

The Cultural Semantics of Colour Naming Concept in Madurese (An Ethnolinguistics Perspective)

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Abstract: Colour is not something meaningless for Madurese. Colour can represent the view of life and culture that is owned. Among the ten basic colours which are known by Madurese speakers, there are four striking colours which are identified with the Madurese; *red*, *yellow*, *green*, and *blue*. This study aims to describe the cultural meaning of colour naming concept in Madurese by using an ethnolinguistics approach. Data were obtained from in-dept-interview with informants and literature study. In the result, the striking colours have several colours classifications that are associated in five categories, namely object, plant, nature, limb, and brightness level. In addition, the colour classifications contain meanings that represent Madurese culture and the character of Madurese such as brave, firm, hardworking, religious, and close to nature. Thus, the colour naming concept has the certain message that can describe the user environment.

Keywords: *Ethnolinguistics, Madurese, colour, cultural semantics*

Introduction

Colour is not something ordinary and meaningless. Colour becomes an important thing because it is strong abbreviation to deliver ideas and information (Paterson, 2004:3). In Madura, colour can represent the view of life, belief, and culture that is owned. Thus, colour stores the specific purposes which want to be delivered by the users. Even, colour can also determine the emotions and characteristics of someone or society in a culture.

Madurese has ten basic colour terms (Rifai, 2007:56-57), namely *potè* (white), *celleng* (black), *bhiru* (green), *mèra* (red), *konèng* (yellow), *bâlâu* (blue), *soklat* (brown), *ennyat* (pink), *bungo* (purple), and *bu-abu* (grey). Among the ten basic colours, there are four colours which are very identified with Madurese, those are *mèra* (red), *konèng* (yellow), *bhiru* (green), and *bâlâu* (blue). It is caused Madurese is known to like combining bold and striking colours. The amusement of Madurese in combining the striking colours is reflected in its own culture, for example in the tradition of *kerapan sapi*, *batik*, and *Madura word carving*.

The colour naming concept in Madurese is unique. Colour name often has an association with culture and objects that are around the society. For instance, a colour which is associated with plant, *mèra cabbi* (chili red). Evidently, chili represents Madurese life which likes the taste of spicy food and also it intimates Madurese behaviour which is full of firmness. It is appropriate with the state of Abdullah (2017:53) that from the names can be known what standard that is used by a society to make a classification, it also means if we can know the view of life of the culture supporters. Another uniqueness, Madurese is judged as colour blind ethnic because they pronounce green as blue. In fact, the pronouncing has some reasons and philosophical value. Except of the two cases of colour naming concept above, there are many more forms of colour naming concepts in Madurese which are very interesting to be researched deeply.

According to Yulianti (2016:75) in the previous study entitled *Vocabulary of Colours in Sundanese Language (Natural Semantic Metalanguage Approach)*, the vocabulary of colours in certain languages often show the cultural characteristics of the language speakers. For example,

the vocabulary of colours in Sundanese which mostly involves the names of nature, the vocabulary of colours in Javanese which involves the puppet terms, and the vocabulary of colours in Betawinese which involves the daily furniture terms. In other words, the easiest way to understand a culture is through a language, especially by using the words list in a language (Abdullah, 2017:53). Therefore, the aim of this research is to describe the cultural meaning of colour naming concept in Madurese, especially on four striking colours which are identified with Madurese by using ethnolinguistic perspective.

Cultural meaning is a typical meaning that expresses the cultural elements and needs that are typically in the cultural aspect (Subroto, 2011:36). In addition, in naming colour form, Munsell (in Darmaprawira, 2002:50) states that the colour has three dimensions, namely the colour name, value or degree, and chroma or intensity. Thus, (1) colour can be identified easily by the naming concept, (2) the value of colour can differentiate the colour brightness quality, and (3) the intensity of colour is a colour quality that causes the colour speaks, shouts, or whispers in a soft tone.

From the many previous studies that the researcher has compiled, until now there has been no research about the vocabulary of colours in Madurese which is seen from ethnolinguistic perspective, so this research can be said as a new one. Ethnolinguistics perspective is considered suitable to be applied in this research because ethnolinguistics is a part of linguistic that pays attention to language in the socio-cultural and social structure context (Foley, 1997: 3).

