

## Analysis Of "*Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk*" (1872) By Willem Iskandar: An Ecolinguistics Study

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### ABSTRACT

The high level of interaction and awareness in the past between the Mandailing people and the natural environment is represented in the text *Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk* (1872) by Willem Iskandar. Currently, high ecological awareness and the Concept of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), which maintains harmony between conservation and nature, are fundamental to be campaigned in depth, and this can be consistently promoted through ecolinguistic studies. This study uses lexical and discourse analysis to find ecological terminology, metaphors, and stories that represent the holistic worldview of the Mandailing people in the 19th century, who viewed humans, animals, and plants as interconnected. It was also found that the text *Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk* has embedded local knowledge values and sustainable cultural practices, such as environmental concern and the prohibition of overexploitation. This study shows that classical literary works can be a valuable source of ecological information through ecolinguistic research. By integrating conventional ecological knowledge into contemporary discourse, this study offers a new perspective for advancing environmental sustainability. This research emphasizes the importance of preserving regional languages and cultures to maintain ecological values in the face of global environmental issues by establishing connections between the past and the present. The contribution to ecological and ecolinguistic sustainability is clearly demonstrated in Willem Iskandar's work, enabling traditional literary texts to serve as valuable sources of ecological information today.

**Keywords:** ecolinguistics, *si bulus si rumbuk*, Willem Iskandar

### ABSTRAK

*Interaksi dan kesadaran yang tinggi dimasa lalu antara masyarakat Mandailing dan lingkungan alam diwakili dalam teks Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk (1872) karya Willem Iskandar. Saat ini kesadaran ekologis yang tinggi, dan Konsep Pengetahuan Ekologi Tradisional (TEK), yang menjaga harmoni antara konservasi dan alam sangat penting untuk di kampanyekan secara mendalam, dan hal ini salah satunya dapat secara konsisten dipromosikan melalui studi ekolinguistik. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis leksikal dan wacana untuk menemukan terminologi ekologis, metafora, dan cerita yang mewakili pandangan dunia holistik masyarakat Mandailing pada abad ke-19, yang memandang manusia, hewan, dan tumbuhan sebagai saling terkait. Ditemukan juga bahwa teks Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk telah menyematkan nilai-nilai pengetahuan lokal dan praktik budaya berkelanjutan, seperti kepedulian*

terhadap lingkungan dan larangan eksploitasi berlebihan. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahwa karya sastra klasik dapat menjadi sumber informasi ekologis yang bermanfaat, lewat penelitian ekolinguistik. Dengan mengintegrasikan pengetahuan ekologi konvensional ke dalam wacana kontemporer, studi ini menawarkan perspektif baru untuk memajukan keberlanjutan lingkungan. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya melestarikan bahasa dan budaya daerah untuk mempertahankan nilai-nilai ekologi dalam menghadapi isu-isu lingkungan global dengan membangun hubungan antara masa lalu dan masa kini. Kontribusi terhadap keberlanjutan ekologi dan ekolinguistik dengan jelas ditunjukkan dalam karya Willem Iskandar, sehingga teks sastra tradisional dapat menjadi sumber informasi ekologi yang bermanfaat di masa sekarang.

**Kata kunci:** ekolinguistik, *si bulu si rumbuk*, Willem Iskandar

## A. Introduction

One of the forerunners of Mandailing literature, Willem Iskandar, used a social and educational perspective in his 1872 work *Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk*. This manuscript, full of ecological representations that highlight the intimate connection between language and nature in Mandailing culture, captures the socioeconomic realities of Mandailing society in the 19th Century. By focusing on how language influences, preserves, or even harms ecosystems and specific cultural contexts, ecolinguistics has expanded in the last several decades (Stibbe, 2015). Ecolinguistic research on ancient literature, particularly Mandailing literature, is still limited.

The research by Lubis (2010), which emphasizes the significance of literature in fostering educational awareness in Mandailing, is one of the few studies on *Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk* that only concentrate on academic, cultural, and social value components. Furthermore, the Nasution (2018) survey emphasizes textual symbolism and stylistic interpretation. Even though these studies provide insightful information, no study looks explicitly at *Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk* from an ecolinguistic standpoint.

