

Folklore Study: The Folk Language of Karo

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20230793>

ABSTRACT

Folklore is a part of culture that is passed down through generations among specific groups. Folklore is generally spread orally and has identifying characteristics such as traditional dissemination, variations in different versions, and anonymous authorship. Folklore takes various forms, including oral folklore, partly oral folklore, and non-oral folklore. The Karo language's oral folklore has specific dialects and distinctive features such as slang, jargon, colloquialism, and unique naming conventions.

Keywords: folklore, types of folklore, characteristics of folklore, Karo language

INTRODUCTION:

Etymologically, folklore comes from two words: folk and lore. Folk refers to a group of people who share identifying physical, social, and cultural characteristics that distinguish them from other groups. These identifying characteristics can include similar skin color, similar hair types, common occupations, the same language, equal levels of education, and shared culture. Lore refers to customs (folk traditions), which are cultural elements passed down through generations orally or through examples accompanied by gestures or mnemonic devices.

Therefore, folklore is a part of a collective culture that is spread and inherited through generations within various collectives, traditionally in different versions, both in oral and exemplar forms (Danandjaja, 2007;2).

There are several main identifying characteristics of folklore, namely:

- a. Dissemination and inheritance are usually done orally, through spoken words from mouth to mouth (or with an example accompanied by gestures and mnemonic devices) from one generation to the next.
- b. Folklore is traditional, meaning it is spread in relatively fixed or standard forms. It is transmitted among specific collectives over a considerable period (at least two generations).
- c. Folklore exists in various versions and even different variants. This is due to its oral dissemination, usually not through print or recordings, which makes it susceptible to changes due to human forgetfulness or interpolation processes. However, the differences are primarily limited to the outer parts, while the core forms can remain unchanged.
- d. Folklore is anonymous, meaning the names of its creators are no longer known.
- e. Folklore often takes a formulated or patterned form. Folk tales commonly use clichéd expressions such as "forty-day month" to describe a girl's beauty and "twisting like a snake" to depict someone's anger. They also employ traditional phrases, repetitions, opening and closing sentences, such as "sahibul hikayat... and they lived happily ever after" or "according to the storyteller... so the story goes" or in Javanese fairy tales "Anuju Sawijining dina" (one day)

and closed with the sentence "A lan B urip rukun bebarengan kayo mini jantan dan mimi betina" (A and B lived harmoniously like a male cat and a female cat).

- f. Folklore serves various functions in the collective life. Folk tales, for example, serve as educational tools, sources of comfort, social processes, and outlets for hidden desires.
- g. Folklore is pre-logical, having its own logic that does not align with common logic. This identifying characteristic applies mainly to oral and partly oral folklore.
- h. Folklore belongs to a collective of a specific group. This is naturally caused by the fact that the original creators are no longer known, so every member of the respective collective feels a sense of ownership.
- i. Folklore is generally straightforward and sincere, often appearing rough or too spontaneous. This can be understood considering that folklore represents the most honest projection of human emotions and manifestations (Danandjaja, 2007;3-4).

According to Jan Harold Brunvand cited by Danandjaja (2007;21), folklore can be divided into three major groups:

- 1) Verbal folklore;
- 2) Partly verbal folklore;
- 3) Non-verbal folklore.

Examples of verbal folklore include:

- 1) Folk language;
- 2) Traditional expressions;
- 3) Traditional questions;
- 4) Folk poetry;
- 5) Folk prose stories;
- 6) Folk songs.

Examples of partly verbal folklore include:

- 1) Folk beliefs;
- 2) Folk games;
- 3) Folk dances;
- 4) Customary ceremonies.

Examples of non-verbal folklore include:

- 1) Material aspects such as folk architecture, clothing, etc.;
- 2) Non-material aspects such as sign language, music. This discussion focuses specifically on oral folklore, specifically the language of the Karo people.

