

# JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

## From Morphemes to Meaning: Analysing the Names of Traditional Kelantan *Kuih*

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### ABSTRACT

The morphological influence in Kelantanese traditional *kuih* is part of a broader cultural context of Malay culinary traditions. In Kelantan, traditional foods play a significant role in wedding customs, with specific items like *pulut*, *sirih junjung*, and various *kuih* included in the *hantaran* (wedding gifts) exchanged between families. Kelantanese *kuih* often have distinctive, eccentric names, many of which are deeply embedded in the Kelantanese dialect, customs, and historical context. These names may perplex individuals from other regions because they rely on local phrases or metaphorical meanings that are not often recognised outside Kelantan. This qualitative study aims to identify the semantics of the quirky names of traditional Kelantanese *kuih* and analyse the factors that influence the word-formation of these *kuih-muih*. This paper examines the etymology of word-formation and the folkloric elements embedded in the distinctive names of traditional Kelantanese *kuih*. Lexical variations in Kelantanese *kuih* result from this combination of words, showcasing the rich tapestry of Malaysian and Indonesian culture, where language and food intersect to create a unique culinary identity. Traditional desserts are open compounds, with Malay words and the Kelantanese dialect as the source words. The visual appearance factor mainly influences the naming of traditional Kelantanese desserts. This study aims to deepen the discourse on Malaysia's culinary and cultural history by analysing linguistic aspects and regional influences.

**Keywords:** morpheme, semantics, etymology, morphology, Kelantanese *kuih*

**Received:** 31 March 2025, **Accepted:** 24 June 2025, **Published:** 30 December 2026

### 1.0 Introduction

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Malaysia is renowned as a multicultural nation rich in diverse culinary traditions. Among the many beloved dishes that define Malaysian cuisine, *kuih* stands out as a quintessential part of the nation's culinary landscape. *Kuih* (dessert or snacks) encompasses a variety of delicacies, ranging from sweet treats to savoury snacks. *Kuih* has been shaped by numerous historical events and influenced by the migration of Chinese, Indians, and various explorers and visitors to Malaysia throughout its history, like other aspects of Malay cuisine (Kamaruzaman et al., 2022). The Hokkien term /koe/ underwent a linguistic shift, resulting in the Malay *kuih*. This reformulation was attributed to native Chinese experts, who incorporated modifications that reflected their tastes and culinary traditions, such as Nyonya *kuih*.

*Kuih-muih* is the plural form of traditional desserts or snacks. It is the compounding form to indicate the plurality of *kuih*. Malaysians are fondly referred to as *kuih* for all types of desserts or snacks; therefore, this study uses the term *kuih* accordingly.

In Malaysia, *kuih* frequently emphasises sweetness, showcasing delectable dishes crafted with coconut milk, glutinous rice flour, and ample *gula Melaka* or *gula nisan* (palm sugar). The inclination towards sweetness is especially evident in Kelantan, a state on the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia, celebrated for its affinity for desserts. These delectable *kuih-muih* are available at roadside vendors and Ramadan bazaars nationwide. Nonetheless, visiting Kota Bharu is imperative for anyone pursuing an authentic experience. Most important is the lively Pasar Siti Khadijah, a renowned landmark, and Pasar Terapung Pengkalan Datu, a floating market that operates every Saturday (Hanni, 2022), offering a chance to enjoy local desserts.

Traditional *kuih* has a profound impact on Malaysia's cultural identity and history. *Kuih-muih* are essential to matrimonial traditions as they are exchanged as gifts between the bride and groom and presented as personal goods in Kelantan (Mohamad & Hussain, 2017). The production and consumption of traditional *kuih* are intricately linked to cultural activities and festivities, embodying inventive thought and distinct cultural identities (Bungsu et al., 2019).

Still, due to changing lives and globalisation, young people find it challenging to preserve these customs. Factors influencing young people's participation in traditional *kuih* include family influence, cultural values, knowledge, motivation, lifestyle, and financial situation (Hamzah et al., 2015). Bungsu et al. (2019) note that traditional *kuih* is vital to Malaysian cultural legacy as it reflects aesthetic and cultural values deserving of preservation. The modernisation of *kuih* has threatened its traditional character due to industrialisation and inventions.

Culinary contributions are an essential part of the dowry in Kelantanese Malay weddings; certain items and amounts in odd numbers hold symbolic meaning (Mohamad & Hussain, 2017). Kelantan is a cultural hub for Malay heritage, encompassing traditional arts and cuisine (Shuaib & Enoch, 2013). Traditional dinners are essential to the local economy in places like Kelantan, where businesspeople understand halal food concepts (Rahman et al., 2011). Comparable naming standards are observed in places like Jambi, Indonesia, where traditional culinary labels sometimes include elements of the local language (Kusmana, 2021).

Traditional Malay delicacies and sweets often carry strong cultural and symbolic meanings, reflecting the local environment and culture through unique names. Still, it sometimes creates semantic tension by using conflicting language or by introducing contextual links. A significant component of the Malay community's identification, the naming process is ingrained in their cultural legacy (Razali et al., 2023).

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The word formation of Kelantanese *kuih* often seems odd, leading to misinterpretation in other fields. For example, Kelantanese *kuih* has a unique vocabulary, marked by *tahi itik*, which translates as 'duck droppings'. The old spellings (e.g., *taik itek* – *tahi itik*) vary from those in other regions; in some cases, it utilises the Kelantan dialect, which makes it challenging to convey the meaning (e.g., *kuba guling*). In the Kelantan dialect, *kuba* means *kerbau* (buffalo). People from other regions may be confused about these atypical names, which lack the term *kuih*, and would conventionally categorise them as traditional desserts or snacks. *Kuih tahi itik* (Figure 1) is a renowned dessert in Kelantan. It is made from egg whites, cooked in heated sugar syrup, and moulded into lumps. This study explains the history, authenticity, identity, and potential of traditional Malay *kuih*. This study further refines traditional Malay culinary expertise, particularly within the sub-genre of *kuih*, in reaction to the heritage-eroding modernism driven by globalisation.

**Figure 1**

*Kuih Taik Itik*



Note. @hadesmelayu. (2020, December 25). Note. From *Kuih Taik Itik* [Photograph]. X (formerly Twitter). <https://x.com/hadesmelayu/status/1342455273592524800>

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

This research had the following objectives:

1. To identify the semantics of the quirky names of traditional Kelantanese *kuih*
2. To analyse the factors that influence the word-formation of the *kuih-muih*.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

This research aims to answer these questions:

1. What is the semantics of the quirky names of Kelantanese *kuih*?
2. What are the factors that influence the word-formation of the *kuih-muih*?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study enhances our understanding of morphology and semantics by revealing word-formation processes in a unique cultural and linguistic setting. The study improves understanding of the formation, meanings, and social, cultural, and linguistic effects of lexical items by discovering and evaluating unusual names. Additionally, it highlights how local dialects, customs, and history shape naming conventions. It preserves Kelantan's distinctive naming traditions and improves linguistic studies by examining a lesser-studied Malaysian language variety. The study helps lexicographers, educators, and cultural historians understand language development, promote cultural awareness, and preserve linguistic variety. This study enhances our understanding of language and culture in daily conversations by examining the semantics of these *kuih* names.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Morpheme**

A morpheme in morphology is a meaningful linguistic unit that might be a complete word, like 'dog', or a word constituent, such as the suffix /-s/ in dogs. Morphemes constitute the minimal units of meaning in a language. Morphemes are generally categorised into two types: free morphemes, which can

function as standalone words, and bound morphemes, which cannot exist separately (Nordquist, 2025). Moreover, a further distinction is made between content morphemes and function morphemes. Content morphemes convey specific semantic meanings, as illustrated by terms such as /book/ and /luck/, as well as by prefixes and suffixes like /un-/ and /-y/. Conversely, function morphemes encompass all inflectional morphemes, such as /-s/ and /-ed/, in addition to free morphemes like /the/, /of/, /with/, /and/, /but/, and others of the same kind.

A content morpheme, or contentive morpheme, constitutes the semantic nucleus of a major word class. These morphemes have lexical meanings that remain unaffected by context or other morphemes. In English, the abstract noun 'beauty' signifies a 'pleasing characteristic'. Adding the causative verbal suffix /-fy/ (a functional morpheme) results in the verb 'beautify,' signifying 'to render pleasing.' The adjective 'beautiful' is created by appending the suffix /-ful/, and the subsequent addition of the adverbial suffix /-ly/ yields the adverb 'beautifully'. These functional morphemes can alter the application of the root through derivation, though they do not affect the root's lexical meaning, which remains 'pleasant' or 'satisfying'. The majority, if not all, principal lexical items encompass at least one content morpheme, while compounds may comprise two or more content morphemes. Alongside content morphemes, significant class words frequently, though not invariably, include one or more functional morphemes attached to the root(s).