Indeed, ecolinguistic research may shed light on how language reflects and influences human interactions with the environment (Pennycook, 2003). Additionally, according to Fill & Mühlhäusler (2001), an ecolinguistic approach may show how ecological ideals are represented in certain cultural discourses. Furthermore, Halliday (2001)

emphasizes language analysis as a means of comprehending and evaluating ecological and social effects on society. Moreover, ecolinguistic research may show how cultural narratives shape people's attitudes toward nature, according to Stibbe (2015). Mühlhäusler (2003) notes that linguistic shifts often mirror social and environmental changes. According to Sapir (1929), language serves as a tool for communication and reflects how people see the world, including their relationships with the natural world.

The concept of language ecology introduced by Haugen (1972) asserts that environmental and social factors shape language development in a community. According to Abram (1996), societal change may jeopardize the preservation of ecological viewpoints in language, as traditional spoken languages are often intimately tied to regional ecological practices. According to Bang & Door (1993), if language is examined from an ecolinguistic standpoint, it may even be used as a tool for environmental preservation. Last but not least, Makoni & Pennycook (2007) claim that critical linguistic methods, such as ecolinguistics, may disclose the power dynamics and social change that influence a society's language ecology.

Thus, there is a research GAP in understanding how the language in the text of *Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk* (1872) represents the interaction of Mandailing people with their natural environment, as well as how social changes affect the concept of ecology in the language and literature of Mandailing people. This research offers novelty by applying an ecolinguistic approach to *Si Bulus-Bulus Si*

*Rumbuk-Rumbuk*, which has never been done before. This study's primary innovations are an ecolinguistic lexical analysis that identifies and analyzes ecological vocabulary in *Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk* to understand how language reflects the ecological concept of Mandailing society in the 19th Century, an ecolinguistic discourse analysis that employs an ecolinguistic discourse analysis model to see how the language structure in this manuscript shapes and reflects the ecological worldview of Mandailing people and a synchronic and diachronic comparison that looks at how ecological vocabulary in this manuscript changes in meanings when compared to modern Mandailing language to see how modernization has affected ecological viewpoints in language.

Through this study, the research is expected to fill the void in ecolinguistic studies of Mandailing literature and expand the understanding of how language can be a tool to record and maintain the ecological values of a society. Thus, this research contributes to developing ecolinguistic studies and efforts to preserve the Mandailing language and culture in the modern era. The study of the text *Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk* from an ecolinguistic perspective provides a unique opportunity to explore how language represents and mediates human relationships with nature.

This article seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How does the language used in "*Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk*" reflect the Mandailing people's relationship with their natural environment? (2) What ecological values and practices are embedded in the text? (3) How can these findings contribute to a broader ecolinguistics and environmental sustainability discourse? Through a qualitative analysis of the text, this study uses an ecolinguistic framework to uncover the ecological narratives and metaphors contained in the text of *Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk*.

In theory, this study contributes to ecolinguistics and offers a framework for examining how language and environment interact in historical writings. It supports

community empowerment, environmental sustainability, and cultural preservation, proving the timeless value of traditional ecological knowledge in the face of modern difficulties. This study underlines the significance of incorporating Indigenous viewpoints into contemporary discourses on language, culture, and the environment by linking the past and present.

## B. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with an ecolinguistic analysis method to examine the manuscript of *Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk* (1872) by Willem Iskandar. This method was chosen because it allows in-depth exploration of the relationship between language, culture, and environment in classical Mandailing literary texts.

### 1. Type of Research

This research is a qualitative descriptive study with an ecolinguistic approach. The analysis was conducted to identify ecological representations in the text and how language reflects the interaction of the Mandailing people with their natural environment.

### 2. Data Sources

The primary data source in this study is the manuscript of *Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk* (1872), and secondary data in the form of related literature, including previous studies on this manuscript and relevant ecolinguistic theories.

### 3. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was carried out through:

- a. The literature study collects references from books, journal articles, and previous studies that discuss the manuscript and ecolinguistic concepts.
- b. Text analysis to identify vocabulary, metaphors, and language structures that reflect ecological aspects.
- c. Synchronic and diachronic comparisons of ecological vocabulary in the manuscript with contemporary Mandailing language show the shift in meaning due to modernization.

