

PROVERBS IN SEKAYU LANGUAGE AND THEIR IMPLICATION TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract: The main purposes of this study were to gather and classify the Sekayu proverbs based on types of proverbs and analyze the structural patterns and the messages found in them and in addition describe how they can be used as a comprehensible input and meaningful learning for the students who especially have the base Sekayu background in learning English. In collecting the data, the writer went through stages of documentary techniques. The result of the study showed that there were four types of proverbs in Sekayu language, namely true proverbs, phrasal proverbs, comparative proverbs, and idioms. The natives of Sekayu use proverbs to advice, prohibit, appreciate, and deride.

Keywords: Proverbs, Sekayu Language, and ELT

Abstrak: Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mendokumentasikan dan mengklasifikasi peribahasa Sekayu, menganalisis struktur kalimat bahasa serta makna yang terkandung di dalamnya. Tujuan ini juga bertujuan memberikan input yang bermanfaat bagi pengajaran Bahasa Inggris melalui pengajaran peribahasa daerah khususnya bagi siswa yang latar belakangnya dari Sekayu. Penulis menggunakan metode dokumentasi dalam penelitian ini. Hasilnya menunjukkan ada empat jenis peribahasa yang ditemukan yaitu true proverbs, phrasal proverbs, comparative proverbs, and idioms. Orang-orang Sekayu menggunakan peribahasa untuk menasihati, melarang, memuji, serta memberi sindiran.

Kata Kunci: Peribahasa, Bahasa Sekayu, dan Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris

1. INTRODUCTION

Proverbs are one of oral literature. It means that proverbs are disseminated and passed on from generation to generation orally. The dissemination is only based on the speaker's memory, therefore, it is possible that proverbs change and diverge from the original form (Sugiarga et al., 2004:1). It may happen to the Sekayu proverbs. In other words, there is no valid information on this aspect. Although Sekayu people sometimes use Sekayu proverbs in daily life, written data concerning the Sekayu proverbs are not well documented. For that reason, among others, the Sekayu proverbs need to be investigated.

The Sekayu proverbs are a form of language containing figurative meanings associated with individual everyday behavior. The form is brief but contains deep and meaningful expression. Therefore, the Sekayu proverbs are one part of the language that may promote the development of the Indonesian language, and the understanding of the same issues in foreign languages. In other words, a profound interpretation of translated Sekayu proverbs can be used as the basis of entering a new language situation in relation to the second language teaching. In addition, a profound interpretation of translated Sekayu proverbs can also be used as the materials for the teaching of language and literature.

This idea confirms the result of Konferensi Bahasa Daerah (Regional Language

Conference) conducted from November 6 to November 8, 2000 in Jakarta. The conference stated that the role of local language and literature needs to be optimized to develop a synergy with other fields. In relation to the development of national culture, local language and culture can enrich the Indonesian language and can be the source of creativity to the development of Indonesian literature works.

Proverbs can create society affection toward a language and culture. Proverbs also have the important status and significance in society as a very valuable inheritance of the ancestor. The status and significance of proverbs have not only educational values but also model values viewed from culture (Pandelaki, 1999:5).

Based on the above account, the writers were eager to conduct research on Proverbs in Sekayu Language and Their Implication to ELT.

2. METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researchers applied descriptive method. In collecting the data, field research and library research were done. Field research is done to collect primary data, recording techniques were used. To meet the objectives of the research, the collection of data were conducted through interview; the **Informant Data Form** (enclosed) should be filled in. The items of the interview were conducted as it is planned and interview itself was done freely (semi-structured).

In order to maintain validity and avoid biases in collecting and analyzing the data, the writer used *triangulation* technique. As

commonly defined, triangulation is a validity check that applies other methods of data collection within a single study (Stubbs, 1993). Hitchcock and Hughes (2001) pointed out triangulation refers to two techniques of checking validity. The first was that 'between methods' triangulation referred to the technique applied more than one method of data collection within a single study. The second was 'within methods' triangulation referring to replication of a study using the same techniques of data collection. Related to the study, the writer used the first technique. In addition, the writer asked a main informant who is a sekayu native speaker to check my interpretation and understanding about the proverbs i.e. Dr (Hc) drs. H. Yusman Haris. The reason why the writer chose him was that she assumed that he is the 'expert' and really concerned about the Sekayu language culture including the use of the proverbs.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It was evident that there are four types of proverbs used by the native speakers of *Sekayu*, they are, true proverbs, proverbial phrases, proverbial comparison, and idioms (Danandjaja, 1991:29).

1) True Proverbs

The true proverbs are used in the forms of simple, coordinate compound, and subordinate compound sentences. They are called true proverbs because they at least fulfill the minimum requirement of sentences, that is, subjects and predicates. These proverbs are still used frequently by the natives of *Sekayu* to

maintain the communication among the communities.