## **2.2 Compounds**

Compounding is a productive word-formation process that involves combining lexemes to generate new words, which poses challenges for computational processing and linguistic analysis (Punske, 2016; Rainer, 2021). It entails morphosyntactic modifications that may result in the loss of lexicosemantic information (Haryati, 2014). The process is widespread across numerous languages, including Romance, and is frequently syntactic in origin (Rainer, 2021). The comprehension of compounding has significant implications for applied linguistics, mainstream linguistics, and language technology (Anderson et al., 2022; Hacken, 2017).

Based on the presence or absence of a head, compounds can be classified as endocentric or exocentric (Scalise et al., 2009). A compound is regarded as endocentric in a grammatical construction if it fulfils the same linguistic function as one of its components. Conversely, it is considered exocentric if it does not. Exocentric compounds demonstrate functional divergence from their component elements (Stukenbrock, 2021). This variance indicates a more intricate interaction among morphology, syntax, and semantics than previously acknowledged. The hierarchical framework, which is incorporated into morphological processes such as compounding and reduplication, underscores the effectiveness of context-free models in representing these language phenomena (Cotterell et al., 2021). Scalise et al. (2009) suggest that the head concept be divided into categorial, semantic, and morphological components, resulting in corresponding categories of exocentricity. In contrast to the conventional endocentric-exocentric typology, Benczes (2015) contends that both categories are generated similarly and adhere to productive patterns. The classification of compounds has transformed the early Sanskrit categories to more recent proposals, such as Bisetto & Scalise's three-class system, which encompasses attributive/appositive, subordinate, and coordinate compounds (Arcodia et al., 2009).

An open compound combines two or more terms written separately with spaces but functions as a single concept. Although each word retains its original meaning, they collectively establish a new meaning. Ice cream, secondary school, and the living room are examples. Open compounds are frequently employed in English and are readily identifiable due to the absence of hyphens or the use of a single word to join the individual words. A compound noun comprises two or more words functioning as a single noun. The three ways these words could be joined are open compounds, which are written as distinct words (e.g., ice cream); closed compounds, which are written as a single word; and compound nouns, which are written as a single word. Hyphens (e.g., mother-in-law) link hyphenated compounds. Closed compounds thus consist of words expressed as a single word with a closed form (e.g., toothpaste). Compound nouns produce connotations different from those of the constituent components. For example, basketball is a compound—a game—not a combination of a basket and a ball.

### 2.3 Word Formation: Coining Compounds

Word formation is fundamental to naming, particularly for food and snacks. Studies have defined numerous techniques for creating brand names, including acronyms, blending, borrowing, compounding, and coinage (Syaputri et al., 2023; Pamungkas, 2015). Primarily, compounding processes are used for over half of snack brand names, according to Syaputri et al. (2023). Traditional Malay *kuih*, a diverse mix of sweet and savoury treats, has evolved in Malaysia through historical events and cultural interactions, resulting in innovations such as Nyonya *kuih* (Kamaruzaman et al., 2020). Food and beverage products often have complex word-formation patterns, with names either directly, indirectly, or unrelated to the objects they represent (Haryati, 2014). The traditional *kuih* consists of various sweet and savoury treats of cultural value in Malaysia (Kamaruzaman et al., 2022). Indigenous crops, traditional cooking methods, and local cultural heritage are part of the complexities of traditional Malay *kuih* (Kamaruzaman et al., 2022).

In many languages, the compound is a vital word-formation process wherein two or more words are combined to produce new words with distinct meanings (Aziz et al., 2019; Yusuf & Shan, 2021). Many techniques are employed in compounding, including hyphens, which have evolved into a unique form of compounding in English (Sun & Baayen, 2021). Noun-nouns, noun-verbs, and verb-adjectives combined produce compound (Aziz et al., 2019). An S-curve model indicates that the frequency of hyphenated compounds has increased, indicating that hyphenation is now a known compounding technique (Sun & Baayen, 2021). Linguistic research in morphology depends on understanding these compounding processes and improving communication efficiency (Sun & Baayen, 2021; Yusuf & Shan, 2021).

Traditional Kelantanese *kuih* are made by combining two or more source words. For example, *kuih tahi itik* combines three root words; removing the word *kuih* changes the connotation to that of a duck dropping. The term /kuih/ is often coupled with other words to create names that define the dessert. Compounding generates descriptive names that are often culturally and gastronomically relevant. The compounding of two or more words describes the ingredients, visual appearance, taste, and texture of the *kuih*. In Table 1, *kuih tahi itik* is an open noun compound.

**Table 1**

*Morphological Analysis of Compound*

Morphological Analysis			
Kelantanese <i>Kuih</i>	Division of Words		
	Malay		
	<i>kuih</i>	<i>tahi</i>	<i>itik</i>
<i>kuih tahi itik</i>	English		
[noun]	dessert	droppings	duck
	noun	noun	noun
	open compound		
	compound noun		

### 2.4 Compounding: The Previous Studies on the Word Formation of Desserts or Snacks

A case study by Anggraeni (2011) focuses on a billboard in Semarang. It examines the word-formation in outdoor advertising, emphasising compounding as a conventional word-formation method in product naming strategies. Haryati (2014) studied the word-formation processes of food and beverage product names in Indonesia. This study analyses word-formation processes, including compounding, in the nomenclature of food and beverage products in Indonesia, and the correlation between the meanings of product names and the products they denote. Pamungkas (2015) examined word formation and product naming methods, addressing word-formation theories, including compounding, and their application to product naming. The most recent ethnolinguistic research by Lestari et al. (2022) emphasise the vocabulary of the traditional *kuih Ashura* of the Malay Society in Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand. This study also analyses the lexicon of cultural traditions, uncovering monomorphemic and polymorphemic forms that embody cultural concepts, values, and practices, similar to the word formation of such terms.

Traditional Malay *kuih* is integral to Malaysia's cultural identity and legacy, as well as those of its adjacent regions, and is closely tied to specific ethnic customs and celebrations. Semantic theories enable the investigation of the vocabulary of traditional *kuih*, which is rooted in inherited knowledge (Syaza, 2016). The ethnolinguistic study has clarified the relationship between language and culture within *Kuih* traditions by distinguishing between monomorphemic and polymorphemic forms in their lexicon (Syaputri et al., 2022). Traditional *kuih* symbolises regional traits, evident in indigenous foods and typical cooking methods (Kamaruzaman et al., 2022). Culinary traditions play a crucial role in preserving cultural identity, as they are passed down through generations (Bungsu et al., 2019; Syaza, 2016). The delicacies of traditional Malay cuisine vary by region, highlighting its diversity and distinctiveness (Kamaruzaman et al., 2022).

### **2.5 Traditional and Inspirational Names of Kuih in Malaysia**

The names of the *kuih-muih* demonstrate notable distinctiveness in their shapes and forms (Koh, 2016; Radzi, 2016). The term *kuih talam* (Figure 2) refers to a type of *kuih* commonly shaped in containers such as baking tins or pans, and then cut into squares, rectangles, or, historically, diagonally to produce diamond-shaped pieces (Aleiya, 2019). The term *pulut panggang* (Figure 3) derives from its components and preparation technique: *pulut* refers to glutinous rice, and *panggang* signifies barbecued. In some cases, the names of *kuih-muih* are associated with their forms. *Kuih buah Melaka* (Figure 4) resembles the little spherical fruit of the Malacca tree (*Phyllanthus emblica*). It is distinguished by its chewy consistency and sweet *gula kabung* syrup, which adequately embodies its name. The Malacca tree is historically significant as it is the source of the state's name.

Another instance is *kuih tiram* (Figure 5), which resembles an oyster shell with layers of crisp pastry. Furthermore, several names, such as *kuih puteri dua sebilik*, are symbolic and translate to 'the two queens of a room'. Despite the name lacking a distinct visual representation (Fatimah, 2015), the metaphor is encapsulated by two glutinous rice balls of various colours, filled with coconut milk batter and enveloped in banana leaves, symbolising the 'room'. The unique names of these *kuih* (Kosasih, 2013) underscore that historically, Malays excelled in literature and poetry, elucidating the inventive application of metaphor in the nomenclature of specific *kuih*.

**Figure 2**

*Kuih Talam*



*Note.* A photograph taken by for this study



**Figure 3**

*Pulut Panggang*



*Note.* A photograph taken by for this study

**Figure 4**

*Kuih Buah Melaka*



*Note.* A photograph taken by for this study

**Figure 5**

*Kuih Tiram*



*Note.* A photograph taken by for this study

## **2.6 Factors that Contribute to the Word Formation of Kelantanese Kuih**

According to Bakar et al. (2015), several factors influence the naming of Kelantanese desserts, contributing to their unique and interesting names. These factors combined make these desserts stand out and pique the curiosity of locals and visitors alike. The factors are cultural significance, visual appearance, ingredients, regional language, humour, and creativity, as seen in Figure 6.