Forms of Oral Folklore in the Karo Language:

Language holds a significant position in human life as it serves as a means to convey emotions, feelings, and intentions to others. Thus, folk language refers to the language used by a specific group of people to express their thoughts, emotions, and intentions towards others. According to Danandjaja (2007;22-27), folk language has several forms, including:

A. Dialects:

According to Wardhaugh cited by Chaedar Alwasilah (1985;49), "A dialect is a variety of language associated with a particular group of speakers who understand each other and other varieties."

In the Karo language, there are three dialects based on geographical location:

- a. Singalor Lau dialect
- b. Kabanjahe dialect
- c. Langkat dialect

The Kabanjahe dialect is considered the standard dialect in the Karo language. The differences among these three dialects generally involve variations in phonemes, although there are also differences in entire words. Here are some examples of vocabulary from these three dialects:

English	Singalor Lau	Kabanjahe	Langkat
Nose	Igong	Igung	Igong
Lips	Biber	Biber	Biber
Tongue	Dilah	Dilah	Dilah
Mother	Nande	Nande	Nande

Grandfather	Laki	Bulang	Bolang
Grandmother	Nini (diikuti oleh marga)	Nini (diikuti marga)	Nondong
Run	Giang	Kiam	Kiam
Fall	Nampok	Ndabuh	Ndaboh
See	Nihen	Nehen	Nehen
Corn	Jong	Jaung	Jaung
Basin	Sembong	Sambong	Kancah
Yes	Oe	Ue	Uai
A little	Sitek	Sitik	Sitek
Wife	Ndehara	Ndehara	Diberu
Husband	Perbulangen	Perbulangen	Dilaki

The above examples were obtained by the author through direct conversations with the locals, specifically the Singalor Lau dialect in the Tiga Binang area, the Kabanjahe dialect in Kabanjahe, and the Langkat dialect in Namu Ukur.

B. Slang

According to Hartmann & Stork, as cited by Chaedar Alwasilah (1985,57), slang is defined as:

"A variation of speech characterized by newly coined and rapidly changing vocabulary, used by young people or specific social and professional groups for 'in-group' communication, tending to be unknown to others in the speech community."

Based on its form, slang can be divided into:

a. Specific forms:

These are slang words that are not commonly used by the Karo community but are used by specific groups, such as by teenagers. Sometimes specific forms are found in the Karo language, but their meanings do not correspond to their literal meanings

Examples:

- "ndauhsa" originally means 'very far', but it has changed to mean 'a statement that is not approved'
- "runggu" originally means 'discussion', but it has changed to mean 'joking, kidding'
- "medotak" originally means 'soft', but its meaning has shifted to 'broken, ruined, failed'
- "ertapa" originally means 'meditating', but its meaning has shifted to 'studying'

b. Acronyms:

Acronyms are abbreviated terms formed from the initial letters, syllables, or combinations of letters and syllables of a series of words treated as a single word (Balai Pustaka, 1988;436).

Examples:

- "Rosari" = "rondong sada wari" meaning 'a date within one day'
- "Gabel" = "Galang beltek" meaning 'big belly'
- "Suber" = "Suari Berngi" meaning 'day and night'
- "Batu" = "Bapa tua" meaning 'old man'
- "Galma" = "galang mata" meaning 'big eyes'
- "Lusi" = "luam silalap" meaning 'constantly chattering'
- "Kumer" = "kumat merengna" meaning 'crazy'
- "Cirila" = "ciret lau" meaning 'diarrhea'
- "Rokerta" = "rondong kerja tahun" meaning 'a date during the annual event'
- "Mitu" = "minem tuak" meaning 'drinking tuak'

c. Unusual Pronunciations:

Unusual pronunciation refers to the pronunciation of a word that changes from its original form while retaining all its letters. This is usually done by rearranging syllables.

