



EXPLORING THE ECOLEXICON OF RORANO TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN MAINTAINING WOMEN'S HEALTH IN THE TERNATE COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the ecolexicon associated with Rorano traditional medicine and its role in maintaining women's health within the Ternate community. It investigates linguistic forms, ecological meanings, and cultural functions of lexical items referring to medicinal plants, plant parts, natural ingredients, preparation techniques, and traditional healthcare practices. Employing a qualitative descriptive design within an ecolinguistic framework, data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, audio recordings, and field notes involving Rorano practitioners, women users, community elders, and native Ternate speakers. Data were analyzed through transcription, lexical identification, semantic classification, and ecolinguistic interpretation. The findings reveal that the Rorano ecolexicon represents a comprehensive indigenous knowledge system in which language serves as a repository of ecological knowledge and traditional healthcare practices. The lexical items reflect knowledge of medicinal plant diversity, sustainable resource utilization, traditional preparation techniques, and women's reproductive and postpartum healthcare. They also embody ecological ethics, local wisdom, and cultural values transmitted across generations through women's central role in preserving medicinal knowledge. This study concludes that the Rorano ecolexicon constitutes an important element of Ternate's biocultural heritage, contributing to language preservation, indigenous ecological knowledge, traditional healthcare practices, and cultural identity.

Keywords: *ecolexicon; rorano; traditional medicine; women's health; ecolinguistics*

INTRODUCTION

Traditional medicine constitutes an integral component of indigenous knowledge systems that have evolved through generations of continuous interaction between local communities and their surrounding environment. Such knowledge encompasses not only empirical understanding of medicinal plants but also ecological values, cultural beliefs, and linguistic expressions that collectively reflect a community's worldview (Ahmad et al., 2025; Lubis & Widayati, 2022). Across many indigenous societies, the names of medicinal plants, natural ingredients, and healing practices are preserved through local languages, making language an essential medium for transmitting ecological knowledge. However, rapid modernization, urbanization, and the increasing dominance of biomedical healthcare have contributed to the gradual decline of traditional healing practices and the erosion of ecological vocabulary inherited through oral traditions (Gonibala et al., 2018; Hafizah & Fitmawati, 2023). Consequently, documenting the linguistic expressions associated with traditional medicine has become increasingly important for preserving both cultural heritage and indigenous ecological knowledge.

Within the framework of ecolinguistics, language is understood as an inseparable component of the ecological systems in which people live. Haugen's ecological perspective emphasizes that language develops through continuous interaction between human beings and their physical, social, and cultural environments (Nahak, 2020). This relationship is particularly evident in the use of ecolexicons, namely lexical items that encode ecological knowledge concerning flora, fauna, landscapes, natural resources, and environmental practices (Lubis & Widayati, 2022). Ecolexicons therefore function not merely as linguistic labels but also as repositories of collective knowledge that preserve information regarding biodiversity, sustainable resource management, and cultural values embedded within local communities. From this perspective, documenting ecolexicons contributes simultaneously to language preservation, environmental knowledge conservation, and cultural sustainability.

Traditional medicine represents one of the richest domains of ecolexical knowledge because it integrates linguistic expressions with detailed understanding of medicinal plants, preparation techniques, therapeutic functions, and ecological adaptation. Previous studies have demonstrated that medicinal plant lexicons reflect sophisticated indigenous knowledge regarding biodiversity utilization and sustainable environmental practices (Hestiyana et al., 2023; Susanti et al., 2023). Likewise, ecolinguistic research has shown that the names of medicinal plants frequently encode cultural meanings, ecological ethics, and practical knowledge accumulated through generations of interaction with nature (Luardini et al., 2019; Budasi & Satyawati, 2021). Consequently, documenting ecolexicons associated with traditional medicine contributes not only to safeguarding linguistic diversity but also to preserving traditional ecological knowledge and local wisdom.