**Figure 6**

*Factors Contributing to the Kelantanese Dessert Word Formation*

<b>Cultural significance</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Many word formations of desserts or snacks are inspired from local culture, traditions, and folklore (e.g., <i>Cek Abas demam</i>), adding cultural richness and storytelling during the making and cooking process (e.g., <i>pulut panggang</i>)</li></ul>
<b>Visual appearance</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There are word formations which reflect the physical characteristics of desserts or snacks, such as shape, colour, and texture (e.g., <i>ulat bulu</i>, <i>buah gomok</i> and <i>pukis gebu</i>).</li></ul>
<b>Ingredients</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some of the desserts or snacks get their names from the ingredients used, which can be intriguing or amusing to those unfamiliar with them, such as <i>ketupat manis</i> and <i>lempok durian</i>.</li></ul>
<b>Regional language</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some of the word formations are in Kelantan dialect, reflecting the language and linguistic characteristics of Kelantanese region (e.g., <i>kuba baling</i> and <i>koleh tahi minyak</i>)</li></ul>
<b>Humour and creativity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In the process of word formation, the locals use humour and creativity which make them memorable and engaging while cooking (e.g., <i>badak berendam</i>).</li></ul>



Some factors influence the word formation of traditional *kuih-muih*. The morphology of word-formation is essential in the nomenclature of traditional *kuih-muih*. Traditional snack names possess cultural significance and historical relevance, with numerous regional variants yet to be documented in official dictionaries (Mukhibun & Setyoningsih, 2024). The nomenclature of dishes reflects regional culinary practices, cooking methods, and cultural contexts. Documenting and studying names in rapidly evolving linguistic contexts is crucial for preserving culinary heritage and enriching language vocabularies (Fitriyah et al., 2023; Mukhibun & Setyoningsih, 2024). For instance, the word formation of *kuih Che Abas demam* reflects the folklore in the region. It is noted that Malays were sensible and humorous while coining words (e.g., *badak berendam*). The locals coined the names to be more relatable and to resonate deeply with the makers' experiences and observations.

### **2.7 Semantic Theories**

Semantics is a fundamental subfield of linguistics that explores the complex domain of meaning, encompassing the interpretation of words, phrases, sentences, and texts. Denham & Lobeck (2018) noted that semantics is the study of meaning in language, which can be applied to texts or single words. For instance, 'destination' and 'last stop' are officially the same thing but semantically vary in minute differences in meaning. Semantic theories study the nature of meaning in language by emphasising how words, phrases, and sentences express meaning.

This study adopted the Use Theory, as proposed by Ludwig Wittgenstein, which posits that the meaning of a word is determined by its use within a specific linguistic context. Researchers employed this theory to analyse the results because the application within language defines the meaning of a word. It underlines how the meaning of words depends on their actual use in communication. As Textor (2007) notes, 'the meaning of a term is its use in the language,' as said by Ludwig Wittgenstein. The Use Theory of meaning emphasises language's social and functional dimensions, positing that meaning emerges from the use patterns within a linguistic community. It asserts that meaning is shaped by the social and functional aspects of language, as observed in the use patterns within a community (Textor, 2007).

The Use Theory of meaning holds that application defines the meaning of a term. A word has no independent meaning; its environment defines it. This theory defines the meanings of abstract concepts or thoughts. According to this theory, the meaning of a word is intrinsically related to its use in a given context, a relationship fundamental to current language philosophy (Justus, 2011). This theory advocates a dynamic interpretation in which the pragmatic use of language creates meaning, thereby contrasting with traditional viewpoints that stress inherent or unchanging meanings (Clark & Anglin, 1973). Therefore, researchers employed this semantic theory for data analysis.

### **3.0 Methods**

This study employed a qualitative approach to examine word structure and form, with particular emphasis on morphological analysis. Qualitative research focuses on careful observation and description rather than numerical measurement, allowing for an in-depth explanation of morphological features such as roots, prefixes, suffixes, and inflections. Through descriptive analysis, the study provides a systematic account of morphological patterns in language (Enzo, 2022). As noted by Enzo (2022), qualitative morphological research highlights how word-formation structures function across spoken and written contexts and supports flexibility in etymological, morphological, and semantic analysis. In this study, the approach was used to analyse word-formation patterns found in traditional Kelantanese desserts and snacks.

Purposive sampling was employed to identify forty traditional Kelantanese *kuih*, particularly those with distinctive or metaphorical names (e.g., *ulat bulu*), as listed in Appendix A. Data were collected from multiple sources, including interviews, social media, newspapers, journal articles, and blogs (see Diagram 2), resulting in a culturally rich dataset. The etymology and meanings of the selected items were analysed to support morphological interpretation. Content analysis was used to code and interpret compounds and meanings through morphological, syntactic, and semantic analysis. While words carry inherent meanings, these meanings may shift or expand when combined into compounds (e.g., *lompat*

*tikam*). Figure 7 summarises the systematic sampling procedures and data collection tools used to achieve the research objectives. Library research further supported the analysis by providing relevant background and reference materials.

**Figure 7**

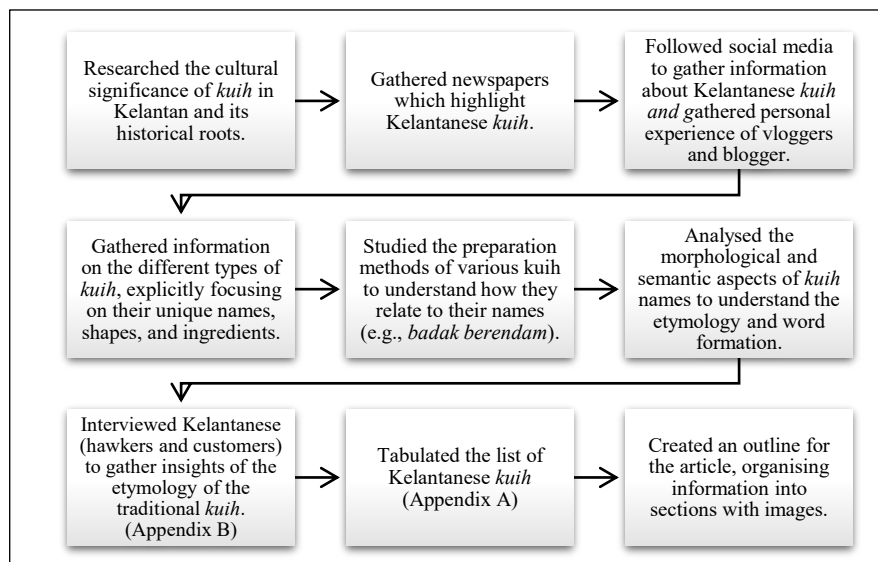
*Data Collection Process*

Data Collection Process	Descriptions
Interviews	Engaging in direct conversations with local <i>kuih</i> makers (in the night market) and culinary enthusiasts helps preserve traditional knowledge and terminology.
Social Media	Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok exhibit contemporary interpretations, viral trends, and social conversations about Kelantanese <i>kuih</i> .
Newspapers	Malaysian news articles often emphasise heritage cuisine, regional specialities, and culinary traditions. News about Kelantanese <i>kuih</i> and the history behind the tradition is used in the study.
Journal Articles	Previous studies on traditional cuisine, such as Kelantanese <i>kuih</i> , are taken as references.
Blogs	Food bloggers, vloggers, and scholars share recipes, historical context, and personal narratives that engage readers and promote interest in <i>kuih</i> .

Researchers used primary references from previous studies (Bakar et al., 2015; Kamaruzaman et al., 2022) to identify and analyse primary sources related to traditional Kelantanese desserts and snacks. The study examined the etymology of Kelantanese *kuih* through word-formation analysis and library research. The findings were then verified through semi-structured interviews with native Kelantanese speakers to validate the data and obtain additional insights. The collected *kuih* terms were documented according to their meanings, word-formation processes (e.g., compounding), and factors influencing word formation (see Appendix A). Supporting information was also obtained from journal articles and newspaper sources to enhance data reliability. The overall data collection procedure is summarised in Figure 8.

