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**Aceh Traditional Culinary *Kuah Pliék U*:
How it Sustains Eco-Lexicon Diversity**

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ACEH TRADITIONAL CULINARY KUAH PLIEK U: HOW IT SUSTAINS ECO-LEXICON DIVERSITY

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Abstract

"Kuah Pliék" is the famous Acehnese cuisine that utilizes most ecological materials. However, only a few researchers have discussed the sustainability of the lexicon contained within the cuisine from an eco-linguistics perspective. This study focuses on Aceh's traditional cuisine, "Kuah Pliék U" (KPU), to assess the raw materials' eco-lexicon diversity and the Acehnese's knowledge of the identified eco-lexicon. This study employed a qualitative research design to address the problems in which data collection included in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), passive and active observation, and the examination of documents such as research reports and journal articles. The analysis of data then used a qualitative interactive model. The result demonstrates that the number of the eco-lexicon within KPU is about 35 – 40, as same as its total of raw materials and ingredients. It consists of biotic and abiotic, with plants comprising the majority. Linguistically, the lexicon belongs to the noun class, but semantically, it can be divided into nouns, prepositional eco-lexicons, and nouns and conjunction. This study also reveals that Acehnese knowledge of KPU has decreased, despite its continued popularity in Aceh society. It means that the existence of three dimensions that influence language sustainability cannot guarantee that local people's cultural knowledge will remain intact.

Keywords: *Kuah Pliék U; Eco-linguistics; Classification; Traditional Culinary; Knowledge.*



A. Introduction

Food as culinary satisfies more than the fundamental physiological needs of the human body. It also helps to foster social connections, psychological expression, and expression of identity and culture (Kim & Iwashita, 2016; Monterrosa et al., 2020; Prempeh, 2022; Rusmawati et al., 2023). Food culinary has grown in popularity as a product of cultural tourism - culinary tourism (Wijaya, 2019). Culinary tourism is undeniably one of the most critical aspects of sustainable development. It has been identified as the primary means of strengthening the position of local communities (Niedbała et al., 2020; Rachão et al., 2019). Accordingly, some social studies have paid attention to traditional foods as culinary tourism to see the prospects of economic opportunities through business and tourism (Hjalager & Johansen, 2013; Meneguel et al., 2019).

Unlike those previous studies, this research focuses on Aceh's traditional cuisine, *Kuah Pliek U* (KPU), from an eco-linguistic perspective. KPU is an Aceh traditional culinary dish that needs most raw materials sourced from flora and fauna compared to other gravies. The complexity of natural diversity contained in KPU inspired the Minister of Religion, Lukman Hakim, to describe the ideal of pluralistic living when giving a public lecture at the STAIN Malikussaleh Syariah Faculty on March 28, 2016. He likened the beauty of diversity to KPU. Its distinctive pleasure due to the diversity of herbs and types of vegetables makes this cuisine very popular in the Aceh community. In addition, the KPU cuisine can reflect the characteristics of Acehnese culture and the diversity of its natural resources. Besides, it has the potential to be an economical source and supports the survival of the Acehnese language and the sustainability of Aceh's ecology.

Traditional food, or culinary, derives its raw materials from natural resources, where it is produced and developed. Therefore, traditional foods vary from one region or district to another. Even if there are similarities in name, the flavor differs due to each region's ingredients, experiences, and cultures (Hajeb & Jinap, 2015; Kadir & Kes, 2022; Velasco et al., 2016). From an eco-linguistic perspective, the existence of ecology contributes to the distinctions. It impacts the development of a region's culture, including food



and language (Calvet, 2006; Lubis & Widayati, 2022; Yuniawan et al., 2017). Moreover, the ecological situation affects other aspects of life, such as economic, social, and political (Dong et al., 2021; Siregar, 2021).

According to the preceding explanation, a particular traditional food's creation depends on the availability of raw materials in its natural environment. In addition, it enables the addition of economic value to the local community while reviving and spreading endogenous languages. It is because interacting with the natural environment requires the language of the environment to express everything that exists in nature, both in the form of language and other cultural elements, such as traditional food.

Despite its many uses, however, Acehnese people do not serve KPU as the introductory course at receptions; instead, it becomes a pre-reception menu for relatives and family who help prepare a reception in advance. While the reception moments involve many people, they can be used to promote the cuisine to other young people and ethnic groups who attend. Unfortunately, people prefer to prepare other dishes; some are not even part of traditional Acehnese cuisines, such as *kimlo* and *soto padang* (the traditional soups from other parts of Indonesia).

