

ICONICITY IN THE NAME OF TRADITIONAL SUNDANESE MEDICINAL PLANTS

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Abstract

Ferdinand de Saussure may have to wince when he was presented with several names of medicinal plants that are not as easy as 'arbor' 'tree' in the semiotic process. Once people hear marker /tree/ necessarily we associate them with the signifier 'tree' in the form of images in the mind. The semiosis process is complete. The signified in the mind is approximately equal but there is no requirement that a marker is denoted /arbor/. The relation between signifier and signified was called arbitrary. Papers to be presented with regard to the arbitrariness of the meaning of the names of Sundanese medicinal plants to prove that the naming of traditional Sundanese medicinal plants is not purely arbitrary (unmotivated). The theory of meaning of Ferdinand de Saussure used in this study. Regarding iconicity is used the theory of Peirce. The study is qualitative. Data were collected from the field, including the district of Cianjur, Sukabumi, Tasik, Pangandaran, Kuningan, Majalengka and Indramayu; all in the province West Java, Indonesia. It will assess whether the process of naming is pure arbitrary or there is a process of iconicity (motivated). Also it will be proved whether the naming process is related to the hidden desire of the people so that the plant has healing properties. The names of the herbs that arbitrary are for example *binahong* (*Bassela rubra* linn), *cikur* (*Kaempferia galanga* L.), *seureuh* (betel), and *manggu* (mangosteen). The names of herbs that are not pure arbitrary for example *koneng* 'turmeric' (for yellow), *kumis kucing* (like a cat's whiskers), *jukut bau* (bad smells grass; *Ageratum conyzoides* L.), and *jambu batu* 'guava' (it is hard). That the herbs have the power to heal is also demonstrated by using the name of *ki* (short form of *aki* 'grandfather'; also a term for people who have supernatural powers to cure diseases): *kiurat* (*Plantago major* L.) that works to relieve aches for breakdown, *kikoneng* (*Arcangelisia flava* L.) which among other things can cure jaundice, and *koneng bodas* (*Curcuma zedoaria*) similar to turmeric but white in color with no meaning with regard to efficacy.

Keywords: medicinal plants, Arbitrary, Iconicity, Signifier-signified.