**Figure 8**

*Step-by-Step Process for Collecting Samples*



## 4.0 Findings and Discussion

A collection of 40 Kelantanese *kuih* was compiled and analysed using morphological and semantic methods (see Appendix A) to ensure authenticity and originality. Selected samples were further discussed, highlighting their unique and distinctive word formations, which are influenced by visual appearance, texture, ingredients, and cooking methods. The compounding process of these desserts drew inspiration from Malay, Kelantan dialects, and Indonesian languages, incorporating various syntactic forms (nouns, adjectives, or verbs), etymological considerations, and morphological structures. Only selected samples were examined to illuminate the reasoning, meanings, and factors behind their quirky names.

Kelantanese *kuih* is formed primarily by compounding two or more source words. Except for *badak berendam*, where *berendam* (the prefix be-) is polymorphemic, these source terms are monomorphemic. This analysis of word combinations showcases the rich tapestry of culture, where language and food intersect to create a unique culinary identity. Appendix A lists Kelantanese *kuih* and their division of source words, meanings, and factors of the word formation. This section provides a morphological and semantic analysis of *kuih-muih*, along with its etymological explanations and some interesting information. Bakar et al. (2015) developed a framework that delineates the factors influencing the word formation of traditional *kuih*, including cultural relevance (e.g., *Cek Abas demam*), visual attractiveness (e.g., *jala emas*), ingredients (e.g., *tepung pelita*), and regional language (e.g., *kole tahi minyak*). Selected samples were shortlisted to study the distinctive names of these traditional *kuih-muih*, to document and educate the public. This section presents six examples, accompanied by their etymology and an overview of word formation.

### 4.1 Result 1

#### Figure 9

*Kuih Tahi Itik*



*Note.*@cik\_leen786. (2023, May 10). Traditional dessert display [Photograph]. Instagram.

In the etymology and word formation of the *kuih tahi itik* (Figure 9), the word /tahi/ is of Malay origin, referring to droppings, and /itik/ is derived from the Malay word for duck. It is also known as *kuih putih* due to its white colour (Mok Cik Kelantan). The name likely originated from the dessert's visual resemblance to duck droppings. Historically, leftover egg whites from making *jala emas* (golden net) were used to make *tahi itik*. *Kuih tahi itik* is a sweet dessert made from egg whites cooked in sugar syrup. Despite its peculiar name, it is well-loved for its taste, especially during Ramadhan. Three

traditional *kuih* types are *jala emas* and *buah tanjung*, which use egg yolks, while *tahi itik* uses egg whites. Therefore, *kuih jala emas* and *buah tanjung* come as a set in making.

According to Mok Cik Kelantan (fondly referred to by customers), in the past, it was often more economical to consume duck eggs than chicken eggs. Duck eggs were larger and had a better flavour. The yolks were used to make a dish called *buah tanjung*, while the egg whites were cooked over a flame with rice flour, sugar, pandan leaves, and a few other ingredients. This preparation yielded a creamy *kuih* that was highly addictive. In Malay, the compound structure follows a noun-noun pattern (Table 2), in which the first noun describes the second. It is an open compound, and both source words are monomorphemic, meaning they are composed of a single morpheme that cannot be further divided. Both source words are independent, and they can stand alone. The word formation of both source words resembles the appearance of the dessert.

Kelantanese <i>Kuih</i>	Division of Words	Factor of Word-formation
<i>Tahi itik</i>	<div>Malay</div> <div><i>tahi</i>      <i>Itik</i></div>	visual appearance (see Figure 6)

#### Applying Use Theory to Kelantanese *Kuih*: *Kuih Tahi Itik*

Contextual Meaning	Cultural Interpretation	Usage in Social Interaction
The term <i>kuih tahi itik</i> is unappetising to outsiders. However, for locals, it is an amusing and descriptive word for the appearance of its irregularly shaped, white, duck-like look. In Kelantan, it is spelt as <i>taik itik</i> .	Malay cuisine naming practices are humorous and creative, so the name is not objectionable. The dessert is labelled by form, texture, or likeness in fun ways. It is regarded as a sweet delicacy made from egg whites and sugar syrup.	<i>Kuih tahi itik</i> is often used in talks, at marketplaces (such as Pasar Siti Khatijah and Ramadan bazaars) and during celebrations. <i>Kuih tahi itik</i> is also known as <i>kuih putih</i> among locals due to its colour.

#### Example of Use Theory in Action

Market Conversation	Cultural Event	Association with other <i>Kuih</i>
A seller does not need to explain its origin, as locals associate it with the <i>kuih</i> .	In Kelantan, people seek <i>kuih tahi itik</i> without hesitation during holidays, proving that the term has become usual.	<i>Kuih tahi itik</i> comes with <i>jala emas</i> and <i>buah tanjung</i> . This is because <i>jala emas</i> and <i>buah tanjung</i> are made from yellow yolk, while <i>kuih tahi itik</i> is made from leftover egg whites.

## 4.2 Result 2

**Table 2**

*Word Formation and Applying Use Theory to Kuih Tahi Itik*

In the etymology and word formation of the *kuih badak berendam* (Figure 10), the word /badak/ is a Malay word referring to a rhino, and /berendam/ refers to being soaked. *Kuih badak berendam* is plump and round (like a rhino) and soaked in sweet coconut milk. The dessert's name highlights its visual appearance. It is made from a rice-flour mixture rolled around a coconut filling mixed with sweet ingredients. The flour part is unsweetened because it has a sweet filling and is typically eaten with coconut milk to add a rich flavour. The word formation of *kuih badak berendam* is believed to originate from the appearance of the smooth texture and shiny outer layer of the back of a rhino soaked in the river.

**Figure 10**

*Kuih Badak Berendam*



*Note.* From *Kuih Badak Berendam* [Photograph]. From *Resepi Kuih Badak Berendam Paling Sedap & Mudah* by Zura Zul, 2021, RASA. <https://www.rasa.my/resepi-kuih-badak-berendam-paling-sedap-mudah/>

*Badak berendam* translates to 'submerged hippopotamus,' a reference to how the dough balls in a bath of coconut gravy resemble an animal in a waterhole. These balls are similar to another Malay treat called *kuih kochi*, which consists of glutinous rice dough filled with grated coconut and palm sugar. The primary difference is that *kuih kochi* is wrapped in banana leaves, whereas *badak berendam* is served in coconut gravy. Typically, the balls are green, coloured with pandan juice, and the coconut gravy is white.

**Table 3**

*Word Formation and Applying Use Theory to Kuih Badak Berendam*

Kelantanese <i>Kuih</i>	Division of Words		Factor of Word-formation
<i>Badak berendam</i>	Malay		visual appearance (see Figure 7)
	<i>badak</i>	<i>berendam</i>	
Applying Use Theory to Kelantanese <i>Kuih</i> : <i>Kuih Badak Berendam</i>			
Contextual Meaning	Cultural Interpretation		Usage in Social Interaction
The word <i>badak</i> refers to rhinoceros's shape and size, reminiscent of a plump and round rhinoceros, and <i>berendam</i> means submerged, as it is soaked in coconut milk.	The word formation is creative and humorous in Malay. It represents the cultural significance of the dessert visually rather than through literature.		<i>Kuih badak berendam</i> is used in talks, marketplaces, and festivals. Locals found it a delicious treat made of glutinous rice flour, coconut milk, and palm sugar.
Example of Use Theory in Action			
Market Conversation	Cultural Event		Comparison with other <i>Kuih</i>
It is famous in Kelantan, but some hawkers sell it at the bazaar during <i>Ramadan</i> in	It is typically served at Malay wedding receptions and other special occasions.		<i>Badak berendam</i> is soaked in coconut milk, while <i>kuih kochi</i> is wrapped in banana leaves.



In Malay, the phrase *badak berendam* follows a noun-verb pattern (Table 3), where the first noun describes the second noun. It is an open compound noun. The word formation of *badak berendam* describes the appearance of a dessert. The first source word, *badak*, is monomorphemic. In contrast, the second source word, *berendam*, is polymorphemic, consisting of the prefix /beR-/ (indicating an action or state) and the root *rendam* (to soak or immerse). The prefix /be-/ is used only for the root word starting with the phoneme /r/.

#### 4.3 Result 3

**Figure 11**

*Kole Tahi Minyak*



*Note.* Kuih Koleh Kacang [Photograph]. From Kuih Koleh Kacang is a Malaysian traditional dessert made from mung bean flour and coconut milk by S. Widyowati, n.d., Freepik.[https://www.freepik.com/premium-photo/kuih-koleh-kacang-is-malaysian-traditional-dessert-made-from-mung-bean-flour-coco-nut-milk\\_138875530.htm](https://www.freepik.com/premium-photo/kuih-koleh-kacang-is-malaysian-traditional-dessert-made-from-mung-bean-flour-coco-nut-milk_138875530.htm)

The etymology and word formation of *kuih kole tahi minyak* (Figure 11) translate to a traditional dessert made from green bean flour (*kole*) and topped with caramelised coconut milk residue (*tahi minyak*). The name of the *kuih* highlights its ingredients and the method of preparation. This dessert is called *kole kacang*, but with oil residue sprinkled on top, it is called *kole kacang tahi minyak*. *Kole kacang* is made with rice flour mixed with green beans, which are then baked or steamed. Meanwhile, the oil residue is obtained from cooked coconut milk, which is then dried to produce a solid oil. This oil can also be used to fry other foods. It is sprinkled on the *kole kacang* for a richer, more lifted taste. Oil residue, the byproduct of oil production, is sprinkled; hence, the name oil residue. Nek Yah, a respondent, shared that boiling coconut milk with salt prevents it from spoiling quickly. Stir frequently to prevent scorching or uneven cooking from becoming lumpy and burning.