Method

This research discussed about the cultural meaning of colour naming concept in Madurese by using ethnolinguistic perspective which was qualitative descriptive with ethnographic method and ethnoscience analysis model. The ethnographic method was used to describe a culture (Spradley, 2007:3). The ethnoscience analysis was done by using the developmental research sequence which consisted of twelve steps (Spradley, 2007:63-312). This research was fieldwork research which was done in Sumenep Regency.

The data used were divided into two types, namely (1) primary data in the form of colour names collection in Madurese which were obtained from in-depth-interview with two selected informants and (2) secondary data in the form of colour names collection in Madurese which were obtained from documents, such as Madurese dictionary, books, and articles.

The data source used were also divided into two types, namely (1) primary data source, it came from two selected informants who are cultural observer and *batik* artist in Sumenep Regency and (2) secondary data source, it came from related documents that already existed before, such as Madurese dictionary, books, and articles.

Furthermore, the researcher used participant observation technique, in-depth-interviewing technique, and literature studies to collect the data. In addition, to obtain the data completeness and depth, the researcher used purposive sampling technique and in the relation of informants determining, the researcher used a snowball sampling technique.

Results and Discussion

After interviewing two selected informants and conducted literature studies on some documents, the researcher could analyze the reason why the Madurese is identified with striking colours and how the cultural meaning of each striking colour is, as follows:

The Madurese with The Striking Colours

The Madurese is identified to like striking colours such as red, yellow, blue, and green. According to Rifai (2007:57-59), the striking colours combination can be seen on the woven fabric, *batik*, and Madurese wood carving. These four colours are often combined together so that the Madurese gets a tacky or sultry predicate because they are considered as not good at aligning colours.

According to the informants, there are two reasons why the Madurese is identified to like the striking colours. *First*, it is because Madura Island has high air temperature (hot) that is marked by the condition of dry and arid land, also surrounded by the beaches. Therefore, the people like the bright colours in order to these colours do not absorb the heat of the sun. In contrast, dark colours such as black can absorb the heat of the sun so that it can make the air is hotter. It is proven by the opinion of Darmaprawira (2002:59) if the black colour absorbs other colours and it can shrink size because the colour absorbs light. *Second*, these striking colours represent the characters of Madurese, such as brave, firm, and to the point. Thus, the Madurese is known to not hesitate in doing something or making a commitment. They will prove whatever is said, not only stop on words but doing actions. It is very related with the philosophy of life for Madurese, that is *koko oca'na, ekenneng talèè cacana*(firm and trustworthy words). Hence, according to Rifai (2007:208), the Madurese will not *acaca dukalè*(say something twice) because the conclusion of the conversation will not change.

After being examined in general, the striking colours can be analyzed specifically as follows:

- *Mèra* (Red)

Table 1. Red Colour Vocabularies

Colour Name	Association	Explanation
<i>Mèra cabbi</i> (Chili red)	Plant	Chili
<i>Mèra atè</i> (Liver brown)	Limb	Liver
<i>Mèra ngadarbhang</i> (Very Red)	Brightness Level	Very red

According to Darmaprawira (2002:45), the red colour is the most powerful and attract attention, aggressive, and primitive symbol. Red colour is always connected by blood, anger, brave, sexual activity, danger, power, love, virile, and happiness. In China, the red colour is used in a wedding ceremony as a happiness symbol. In the line with that, red colour (*mèra*) also has its own philosophy for the Madurese.

The word *Mèra* comes from two decapitations, namely *mè* and *ra*. The meaning of *mè* is for Madurese, whereas the meaning of *ra* is for *pangara* (job). Thus, if these two words are combined, *mèra* means the Madurese should move to get something. In other words, the Madurese has a high spirit in their work ethics. It is appropriate with one idiom of Madura that states *abantal omba' asapo' angin* (cushioning in the wave, covering in the wind). The Madurese who works as a fisherman is not willing to sleep at home, while he must sleep in the middle of ocean to make money for the family. He never comes back home before getting success, likewise with other professions. Thus, that is why the Madurese migrates to almost all corners of this country, even foreign countries.

Red colour has many types, such as *mèra cabbi* (chili red), *mèra ate* (liver brown), and *mèra ngadarbhang* (very red). *First*, the red colour is associated with chili. It is caused chili is one of

the plants that is very close with Madurese. Most of Madura culinary are eaten with *cengè* (sauce) which is made from chili. Thus, most of Madurese like the taste of spicy food. The spicy taste represents hard nature for Madurese. This character means hard in giving an effort in order to what they want can be reached and hard in maintaining the principles of life.