One important indigenous healthcare tradition in the Ternate community of North Maluku is Rorano, a traditional medicinal practice that utilizes locally available medicinal plants and natural ingredients to maintain women's health throughout different stages of life. Rorano encompasses herbal preparations used before marriage, during menstruation, after childbirth, and for maintaining reproductive and general physical well-being. The preparation and application of these remedies involve numerous ecolexical items referring to medicinal plants, plant parts, natural materials, and traditional processing techniques whose meanings have been transmitted across generations through the Ternate language. Beyond their practical therapeutic functions, these lexical items embody ecological knowledge concerning plant identification, harvesting practices, seasonal availability, processing methods, and sustainable interactions with the surrounding environment (Ahmad et al., 2025; Batani et al., 2020). Accordingly, the ecolexicon of Rorano represents an important linguistic manifestation of the intimate relationship between language, ecology, and indigenous healthcare.

Women's health occupies a central position within the Rorano tradition because women are not only the primary beneficiaries of these treatments but also the principal custodians of the knowledge associated with them. In many indigenous societies, women preserve and transmit traditional healthcare knowledge through everyday practices involving pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum recovery, reproductive health, and family well-being (Batani et al., 2020; Busro et al., 2024). This role extends beyond healthcare provision, positioning women as key agents in maintaining ecological knowledge, linguistic heritage, and cultural continuity.

As argued by Bhoi and Rout (2024), indigenous medicinal knowledge concerning plants is closely intertwined with women's lived experiences and social



responsibilities. Similarly, Chance et al. (2025) emphasize that the sustainability of traditional healthcare systems depends largely on the intergenerational transmission of knowledge maintained by women. Therefore, examining the ecolexicon of Rorano also provides insights into how language functions as a medium through which women's ecological knowledge and cultural identity are preserved across generations.

The importance of documenting indigenous healthcare terminology has also been highlighted in language documentation studies. Austin (2014) argues that language documentation should encompass not only grammatical structures but also the semantic, cultural, and pragmatic knowledge embedded within linguistic practices. In the context of traditional medicine, lexical documentation records the names of medicinal plants alongside the ecological knowledge, cultural beliefs, and healthcare practices associated with them (Budasi & Satyawati, 2021; Hisa et al., 2019). Such documentation is particularly significant because the disappearance of local terminology may simultaneously result in the loss of valuable ecological knowledge accumulated over centuries of interaction between humans and their natural environment.

Although previous studies have examined ecolexicons associated with medicinal plants and ethnobotanical knowledge in various Indonesian communities (Hestiyana et al., 2023; Luardini et al., 2019; Susanti et al., 2023), relatively little attention has been devoted to the ecolexicon of indigenous women's healthcare traditions in eastern Indonesia, particularly within the Ternate community. Existing studies primarily document medicinal plant inventories or classify lexical items from ethnobotanical perspectives, while limited research has explored how ecolexicons simultaneously represent ecological knowledge, women's healthcare practices, and cultural identity within an integrated ecolinguistic framework. Consequently, the linguistic dimensions of Rorano remain insufficiently documented despite their important contribution to preserving indigenous knowledge systems.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the ecolexicon associated with Rorano traditional medicine in maintaining women's health within the Ternate community. Specifically, the study investigates the linguistic forms, meanings, and cultural functions of ecolexical items referring to medicinal plants, natural materials, preparation techniques, and traditional treatment practices. By adopting an ecolinguistic perspective while recognizing women's central role in preserving indigenous healthcare knowledge, this study demonstrates that the ecolexicon of Rorano functions not merely as a collection of lexical items but as an important medium through which ecological knowledge, traditional healthcare practices, and the cultural identity of the Ternate community are continuously transmitted across generations.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design within an ecolinguistic framework to explore the ecolexicon of Rorano traditional medicine in maintaining women's health in the Ternate community. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study seeks to understand the meanings, cultural functions, and ecological values embedded in linguistic expressions related to traditional medicine rather than to quantify linguistic phenomena (Abdussamad, 2021; Rukminingsih et al., 2020). The ecolinguistic perspective was adopted to examine how language reflects the reciprocal relationship between humans, culture, and the natural environment through the naming and use of medicinal plants and traditional healthcare practices.

The research was conducted in Ternate City, North Maluku, Indonesia, where Rorano remains an important component of indigenous healthcare, particularly for women's reproductive and postpartum health. The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their knowledge and experience regarding Rorano practices. They consisted of traditional Rorano practitioners, women who regularly use Rorano, community elders, and native speakers of the Ternate language who possess knowledge of traditional medicinal terminology. These participants were chosen because they represent the primary custodians and transmitters of indigenous knowledge concerning medicinal plants and traditional healing practices.