Examples:

- "Cingku" = "kucing" meaning 'cat'
- "Mbulem" = "lembu" meaning 'cow'
- "Lungbu" = "bulung" meaning 'leaf'
- "Rike" = "keri" meaning 'finished'
- "Kanna" = "nakan" meaning 'rice'
- "Landa" = "dalan" meaning 'road'

- "Peni" = "nipe" meaning 'snake'
- "Itdu" = "duit" meaning 'money'
- "Demme" = "medem" meaning 'sleep'
- "Kutdu" = "dukut" meaning 'grass'

Some people consider argot and jargon to be the same, but others make a distinction. Similarly, cant is considered synonymous with several definitions of argot, jargon, and cant.

Jargon:

According to Pel & Gaynor, as cited by Chaedar Alwasilah (1985:61), jargon is:

"A set of terms and expressions used by a social group or professional group, but not used and often not understood by the speech community as a whole."

Examples:

The word "aron," for example, has different meanings among young people and farmers. Among young people, it means "lover," while among farmers, it means "workmate."

Argot:

According to Zeigher, as cited by A. Chaedar Alwasilah (1985:61), argot is:

"A secret language, or the language of thieves. It is also used for technical or specialized vocabulary in trade, professions, or other activities. As such, argot is synonymous with jargon... In the sense of a 'secret' language, cant is considered synonymous with argot. However, cant is generally applied to whining, artificial, or pretend speech."

According to DJames Danandjaja (2007:23), the specific cant used by criminals is often referred to as argot.

Examples:

- The word "lipo" means 'chicken coop,' but among thieves, it means 'hideout.'
- The word "bengkila" means 'husband of the father's sister or father-in-law,' but among thieves, it means 'police.'

Cant:

According to DJames Danandjaja (2007:23): "In contemporary times, slang, in the specific sense, is called cant."

Among the young Karo people, especially in the Singalor Lau dialect area, there is another type of secret language. It involves adding certain syllables (sa, si, so, se, su, ra, ri, re, ro, ru) to the end of each syllable. The added syllables are adjusted or matched with the vowel of the following syllable.

Examples:

- "Kai" becomes "kasaisi" becomes "karairi" meaning 'what'
- "Juma" becomes "jusumasa" becomes "jurumara" meaning 'field'
- "Karat" becomes "kasarasat" becomes "karararat" meaning 'bite'
- "Suan" becomes "susuasan" becomes "suruaran" meaning 'planting'

C. Shop Talk

According to DJames Danandjaja (1986:24), "Another type of folk language similar to slang is Shop Talk, or the language of traders."

Examples:

Among traders, it is common to use abbreviations for numbers, such as:

- "limpul" for 'fifty'
- "limper" for 'five cents' or 'five rupiahs'

There are also expressions like:

- "tengah dua ribu" for 'one thousand five hundred'
- "tengah lima ratus" for 'four hundred fifty'

D. Colloquial

The term "colloquial" comes from the Latin word "colloquium" (conversation). Thus, colloquial language refers to:

"Words or phrases commonly used in spoken language, not in written language" (A. Chaedar Alwasilah, 1985:59).

"It is the everyday language that deviates from conventional language" (Danandjaja, 2007:24).

Examples:

- "jile-jile kobe" means 'exaggerated behavior or style'

- "ting" is a form of address for a woman with the surname Ginting or an elderly woman with the surname Ginting

E. Sirkomlokusi

"Sirkomlokusi refers to indirect expressions" (Danandjaja, 2007:24).

In the Karo region, there is a custom that when someone is walking in the middle of the forest, they will never mention the words "arimo" (tiger), "nipe" (snake), and "begu fin" (demon). Instead these words are replaced with other expressions, such as "nini" (grandmother). The purpose of replacing these words is to avoid being attacked by a tiger, bitten by a snake, or disturbed by a demon.

F. Naming Practices

In the Karo community, naming a child is a significant event. Usually, the naming is entrusted to the mother's brother (uncle). In the past, most names were based on events that occurred during the child's birth or the parents' aspirations. There is also a custom of changing a name if the current name is considered unfavorable, for example, if the child is frequently ill. The timing and auspiciousness of the name change are determined by individuals skilled in finding auspicious days according to the Karo customs

Examples:

"Mbera Malem" means 'hope for recovery (good, happy)'

From the given names above, it can be inferred that the parents hope for a better and happier life with the birth of the child.