This condition will harm Acehnese's future knowledge, attitudes, behavior, and generation. As a result, Aceh's language, culture, and ecology will be threatened to extinct for the lack of value given by the community. Therefore, it becomes imperative to investigate the situation to prevent the extinction of the Acehnese language and preserve its ecology and culture. The study demonstrates a variety of KPU's raw materials and ingredients to examine the diversity of eco-lexicons within this cuisine and assesses Acehnese's knowledge regarding the eco-lexicon of KPU's raw materials.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative method to comprehend a phenomenon holistically, particularly the experiences of research subjects involving their behaviors, perceptions, motivations, actions, and others. Data is described as words and language in a unique and natural context (Mohajan, 2018). The



main task of language is to convey information or explain reality. Qualitative research presupposes that humans actively interpret their experiences by giving meaning to them. Therefore, interpretation is the process of imparting meaning to something humans experience (Crabtree & Miller, 2022).

This research used the descriptive qualitative method with primary and secondary data types. Primary data consists of directly observed expressions, events, and community activities on the people of Aceh, with answers obtained through interviews with informants. At the same time, secondary data come from media information, historical documents, books, and research reports (Pandey & Pandey, 2021).

In this study, researchers acted as the key instruments. The primary data sources were Acehnese from East Aceh, North Aceh, and Pidie Jaya, and key informants were determined purposively. They consisted of senior citizens, adults, and adolescents, who met the following criteria: they had never resided outside the island of Aceh for more than one year, were not speech impaired, were physically and mentally healthy, and could be present to communicate. The researcher selected three age groups for the community. Adolescents are between 20 and 30, adults are between 31 and 50, and older people are between 51 and above. For each age category, there were 15 informants interviewed. In addition, the researcher also used library resources or documents to support and supplement the primary data, such as research results on the Acehnese language and culture; and documents on Aceh cuisine.

The data collection methods included; (1) in-depth interviews by asking open-ended questions to informants; (2) passive and active observation; (3) Focus Group Discussions with older people, adults, and adolescents; and (4) analysis of documents such as research reports, and journal articles. The data were then analyzed interactively in three stages; (1) Data reduction, selection process, and simplification of raw data obtained from field notes; (2) Data display, namely the presentation of information collected in the form of narrative text with the aid of tables; and (3) concluding, the process of finding



meaning, patterns, causal explanations, and forming propositions (Grbich, 2012). In order to validate the obtained data, field notes were meticulously and methodically checked and rechecked for accuracy.

C. Result and Discussion

1. Result

a. Raw Materials and Eco-Lexicon Diversity in *Kuah Pliek U*

The Acehnese have made the region's natural wealth a primary component in their traditional food, from principal to intermediate. KPU is a traditional dish served with rice or as a side dish. The raw materials generally come from the Acehnese nature, with only a few portions of the raw materials not obtained directly from the living environment, such as *aweuh* (coriander), *jeuramaneh* (white cumin), and *lada* (pepper). Districts within the Aceh region have distinctive aromas, hues, and flavors for KPU due to the varied condiments and spices.

The number of ingredients and raw materials is only found partially in one district. Based on the findings of interviews and observations at the three research sites, the study found various raw materials and ingredients used in KPU as outlined in the following table.

Table 1. The differences of raw materials and ingredients in Kuah Pliek U

No.	Acehnese	English	Aceh Timur	Aceh Utara	Pidie Jaya
1.	<i>U</i>	Coconut	+	+	+
2.	<i>Santan</i>	Coconut milk	+	+	+
3.	<i>Pliek u</i>	Fermented coconut	+	+	+
4.	<i>Aweuh</i>	Coriander	+	+	+
5.	<i>Kunyet</i>	Turmeric	+	+	+
6.	<i>Campli ijo</i>	Green Chili	+	+	+
7.	<i>Campli ubiet</i>	Cayenne pepper	+	+	+
8.	<i>Campli kleng</i>	Dried chili	+	+	+
9.	<i>Campli mirah</i>	Red chili pepper	+	+	+
10.	<i>Bawang mirah</i>	Shallot	+	+	+
11.	<i>Bawang putih</i>	Garlic	+	+	+
12.	<i>Boh halia</i>	Ginger	+	+	+
13.	<i>Jera maneh</i>	White Cumin	+	+	+
14.	<i>Lada</i>	Pepper	+	+	+