The primary data consisted of ecolexical items referring to medicinal plants, plant parts, natural ingredients, preparation techniques, treatment procedures, and traditional healthcare practices documented during fieldwork. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, audio recordings, and field notes. Participant observation enabled the researchers to understand the contexts in which Rorano is prepared and administered, while semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit local terminology together with explanations of the meanings, functions, and cultural values associated with each lexical item. Audio recordings ensured the accuracy of linguistic data, whereas field notes documented contextual information, including preparation processes, ecological settings, and participants' explanations concerning traditional beliefs.

The collected data were analyzed using an interactive qualitative procedure consisting of four stages. First, all interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and translated into English where necessary while maintaining the original Ternate lexical forms. Second, ecolexical items associated with Rorano were identified and extracted from the interview transcripts. Third, the lexical items were classified into semantic categories, including medicinal plants, plant parts, natural materials, preparation techniques, and women's healthcare practices. Finally, each category was interpreted using an ecolinguistic perspective to explain the relationship between linguistic expressions, ecological knowledge, and the cultural functions of traditional medicine within the Ternate community.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, methodological triangulation was applied by comparing information obtained through observation, interviews, recordings, and field notes. Source triangulation was also conducted by comparing explanations provided by different participants to verify the meanings and cultural interpretations of the documented ecolexicons. Repeated verification with key informants was undertaken throughout the analysis to ensure that the linguistic interpretations accurately reflected the indigenous knowledge system maintained by the Ternate community (Abdussamad, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Linguistic Forms of the Rorano Ecolexicon

The analysis identified a diverse range of ecolexical items associated with Rorano traditional medicine. These lexical items represent ecological entities and indigenous healthcare practices that have been preserved through the Ternate language. Based on the interview data, the ecolexicons can be classified into five semantic categories: medicinal plants, plant parts, natural materials, preparation techniques, and traditional healthcare practices. This classification demonstrates that the Rorano lexicon



extends beyond botanical nomenclature to encompass the entire process of traditional healing.

Table 1. Classification of the Rorano Ecolexicon

Category	Ecolexicon	English Equivalent	Function
Medicinal plant	Goraka	Ginger	Body warming, postpartum recovery
Medicinal plant	Kuning	Turmeric	Anti-inflammatory, wound healing
Medicinal plant	Bataka	Aromatic ginger	Circulation improvement
Medicinal plant	Gaumedi	Clove	Body protection, antiseptic
Medicinal plant	Mayana	Coleus	Fever and inflammation treatment
Plant part	Daong	Leaf	Main medicinal material
Plant part	Ubi	Rhizome	Warming ingredient
Preparation technique	Tutu	Pounding	Extracting medicinal compounds
Preparation technique	Rubus	Boiling	Herbal preparation
Treatment practice	Rorano nifas	Postpartum treatment	Maternal recovery

The lexical classification illustrates that each ecolexical item functions as a linguistic representation of ecological knowledge accumulated through generations. Rather than merely naming biological resources, these lexical items encode information concerning plant identification, therapeutic functions, preparation methods, and environmental utilization. Such findings support the concept of ecolexicon proposed in ecolinguistic studies, which regards lexical items as repositories of ecological knowledge reflecting the interaction between language users and their surrounding environment (Lubis & Widayati, 2022; Nahak et al., 2019).

The findings are also consistent with previous studies documenting medicinal plant lexicons among indigenous communities in Indonesia (Hestiyana et al., 2023; Susanti et al., 2023), indicating that traditional medicinal vocabulary constitutes an essential component of local ecological knowledge. However, unlike previous studies that primarily document plant inventories, the present study demonstrates that the Rorano ecolexicon encompasses not only medicinal plants but also preparation techniques and healthcare practices specifically associated with women's health.

Ecological Meanings Embedded in the Rorano Ecolexicon

Beyond their lexical forms, the documented ecolexicons embody ecological meanings that reflect the Ternate community's long-standing interaction with the natural environment. Each lexical item contains knowledge concerning the characteristics of medicinal plants, harvesting practices, processing methods, and the appropriate contexts in which the remedies should be used. For example, goraka is widely recognized as a medicinal plant that restores body warmth and improves blood circulation after childbirth. Interview participants explained that the rhizome should preferably be harvested during the daytime because harvesting at night is believed to disturb the plant's natural balance. Although this belief is expressed through cultural narratives, it simultaneously functions as an ecological ethic regulating human interaction with natural resources. Similarly, mayana is understood not merely as an ornamental plant but also as a medicinal resource cultivated within household gardens, reflecting the concept of the home garden as a living pharmacy. Meanwhile, gaumedi (clove), one of

Ternate's most important endemic commodities, symbolizes both economic value and medicinal efficacy, illustrating the close relationship between biodiversity and traditional healthcare.

