



The Tradition of the Legacy of ‘Look Malu’ in Timor-Leste Society: An Ecolinguistic Study

Lourenço Marques da Silva

Timor Leste

Email: lmarques67@yahoo.com.br

Article info

Received Date: 5 Maret 2025

Accepted Date: 30 April 2025

Published Date: 31 July 2025

Keywords:*

Tradition, ‘look malu’, eating betel nut, ecoculture, ecolinguistics.

Abstract*

The study of the tradition of 'look malu' or presenting betel nut in Timor society, is one part of the study that correlates with ecoculture in the context of Ecolinguistics with the aim of identifying, exploring, and arranging in a series of visual data for analysis. This study was realized based on the theory of text data studies from Creswell (2009) in Sugiyono (2012: 14) and data analysis methods from Maxwell & Chamiel (2014) in Ascarya Academia (2021). The tradition of 'look malu' that applies in the social relations of community life has several functions that are concretely appreciated in the social life of the supporting community that runs from time to time.

1. Introduction

The practice of performing the action of ‘**look malu**’ (serving betel + areca nut + lime + cigarettes) as a cultural legacy of the people on Timor Island has been and always has been maintained and passed down from generation to generation from generation to generation until now. Because this is one of the cultural riches that has naturally taken root in the lives of the Timorese people, there is a close relationship between the supporting community and the social environment in Ecolinguistics with Ecoculture or Ecocultural.

This practice of the legacy of ‘lok malu’ (serving) is a characterization of the natural reciprocal relationship of that culture with the social life of the community in its supporting environment which is correlated with the preservation of cultural wealth in the rapid flow of modernization and social globalization known as ecouniversal and ecoglobalization which will affect the existence of local ecoculture.

In relation to the preservation and maintenance of culture in its environment (Channel Mata Pena) it is stated that this betel-chewing habit has been going on for a long time, estimated

to be more than 3000 years ago or from the Neolithic era to the present. There are also records of Chinese travelers who reveal that betel and areca nuts have been consumed since two centuries before Christ.

In Timor-Leste society, from the past to the present, there are several ethnic groups that in many ways have almost different cultural aspects and some are always the same and can be practiced naturally without any external coercion from others, but rather practiced conscientiously by each individual who already has family status.

One of them is the legacy tradition of **'Look Malu'** in Timor-Leste society from every family in all ethnic groups that are composed and build Timorese society since life in rural areas to urban areas from all families that are known to have one married couple. This is a moral responsibility in an obligatory psychological manner in social life every day to legitimize the **'Look Malu'** action.

This tradition of habit is generally practiced when someone visits a family home, either close or far away, whether it happens frequently or sometimes in the form of individuals or visiting in the form of groups of people from one family to another. This, in addition to happening in homes, can also be done when meeting suddenly in the garden, in the rice fields, on the street and in other open spaces among acquaintances and relatives meeting as a family.

The tradition of **'look malu'**, not only occurs at simple meeting events, but is more 'exciting' at ceremonial events between gatherings of many relatives at wedding festivals, removing black cloth or kendurian events, death events, proposals, purchases, releasing daughters-in-law (hatun feto-foun) and the more careful directive **'look malu'** at the event of releasing the spirit from the woman's family (fetosaan) to the man's family (humane). Because in this last event, it can be done carelessly according to the directive or existing traditional regulations, then it will have fatal consequences for the party giving it and for the family who will receive it. Thus, viewed in the context of Ecolinguistics, especially its correlation with Ecoculture with cultural values in ecosemantics is very sacred, honorable in its supporting communities throughout Timor both in West Timor (NTT) and in East Timor.

Therefore, in the elaboration of this article, it is not more emphasized on the implementation of the event, but rather more emphasized on the axiological orientation that has an ecocultural or ecocultural correlation in the perspective of Ecolinguistic studies.