No.	Acehnese	English	Aceh Timur	Aceh Utara	Pidie Jaya
15.	<i>Asam sunti</i>	Star fruit acid	+	+	+
16.	<i>On kruet</i>	Lime leaves	+	+	+
17.	<i>On teumerueh</i>	Curry leaves	+	+	+
18.	<i>Reu</i>	Lemongrass	+	+	+
19.	<i>Reubong trieng</i>	Bamboo shoots	+	+	-
20.	<i>Reubong kala</i>	Kecombrang	+	+	-
21.	<i>Boh mulieng</i>	Melinjo fruit	+	+	+
22.	<i>Boh trueng cawieng</i>	Little eggplant	+	+	+
23.	<i>Boh trueng punyok</i>	Index eggplant	+	+	+
24.	<i>Boh trueng gadong</i>	Purple eggplant	+	+	+
25.	<i>Boh panah putik</i>	Young jackfruit	+	+	+
26.	<i>Boh putek putik</i>	Young papaya	+	+	+
27.	<i>Boh reuteuk</i>	Long beans	+	+	+
28.	<i>On mulieng</i>	Melinjo leaves	+	+	+
29.	<i>On rumpuen</i>	Water spinach leaves	+	+	+
30.	<i>On ubi</i>	Cassava leaves	+	+	+
31.	<i>On putek</i>	Papaya leaves	-	-	+
32.	<i>On Paku</i>	Fern	-	+	-
33.	<i>Kulet maneh</i>	Cinnamon	-	-	+
34.	<i>Kapulaga</i>	Cardamom	-	-	+
35.	<i>Bungong lawang kleng</i>	Star anise	-	-	+
36.	<i>Boh labu Jeupang</i>	Japanese Pumpkin	-	-	+
37.	<i>Jera eungkot</i>	Caraway	-	-	+
38.	<i>Bungong putek</i>	Papaya flower	-	+	+
39.	<i>Guw putek</i>	The tip of the papaya stem	-	-	+
40.	<i>Boh jantung pisang</i>	Banana heart	+	+	-
41.	<i>Kukuet</i>	Buffalo/cow skin	+	+	+
42.	<i>Udeung</i>	Shrimp	+	+	+
43.	<i>Sira</i>	Salt	+	+	+
44.	<i>Ie</i>	Water	+	+	+
The Number of Raw Materials in Each District			35	37	40

Source: The processed data based on observations and interviews

Table 1 shows that KPU contains significantly fewer ingredients than raw materials, which all come directly from nature. The cuisine contains only two ingredients: *sira* (salt) and *pliek u* (fermented coconuts, which Acehnese use as a seasoning) (Asril et al., 2019), while the rest are raw materials. Most of the combined raw materials and ingredients are from plants, and only two



come from the sea: salt and shrimp. Thus, the number of raw materials is proportional to the quantity of eco-lexicon contained therein.

In addition, the tools used are the same in all districts, so the lexicons for making *KPU* are as follows.

Table 2. The tools used in making Kuah Pliek U

No.	Acehnese	Indonesian
1.	<i>Sikin</i>	Knife
2.	<i>Sareng santan</i>	Coconut milk filter
3.	<i>Geulungku</i>	Coconut grater
4.	<i>Bate seumupeh</i>	Milled stone / blender
5.	<i>Aweuk</i>	Cock
6.	<i>Dapu maguen</i>	Kitchen

Source: The processed data based on observations and interviews

b. Acehnese Knowledge of the *Kuah Pliek U* and its Eco-Lexicons

Personal knowledge can be obtained through sensing experience-sight, hearing, appreciation, feeling, and smell- To understand and interpret their natural surroundings (Suardi, 2018). Therefore, a person's level of knowledge depends on his or her ability to perceive objects in his environment, which are then interpreted and comprehended based on his social and cultural experiences. In this instance, the Acehnese's knowledge about *KPU* can be identified through the three-dimensional interrelationship: ideological, sociological, and biological dimensions of Bang et al. (2007). The ideological dimension sees and describes the Acehnese people's mentality and cognition of the *KPU* eco-lexicon. The ideological dimension of this discussion will be clarified by the public's knowledge about the lexicon of materials used and how to make and consume them.