These examples demonstrate that ecolexical meanings extend beyond dictionary definitions. The lexical items simultaneously represent botanical knowledge, ecological ethics, and practical healthcare experience accumulated through generations. This finding supports Haugen's ecological perspective, which argues that language evolves through continuous interaction between communities and their environments (Nahak, 2020). Likewise, Fill's ecolinguistic perspective suggests that lexical choices reflect ecological experiences and cultural adaptations rather than functioning solely as linguistic labels.

The ecological meanings identified in the Rorano ecolexicon also reinforce the concept of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), which refers to cumulative knowledge, practices, and beliefs developed through long-term interaction between indigenous communities and their environments (Si, 2016). Within the Ternate community, the naming of medicinal plants is inseparable from local experiences regarding plant characteristics, harvesting periods, environmental adaptation, and therapeutic efficacy. Consequently, ecolexical items function not merely as linguistic units but also as cognitive representations of ecological relationships that guide the community in utilizing natural resources responsibly. This finding confirms that language serves as an important mechanism for preserving environmental knowledge alongside cultural memory.

The findings also reinforce previous ecolinguistic studies indicating that medicinal plant lexicons preserve collective ecological memory (Luardini et al., 2019; Budasi & Satyawati, 2021). Consequently, the ecolexicon of Rorano should be understood as a linguistic manifestation of indigenous environmental knowledge that integrates biological observation, cultural beliefs, and healthcare practices into a coherent knowledge system.

The present findings are consistent with previous ecolinguistic studies conducted in Indonesia. Rahmah et al. (2023) reported that ecological lexicons within traditional communities preserve local classifications of biodiversity while simultaneously reflecting cultural values attached to environmental management. Likewise, Aceng Hasani et al. (2023) argue that ecological vocabulary constitutes an integral part of local wisdom because lexical choices often encode ethical principles governing human interaction with nature. Compared with these studies, the present research extends existing discussions by demonstrating that ecolexicons also preserve specialized knowledge concerning women's traditional healthcare, thereby linking ecological knowledge with reproductive well-being and indigenous medical practices.

Ecolexicon as Women's Indigenous Healthcare Knowledge

The ecolexicon documented in this study is closely associated with women's healthcare throughout various stages of life, including menstruation, pre-marital care, pregnancy, postpartum recovery, and general reproductive health. Unlike many traditional medicinal systems that emphasize general healing, Rorano demonstrates a specialized body of ecological knowledge developed to address women's physiological needs.

Interview data indicate that medicinal plants are selected not only because of their pharmacological properties but also because of their culturally recognized roles in



restoring bodily balance, improving circulation, accelerating postpartum recovery, and maintaining reproductive health. Such practices illustrate that traditional healthcare within the Ternate community integrates empirical observation with local cultural understanding concerning women's bodies and well-being.

The findings also illustrate that traditional healthcare practices are closely associated with the conservation of medicinal plant diversity. Women's selection of specific plants reflects accumulated ecological knowledge regarding sustainable harvesting, seasonal availability, and appropriate processing methods that ensure the long-term availability of medicinal resources. Similar observations were reported by Wahidah et al. (2025), who emphasize that indigenous healthcare systems contribute not only to community health but also to the conservation of medicinal plant biodiversity through responsible utilization of natural resources. Accordingly, the preservation of women's traditional healthcare practices simultaneously supports environmental sustainability.

An important finding of this study is that women occupy a central position in preserving this indigenous healthcare system. Female practitioners, mothers, and elder women act as the principal custodians of knowledge concerning medicinal plant identification, preparation techniques, dosage, and treatment procedures. The transmission of this knowledge occurs primarily through oral communication and direct participation in traditional healthcare activities within families and communities.

