is famous for its oil palm and rubber plantations. In addition, two significant sultanates once stood here, namely the Bilah Sultanate, whose capital was

in Negeri Lama, and the Panai Sultanate, whose capital was Labuhan Bilik. Furthermore, Labuhanbatu has become a culinary center because it has many special foods and drinks. Labuhanbatu culinary specialties include *tarubuk anyang*, *anyang buas-buas*, *labar pakis*, *lais fish curry/pepes*, *pajri nonas*, *karas-karas*, *pakasam maman*, *sarak terong*, *pongat jelok*, *bolu kampung ika la iya*, and others.

These Labuhanbatu's unique cuisines use ingredients from plants and animals that live in water. *Anyang terubuk*, for instance, according to Zen Nasution, '*terubuk*' is a type of fish originating from Bengkalis water brought to Labuhan Bilik (one of the sub-districts in Labuhanbatu). The fish then bred in Labuhan Bilik's waters, becoming endemic to the Labuhan Bilik estuary. The anatomy of the fish changes and has a more specific distinctive taste. The process of cooking is also unique. It is conducted by serving it raw and using no fire in the process. A concoction of spices is used instead by pouring the fish with lime juice, then covering it with small grated coconut. It is supposed that the grated coconut will cook the fish. After that, the process continues by adding additional spices such as curly chilies, chili peppers, shallots, lemongrass, and scallions for seasoning.

This research is relevant if it is studied through an ecolinguistic study. Interdisciplinary studies linking ecology and linguistics began in the 1970s when Einar Haugen (1972) proposed the 'ecology of language.' Haugen in Fill and Muhlhauser (2001) stated, "*ecology of language may be defined as the study of interactions between any given language and its environment*" this means that ecology of language is defined as the study of interactions or reciprocal relationships interactions between language and its environment. Labuhanbatu's special cuisine also famous in various regions, however have a different name. This matter also influenced by the way people say the names. According to Suktiningsih (2016), speech community know and control, and using language tools associated with environment. Naming phenomenon regional culinary specialties included in the study of ecolinguistic.

The language environment is the community that uses the language as its code. The code refers to the communication tool used within the community: these codes or the terminology for the cuisine are seen by its iconicity. Charles Sanders Peirce (Listiani, 2020) distinguished three types of signs in semiotics, namely: (1) icons are signs that have similarity with the object it represents, (2) indexes are signs that have a causal connection with the object it represents or as evidence, and (3) symbols are signs that based on convention or agreements within the community and are universal. Peirce concludes that the naming of objects can be seen from their similarity and their causal connection regarding the represented objects. In conducting iconic and indexical categorization, researchers sought the similarities from several factors and the causal relationship from those similarities. The factors are shape, sound, color, and other factors

(Rahardi, Setyaningsih, and Purnama, 2019). Those similarities can be found by observing the objects directly or through digital documents.

Thus, the researchers analyzed and described the iconic meaning and index meaning contained in the signature cuisines in Labuhanbatu. Therefore, later, the younger generation can easily learn and understand the works of previous ancestors, which have values and teachings of good things in people's lives. In addition, because only few people who know about the cuisines, it is necessary to learn and preserve the signature cuisines that still survive today. This paper aims: (1) to inform the iconic and indexical meaning of the Labuhanbatu's signature cuisines and (2) to present the relationship between the factors with the iconic and indexical meaning of the Labuhanbatu's signature cuisines. This research provides benefits (1) to introducing and preserving the signature cuisines of Labuhanbatu by providing linguistic documentation that is advantageous for developing a branch of linguistics and (2) to developing ecolinguistics, especially in the iconic meaning and indexical meaning in the peculiar culinary.