The followings are the examples of true proverbs that were found in *Sekayu* language.

a)

/Ade	asap,	ade	api/
there	smoke	there	fire

‘When there’s smoke there’s fire’

Evidence of a problem probably indicates that there really is a problem.

b)

/Ayam	itam	terbang	Malam,
cock	black	fly	at night,

inggap	di	kayu	ghimbun/
Perch	on	tree	leafy

‘A black cock flies at night then perches on a leafy tree’

It means that it’s very hard to find the evidence of someone’s crime.

c)

/Ayam	Dambur	Tambang	Dinjak/
Cock	released	rope	stepped on

“The cock is released but the rope is stepped on.

Someone who says ‘yes’ at the beginning but finally says ‘No’ at the end. He’s not consistent of what he says.

2) Phrasal Proverbs

There are proverbs in the forms of phrases and clauses found in *Sekayu* language. These types are considered to be proverbial phrases because they are formed of meaningful groups of words. The speakers did not convey the meanings in forms of complete sentences. They just uttered them in the form of clauses or phrases, instead. The followings are some examples of the proverbs in the form of clauses and phrases.

a)

/Adat	ulak	timbunan	rempun/
Tradition	river	heap	garbage

‘The tradition is the heap of garbage in a river bay’

It expresses about an elder in a country who becomes a place for people to consult their problems.

b)

/Baik	anto	pighing	kosong/
good	serve	plate	empty

‘Serving an empty plate’

It expresses someone who seems to be willing to help in the beginning but doesn’t help at all at the end.

c)

/Bakijap	Same	bute	bakubit
Wink	Same	Blind	pinch

same	mati	daging/
same	dead	meat

‘Both are blind to wink at each other, and both are dead to pinch each other’

It expresses about two people who are both in trouble and unable to help each other.

3) Comparative Proverbs

These proverbs were used to express the meanings by describing the conditions or characteristics of somebody or something by using comparison words. The followings are some examples of the proverbs containing comparison.

a)

/Bakule	Same	Sebajak	mbak
Dating	with	coeval	like

pulut	kedingen	lidi/
pulut	with	Palm leaf rib

‘Dating someone of the same age is like *pulut* and palm leaf rib’

It expresses about a couple who really loves each other.

b)

/Mbak	Anak ayam	kilangan	induk/
Like	chicken	Lose	mother

‘Like chicken that lose their mother’

It expresses about a group of people who loses their leader, everyone gets distorted.

c)

/Mbak	ayo	kedingen	minyak/
Like	water	with	oil

‘Like water and oil’

It expresses about two people who will never get along together.

4) Idioms

Idioms also exist in *Sekayu* language. The natives used some idioms to express their feelings and thoughts. Though the numbers of the idiosm are not many, The followings are some examples of *Sekayu* idioms that are found in this study.

a)

/Anak	kapak/
Child	axe

‘small axe’

A maid

b)

/Banyak	agai/
many	business

‘too much business’

It expresses a person who is very busy with others’ business.

c)

/Ilang	sughang/
gone	alone

‘Lost alone’

It expresses about a person who is easy to feel bad and easily offended.

d)

/Kecik	kundu/
Small	pull

‘weak pull

It expresses about a person who is a coward.

e)

/Makan Polean/

eat	gain

‘spending money’

It tells about someone who has no job and he just spends his savings for life.

3.1 The Structural Pattern

The Structural Patterns of the base *Sekayu* language proverbs are subject-verb(object) and Subject – Verb – Complement. However, most of the proverbs are in the forms of clauses where the subject is missing or hidden.

1) Subject – Verb – (Object)

It was evident that Subject – Verb – (object) or S-V-(O) pattern was found in some proverbs. The followings are some examples.

Subject	Verb	(Object)
/BUIUh	<i>dakke</i>	<i>rakIt/</i>
<i>sebatang</i>	<i>nimbulke</i>	
/Keli lapo	<i>makan</i>	<i>kanti/</i>
/KambIng	<i>datang</i>	\emptyset
<i>Nangke</i>	<i>rUbUh/</i>	

2) Subject-Verb-Complement

Subject-Verb-Complement or S-V-C pattern was also found in some proverbs, for example:

Subject	Verb	Complement
/Ayo	<i>digengam</i>	<i>Idak lUIUs/</i>
/Bung	<i>dakke jaUh</i>	<i>dai umpun/</i>
/Batu	<i>umban</i>	<i>ke lUbUk/</i>

3) S \emptyset (hidden subject) – Verb- Object

Many proverbs in *Sekayu* language use S \emptyset (hidden subject) – Verb – Object pattern or in the form of clauses. By hiding the subject, the speaker uses the proverbs to express his ideas and thoughts to a common person, not directly to a certain counterpart. The following are some examples.