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These findings correspond with Batani et al. (2020), who argue that indigenous women's healthcare constitutes a comprehensive knowledge system integrating medicinal plants, cultural values, and reproductive health. Similarly, Busro et al. (2024) emphasize that traditional maternal healthcare represents a holistic approach combining physical, social, and cultural dimensions of well-being. Chance et al. (2025) further note that the sustainability of indigenous healthcare systems largely depends on women's roles as knowledge holders responsible for transmitting traditional medical practices across generations.

Therefore, the ecolexicon of Rorano should not be viewed solely as a linguistic inventory but also as evidence of women's contributions to preserving indigenous ecological knowledge and healthcare traditions. The lexical items document women's experiences, healthcare practices, and cultural responsibilities while simultaneously maintaining the continuity of local medical knowledge.

Ecolexicon, Cultural Identity, and Intergenerational Knowledge Transmission

The findings demonstrate that the Rorano ecolexicon functions as an important medium through which ecological knowledge and cultural identity are transmitted across generations. The continued use of local terminology enables communities to

preserve knowledge concerning medicinal plants, environmental management, and traditional healthcare despite increasing social and cultural changes.

Language documentation also contributes to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage by preserving lexical knowledge that is increasingly vulnerable to modernization and language shift. Mahardika (2019) argues that ecological lexicons represent cultural archives through which indigenous communities preserve collective memories concerning environmental management and traditional livelihoods. Similarly, Wibowo (2020) emphasizes that lexical documentation strengthens cultural resilience because local terminology embodies values, identities, and ecological experiences that cannot be fully represented through national or global languages. Therefore, documenting the Rorano ecolexicon contributes not only to linguistic preservation but also to maintaining the continuity of indigenous knowledge systems within the Ternate community.

The documentation of ecolexical items reveals that language serves as more than a communication system; it functions as a cultural archive preserving indigenous knowledge accumulated through centuries of interaction with the natural environment. Each lexical item embodies collective experiences regarding biodiversity, sustainable resource utilization, and healthcare practices, thereby reinforcing the inseparable relationship between language, ecology, and culture.

This finding aligns with Austin's (2014) argument that language documentation should preserve not only linguistic forms but also the cultural knowledge embedded within them. Similarly, Budasi and Satyawati (2021) argue that documenting indigenous lexicons contributes directly to preserving intangible cultural heritage. Within the context of Rorano, documenting ecolexicons simultaneously safeguards ecological knowledge, women's healthcare traditions, and the linguistic identity of the Ternate community.

Overall, the present study demonstrates that the ecolexicon of Rorano represents an integrated knowledge system connecting language, biodiversity, women's health, and local wisdom. Consequently, preserving these lexical items contributes not only to linguistic documentation but also to sustaining indigenous healthcare practices and strengthening cultural resilience within the Ternate community.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the ecolexicon of Rorano traditional medicine as a linguistic representation of indigenous ecological knowledge related to women's healthcare in the Ternate community. The findings demonstrate that the Rorano ecolexicon comprises lexical items referring to medicinal plants, plant parts, natural ingredients, preparation techniques, and traditional healthcare practices. These lexical items extend beyond their denotative meanings by encoding ecological knowledge, cultural beliefs, and empirical experiences accumulated through generations of interaction between the Ternate community and their natural environment.

From an ecolinguistic perspective, the documented ecolexicons reveal the inseparable relationship between language, ecology, and culture. The naming of medicinal plants and traditional healing practices reflects not only knowledge of biodiversity and natural resource utilization but also ecological ethics that guide sustainable interactions with the environment. Furthermore, the findings indicate that women play a pivotal role in preserving and transmitting this knowledge through



traditional healthcare practices, positioning them as key custodians of indigenous ecological knowledge and cultural heritage.

The study also highlights the importance of language documentation in safeguarding traditional medical knowledge that is increasingly vulnerable to social and cultural change. Documenting the ecollexicon of Rorano contributes not only to the preservation of linguistic diversity but also to the conservation of indigenous healthcare systems and local wisdom within the Ternate community. Consequently, the preservation of ecollexicons should be regarded as an integral component of broader efforts to sustain biocultural diversity and strengthen cultural identity.

Future research may expand the scope of investigation by examining the use of Rorano ecollexicons across different generations and speech communities, as well as by integrating ethnobotanical, anthropological, and public health perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of indigenous healthcare knowledge.

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