METHOD

This research utilized a qualitative approach and this research uses an ecolinguistic perspective study method pioneered by Einar Haugen (1972) which has developed by Levasseur in Chen (2016:110) and Muhlhausler (2001). The data was gathered in the form of oral utterances from interviewing the informants. The questions for the interview cover information: Labuhanbatu's signature cuisines, their iconic and indexical meaning, the informant's views about the meaning of the cuisines, and the relationship between the factors, the iconic and indexical meaning based on Charles Sanders Peirce's categorization. The researchers collected the data using a literature study and interviews. The source data is several of Labuhanbatu's signature cuisines and a resident of Labuhanbatu who knows well about the cuisines' origins. The type of data in this research is images and utterances from the interviews. The interview was an in-depth interview aimed at getting as much explanation as possible. According to Bungin (2010a: 108), universal in-depth interviews are a process of obtaining explanations for research purposes using a face-to-face question and answer method with or without an interview guide.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research found 25 signature cuisines from Labuhanbatu; however, the researcher analyzed only five cuisines: *anyang terubuk*, *pajri nonas*, *anyang buas-buas*, *pongat jelok*, and *sarak terong*. The rich iconic and indexical meaning of Labuhanbatu's cuisines refers to the praxis social concept. It is a concept that refers to all the community actions, activities, and behaviors towards themselves and towards their natural surroundings.

The praxis concept of Labuhanbatu's cuisines covers three dimensions, namely, ideological, sociological, and biological. The three dimensions are reflected in each type of Labuhanbatu's unique cuisines. It can be seen in the characteristics of flavor, color, smell, and the cultures recorded in the community's cognitive. The iconic and indexical meanings of Labuhanbatu's cuisines are strongly related to the community's cognitive, social and biological existence, which co-exist with other species such as flora and fauna.

1. Anyang Terubuk

Ikan terubuk (*terubuk* fish) is one of the protected fish species in Indonesia. There are only five species of *terubuk* fish in the world, and two of them inhabit Indonesian water. The two types of *terubuk* fish are *Tenualosa ilisha* found in Labuhanbatu, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Kuwait; the other is *Tenualosa macrura* found in Bengkalis, Indonesia. *Terubuk* fish is unique because these fish are *hermafrodit proandri*, which means that the fish has multiple sexes. Younger *terubuk* fishes under one year are male, and in the following year, it alters to female fishes. Kings and sultans once served and consumed this unique *terubuk* fish cuisine. However, it did not serve as a daily feast. It was served on special occasions such as coronation (appointment), custom celebration after illness, and as an encouragement. Due to the more difficult problem of obtaining *terubuk* fish, a prohibition on catching *terubuk* fish was issued to conserve the fish from massive fishing. The regulation was published by the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Republic of Indonesia No. 43 of 2016 concerning the determination of the limited protection status of *terubuk* fish in Labuhanbatu Regency, which is one of the habitats of *terubuk* fish. According to Aini (2018), the scarcity and difficulty of getting this *terubuk* fish makes the fisherman charge a fairly high price. Some areas that the most expensive of the *terubuk* fish is the egg's *terubuk* fish, namely egg's *terubuk* fish separated from the fish.

Furthermore, *anyang terubuk* is a signature dish of Labuhanbatu, initially served by the Sultan of Panai to their honored guests. The dish is commonly cooked using three ways: roasted, boiled, and served raw (*anyang*). However, back in the sultanates and kingdom period, the cuisine was favored to be served raw (*anyang*). The word '*anyang*' is derived from the ancient Malay language, which means 'chopped but raw.' *Terubuk* fish from Barumon river is utilized to make *anyang terubuk*. The process begins by cleaning the scales, separating the meat from the bones, and cutting it into small square shapes. *Terubuk* fish and its eggs are not cooked with fire but with spices and seasonings such as grated *roasted* coconut, black pepper, ginger, coriander, lime, sliced chili, and sliced onion. Then, let it sit for 30 minutes until all spices and seasonings are entirely absorbed.

Picture 1:
Anyang Terubuk



Source: correcto.id

Based on the explanation above, there is an iconic meaning in the dish's name; *anyang terubuk*. The iconic meaning is reflected in the fish's cooking process, which is '*anyang*' or chopped raw, and instead of using fire, it is cooked by smearing a concoction of seasonings on the fish. In this case, the object being chopped is the fish; therefore, in line with Pierce's statement (in Sobur, 2003), an icon is a sign whose relationship between the signifier and the sign is scientifically concurrent. In this case, *anyang terubuk*'s icon is a sign that shows the actual object is similar to what is represented.