Subject	Verb	Object/Complement
\emptyset	/Balamban	<i>Batang bagllIng/</i>
\emptyset	/Dengo	<i>Ayam kUkUk sepIt/</i>
\emptyset	<i>Mbangonke</i>	<i>Ulo tido/</i>

3.2 Messages

It is evident that the natives of *Sekayu* frequently use proverbs in their daily communication. They often use figurative meanings to express their ideas. For instance, they often use the names of animals for nick names such as ‘blancak’ (lizard), ‘puyuh’ (sort of bird), ‘kuyuk’ (dog) and names of plants like ‘bUIUh (bamboo or something related to bamboo such as ‘ bUbU’ (sort of traditional fishing tool made of bamboo).

Every proverb found in *Sekayu* language covers almost all aspects of *Sekayu* people life. It is proved by the fact that *Sekayu* people use words related to their life in the village like *bilik* “rice hut”, *rakit* :”raft”, *biduk* “boat”, and *IEcak*” mud.

Like other common Melayu people, Sekayu people have a custom of not telling something or ideas directly. Their messages are implicitly conveyed in proverbs. The messages are of giving advice, telling prohibition, giving appreciation, and derision.

1) Giving Advice and Telling Prohibition

Sekayu people have a custom of not expressing their ideas openly or explicitly. Especially in giving advice or telling prohibition, they often use proverbs in their daily life. The way they tell prohibition is similar to the way they advise. They want the interlocutors to understand themselves what they prohibit and advise to other persons not to do something bad. However, the natives never use a strong verbal marker to prohibit or special marker to advice. Rather, they present a situation or impact in a proverb to invite others to think of what people should have done or what will happen after doing something bad. In analyzing the messages, the writer observed the meanings on the basis of context. The examples are shown in the following.

1)

/Adat	ulak	timbunan	rempan/
Tradition	river	heap	garbage

‘The tradition is the heap of garbage in a river bay’

It expresses about an elder in a country who becomes a place for people to consult their problems.

Ulak is a bay in a river bank. Usually, the whirlpool in that bay does not drift away. Rempan is tree logs or garbage that drifts in a river and usually they are stopped by the

whirlpool in that bay then they spin following the whirlpool. This proverb is for the elders in the village. When someone becomes the elder in a village, other people will come to see him to ask for advice and opinions for any problem they encounter in life.

2)

/Ade	asap,	ade	api/
there	smoke	there	fire

There is smoke there is fire

‘When there’s smoke there’s fire’

Evidence of a problem probably indicates that there really is a problem

There must be reasons of every problem that occurs. When someone faces a problem, he must analyze the causes of it to find a good solution.

3)

/Banyak	Kughang	Sedikit	cUkUp/
Much	less	A bit	enough

‘Much is less, a bit is enough’

It expresses about a person with a high salary but always feels that his income is not enough because he has many expenses.

This proverb is usually used by old people to to give advice to younger ones to always thank God of what they have and they must spend their money wisely.

4)

/Benci	Di tikus	Nunu	Bilik/
Hate	at rat	Burn	hut

‘ Burning hut to kill the rats’

Solving a small problem but creating a new big problems

/Buah	masak	penyUluk	datang/
fruit	ripe	harvester	come

Sekayu people usually keep their rice stock in a hut. In that hut, sometimes there are rats that often make that hut as their nest. People who get sick of the rats burn the hut to kill them. As a result, they lost their food stock. This proverb reminds us **not to** get emotional when we have a problem. A sudden decision may create a new big problem.

5)

/Dak	begawe	Dagu	Dak begoyang/
No	Work	Chin	No sway

‘Not working, the chin is not swaying’

If you are not working, you will get nothing to eat.

Sekayu people use this proverb to warn the younger people not to be lazy. They must work to live. Especially for those who have already got married, they must always work hard to afford their wife and children’s needs

2) Giving Appreciation and Derision

There were only few provebs found in giving appreciation. It might be because of the custom of Sekayu people who usually give appreciation through pantun (Haris, 2004:360). They use pantun in particular time and occasions. It also becomes the characters of Sekayu people of not to give lip service by

praising too much to others. On the other hand, the natives in fact have more proverbs to tell something that was assumed to hurt others indirectly. For this purpose, some of the proverbs use a verbal marker i.e. *mbak* “like”.

1)

/Bakule	Same	Sebajak	mbak
Dating	with	coeval	like

pulut	kedingen	lidi/
pulut	with	palm leaf rib

Pulut really sticks to the palm leaf rib used to trap birds. This proverb expresses an appreciation to a couple who really love each other. When they are already like *Pulut* and *lidi*, it means that they can not be separated. Usually it is for a couple who is getting married.

2)

‘When the fruit is ripe the farmers come to harvest’.

At exactly the right time.