According to Kak Wok (known by her nickname), this dessert is also available in white (Figure 12) and is delicious with coconut sambal. She added that making *kuih koleh kacang* is quite challenging. The oil will turn bitter if a small mistake is made, but it can be made with the proper technique and recipe. She also further added that *kole kacang tahi minyak* symbolises unity and hospitality and is often made for holidays, family gatherings, and religious festivities. The patient's skilled cooking demonstrates generations-old craftsmanship. Its glossy texture and rich taste make it a favourite among Kelantanese.

Figure 12

*Kole Tahi Minyak (White Version)*



Note. From the tweet by @dsyazmaggiketam] [Photograph].<https://x.com/dsyazmaggiketam/status/746575247508307968>

In Malay, *kole tahi minyak* follows a noun-noun-noun formation (Table 4), which forms an open compound. All the source words are monomorphemic. All the source words in *kuih kole tahi minyak* are free morphemes as they can stand alone to convey meaning.

Table 4

*Word Formation and Applying Use Theory to Kuih Kole Tahi Minyak*

Kelantanese <i>Kuih</i>	Division of Words			Factor of Word-formation
<i>kole tahi minyak</i>	Malay			visual appearance (see Figure 8)
	<i>kole</i>	<i>tahi</i>	<i>minyak</i>	
Applying Use Theory to Kelantanese <i>Kuih</i> : <i>Kuih Kole Tahi Minyak</i>				
Contextual Meaning	Cultural Interpretation			Usage in Social Interaction
In the Kelantan dialect, <i>kole</i> means “pool.” <i>Tahi</i> means droppings, while <i>minyak</i> means oil. The phrase <i>tahi minyak</i> refers to “oil residue,” which is the caramelised coconut milk residue formed during cooking and used as a topping.	Malay cuisine labels foods by appearance or cooking technique. <i>Tahi minyak</i> shows the layer of residue that improves the texture and taste.			In Kelantan, everyone is familiar with <i>kuih koleh tahi minyak</i> , a delicacy prepared from mung bean flour, coconut milk, and palm sugar.
Example of Use Theory in Action				
Market Conversation	Cultural Event			Comparison with other <i>Kuih</i>
This dessert is also called <i>koleh kacang</i> among vendors and buyers. In other regions, sellers name the packages to help common buyers familiarise themselves with the dessert's name.	The production of traditional desserts is an art that requires time and tradition. This <i>kuih</i> remains a traditional delight despite current culinary changes.			In Terengganu, palm sugar is added for a caramelised sweetness, or the green bean flour ratio is modified for a firmer consistency. In other regions, for commercial purposes, some variants have durian to make it richer.

#### 4.4 Result 4

**Figure 13**

*Kuih Pukis Gebu*



*Note.* *Kue Pukis* [Photograph]. From *Resep Kue Pukis* on Cookpad. <https://cookpad.com/id/resep/14007071-kue-pukis>

In the etymology and word formation of *kuih pukis gebu* (Figure 13), the word /pukis/ is believed to have originated in Indonesian, referring to a specific type of cake, and /gebu/ means 'fluffy'. The spread of this term to Malaysia is likely due to cultural and culinary exchanges between the two countries. This traditional dessert comes from Indonesia.

The history of this food dates back to the colonial era, when individuals kidnapped by the colonialists were forced to make *pukis* while detained. However, the recipe for *pukis* is very special and unknown to anyone. While in prison, a criminal learned how to make it and continued to produce *pukis* when he was released (Sahib, 2018). In Indonesia, it is known as *kuih prima donna*, due to its deliciousness. A unique mould is required to make *kuih pukis*. The mould pan resembles a muffin tin but features rectangular basins instead of rounded ones. It has a series of small tubs with a rounded half-moon bottom, resulting in half-moon or boat-shaped hot cakes.

*Kuih pukis*, also known as *kuih bulu pukis*, resembles *apam* and is garnished with chocolate rice. Although the name is peculiar, it is tasty because it is fluffy and light. *Kuih pukis* is usually sold together with *apam balik*. In Malay, *kuih pukis gebu* follows a noun-adjective formation (Table 5), where the second adjective describes the first noun.

It is an open compound noun. All three words, /kuih/, /pukis/, and /gebu/, are free morphemes and monomorphemic as they can stand alone and convey meaning. *Kuih pukis gebu* is a compound word formed by combining these free morphemes, each contributing to the overall meaning of the dessert.

#### 4.5 Result 5

**Table 5**

*Word Formation and Applying Use Theory to Kuih Pukis Gebu*

Kelantanese <i>Kuih</i>	Division of Words		Factor of Word-formation
<i>pukis gebu</i>	Malay		texture (see Figure 10)
	<i>pukis</i>	<i>gebu</i>	
Applying Use Theory to Kelantanese <i>Kuih</i> : <i>Kuih Pukis Gebu</i>			
Contextual Meaning	Cultural Interpretation		Usage in Social Interaction
<i>Kuih pukis gebu</i> translates to a traditional snack, a soft, spongy cake with a fluffy texture. The word <i>gebu</i> means 'fluffy' or 'soft'. It describes the texture of the <i>kuih</i> , emphasising its light and airy quality.	The name emphasises sensory and experience aspects above substances. The word <i>gebu</i> conveys lightness and enjoyment when people describe the dessert.		<i>Pukis gebu</i> is a typical term among Kelantanese. The sellers highlight the term <i>gebu</i> to entice clients, thereby strengthening the connection between the name and the texture.
Example of Use Theory in Action			
Market Conversation	Food Reviewers and Social Media		Comparison with other <i>Kuih</i>
Given its name, <i>kuih pukis gebu</i> is fluffy; thus, clients anticipate a soft texture. In Selangor, the seller renamed it <i>pokis</i> to avoid the distastefulness of pronouncing the name.	Repeated usage of phrases like <i>gebu</i> and 'melts in the mouth' to describe this dessert reinforce its meaning.		Similar names, such as <i>kuih apam gebu</i> (fluffy steamed cake), set customer expectations with adjectives like <i>gebu</i> .

**Figure 14**

*Kuih Gelembung Buaya*



*Note.* From Media Permata Online. (n.d.). Kekalkan warisan serunding dodol. <https://mediapermata.com.bn/kekalkan-warisan-serunding-dodol/>

In the etymology and word formation of the *kuih gelembung buaya* (Figure 14), the Malay word /gelembung/ refers to a bubble, and /buaya/ refers to a crocodile. This traditional green-and-orange cake is made from a mixture of young coconut, glutinous rice flour, pandan leaves, sugar, and salt. It is known as a *gelembung buaya* due to its texture, which resembles reptilian skin. The texture is soft and easy to swallow, and its sweet taste makes it a suitable dessert for special occasions. This dessert is easily found around Kampung Laut, Palekbang, and Tumpat in Kelantan. An officer from the Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia, Kota Bharu branch in Kelantan, recalled that the dessert was known as *glebong boyo* during childhood. Its original name was *glebong buih*, which translates to 'bubble foam'. This dessert creates bubbles that resemble a crocodile breathing underwater as it cooks. Consequently, the name *glebong boyo* has persisted to this day (Azaman, 2020).

This Kelantanese heritage dessert is well known for its sweetness, often described by locals as *manis leting* ('too sweet'), although some producers offer less sweet variations. In certain areas, coconut water is also used in its preparation (Bernama, 2021). *Kuih gelembung buaya* is especially popular during Ramadan and festive seasons. Its preparation takes approximately six hours, as each coloured layer is cooked separately before being combined. The dessert has a sticky texture similar to *dodol* and is made from rice flour, coconut milk, and palm sugar. Its distinctive green and pink layers make it visually striking.

Morphologically, *kuih gelembung buaya* follows a noun–noun formation (Table 6) and functions as an open compound. The components /kuih/, /gelembung/, and /buaya/ are free, monomorphemic forms, each contributing to the overall meaning of the compound.