### 4. Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using three main stages:

1. Ecolinguistic Lexical Analysis
  - a. Identifying and categorizing ecological vocabulary used in the text.
  - b. Examining the meaning and context of the use of the vocabulary in describing human and environmental interactions.
2. Ecolinguistic Discourse Analysis
  - a. An ecolinguistic discourse analysis model was used to see how language in the manuscript shapes and reflects the ecological worldview of the Mandailing people.
  - b. Analyzing ecological narratives and metaphors in the text.
3. Synchronic and Diachronic Analysis
  - a. Comparing ecological vocabulary in the text with contemporary Mandailing language.
  - b. Identifying changes in meaning due to developing social and cultural influences.

### C. Result and Discussion

Based on the research questions and methods that have been designed, the following research results can be compiled:

1. How does the language used in "*Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk*" reflect the Mandailing people's relationship with their natural environment?

The language in "*Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk*" reflects the symbiotic relationship between Mandailing people and their natural environment. The text emphasizes that nature is a resource and an integral part of the community's identity and life.

- a. Ecological Vocabulary: Lexical analysis reveals that the text is rich in vocabulary that refers to i) natural elements, such as (*portibi/dunia*) world, (*tano/tanah*) land, (*aek/air*) water, (*udan/hujan*) rain, (*bonca-bonca/ rawa-rawa*) swamps, (*hadabuan/muara*) estuaries, (*dolak/gunung*) mountains, (*saba/sawah*) rice fields, (*arangan/hutan*) forests. ii)

Animals, such as (*manuk/ayam*) chicken, (*amporik/burung*) bird, (*bianglala/serangga*) insect, (*baruang/beruang*) bear. iii) Plants, such as (*kopi*) coffee, (*eme/padi*) rice, (*pisang*) banana, (*bargot/pohon aren*) palm tree, and iv) Natural phenomena, for example, (*gurgur/gemuruh petir*) thunder, (*riam/arus sungai*) river current. This vocabulary shows the closeness of Mandailing people to their natural environment.

- b. Nature Metaphors: The text uses metaphors that connect humans to nature, such as depicting humans as part of an interdependent ecosystem. For example, the usage refers to animals and plants, symbolizing balance and harmony in people's lives. The phrase "*Tano do matua, aek do anakna*" refers to the land as the parent and the water as the child, emphasizing the inseparable relationship between man and nature. "*Udan na riris, tano na marbunga*" gentle rain brings fertility, symbolizing blessings in life.
- c. Ecological Narrative: The discourse structure in the text reflects a holistic ecological worldview, where humans, animals, and plants are seen as interconnected entities. It can be seen from the narrative that describes the harmonious interaction between humans and nature.

The study results demonstrate that "*Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk*" extensively uses metaphors and ecological terminology. It is consistent with the ecolinguistics idea put out by Stibbe (2015), which holds that language reflects ecological reality and influences how people see and engage with the natural world. In addition to referring to biological beings, terms like "bulus-bulus" (turtles) and "rumbuk-rumbuk" (certain plants) also represent harmony and balance in the environment.

Prior research by Lubis (2010) and Nasution (2018) did not examine the text's ecological dimensions, concentrating on its pedagogical and stylistic elements. The study's results support those of other research by demonstrating that "*Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk*" is also a text rich in previously unidentifiable ecological representations. Human interactions with nature are mediated by language, claim Fill and Mühlhäusler (2001). Given that the language used is descriptive and includes values and ideologies that influence people's views toward the environment, the ecological representations in this work lend credence to this idea.

2. What ecological values and practices are embedded in the text?

*Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk* contains ecological values and practices relevant to modern sustainability concepts. The text explains how 19th-century Mandailing communities practiced sustainable environmental management.

- a. Local Wisdom Values: This text contains local wisdom values that emphasize the importance of maintaining the balance of nature. For example, there is an implicit message that prohibits the overexploitation of natural resources.
- b. Sustainable Cultural Practices: Discourse analysis reveals practices such as the wise use of natural resources and respect for other living beings. For example, the text describes rituals or traditions that involve nature as a form of environmental respect.
- c. Environmental Ethics: The text also reflects a strong ecological ethic, where humans are expected to be responsible for nature. The narrative emphasizes the concept of "not taking more than is needed".

This text's local knowledge values emphasize the preservation of the natural

balance. For instance, the story exemplifies "not taking more than needed" by prohibiting the over-exploitation of natural resources. These principles are consistent with Berkes' (1999) idea of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), which holds that traditional groups often possess knowledge systems that promote environmental sustainability. Indigenous groups in Indonesia have sustainable ecological management systems, according to research on TEK, including Ellen's (2007). However, this study provides a new perspective by uncovering ecological values in classical literary texts that have not been widely explored. Bang and Trampe's (2014) ecolinguistic theory holds that language can serve as a tool for maintaining and transmitting ecological knowledge. The findings of this study support the theory, as the ecological values in "*Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk*" demonstrate how language conveys messages about environmental sustainability.