Second, red colour is associated with one of limbs namely liver. Actually, the real colour of liver is dark (black). Thus, *mèra atè* is a term of red colour which is darker than usual. According to Madurese perspective, the liver must be kept so that the darkness of the liver is only a colour not dark because bad manner of the owner (human). In other words, people should have good manners to themselves and others. *Third*, the red colour is associated according to the brightness level in term of *mèra ngadarbhang*. Usually, this phrase is used to pronounce something which is very red (in hyperbole way).

- *Konèng* (Yellow)

Table 2. Yellow Colours Vocabularies

Colour Name	Association	Explanation
<i>Konèng konyè'</i> (Chrome yellow)	Plant	Turmeric
<i>Konèng pelay</i> (Whitish yellow)	Brightness Level	Light Yellow
<i>Konèng emas</i> (Golden yellow)	Object	Gold

Yellow colour is a collection of two important phenomena in human life, that are a living which is given by sun on the planet and a gold as earth wealth (Darmaprawira, 2002:47). In addition, the yellow colour is symbolized as a pleasure, friskiness, and empire.

In Madurese, *konèng* means *kolbu sè bennèng* (the holy heart). When people have the holy heart, their life is noble. If it is associated with the character of Madurese, the holy heart is marked by positive attitudes, such as *sacca* (honest and faithful), *jijib* (orderly), *sokkla* (religious), *maddhung to 'ot* (having good manners), and *sekot da' aba'na dhibi'* (respectful).

Furthermore, yellow colour is associated with some things in Madurese. *First* is *konyè'* (turmeric). Turmeric is one of herb species which is often used by Madurese to add a taste of the cuisine and keep health. Besides that, the word of *konyè'* is also used in Madurese *bàngsalan* (idiom) namely *konyè'gunong* (a turmeric comes from the mountain range) which is called as *temmo* and it means *samotemmona* (whatever there is). Thus, one of Madurese characters is *saduhuna* (humble). The Madurese will feel enough with all things that they have although they are lack of life. *Second*, yellow colour is associated with gold. Gold is something valuable. In addition, to get something valuable, people need hard effort and be hard worker. The Madurese is known to have characters such as *bilet* (diligent), *junèl* (entrepreneurial), and *parèmpen* (thrifty and careful). According to Rifai (2007:347), the work ethic of Madurese can be called as the high count because instinctively working is a part of worship for them. Afterwards, there is an idiom in Madura that states *orèng Madhurâ ta' tako' matè, tapè tako' kalaparan*. It means, the Madurese are not afraid of death, but they are afraid of starvation. Death is a God's will. However, starvation is an effect of human attitudes which are less trying to sufficient their lives by hard working.

Third, yellow colour is associated with its brightness level in the term of *konèng pelay*. *Pelay* means a bit whitish. Thus, *konèng pelay* is a term to whitish yellow or light yellow.

- *Bhiru* (Green)

Table 3. Green Colour Vocabularies

Colour Name	Association	Explanation
<i>Bhiru daun</i> (Leaf green)	Plant	Leaf
<i>Bhiru lomot</i> (Olivaceous)	Plant	Moss

Green colour symbolizes contemplation, belief, eternity, freshness, raw, young, growth, life, hope, birth, and fertility (Darmaprawira, 2002:46). In Egyptian mythology, green colour is believed to be able to reconcile natural conflicts because it is connected with the God of plants, namely Osiris.

In Madurese, the green colour is called as *bhiru* which means blue in Indonesian. This phenomenon causes the society outside Madura to think if Madurese is colour-blind because they are considered unable to differentiate between blue and green colour. This case does not just happen. In the Madurese language dictionary, green is referred as *bhiru*. It means if each language has its own colour naming concept and it cannot be compared to other languages. This is related to the opinion of Darmaprawira (2002:52) that the development of the cultural environment of society influences the development of color dictionaries. *Second*, in a scientifically, green colour is formed from a mixture of blue and yellow. More than that, in a colour circle (Darmaprawira, 2002:75), green and blue colour are side by side with the sequence as yellow - yellow green - green - blue green - blue. Thus, before entering blue colour part, there is a blue green colour. Therefore, between blue and green colour still has a relationship and it is not something very contrast.