#### 4.6 Word Formation of Kuih Inspired by Animal Names

Table 6

Kelantanese <i>Kuih</i>	Division of Words		Factor of Word-formation
<i>gelembung buaya</i>	Malay		texture
	<i>gelembung</i>	<i>buaya</i>	(see Figure 11)
Applying Use Theory to Kelantanese <i>Kuih</i> : <i>Kuih Gelembung Buaya</i>			
Contextual Meaning	Cultural Interpretation		Usage in Social Interaction
The traditional green is known as <i>gelembung buaya</i> (crocodile bubbles) because its texture resembles the reptile's skin.	The originality of Malay culinary naming reflects a clear visual connection to the cultural significance of the dessert.		It is also known as <i>kuih boyo</i> , a term familiar to both locals and sellers.
Example of Use Theory in Action			
Market Conversation	Food Reviewers and Social Media		Comparison with other <i>Kuih</i>
In the Kelantanese dialect, this dessert is locally known as <i>glebong boyo</i> . In other states, the name is standardised in spelling and printed on packaging for consumer reference.	Its sweet, rich taste, soft and easy-to-swallow texture makes this food a 'must-try' every time you visit the land of Che Siti Wan Kembang, Kelantan.		This dessert is similar to <i>dodol</i> in its sticky texture and is made from the same ingredients, including rice flour, coconut milk, and palm sugar.

Word Formation and Applying Use Theory to *Kuih Pukis Gebu*



This study builds on existing research on word-formation factors, as outlined by Bakar et al. (2015), and contributes to the unique and interesting names they identified. However, this study documented that some traditional Kelantanese dessert names are associated with animals. Kelantanese desserts often have distinctive names derived from local linguistic conventions, with animals serving as the basis for their names. These names may originate from visual similarities, textures, or cultural connections to specific animals. Table 7 provides an example of an animal-inspired traditional dessert, along with its descriptions. The animal-inspired names for traditional desserts are also available in other regions, such as *kuih siput*, *kuih kodok*, *cucur udang*, *kuih badak*, *kuih lidah buaya*, *kuih sarang semut*, *kuih cuping gajah*, *kuih lidah kucing*, *kuih telur penyu*, *kuih ulat gonggok*, and *kuih sarang tebuan*. The research illustrates how Kelantanese culture innovatively employs animal imagery in food names by detecting these patterns. These names help preserve local customs, making the sweets culturally rich and unique.

**Table 7**

*Animal-Inspired Dessert Names*

<b>Animal-Inspired Dessert Names</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
Kuih Tahi Itik	It resembles duck droppings and is a white substance. The dessert resembles a lump made from a duck's egg white.
Kuih Ulat Bulu	It has a caterpillar-like texture and a long form, with the same colour tone (light green).
Kuih Kuba Guling	It reflects both appearance and cooking technique. The term <i>kuba</i> is a buffalo ( <i>kerbau</i> in Malay), and <i>guling</i> is rolling. Black in hue, the delicacy resembles buffalo dark skin and is wrapped in shredded coconut before presentation.
Kuih Gelembung Buaya	The name comes from the bubbly texture formed during cooking, evoking the bubbles observed when a crocodile breathes underwater.
Kuih Badak Berendam	The name translates to 'soaking hippo cake,' inspired by the dessert's appearance as it rests in a pool of coconut milk, like a hippopotamus submerged.
Kuih Bronok	The name is inspired by the shape of <i>bronok</i> , also known as a sea potato.

## 5.0 Conclusion

Traditional Malay *kuih-muih* are unquestionably widespread across all social levels. Analysing the word formation and etymology of the quirky names reveals the culinary delights and rich linguistic and cultural history. Combining descriptive images, amusing language, and cultural background produces a distinct and strong linguistic identity for every *kuih* in the vocabulary of compounds. Every traditional *kuih-muih* enhances the variety of Malay culture and draws many people to discover and savour these treats for their distinctive names, great taste, and beauty. The word formation of *kuih-muih* represents the Malay people's inventiveness and resourcefulness, capturing their history and narrative while displaying the craftsmanship and ideals inherent in their culture. Therefore, the word formation of *kuih-muih* should be valued and celebrated for its creativity, traditions, and unique origins, demonstrating the rich cultural heritage and ingenuity in word formation. The name describes the desserts' visual appearance, ingredients, shape, texture, preparation, cultural significance, creativity, and humour (Appendix A).

Traditional *kuih-muih* are integral to Malaysia's cultural identity and legacy, as well as those of adjacent regions. These delicacies differ in their preparation techniques, encompassing steaming, frying, boiling, and baking (Radzi, 2016). The nomenclature of *kuih-muih* frequently embodies cultural knowledge and is examined using semantic theories (Radzi, 2016). Its manufacturing is intricately linked to cultural behaviours and festivals, demonstrating creativity and distinctive forms (Bungsu et al., 2019). In Mersing, Johor, traditional Malay *kuih* are distinguished by indigenous crops, traditional cooking techniques, and influences from Malaysia's east coast and sub-ethnic traditions (Kamaruzaman et al., 2022). Ethnolinguistic methods have revealed monomorphemic and polymorphemic structures with cultural significance in *kuih* traditions, such as the *kuih* Ashura among Thai Malay (Lestari et al., 2022).

A typical Malaysian delicacy with a fascinating name is *kuih koleh tahi minyak*, showcasing the variety of Malaysian cuisine and its cultural relevance. The fragrance of pandan leaves, the sweetness of palm sugar, and the richness of coconut milk often enhance its delicate texture, richness, sweet taste, and flavour. The preparation of classic *kuih* is an art that necessitates patience and profound reverence for tradition. This *kuih* remains a prized traditional delicacy, even as modern cooking styles have evolved. *Kuih kacang tahi minyak* is distinguished by its elegant texture and subdued refinement. In an era of culinary innovation, it serves as a sobering reminder of the enduring eating customs of the country, offering a concise exploration of Malaysian heritage. The word formation of *kuih-muih* conveys their cooking techniques, texture, or visual appeal. The source words are usually free morphemes with particular meanings that become even more important when combined. Although the source words belong to different grammatical categories, they form an open compound noun. These compounds fall under the noun category—desserts.

This compounding process provides an important insight into how the community perceives and categorises these *kuih-muih*. The broad use of metaphor and personification in names often reflects cultural humour, creativity, and relatability. Many names can be traced to Malay-language traditions, augmented by local Kelantanese dialects and occasionally influenced by adjacent regions, such as Indonesia, due to past commerce and migration. This demonstrates an engaging interaction between language and cultural heritage, emphasising the historical and social aspects of the place. These names retain archaic linguistic characteristics that may no longer be prevalent in contemporary Malay, functioning as tangible relics of linguistic history.

### **Acknowledgement**

I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to the vendors who generously contributed their time and insights in introducing and elucidating the cultural significance of Kelantanese *kuih*. Their participation has been invaluable in enriching the depth and authenticity of this study. I am equally indebted to my family, whose steadfast encouragement and unwavering support throughout my academic journey have provided both inspiration and resilience, enabling the successful completion of this research.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

### **Author Contribution Statement**

KM: Study Design, Data Collection, Analysis, Writing – Original Draft. OSN: Conceptualisation, Data Interpretation, Writing – Original Draft (co-drafting), Reviewing & Editing. NHH: Writing – Review, Editing & Proofreading

### **Funding**

This research received no external funding.

### **Ethics Statement**

This research did not require IRB approval because it involved an anonymous survey with no collection of personal or sensitive data.

### **Data Access Statement**

Research data supporting this publication are available upon request to the corresponding author.

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## Appendix A

### Traditional Kelantanese Kuih

Kelantanese *kuih-muih*, or traditional Malay cakes and pastries, have fascinating names that often reflect their visual appearance, texture, shape, ingredients, preparation methods, or cultural significance.