3. How can these findings contribute to the broader ecolinguistics and environmental sustainability discourse?

The findings of this study not only contribute to the development of ecolinguistic theory but also offer a new perspective for promoting environmental sustainability. By linking the past and the present, this study demonstrates the enduring relevance of traditional ecological values in the face of global environmental challenges.

- a. Theoretical Contribution: This research enriches the field of ecolinguistics by showing how language in classic literary texts can represent human-nature relationships. The findings support the theory that language is an essential medium for understanding and sustaining ecological values.
- b. Relevance to Modern Sustainability: The ecological values in this text can be integrated into contemporary

environmental discourse. For example, the text's concept of balance and harmony can inspire more sustainable environmental policies.

- c. Language and Culture Preservation: This research also highlights the importance of preserving local languages and literature to maintain traditional ecological knowledge. It can support efforts to revitalize the Mandailing language and culture in the modern era.

This study advances the field of ecolinguistics by demonstrating the potential of ancient literary texts as a source of ecological information. This result supports Stibbe's (2015) assertion that ecolinguistics may be used to analyze historical texts to comprehend the evolving interaction between humans and nature, but it applies only to the analysis of current texts. Like Alexander's (2009), most earlier ecolinguistic studies concentrated on current media or literature. This study supports previous research by demonstrating that traditional literary works may also be pertinent subjects of ecolinguistic analysis. Goatly (2000) introduced the idea of critical ecolinguistics, which holds that language may be used to critique environmentally harmful actions. Although "*Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk*" does not explicitly criticize exploitative practices, the text offers an alternative worldview that emphasizes harmony with nature, which can serve as a basis for more critical environmental discourse.

The study's conclusions apply to the current environment, where environmental problems such as ecosystem degradation and climate change are becoming increasingly urgent. The ecological principles presented in this book may be incorporated into sustainability initiatives and environmental education programs to encourage the peaceful co-existence of people and nature. According to research by Pretty et al. (2009), environmental sustainability may be enhanced by incorporating traditional ecological knowledge into contemporary

activities. The study's conclusions bolster that claim by offering specific instances from Mandailing culture.

According to Grenoble and Whaley's (2006) notion of language and culture revitalization, maintaining regional languages may help conserve ecological knowledge. The study's results support the argument, demonstrating that the Mandailing language used in "*Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk*" has crucial ecological information. This research effectively uncovers the ecological representations, ideals, and practices of sustainability in "*Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk*," and their contribution to the conversation about ecolinguistics and environmental sustainability. The results provide a fresh perspective on addressing contemporary environmental issues and deepen our understanding of the interrelationships among language, culture, and the environment. By connecting the past and the present, this research confirms the importance of integrating traditional ecological knowledge into environmental conservation efforts in the era of globalization.

#### D. Conclusion and Suggestion

Willem Iskandar's "*Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk*" manuscript is complete, with ecological images that highlight the intimate connection between the Mandailing people and their natural surroundings, according to the study's text. According to lexical and discourse analysis, the text's lexicon, metaphors, and tales portray a holistic ecological worldview in which people, animals, and plants are seen as interrelated creatures. The text includes local wisdom values and sustainable cultural practices, such as respect for the environment, the ban on overexploitation, and the idea of ecological balance. Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) concepts strongly emphasize the preservation of harmony with nature and align with these ideals.

By demonstrating that traditional literary texts can be a valuable source of ecological information, this study advances

the field of ecolinguistics. The results also offer a fresh perspective on advancing environmental sustainability by integrating conventional ecological knowledge into contemporary discussions. Relevance to contemporary contexts: This text's ecological principles strongly affect environmental concerns, including ecosystem degradation and climate change. The book may encourage the creation of more environmentally friendly laws and procedures.

This research has successfully uncovered the ecological richness in the manuscript "*Si Bulus-Bulus Si Rumbuk-Rumbuk*" and emphasized the importance of linking cultural heritage with environmental conservation efforts. By integrating traditional ecological knowledge into modern discourse, this research contributes to the development of ecolinguistics and offers innovative solutions to global environmental challenges.

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