2. Research Methods

Research in collecting data for this study, qualitative design research through direct observation as an initial step to realize the planned research. Sugiyono (2017: 2) "research methods are basically a scientific way to obtain valid data with the aim of finding, proving, and developing knowledge so that in turn it can be used to understand, solve through analysis to anticipate problems". Furthermore, Sugiyono (2015: 145) observation as a complex process and composed of various biological and psychological processes. Two of the most important are the

observation and memory processes". Then, he explained that the descriptive method is "a method used to analyze data by describing, describing the data that has been collected as it is without making conclusions that apply to the public or generalization" Sugiyono (2017: 147). Creswell (2009) in Sugiyono (2012: 14) data analysis method from Maxwell & Chamuel (2014) in Ascarya Academia (2021) is equipped with methods and techniques as well as stages of studies used in the data study of the stages of the legacy tradition of 'look malu' or the offering of 'bua + malus + ahu + tabaku' = betel + areca nut + betel lime + tobacco as data obtained from cultural practices in the ecoculture of the people in Timor-Leste.

3. Result of Research

The data obtained from the place of acquisition in the city of Dili were in the form of kova in Timor-Leste and oko mama in NTT as a place to place bua, ahu and malus, tabaku (areca nut, betel, lime and tobacco) to be served to guests. In the **kova** or **oko mama**, if a bainaka or guest comes, the host 'uma-na'in' prepares three objects in the kova before serving or looking to the guest (bainaka), whether it is an individual guest or a group of guests, the way of serving is the same. In the **kova** or **oko mama** as seen in the symbolic objects that correlate with ecoculture in the ecolinguistic context that is illustrated.

In the image of the kova as figurative text data that is arranged in order, there is not only one kova, but two kova that always complement each other when served to guests who come. In each kova, the contents are different from each other. Kova number (2) in part I has two pieces. The first kova contains three types of objects presented to guests, malus (betel), bua (areca nut) and ahu (betel lime). While the second kova also contains objects presented to guests in the form of dry, neatly cut corn husks and tabaku (tobacco) placed together in the kova.

Creswell's quantitative data analysis method, with data description techniques for analysis, is very reasonable to be able to describe the stages that have been arranged in an ecolinguistic context, both at the morphological level, syntactic level and semantic level in the following table is a series of data to be studied.

That the arranged kova image is a text of the data to be studied. These images are one type of data text that emerged after the birth of the big data era which began to open our eyes that data is not only in tabular form, narrative text, but many other forms. In addition to text data, the emergence of big data also makes the existence of other types of data increasingly growing, such as image data, sound data, video, etc. So it is appropriate that the kova image is arranged as a presentation instrument is really data in this study.

Thus, text analysis is also known as content analysis a technique used to collect diverse and unorganized data in a structured form. In this process, documents are broken down for hassle-free management of data chunks, simply put: unstructured text in the form of images is sorted in a sequence into structured data.

Stages in part I: Giving and Eating betel



No.	Tetun language	English language
01	Uma-na'in look bainaka.	The host serves the guests.
02	Bainaka simu tiha, tau lai ba meza leten.	After receiving the offerings, the guests first place them on the mesa.
03	Bainaka kaer ona kova malus atu mama.	The guest starts holding the mother's oko to start eating betel.
04	Bainaka tau ahu iha malus tahan.	Guests put betel lime in betel leaves.
05	Bainaka hahú mama malus.	The guests have started eating betel.
06	Bainaka fó fali ba uma-na'in atu mama hamutuk.	Guests return to the host to eat betel together.
07	Uma-na'in mós tau ahu iha malus tahan.	The host also put lime on betel leaves to eat.
08	Uma-na'in ho bainaka mama hamutuk, bainaka tau tan ahu hodi mama.	The host and guest ate betel together, the guest felt that the betel that was eaten lacked lime so he added more lime.
09	Bainaka tafui malus been husi ibun.	The guest spat betel water from his mouth.

In the practice of the legacy of 'look malu' (serving each other) it is a typical symbol that characterizes the local ecoculture. The uniqueness is that when serving it, the majority of the

offerings of bua malus in one kova are always accompanied by other kova with tobacco and corn husks used to roll cigarettes for smoking. However, sometimes 'look malu' or mutual offering can be complete and sometimes the offering of sirih pinang without the offering of tobacco. It also depends on the presence or absence of tabaku or tobacco.

In the practice of serving 'bua malus' and cigarettes, there is a norm of presentation, namely the presentation of 'bua malus' or sirih pinang without any changes from the past until now. Presenting in a cultural normative manner, one offering must be complete with fruit, malus and lime betel. Normatively in any culture, it must be complete, whether it is an individual offering, a family group visiting from house to house or at ceremonial wedding gatherings, deaths, and other events.