Morphological Analysis				The Factor of Word-formation	
Kelantanese Kuih	Division of Source Words		Word-formation		Semantic
tahi itik	Malay		open compound	Tahi itik is duck droppings. Despite the unappetising name, this dessert is quite delicious. The name likely refers to the small, round shape of the dessert, which resembles the droppings of a duck.	visual appearance
	tahi	itik			
	English				
	droppings	duck			
lompat tikam	Malay		open compound	It is translated as 'jump and stab', reflecting the dessert's layered nature. The name likely refers to the way the layers of the dessert are stacked and cut.	cultural significance
	lompat	tikam			
	English				
	jump	stab			
tepung pelita	Malay		open compound	This name refers to the dessert's appearance, which resembles a small lamp or lantern.	visual appearance
	tepung	pelita			
	English				
	flour	lamp			
seri muka	Malay		open compound	This name reflects the dessert's beautiful appearance, with a green pandan layer on top and a white glutinous rice layer at the bottom.	visual appearance
	seri	muka			
	English				
	beauty	face			
badak berendam	Malay		open compound	The Malay word badak means rhinoceros. In the context of this kuih, berendam refers to the shape and size of the dessert, reminiscent of a plump and round rhinoceros. It means soaked or immersed, implying it is soaked in a rich, sweet coconut milk sauce.	visual appearance
	badak	berendam			
	English				
	beauty	face			
kuih akok	Malay		open compound	'Kuih' is a term for desserts/snacks in Malay. The Malay word akok refers to a traditional kuih made with eggs, coconut milk, and palm sugar.	visual appearance
	kuih	akok			
	English				
	dessert	face			
butir nangka	Malay		open compound	Butir nangka gets its name from the small, oval shape of the kuih, which resembles the jackfruit seeds. In some sources, they are also known as bubur nangka or kuih nangka.	shape
	butir	nangka			
	English				
	granule	jackfruit			
jala emas	Malay		open compound	Jala emas, translated as golden net, is a sweet treat made from egg yolks and sugar spun into delicate strands.	visual appearance
	jala	emas			
	English				
	net	gold			
pulut dakap	Malay		open compound	Pulut dakap is famous in Thailand as Khao Tom—steamed glutinous rice covered in banana leaves. Thai custom dictates that Khao Tom Mat Sai Klua symbolises a pair when two bundles are attached with a rope, signifying oneness like a couple getting married. The word pulut dakap comes from Malay, where dakap means 'hug'. The physical appearance of this dessert—two bundles of sticky rice bound together—seems to embrace one another.	visual appearance
	pulut	dakap			
	English				
	glutinous rice	hug			
	Malay				

<i>gelembung buaya</i>	gelembung	buaya	open compound	<i>Kuih gelembung buaya</i> has a fascinating history, rooted in Kelantanese customs, and translates to 'crocodile bubbles'; the name originates from the bubbling effect during cooking, reminiscent of the bubbles produced by a crocodile breathing underwater.	cooking process
	English				
	bubble	crocodile			
<i>ulat bulu</i>	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih ulat bulu</i> looks like a caterpillar and is sprinkled with shredded coconut, giving it a fuzzy appearance. <i>Ulat</i> refers to a caterpillar, and <i>bulu</i> is hair. The visual appearance of this dessert is like a caterpillar.	visual appearance
	ulat	bulu			
	English				
<i>pukis gebu</i>	caterpillar	fur	open compound	<i>Kuih pukis gebu</i> , which resembles a half-moon, is a famous dessert in Kelantan, originating from Indonesia. This dessert is made from flour, eggs, sugar, coconut milk, and yeast. The mixed batter is then poured into the mould and cooked until golden. It is served for teatime. For decoration, chocolate rice is sprinkled on top. <i>Pukis gebu</i> refers to the fluffiness of the dessert. <i>Pukis</i> refers to female genitalia. Today, due to its unpleasant name, sellers renamed the dessert as <i>pokis gebu</i> in other regions, like Selangor	texture
	English				
	miss V	fluffy			
<i>kekoh char</i>	Malay (Kelantan dialect)		open compound	<i>Kuih kekoh char</i> is made from sticky rice flour, coconut milk, and palm sugar, resulting in a richly sweet treat. The Kelantanese dialect word <i>kekoh char</i> means 'bite and drop,' referring to the texture of the dessert.	texture
	kekoh	char			
	English				
<i>buah gomok</i>	gigit	bertakung	open compound	<i>Kuih buah gomak</i> , or <i>buah gomok</i> , captures its round, ball-like form and is often savoured at festive events or as a teatime snack. Its preparation involves boiling the dough until it floats (a sign of doneness) and rolling it in mung bean flour.	shape
	English				
	fruit	chubby/fat			
<i>kuba guling</i>	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih kuba guling</i> is traditionally from Kelantan and southern Thailand. Its black hue, derived from burned coconut shells or charcoal powder, is known as <i>kuih hitam</i> . It is made from rice flour, maize flour, sugar, and coconut milk. It is cooked till thickened and coated with shredded coconut before serving. It resembles a buffalo wallowing in mud, which is said as <i>kerbau guling</i> in Malay.	visual appearance
	kuba – Kelantanese dialect kerbau - Malay	guling			
	English				
<i>kuih serabai</i>	buffalo	rolling	open compound	<i>Kuih serabai</i> , often known as <i>kuih orang mati</i> or <i>kuih mayat</i> , is offered upon death. Made from rice flour and boiled thinly, <i>kuih serabai</i> hails from West Java, Indonesia, and Malaysia; it tastes sweet and sour when eaten with palm sugar and coconut milk syrup. Except during <i>Ramadan</i> , this <i>kuih</i> is seldom offered at cake stands. Some jurisdictions routinely present it during funerals, generally on the fifth day after death.	cooking method
	English				
	dessert	not managed			
<i>ketupat manis</i>	Malay				ingredients

	ketupat	manis	open compound	A sweet delicacy eaten in some regions of Malaysia and Indonesia, <i>ketupat manis</i> is a lesser-known version of the original ketupat. Unlike the savoury variation, which is usually eaten with <i>rendang</i> or <i>satay</i> , <i>ketupat manis</i> is frequently sweetened by being covered in a sweet syrup or mixed with palm sugar. Steamed and wrapped in woven coconut leaves, <i>ketupat</i> takes on a soft, chewy texture.	
	English				
	packed rice	sweet			
<i>buah peria</i>	Malay		open compound	The traditional delicacy <i>kuih buah</i> derives its name from its similarity to the bitter melon ( <i>peria</i> ). It is made from glutinous rice flour dough, frequently green, and is stuffed with sweet red bean paste or another filling. The dough gets its distinctive look by being formed into ridges resembling those of a bitter melon. It is shiny and finished with occasional oil brushing.	visual appearance
	buah	peria			
	English				
	fruit	bitter melon			
<i>bunga tanjung</i>	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih bunga tanjung</i> is renowned for its vibrant yellow hue and delicate, teardrop-like shape, symbolising elegance and sweetness. It is made from egg yolks, sugar, and water. It has a smooth, syrupy feel that melts on the tongue. Desserts serve as a cultural marker and are commonly served at festivals, weddings, and other ceremonies.	visual appearance
	bunga	tanjung			
	English				
	flower	symbolic, representing beauty			
<i>tepung bungkus</i>	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih tepung bungkus</i> highlights steaming and wrapping techniques. It comprises a sweet coconut filling made from grated coconut and palm sugar ( <i>gula Melaka</i> ), surrounded by a creamy rice-flour mixture. The combination smells and tastes different when steamed, as banana leaves envelop everything.	cooking method
	tepung	bungkus			
	English				
	flour	wrap			
<i>beko pandan</i>	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih beko pandan</i> is version of classic <i>kuih beko</i> . This variant achieves a vivid green hue and the aromatic, pleasing taste of pandan, which is known in Southeast Asian sweets, by adding pandan extract or juice to the recipe. The vital ingredients are glutinous rice flour, coconut milk, eggs, and sugar, which are baked to achieve a soft, chewy texture with a hint of pandan aroma.	ingredients
	beko	pandan			
	English				
	pancake-like snack that's grilled, often with a chewy texture	screw-pine			
<i>pulut panggang</i>	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih pulut panggang</i> is a classic delicacy of sticky rice ( <i>pulut</i> ) stuffed with a savoury coconut filling. It is usually seasoned with dried shrimp or anchovies. Grilled over charcoal, the rice is wrapped in banana leaves and infused with a strong smoky aroma, enhancing its flavour. The mix of textures, soft and sticky rice, contrasts with the fragrant, crunchy filling.	cooking method
	pulut	panggang			
	English				
	glutinous rice	grill			
<i>gerodok telur</i>	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih gerodok telur</i> is an old Malay dessert made of eggs, sugar, coconut milk, and flour. The ingredients are mixed well to form a batter, which is then steamed to create a thick, custard-	cooking method
	gerodok	telur			
	English				