2. Pajri Nonas

Nonas in the Indonesian language means *buah nenas* (pineapple). According to Labuhanbatu's locals, *nenas* first appeared in 1902. When the late Husein, an immigrant from Bogor, came to Panai Tengah sub-district's capital, Labuhan Bilik; hence, the fruit's name was *nenas pane*. He brought *nenas* seeds and became the first farmer to cultivate *nenas* in the area. Supported by a soil texture that contains peat-type nutrients, the development of *nenas* is increasingly successful. As a result, there are differences in the texture of *nenas* in Bogor with *nenas* on the coast of Labuhan Bilik, which are more fibrous and sweet.

Pajri nonas is a dish made from sliced *nenas* seasoned with savory spices (a stew). *Pajri nonas*' epicures experience flavorful sensation in one bite: sweet, sour, savory, and spicy. The ingredients to make this dish is ripe *nenas* and spices, including cayenne pepper, star anise, cardamom, cloves, curry powder, grated roasted coconut, cinnamon, Ebi prawns, brown sugar, salt, and water. Some spices need to be mashed, such as garlic, shallots, curly red chili, and Ebi, which have been soaked in hot water for ten minutes. The cooking process begins by peeling off *nenas* from its skin, cleaning the fruit, and slicing the flesh 2-3 cm thick. After that, prepare the ground spices and stir-fry until fragrant. Add cinnamon, cardamom, star anise, and cloves, and stir thoroughly before adding the curry powder and

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grated roasted coconut. After adding all the spices, add sliced *nenas* and cayenne pepper, and stir again. Finally, add water and cook until the sliced *nenas* and all the spices are done. Add brown sugar and salt to taste.

Picture 2:
Pajri Nonas



Source: sumut.indozone.id

As stated by the locals, the philosophy of *nenas* contains the yellow color of the fruit, which is similar to gold, and it symbolizes joyfulness and expressiveness. Meanwhile, the green color of the leaves is believed to symbolize life. Because of the philosophy, it is common for the people to make *nenas* the symbol of the village's democracy in the chief election. Based on the statement, indexical meaning is found in the dish's name, *pajri nonas*, which is reflected in the ingredients used. The main ingredient is *nenas* fruit, a signature from Labuhan Bilik, cooked as one of the antidote cuisines to greasy food. In the region, *nenas* fruit is considered king fruit because *nenas* have a crown similar to a king and a queen. The fruit's flesh represents the wealth of the soul. The uniqueness of *nenas* is also reflected in the thorn structure and texture, and some locals signify it as protection and unfriendliness. It is in line with Sobur's (2003:159) statement that indexes are signs that exhibit the natural and causal relationship between the signs and the signifier or the sign that refers directly to the fact.

3. Anyang Buas-buas

Anyang buas-buas is made from *buas-buas* leaves origins from the low land area and has an herbal fragrance. The leaves are light green with oval leaf petals, and it is commonly planted in the coastal area's local yard. To make *anyang buas-buas*, it only needs the leaves because the young leaves are soft and are believed to have many nutrients. To cook *anyang buas-buas*, the first step is to clean the leaves with water, then slice the leaves into small pieces and boil them to cook. After that, mash the spices such as garlic, cayenne pepper, galangal, lemongrass, lime, and salt, then stir-fry all the spices over low heat. After the spices are cooked, mix all the ground spices with the boiled *buas-buas* leaves. Other ingredients can also

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be added as '*roncah*' or flavor enhancers such as river prawns, clams, and *ulampau* (curcuma turmeric).

Picture 3:
Anyang Buas-buas



Source: travelingyuk.com

Currently, only local people who live in the coastal of Labuhanbatu, especially among local women, serve *anyang buas-buas* since the dish has a unique flavor and is often served for breaking the fast in Ramadhan. This dish is not sold in food stalls daily, but it is sold during the season of *buas-buas* leaves, which is also the moment of Ramadhan. The locals believe that one of the spices used in *anyang buas-buas*, *ulampau* can suspend the wind in the body, restore stamina, and warm the body up after fasting. Furthermore, *anyang buas-buas* is beneficial as an antioxidant, anticancer, antiviral, anti-fungal, and anti-bacteria (Anggrelita, 2019). In conclusion, the iconic meaning of the name of *anyang buas-buas* is shown in the way the dish is processed by '*dianyang*' or by cutting the leaves raw and cooking it by smearing the dish with a variety of spices. In this case, the ingredient being cut raw is *buas-buas* leaves. In line with Pierce (in Sobur, 2003), he stated that an icon is a sign whose relationship between the signifier and the sign is scientifically concurrent. The icon in *anyang buas-buas* is the sign in which the actual object and what is being represented are similar.