While 'looking embarrassed' with tobacco, can be complete between tobacco and corn husks. It may also not be required to be presented completely. It depends on how the subject consumes it in two different ways. One, the corn that is presented is with the practice of smoking and the second way is that the cigarette that is presented is just singekan. This means, the cigarette that is presented is after eating betel nut, add a cigarette in the mouth with the betel nut that is being eaten. In this way, it is permissible to present tobacco with corn husks, but this is returned to the one who presents it or the one who is presented just brings it.

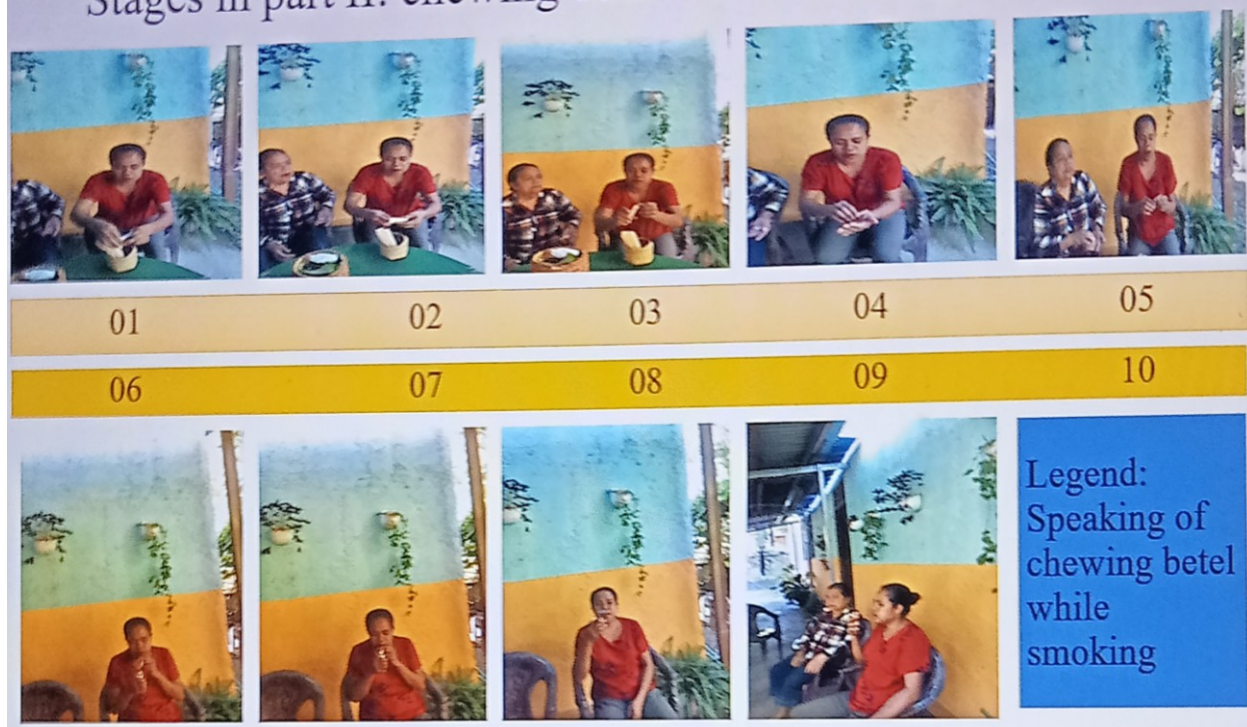
Thus, the practice of serving or 'look malu' must absolutely be complete from (bua + malus + ahu = areca nut + betel + betel lime), while the presentation of corn can be complete tabaku + batar kulit = tobacco with corn husks and can be incomplete and can be accepted by the community supporting the ecoculture. If the 'look malu' bua malus without lime-betel is not acceptable in the community supporting the ecoculture practice.

Because according to the functional point of view, 'look malu' has a special value, namely, giving a serving of betel nut is indirectly showing the characteristic of respecting the one being served. So serving guests in any situation is already more valuable in terms of respect.

If serving betel nut to guests without betel lime or between one of the three objects (bua + malus + ahu = betel nut + betel + betel lime) is not complete in **kova** in front of the guest, whether it is on purpose or not purpose, implicitly the guest is saying in his heart that, the way we serve is not with respect.