This proverb is usually used by a husband to praise his wife who can give a quick serving to the guests visiting their house. The guests do not have to wait for a long time to eat or drink.

3)

/kecik	kundu
‘small	pull’

‘Weak pull’

It expresses about a person who is a coward

It is usually used by a woman to deride her husband when he is afraid of taking decisions or doing something that a man could have done. Sekayu people always teach their sons to be brave and strong. Doing house chores for Sekayu man is a taboo. The house chores should be done by women. If there is a man who is caught up doing a house chore because he is afraid of his wife, this proverb is also sometimes used to deride him.

4)

/Keli	Lapo	Makan	kanti
Cat fish	hungry	eat	fellow friend

‘A hungry cat fish usually eats its own fellows’

A person who intends to brings his friend/family into trouble

5)

/Kerekek	betine	tanjal
laugh	woman	fall suddenly

‘The laugh of a woman who falls suddenly’

Pretending to be OK but actually getting hurt

It is used for deriding someone who is just caught up doing something bad and tries to hide his shamefulness from others.

3.3 Interpretation and Teaching Implication

Since teaching means making learners conscious about aspect of their behaviour, it is obvious that proverbs should be considered as part of materials to teaching English to foreign learners, in this case *Sekayu* speaking students.

Some Sekayu proverbs used are developed through aspects of figurative language. For some proverbs, the ways of the meanings illustrated are similar to those of English, for example, *Ade asap ade api*/when there is smoke there is fire. *Mbangonke ulo tido*/ do not kick a sleeping dog, *Bung dakke jauh dai umpun*/like father like son, and *kuyuk nyalak babi beghani*/ like dog and cat. If the ways the natives develop the Sekayu proverbs are similar to those of English proverbs, the teachers of English can consider the Sekayu proverbs as prior knowledge or inputs for Sekayu speaking students for learning English.

Inputs are important factors in acquiring and learning a second language. In acquiring a second or language, inputs are needed to activate language acquisition device (LAD) which are used to practice, correct, and conclude language principles (Purnomo, 1983). Krashen (1982) supported the statement by saying that language competence is the result of getting inputs, which can be understood by the learners. In order to have the comprehensible inputs, the teaching materials should be neither too difficult nor too easy. If the materials are too difficult to understand the students are reluctant to learn. In contrary, if the materials are too easy to understand the students are bored. They are not challenged. In short, the materials should be challenging. Considering the local content, that is, Sekayu proverbs can support to provide the comprehensible inputs.

Considering Sekayu proverbs in teaching English to the students of the Sekayu natives means to try to lower the students’ affective filter, that is lowering learners’ anxiety (Ariana, 2002:66) It is also said that a wide range of

studies has shown that using content familiar to learners, rather than unfamiliar content, can influence the students' comprehension of the target language (Post and Rathet, 1996:12). The students' affective filter raises when they feel threaten and unrelaxed. It can occur when they feel that the materials are far beyond their cognition. In other words, they enjoy learning English when the materials are not so difficult. Starting teaching English proverbs by comparing with the equivalent *Sekayu* proverbs is one way that is possibly done to interest and make the students (especially those who have *Sekayu* language background) enjoy learning English.

4. CONCLUSIONS

There are four types of proverbs in *Sekayu* language, namely true proverbs, proverbial phrases, proverbial comparisons, and idioms. The true proverbs are used in forms of simple, coordinate compound, and subordinate compound sentences. The proverbial phrases are used in forms of phrases. The speakers did not convey the meanings in forms of sentences. They just uttered them in form of groups of word or phrases, instead. The proverbial comparisons are used to express the meanings by describing the conditions or characteristics of somebody or something by using comparison words. The idioms are used to express their feelings and thoughts. These four types of proverbs are still used frequently by the natives of *Sekayu* to maintain the communication among the communities. The structural patterns used are *Subject - Verb - (Object)* and *Subject - Verb -*

Complement. However, *S* \emptyset (hidden subject) - *Verb - Object* pattern is also found. It is evident that the natives of *Sekayu* use proverbs to give advice, prohibit, appreciate and deride. In giving advice or telling prohibition, they often use proverbs in their daily life. The way they tell prohibition is similar to the way they advise. They want the interlocutors to understand themselves what they prohibit and advise to other persons not to do something bad. However, the natives never use a strong verbal marker to prohibit or special marker to advice. Rather, they present a situation or impact in a proverb to invite others to think of what people should have done or what will happen after doing something bad. There were only few proverbs found in giving appreciation. It might be because of the custom of *Sekayu* people who usually give appreciation through *pantun* (Haris, 2004:360). They use *pantun* in particular time and occasions. It also becomes the characters of *Sekayu* people of not to give lip service by praising too much to others. On the other hand, the natives in fact have more proverbs to tell something that was assumed to hurt others indirectly. For this purpose, some of the proverbs use a verbal marker i.e.

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