	mix/stir	egg		like dessert. The dessert got its name from the cooking process of mixing or stirring the eggs— <i>gerodok telur</i> .	
<i>puteri mandi</i>	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih puteri mandi</i> originates from a Kelantanese dessert made from glutinous rice flour. The dough is then formed into small balls and cooked until they rise to the surface, indicating that the balls are cooked. The balls are then encased in a sweet coconut filling made from shredded coconut and palm sugar. This yields a delicious dessert that combines texture and taste. This dessert is famous during the festive season and is sold at <i>Ramadan</i> bazaars. The phrase <i>puteri mandi</i> translates to 'bathing princess', adding charm to the presentation.	visual appearance
	puteri	mandi			
	English				
	princess	bathing			
<i>asam gumpal</i>	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih asam gumpal</i> , or <i>sang gumpal</i> or <i>sangupal</i> , is a dumpling made of glutinous rice filled with a sweet coconut, where the shredded coconut is caramelised with palm sugar. These dumplings are immersed in creamy, aromatic coconut milk, seasoned with pandan leaves and a hint of salt to balance the sweetness. This dessert is enjoyed during <i>Ramadan</i> .	taste and shape
	asam	gumpal			
	English				
	tamarind	lump			
<i>lempok durian</i>	Malay		open compound	<i>Durian</i> is known as the king of fruits. <i>Kuih lempok durian</i> is a traditional delicacy made from durian pulp, glutinous rice flour, sugar, and coconut milk, which is then cooked until it solidifies into a thick, sticky texture, assuming a malleable consistency that allows it to be formed into rolls.	ingredient
	lempok	durian			
	English				
	confection	durian			
<i>gula tarik</i>	Malay		open compound	<i>Gula tarik</i> , or <i>tepung sema</i> , is a dessert of glutinous rice flour, sugar, and coconut milk. The texture is soft and chewy. The name <i>tepung sema</i> refers to combining ingredients into a smooth, creamy batter, which is then steamed to perfection.	cooking process
	gula	tarik			
	English				
	sweet	pull			
<i>tepung nilin</i>	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih tepung nilin</i> is a rare dessert from Kelantan, made from <i>daun nilin</i> ( <i>nilin</i> leaves) extract. It gives a distinctive green hue and delicate herbal scent. The batter is mixed with rice flour, coconut milk, and sugar. Then, the batter is placed in banana leaves to steam. The end product is a sweet, smooth, aromatic dessert.	ingredient
	tepung	nilin			
	English				
	flour	nilin leave			
<i>nekbat sira</i>	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih nekbat sira</i> is a dessert shaped like a <i>baulu</i> fruit prepared from sugar, water, and pandan leaves. <i>Sira</i> is a process of caramelising sugar on unsweetened cakes. <i>Kuih nekbat</i> is a rice flour and egg batter mixed into tiny, robust cakes.	shape and cooking process
	nekbat	sira			
	English				
	shape - small and round	The process of coating with melted sugar			
<i>kuih serunai</i>	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih serunai</i> , or <i>kuih tepung pasung</i> , is made of coconut milk, palm sugar, rice flour, and tapioca flour. The form and aroma result from the boiling of banana leaf cones. The bottom layer is sweet and	shape
	kuih	serunai			
	English				



	dessert	flute		luxurious because of palm sugar, while the top layer is creamy and savoury thanks to coconut milk.	
belebat ubi	Malay		open compound	The main ingredient of <i>kuih belebat ubi</i> ( <i>lepat ubi</i> ) is cassava mixed with coconut milk and sugar. Steaming the mixture in banana leaves makes it tender and chewy. Palm sugar is an added ingredient to enhance its flavour and taste. <i>Belebat ubi</i> refers to a tapioca wrap.	ingredient
	belebat	ubi			
	English				
	wrap	cassava			
sagu kelapa	Malay		open compound	<i>Sagu kelapa</i> , also known as <i>sagon</i> , is a sugary and chewy dessert. <i>Sago</i> pearls are cooked till translucent and flavoured with sugar and pandan leaves. Upon cooling, the <i>sago</i> is cut into portions and adorned with freshly grated coconut ( <i>kelapa</i> ), often lightly salted to balance the sweetness.	ingredient
	sagu	kelapa			
	English				
	sago	coconut			
kuih koci	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih koci</i> , meaning passover cake. The dough is prepared from glutinous rice flour and filled with shredded coconut and palm sugar. The unrefined rice is black, symbolising death, whilst the sweet filling signifies resurrection.	ingredient
	kuih	koci			
	English				
	dessert	passover			
kuih topi	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih topi</i> , also known as <i>cucur Jawa</i> or <i>cucur topi</i> , is a classic dessert from Kelantan. The term <i>topi</i> comes from the hat-like shape the batter takes when sautéed in hot oil. The dessert is made from water, sugar, wheat flour, and rice flour. The batter is introduced into hot oil, yielding a delicate, sticky inside and a crisp, flaky outside.	shape
	kuih	topi			
	English				
	dessert	hat			
nasi manis	Malay		open compound	<i>Nasi manis</i> , also known as <i>pulut manis</i> or <i>wajik</i> , is a traditional Kelantan dessert made from glutinous rice cooked with coconut milk and palm sugar. The glutinous rice is cooked with palm sugar until it reaches a thick and sticky consistency. After it has cooled down, it is sliced into portions. This is a special delicacy for guests or festivities such as weddings.	taste
	nasi	manis			
	English				
	rice	sweet			
pulut bakar	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih pulut bakar</i> is a dessert prepared by grilling. The charcoal gives it a robust flavour and smoky essence. <i>Pulut bakar</i> is made by simmering glutinous rice in coconut milk, sugar, and a hint of cloves for fragrance. After being cooked over charcoal with banana leaves, the combo had a charred and aromatic flavour.	cooking method
	pulut	bakar			
	English				
	glutinous rice	grill			
tapai pulut	Malay		open compound	<i>Tapai pulut</i> is made using a traditional fermentation method. The main ingredient is glutinous rice, the fermenting starter, which is then boiled, cooled, and inoculated with <i>ragi</i> . The mixture is then stored in a big jar and fermented for a few days. The jar is usually covered with banana leaves. This dessert has a sweet, sour, and slightly alcoholic flavour with a soft, sticky texture. This is an old dessert among Malays, and only skilled cooks continue to make it to date, as it is mainly served at weddings and festivals, such as <i>Hari Raya</i> .	cooking process
	tapai	pulut			
	English				
	tapay/tape	glutinous rice			

<i>Che Abas demam</i>	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih Che Abas</i> is a classic dessert with cultural significance and folklore surrounding its making. It is made from <i>sago</i> flour, which is then cubed and topped with a creamy coconut milk soup mixed with fish and spices. The folklore of the word formation of <i>Che Abas demam</i> is about a lady cooking this dessert for Che Abas (her husband), who was sick ( <i>demam</i> ). She substituted <i>laksa</i> noodles with <i>sago</i> to suit his health condition. Therefore, this dessert symbolises love and compassion towards Encik Abas, who was sick.	cultural significance
	Che Abas	demam			
	English				
	Mr Abas	fever			
<i>cek mek molek</i>	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih Cek Mek Molek</i> is a traditional Malay treat made from sweet potatoes ( <i>ubi keledek</i> ), cooked, mashed, and combined with flour to create a dough. This dessert is usually golden brown and oval shaped. The word <i>cek mek</i> is used in the Kelantanese Malay dialect to describe an attractive young lady or girl—it depicts the lovely, delicate beauty of the <i>kuih</i> . In Malay, <i>molek</i> means 'lovely,' highlighting the dessert's flavour and appearance.	visual appearance
	Cek Mek (Kelantanese dialect)	molek			
	English				
	young pretty girl/woman	beautiful			
<i>kuih keria</i>	Malay		open compound	<i>Kuih keria</i> is a classic Malay doughnut-like treat made from sweet potatoes ( <i>ubi keledek</i> ). <i>Ubi keledek</i> is boiled, mashed, and blended with flour to form a dough, which is then cooked into rings until golden. <i>Kuih keria</i> gets its distinctive glossy, sweet finish from a caramelised palm sugar coating on the fried rings. The doughnut-like form is known as <i>keria</i> . The Malay word <i>keria</i> reflects the form of a ring-shaped or circular object.	shape
	kuih	keria			
	English				
	dessert	doughnut-like shape			

## **Appendix B**

### *Semi-structured Interview*

These are the semi-structured interview questions for the respondents. These questions are less formal, and during the interview, researchers modify their sequence and word choices to improve the respondent's understanding. These questions were asked in Malay during the interview to create a smooth conversation with the respondents.

1. What cultural elements are reflected in the semantics of Kelantanese *kuih* names?
2. How does humour play a role in the semantics of Kelantanese *kuih* names?
3. What morphological structure is commonly used in the word formation of Kelantanese *kuih* names?
4. How does the local dialect influence the word formation of Kelantanese *kuih* names?
5. Do the quirky Kelantanese *kuih* names often reflect their physical appearance?
6. What role do cultural metaphors play in the word formation of Kelantanese *kuih* names?
7. How do historical events influence the semantics of Kelantanese *kuih* names?
8. What is the primary source of inspiration for the quirky names of Kelantanese *kuih*?
9. Do the names of Kelantanese *kuih* often reference animals and objects?
10. How do ingredients influence the word formation of Kelantanese *kuih* names?