4. Pongat Jelok

Pongat is a specific *kolak* dish (compote dish). Meanwhile, *jelok* is derived from the coastal Malay language, which means pumpkin. *Pongat jelok* is a dish served as a dessert in traditional wedding celebrations or thanksgiving events in the Labuhanbatu community. The required ingredients to make this dish are *jelok* fruit (pumpkin), palm sugar, *pandan* leaves, coconut milk, sugar, and *pulut* (glutinous rice). The first step to making the dish is begun by peeling off the pumpkin and cutting the fruit; to obtain a slightly stiff pumpkin, soak it first with limewater. Put the sliced pumpkin into the pot, and then add the thin coconut

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milk, *pandan* leaves, sugar, palm sugar, and salt to taste. After all the ingredients are in, cook the dish until the thin coconut milk reduces, pour the thick coconut milk, and let it boil. While for the glutinous rice, it is cooked like how ordinary rice is cooked. Finally, *pongat jelok* and *pulut* are served in a bowl.

Picture 4:
Pongat Jelok



Source: cookpad.com

Pongat jelok has the philosophy of 'hard, chewy, soft, and sweet' that symbolizes the customs in Labuhanbatu: 'hard' firmly upholds the customs similar to the firmness of *jelok* fruit, 'chewy' represents the people who stick to the customs, but 'soft' inside showing the wisdom and harmony within the people who are firmly upholding their customs, and 'sweet' reflecting the strong relationship between the people. Therefore, the locals serve this dish at celebrations, reflecting how they uphold their customs and solidarity. Based on the explanation above, the index meaning of *pongat jelok* exists because the dish holds the nature of bringing togetherness and has a particular philosophy to the community related to their customs.

5. Sarak Terong

Sarak terong is a signature cuisine from Labuhanbatu, which is made from eggplants. It is commonly served as a dish for breaking the fast and served at the Eid al-Fitr celebration. The required ingredients to make *sarak terong* are eggplants, coconut milk, grated roasted coconut, ebi soaked in warm water, bay leaf, brown sugar, lemongrass, and salt. The dish also requires mashed spices such as red chili, cayenne pepper, shallots, garlic, ginger, turmeric, coriander powder, cumin, candlenut, galangal, shrimp paste, and lemongrass. *Sarak terong* is cooked by cutting the eggplant into half pieces, however, do not cut it completely. Grind the grated roasted coconut using mortar and pestle until the oil comes out as well as the Ebi. Then, stir-fry the mashed spices, Ebi, and roasted coconut with oil and then add the bay leaf. Smear the spices on the eggplant halves, put them in the pan and, pour the coconut milk. Cover the pan and cook the dish over low heat. Occasionally, open the cover and stir to avoid burning. After that, let it

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cook until the coconut milk reduces, the oil comes out, and the eggplant turns brown.

Picture 5:
Sarak Terong



Source: caracari.id

Sarak in KBBI (The Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language) means separate; split. The eggplant is sliced in half but not completely separated. Based on the statement, the iconic meaning of *sarak terong* is shown in the main ingredient used. The ingredient is the eggplant which displays that the eggplant icon is the sign, and the relationship between the signifier and the sign is scientifically accompanying. The *sarak terong* icon is the sign that displays the similarity between the actual object and what is represented.

CONCLUSION

According to the data collected and the semiotic analysis based on C. S. Peirce's theory of Labuhanbatu's signature cuisines, it can be concluded that there are iconic and indexical meanings within the cuisines' names. Of the two forms of signs, the most common sign is iconic, meaning three forms. Meanwhile, there are two forms of indexical meaning. The iconic forms in Labuhanbatu's signature cuisines include 1) *anyang terubuk* icon as honor and appreciation cuisine, 2) *anyang buas-buas* icon as cure cuisine, and 3) *sarak terong* icon as flavor enhancer cuisine. Furthermore, the indexical forms in the cuisines include 1) *pajri nonas* index, which shows the wealth of the people's souls, and 2) *pongat jelok* index, which depicts the features of Labuhanbatu's customs.

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