Furthermore, through the sociological dimension, this study can explain the familiarity of language (eco-lexicon in *KPU*) among the Acehnese people in their interactions. In this instance, the sociological knowledge that will be explained relates to having heard *KPU*-related lexicons in societal discussions. For example, *reubong* is one of the components of *KPU*. This study, then,



examines how the Acehnese recognize *reubong* from a sociological aspect. The ideological dimension is closely associated with the sociological dimension, in which community knowledge is acquired through social interaction. People might be familiar with the lexicon of the KPU components through their social interactions within their community.

Based on the results of the 45 interviews (15 informants for each age category), this study found that the knowledge of the Acehnese regarding the KPU is the same among all age groups. Teenagers, adults, and seniors all have complete knowledge of the KPU. Also, their tasting experiences are identical: 100% for adolescents, 100% for adults, and 100% for older people. However, they had different knowledge about the raw materials and ingredients contained within it and how to make it. 80% of adolescents, 86% of adults, and 93% of the older people in the Aceh community know the raw materials and ingredients used to create KPU. 53% of adolescents, 80% of adults, and 86% of older people can make it. Then, their experiences in making it are different: 40% of adolescents, 80% of adults, and 86% of older people have ever made it.

The data show that the Acehnese's knowledge of KPU raw materials, how to make it, and the experience of making it has decreased, especially for the experience of making KPU among adolescents. It is alarming and threatens the risk of losing skills in maintaining traditional food amongst the next Acehnese young generations.

2. Discussion

a. Eco-Lexicon Classification of Kuah Pliek U

From an eco-linguistic perspective, the natural environment is a language source that gives variations of lexicon form and meaning. The richness of lexicons found in the natural environment can be classified into word classes: nouns or nouns plus adjectives that describe the diversity of the natural environment of a region or district. One medium for identifying its diversity is through traditional food. Based on the exposure of the data in Table 1, it shows that KPU represents 44 diverse



eco-lexicons. Linguistically, the lexicon can be categorized into nouns, nouns and prepositions, and nouns and conjunctions. The lexicons can be grouped into several categories of noun phrases.

- 1) The result of combining the noun + noun word class such as: *Pliék U, Boh halia, On kruet, On teumerueh, Reubong trieng, Reubong kala, Boh mulieng, Boh trueng, Boh reuteuk, On mulieng, On rumpuen, On ubi, On putek, On Paku, Boh Labu Jeupang, Bungong putek, Boh jantong pisang.*
- 2) The results of the incorporation of Nouns + Adjectives such as; *Campli ijo, Campli ubiet, Campli kleng, Campli mirah, Bawang mirah, Bawang Puteh, Jera Maneh, Boh trueng cawieng, Boh trueng gadong, Boh panah putik, Boh putek putik, Kulet maneh, Bungong lawang kleng.*

In addition, two of the lexicons have two function categories: *U* and *SIRA*. Lexicon *U*, firstly, can be categorized as a noun, which means "coconut", but on the other hand, it can be categorized as a preposition, which means "to". Here are two examples to be more explicit in understanding it.

- 1a. *Lon neuk jak blow U siat.*
I want to buy a coconut for a while.
- 1b. *Lon neuk jak U blang siat.*
I want to go to the rice fields for a while

Based on this example, it can be explained that *U* in sentence 1a. is classified in the noun category. As for *U* in example 1b, it is categorized as prepositions. In addition, the lexicon *SIRA* can also be categorized as a noun and conjunction with multiple meanings. As a noun, *SIRA* means salt, while *SIRA*, as a conjunction, means when/ while. For more details, it is explained in the following examples.

- 2a. *Katamah sira bacut lam saus nyan.*
Add a little salt to the sauce.
- 2b. *Kacok sikin siat sira kajak keu nou.*
Please bring me a knife while you walk here.



The lexicon SIRA is found in example 2a. It means salt and noun category, while SIRA in sentence 2a contains temporary meanings and is included in the conjunction word class. The fact shows that in the natural eco-lexicon in Acehese, one-word consonants can be classified into two classes, such as U lexicon meaning coconut (noun category), can also be meaningful (preposition category), and SIRA lexicon, which means salt (noun category), also means while (conjunction category). This reality has revealed that the Acehese word differs from other languages' norms. Acehese describes one lexicon object with a combination of two or more word classes, such as the example in number 2 above.

Furthermore, the different ingredients and raw materials of the KPU from the three districts indicate differences in their natural resources' biological, ideological, and sociological aspects. In other words, the Acehese from the three districts differed in their interactions, interrelationships, and interdependencies with the diversity of the environment. Then table 1 above also shows that the treasure of lexicons in Acehese semantically can be classified into biotic and abiotic. However, most are biotic, while abiotic elements are only two: *sira* (salt) and *ie* (water).