Because historically and in actuality, the practice of 'look malu' to guests or eating betel nut at home, the prevailing norm is that eating betel must absolutely be complete with bua (betel nut) + malus (betel) + ahu (betel lime). If one of the three substances is incomplete, it means that you have made a mistake against the goodness in the house, there will be a sudden commotion in the family, with neighbors, loss of buffalo, horse, death of pigs, goats, loss of money in a significant amount. If one of the three is incomplete with guests, it is a lack of respect for the guest or the one being served.

Stages in part II: chewing betel while smoking



In addition to the description of the graphic text to the ecolinguistic level in the first part regarding 'look malu' and mama malu serving and eating betel nut to each other, with the same thing in this second part. It can be seen in the graphic text as an ecoculture that is arranged in order and can also be described in the ecolinguistic formulation in the following table.

No	Tetun language	English language
01	Bainaka foti tabaku hosi kova atu lulun.	Guests take tobacco from oko mama to roll.
02	Prosesu lulu tabaku.	The process of rolling tobacco.
03	Halo kabera tabaku nia lulun.	Tidying up the tobacco rolls.
04	Aperta metin tabaku nia lulun iha liman laran.	Tidy up the tobacco roll in the palm of your hand.
05	Kaer tabaku nia lulun atu sunu	Hold a rolled tobacco to burn.
06	Sunu tabaku nia lulun atu hahú fuma.	The tobacco roll has been lit and has started to smoke.
07		
08	Fuma tabaku dadaun.	Have started smoking.
09	Bainaka fuma ho ko'alia-ko'alia hela ho uma na'in.	Guests smoking while chatting with the host.

Ecoculturally in the ecolinguistic context, the practice of serving 'look malu' occurs only once from the host to the guest, but according to the directrix or traditional regulation, consuming bua + malus + ahu (areca nut + betel + betel lime) first, then followed by consuming tobacco while eating betel and chatting in a family manner according to what is desired in the familiar conversation. Metaphorically, the practice of serving is always carried out as a symbol of honor in kinship towards fellow neighbors and other relatives. Look malu with bua + malus + lime (areca nut + betel + betel lime) as a sign of togetherness in a family there is the integrity of husband + wife and a number of personal family members from the fruit (areca nut) symbolizing the father + malus (betel) symbolizing the wife and ahu (lime) which can symbolize the blood of the husband + wife who will produce a new generation as an ecobiological legacy that correlates with ecoculture in an environment which can then be called ecoenvironment.

In addition, the presentation of bua + malus + ahu (areca nut + betel + betel lime) along with tobacco + batar kulit (corn husk) as a sign of cultural honor from a pair of families from the house as hosts in front of anyone who meets in the house. Semantically it can be understood that a family must be built from a husband (father) and wife (mother) to always live together as a family as an umbrella of protection for the children in the family.

3.1 Linguistic Rules in Ecolinguistic Studies

Each type of image or visual text data has a very unique language. So there are language rules between one type of text and another. With these special language rules, readers can certainly easily guess the type of text they are reading with a number of language rules in the image text that must be known. 1) In the image text there are scientific terms or language, 2) The discussion contained in the image text has a general nature, 3) Arranged based on events that are in accordance with facts or actually happened, 4) In the image text there are causal and time conjunctions, and 5) The use of verbs is more relational to the material.

From several language rules in the study of ecolinguistic image or visual data, it can be understood that the lexicon used at the action stage according to the ordered image is mostly a spoken language lexicon, but correlates with scientific language in the axiological dimension with ecoculture in linguistic ecology which is then scientifically named ecolinguistics. Indeed, the use of lexicon in the image text data is always universal and does not characterize the specificity of the subject of the user that actually occurs in fact, but is not fictional. Another linguistic rule is cause and effect which contains an explanation of the stages of events that are arranged in a gradual manner from the beginning to the end of the series of actions 'look ashamed' to eating betel and smoking as the peak stage in the series of actions that have been implicitly realized with the time series study technique. The last rule in this study is the use of lexicon which is always related to the material relations used as the instrument 'look ashamed' and is not an abstract lexicon.