Furthermore, based on the information from selected informants, the Madurese does not have a green colour because for them the word green has no philosophy, in contrast to the word blue (*bhiru*). *Bhiru* comes from the word *assobiru* which means patience. Thus, the Madurese must be patient in accepting God's destiny or provision and be patient when facing any problems. The green colour in Madurese is called *bhiru dhaun*(leaf green) to explain light green and *bhiru lomot* (olivaceous) to explain dark green.

These green colours are both associated with natural objects. According to Tejani (2004), the life of Madurese is close to nature and it cannot be separated from nature. It is also described by Rifai (2007:79-81) that a long time ago, the Madurese chose to work as farmers and fishermen because the environment was close to nature. Therefore, the green colours are associated with moss and leaf because besides the colours are green, these objects are also very close to the life of Madurese.

In the field of *batik*, the existence of leaves becomes very important because it can be used as a natural dye. For example, tarum leaves for blue colour, teak leaves for red color, and ketapang leaves for yellow colour. Thus, nature is not only close but it can be used well by the Madurese.

- *Bâlâu* (Blue)

Table 4. Blue Colour Vocabularies

Colour Name	Association	Explanation
<i>Bhiru langgè'</i> (Sky blue)	Nature	Sky
<i>Bhiru laot</i> (Sea blue)	Nature	Sea

According to Darmaprawira (2002:46), blue colour has cool, passive, calm, and peaceful characteristics. In addition, the blue colour is a perspective colour, attracting us to solitude, coldness, making distance, and separation. For example, for Mexicans and Venetians, the elite is identified in black and blue. Hence, the emergence of the term "blue blood" society which shows an aristocratic attitude, and it is separated from the lower class society.

Actually, the original designation of the blue colour is *bâlâu* (Rifai, 2007:56-57). However, people rarely use the term *bâlâu* and they are more familiar with *bhiru*. That is why the names of blue (green colour) and the real blue colour are given an association of objects so that the speakers and listeners can differentiate the both colours. The philosophy of the blue colour for the Madurese is the same as previously mentioned in the blue (green colour) section, which it symbolizes patience in living life. In its pronunciation, the blue colour in Madurese is referred as *bhiru langngè'* (sky blue) and *bhiru laot* (sea blue). The Madurese who lives in coastal areas will be more familiar with the term of *bhiru laot*(sea blue)because the sea is close to their daily lives and from the sea they support life as fishermen or salt farmers. On the contrary, the Madurese who lives far from the coastal areas or live in the highlands will be more familiar with the term of *bhiru langngè'* (sky blue). Through the emergence of these two types of the blue colour, it can be said that the blue sky and blue sea have some differences, for example in the intensity of the color.

Conclusions

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that ethnolinguistics is a study that expresses cultural fact through language fact. It is proven from the research carried out by the author regarding colour that through the colour naming concept people can know the details of culture and mindset of the society. In other words, naming something is not arbitrary, but it for various reasons and it also has meaning, including the naming concept in Madurese. Colour is something that cannot be separated from Madurese. The colours are expressed in their culture and those are used in daily life.

The Madurese has 10 basic colours in which four of them are striking colours that have become the identity of Madurese. The four colours are *bhiru* (green), *mèra* (red), *konèng* (yellow), and *bâlâu* (blue). The naming colour concept in Madura is unique because the colours are juxtaposed together with things that are very close to the life of Madurese, especially nature because they live from it. In addition, the basic color vocabularies are also juxtaposed with the names of objects, limbs, plants, and the colour brightness level. The way Madurese gives the naming colour concept is not merely happen, but it uses philosophy. Each association which is attached to the colour vocabulary has a cultural meaning that explains how the life, mindset, habits, and character of the Madurese are. The characters of Madurese which are stored behind these four striking colours such as brave, assertive, to the point, high spirit, hard, diligent, thrifty, careful, entrepreneurial, sincere, orderly, respectful, religious, polite, hardworking, and close to nature.

In addition, the existence of this research can help to straighten the stereotypes inherent in the Madurese regarding colour, such as the judgment that the Madurese are colour-blind because they cannot distinguish blue and green. Broadly, the colour names in an area cannot be compared to other areas, for example, the addressing of the green colour in Madurese which is the same with the blue colour in Indonesia. Second, by the existence of this research, there is a clearer understanding of Madurese characters because all this time the society outside often associates the characters of Madurese with something negative, such as the hard character that is considered as temperament and it is associated with physical violence.

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