The fact shows similarities with Mbete et al. (2015), which categorize the noun eco-lexicon; as biotic and abiotic but are slightly different concerning the nominal class. A one-word lexicon can be classified into two categories in the Acehese eco-lexicon. Meanwhile, Mbete et al. (2015) categorize the eco-lexicon of the Lio language; as nouns, adjectives, and verbs.

b. The Level of Knowledge of the Acehese Towards *Kuah Pliék U*

The knowledge of Acehese in this case, especially the Acehese speakers, towards the concept of diversity can be seen through the three dimensions (ideological, sociological, and biological) of interrelationships pioneered by Bang & Door (1993). The ideological dimension identifies and characterizes the mentality and cognition of the Acehese to the eco-lexicon of KPU. The ideological dimension of this discussion will be elucidated through the community's knowledge of the lexicon of the used components,

knowledge of how to create it, consumption and production experiences, and lexicon knowledge.

In addition, the sociological dimension of this study explains the Acehese people's comprehension of the interactional use of language (eco-lexicon in KPU). In this instance, sociological knowledge is associated with having heard the KPU lexicons discussed in society. For instance, *reubong*, one of the critical components of KPU, will be reflected in how the Acehese perceive it from a sociological standpoint. The ideological dimension is closely related to the sociological dimension, in which aspects of community knowledge are acquired through their existence in social interaction, where they are subsequently practiced. Someone knows the lexicon of KPU because of the social interaction by hearing the conversation in the community.

The results show that people who have heard the lexicon KPU 100% while knowing the ingredients of KPU as a biological dimension and its use to see the community's understanding of ecological collectivity as an ecosystem is slightly decreasing by generation, 93% to 80%. Next, the ideological dimension, which includes knowing how to make and experience making it is also low, 86% to 40%.

If the data description derived from those three areas in Aceh is averaged, it reveals that, of the combined residents of Pidie Jaya, North Aceh, and East Aceh, 100% know and have tasted KPU. As much as 86% of them know the components, 73% know how to process them, and only 67% have experience preparing KPU.

Penz & Fill (2022) state that language changes can be observed in the lexicon, which reflects most of the physical, social, and cultural environmental characteristics of native speakers (Uyanne et al., 2017). It is similar to the state that the dynamics of language change can be seen through three dimensions: ideological, sociological, and biological (Bang et al., 2007; Mokoagouw, 2018). It is similar to confirming a close relationship between language and environmental sustainability and damage (Gorenflo et al., 2012). However, this study reveals that the continuity of this three-



dimensional dialectic cannot guarantee that local people's knowledge about their culinary culture remains the same. It means that other dimensions also affect the decrease in local people's knowledge and language regarding their culture.

In conclusion, the knowledge differences about the KPU across age groups of Acehnese are inseparable from the three abovementioned dimensions. However, despite decreasing in younger age groups, the threat level towards Acehnese's KPU knowledge is still in a safe position (85%) but is threatened to decline even more in the future. Thus, if we refer to Al-Gayoni (2010) since language is closely linked with environmental sustainability and damage, it can be estimated that in the future, KPU will be less produced or fewer raw materials can be derived from Aceh's natural resources if the degradation of Aceh's natural diversity continues to decrease. In other words, the natural diversity related to KPU will degrade because of the lack of KPU value among Acehnese.

D. Conclusion

Based on the descriptions above, it can be concluded that the number of eco-lexicons in KPU is 44. However, when broken down by district, Pidie Jaya has the most lexicons, with 40, and East Aceh has the fewest, with 35. Its eco-lexicons can be categorized as biotic and abiotic but can also be categorized linguistically and semantically. Linguistically, these lexicons are categorized into the noun class, but semantically, two nouns differ from the others in that the word *u* might be classified into nouns and prepositions and the word *sira* into nouns and conjunctions. Thus, some Acehnese eco-lexicons can be categorized into two categories.

Furthermore, Acehnese knowledge of the KPU began to shift, even though all ages still consume the traditional food. However, the vitality level remains safe because the average value still reaches 85%. However, this mark could decline even more if the degradation of Aceh's natural diversity continues. It will happen because nature and culture are interdependent. Thus, the effort to save the language from its rapid



extinction is also related to the salvation of the natural environment and biodiversity reflected in the vocabulary (Haugen, 2001; Stibbe, 2020).

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