3.2 Discussion

The discussion here is intended to be based on questions that correlate with the action of 'looking ashamed' itself. Is there a function of the action of implementing the practice of 'looking ashamed' from the past until this modernization flow?

From this question, an interpretative answer can be narrated based on the image text data arranged above. Diplomatically interpretive in social ecology called ecosiolinguistics, it is understood that if an action from the aspect of the social dimension has no use or function, it clearly will not be practiced over time in the context of a long time series, then there are also several functions that are very closely related that are beneficial to its supporters as follows.

3.3.1 Social function

The existence of the practice of 'look malu' with betel nut + betel leaf + betel lime + tobacco naturally in Timor society or in other words the tradition of the Timor Island community as one of the social instruments to strengthen reciprocal relationships between individual acquaintances, families, neighbors and relatives in a certain eco-environment.

3.3.2 Medical function

Eating betel as one of the medical instruments to strengthen teeth, prevent bleeding gums, eliminate bad breath. In addition, people eat betel while smoking to eliminate laziness, drowsiness and give people the spirit to work in the garden, in the rice fields and others. In relation to this, reality shows that in the Timorese community, all day working in the garden and in the rice fields or other heavy work, just by eating betel and smoking all day, not too much headache with eating and drinking.

3.3.3 Directive function

The practice of legacy action presents whether it is between individuals at home, at certain social events, has provisions as regulations (directives) to regulate and always remind ecoculturally that, the presentation is carried out carefully, completely and regularly. Although there are no written regulations, but in ecocultural inspiration, it must be followed and obeyed the normative directives that are determined and left by ancestors as traditional legacies.

3.3.4 Cortesial legal function

The traditional action of 'look malu' also has a cortesial legal function in the supporting community on Timor Island. At an event in a proposal, a ceremonial event at the fetosaan-humane (female line family >< male line family), the offerings made are incomplete or more than the total set according to tradition, then the party offering them is subject to a fine (multa) according to the mistake made in the offering action. Usually, paying the fine is not done individually, but collectively under the leadership of the oldest customary leader from the humane party (male line family) to the fetosaan (female line family) according to the demands of the party being mistreated. So, the one who pays the fine (multa) is imposed on the oldest party so that it is traditionally known as a cortesial legal function.

3.3.4 Modifying function

Viewed from the aspect of its time series, the practice of the action of 'look malu' or the presentation of betel nut in following the evolution of time, until this technological era, has undergone significant changes. This change does not mean eliminating one of the cultural riches in the eco-culture of the supporting community on Timor Island. However, the changes referred to here are the way it is presented and the instruments used in the presentation.

In the eco-cultural context, the action of 'look malu' or the presentation of betel nut, the number of objects in the **kova** or **oko mama**, remains the same as previously practiced. It's just that in the development of technology and the flow of globalization, the presentation of betel nut + betel + lime is placed in a plastic plate, pottery plate or with other objects that can be used to serve guests at home, at other cultural meetings that occur in the supporting community. In the past, only the cultural object kova (lohu) or oko mama was used.

Meanwhile, the presentation of cigarettes from the old model has changed slightly both in the form of presentation and the objects used as presentation instruments, even the material of the cigarette itself has been significantly modified. The method used to be the same as the one practiced now. In the past, cigarettes were served with cigarettes + corn husks, because the way of consumption was different. Smoking in the form of rolls by burning and by being smoked or tucked into the lips. One of the modifications that is happening now is that it is permissible to use kova or oko mama, it can be put in a cup, in a plastic plate, pottery.

There are modifications that occur between generations of consumers. Sometimes the older generation still maintains the old model plus a new model called cigarettes (cigarette from the factory): Gudang garam, djarum, surya, LA and others. The presentation can be put in oko mama, it can also be without oko mama. Because cigarettes from the factory have been formed in a roll formation for consumption. It is already available in its package. So, the modification is that many young generations do not bother with corn husks, they just consume them directly from the factory.