In addition, the Karo community also has a naming tradition based on family lineage for both males and females.

Examples:

1. A person with the Sembiring Meliala surname is called "jemput" for males and "tekang" for females.
2. A person with the Ginting Sugihen surname is called "nangkul" for males and "sungam" for females.

3. A person with the Tarigan Gersang surname is called "mondan" for males and "ombar" for females.
4. A person with the Karo-Karo Purba surname is called "nahar" for males and "nuhar" for females.
5. A person with the Perangin-angin/Bangun surname is called "teger" for males and "girik" for females.
6. Furthermore, the Karo community also has specific names for certain male animals.

Examples:

1. "Nipe" (snake) is called "ringki" for males.
2. "Kerbo" (buffalo) is called "mbergoh" for males.
3. "Manuk" (chicken) is called "bugan" for males.

G. Aristocratic Titles or Traditional Positions

In the Karo community, there are aristocratic titles such as "Sibayak" (king) and the addition of the title "raja" before the name of a descendant of Sibayak (specifically for males). The literal meaning of "sibayak" is 'rich.'

H. Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia refers to words that are formed to imitate natural sounds (Danandjaja, 2007:27).

Examples:

- "Cincip" (a bird's name) is called "cicip" because the bird makes a "cip...cip...cip" sound.

- "Kapkap" (a bird repellent device in rice fields) is called "kap-kap" because it makes a "kapkap" sound.

I. Onomastic

Onomastics refers to traditional street names or specific place names that have a legendary history of their formation (Danandjaja, 2007:270). Many names in the Karo region have a history, such as the names of rivers, mountains, villages, etc.

Examples:

The Gundaling Hill located near Berastagi is derived from the phrase "goodbye my darling," which later became "gundaling." According to the story, two lovers used to meet and express their love on this hill. One day, the lover had to return to their home country (as they were not Indonesian citizens). For the last time, they met on the hill and the lover uttered those words, which later became "gundaling."

Apart from the forms of folk language described above, there is one more form called "bahasa bertingkat" in the Karo language, but it is not discussed in this text as it is not commonly found in the Karo language.

CONCLUSION

Folklore originates from the combination of two words, "folk" and "lore." Folk refers to a group of people distinguished from other groups by physical, social, and cultural characteristics. Lore refers to customs or traditions passed down through generations via oral stories, gestures, or mnemonic devices. Folklore is part of the collective culture that is spread and inherited among various groups, both in oral and written forms.

The identifying characteristics of folklore include oral dissemination and transmission from one generation to another, relative traditional nature, variation and variants due to oral transmission, anonymous creators, presence of formulas or patterns, serving a function in collective life, having its own logic different from common logic, collective ownership by specific groups, and a naive and innocent nature.

Folklore can be divided into three main groups: oral folklore, partially oral folklore, and non-oral folklore. Oral folklore includes folk language, traditional expressions, traditional questions, folk poetry, folk prose stories, and folk songs. Partially oral folklore includes folk beliefs, folk games,

folk dances, and traditional ceremonies. Non-oral folklore includes material culture such as folk architecture and clothing, as well as non-material culture such as sign language and music.

In the Karo folk language, various forms exist, such as dialects, slang, shop talk, colloquial language, sirkomlokusi, naming practices, aristocratic titles or traditional positions, onomatopoeia, and onomastics. Each form of language has its own characteristics and usage in daily communication.

Declaration by Authors

Source of Funding: None

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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How to cite this article: Dra. Herlina, M. Hum, Dra. Asriaty R Purba, M. Hum. Folklore Study: The Folk Language of Karo. *International Journal of Research and Review*. 2023; 10(7): 790-795.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20230793>