4. Novelty

Research on the legacy practice of 'look malu', offering betel + areca nut + lime + cigarettes between hosts and guests is a form of maintaining ecoculture as a legacy of wealth from ancestors to the rapid modernization so that it does not disappear from its existence in the eco-environment. The preservation of the ecocultural 'look malu', as a knowledge that is always communicated to the new generation in the rapid modernization, both through real practice and social communication called ecolinguistics. This is proven by research conducted by Alfius Sabon, <https://www.kompasiana.com/alfiussabon/5c47e9e843322f76593775a/tradisi-masyarakat-timor-makan-sirih-pinang>, Viana (2023), Gazeta digital (Dili, 2024) that the vital objects in the process of eating betel + areca nut + betel lime + tobacco as a collection that is inseparable from one another when presented to guests as demonstrated in the figurative text.



That this research is one form of innovative research that aims to open new insights in

ecocultural studies to contribute to eco-linguistic studies in the eco-environment of Timorese society so that it is always maintained and inherited as a cultural wealth in this hegemonic modernization current in order to suppress the elimination of implicit traditional culture. Through this research, it in turn encourages the attitudes and enthusiasm of subsequent researchers to explore more issues related to the attitude of maintaining cultural heritage in an innovative scientific form.

5. Conclusion

The paper on the tradition of 'look malu' is one of the many cultural traditions in the Timor-Leste community in particular and the community on Timor Island in general that has always been practiced in social communities from time to time until the era of globalization. One of the important topics of relevance that is currently being studied is the correlation with ecoculture or ecocultural in Ecolinguistics.

The study is the stages of the tradition of practicing 'look malu' or serving each other with bua + malus + ahu (areca nut + betel + lime) and tabaku + batar kulit (tobacco + corn husk) with image text data arranged in two parts sequentially. The first part concerns the process of eating betel nut and the second part concerns the process of consuming cigarettes by smoking after and while eating betel nut.

The data studied here is an ecocultural tradition that is always maintained and practiced in the social relations of society that take place in everyday life with social, medical, directive, cortesial legal and modifying functions that are highly correlated with ecoculture in this socioecolinguistic study in Ecolinguistics.

6. Acknowledgements

Finally, the author would like to express many thanks to Mrs. Cristina as the host who served betel + areca nut + betel lime + tobacco to Mrs. Gilberta Santana as a guest who accepted the treats that took place in her house and agreed to the author to observe the legacy action of the 'look malu' treat which is an ecocultural action maintained through ecolinguistics to become the data for this research and study.

7. References

Abdullah Ali. 2007. *Metodelogi Penelitian Dan Penulisan Karya Ilmiah*. Cirebon: STAIN Press Asmadi Alsa. 2003. *Pendekatan Kuantitatif Dan Kualitatif, serta kombinasinya dalam penelitian psikologi*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.

Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design choosing among five approaches*. Second Edition. Sage Publications – California.

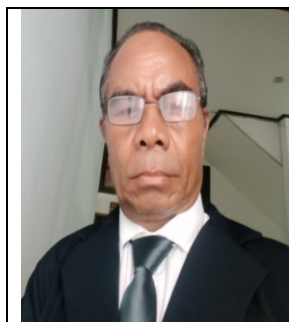
Gentio de Timor de Armando Pinto Corrêa; prefácio de [Dom Ximenes Bello](#). Câmara de Lobos: Câmara Municipal, 2009. [ISBN 978-972-8684-80-8](#).

Arquitectura Timorense de Ruy Cinatti, Leopoldo de Almeida e Sousa Mendes. Lisboa: Inst. Inv. Científica Tropical, Museu de Etnologia, cop. 1987.

Maxwell, J.A. and Chmiel, M. (2014) Generalization in and From Qualitative Analysis. In: Flick, U., Ed., The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis, SAGE Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks, 540-553. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446282243.n37>

N Lexy J. Moleong. 2007. *Metodelogi Penelitian Kualitatif Edisi Revisi*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.

Biography of Author



Lourenço Marques da Silva is a lecturer in the Department of Primary School Teacher Education, Faculty of Education, Arts and Humanities, National University of Timor Lorosa'e in Dili, Timor-Leste. He completed his undergraduate education in Indonesian Language and Literature Education at the University of East Timor in 1999, his master's degree in Pure Linguistics of Portuguese, Federal University of Paraiba-João Pessoa, Brazil in 2010 and has been a doctoral student (S3) since 2022 in linguistics at Udayana University, Bali, Indonesia. He is currently in the process of completing his dissertation on the issue of the morphological process of the Makasae language in Timor-Leste.