

Petatah-Petitih in Minangkabau Community in Medan, Indonesia: Its Use and Meanings

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Abstract

This study depicts how *petatah-petitih* (proverbs) and their meanings are used by the Minangkabau people in Medan, Indonesia. This study utilized a qualitative approach. The method used in data collection is documentation techniques to informants talk about sayings and their meanings in Minangkabau society. The data were in the form of utterances taken from observation and interview. The findings present the meanings of *petatah-petitih* used by community members on some occasion such as giving advice, thanksgiving, marriage, courtesy, and arranging marriage contracts. The moral values incorporated in the proverbs include tolerance, loyalty, humility, satire, and success. Proverbs used for family advice are the most dominant.

Keywords: *Petatah-petitih*, society, Minangkabau

1. Introduction

Sociolinguistics is a field of study that looks at how language and society interact with the goal of better understanding how languages are structured and used in communication. It is an interdisciplinary linguistics and sociology research field focusing on the relationship between language and social factors in speech communities. This branch of linguistics is also helpful in communication and interaction (Chaer, 1995; Hanafiah et al., 2021).

Mieder (2005) asserts that proverb have always played a major role in human communication. It can be in oral or written form. Proverbs are traditional expression of human wisdom in society, and it is inherited from generation to generation. Proverbs can be found in Minangkabau society and it is called as *petatah-petitih* that contains advice shaping the meaning of life. It is line with the statement that Minangkabau proverbs have existed and have played an important role in Minangkabau community and tradition (Silalahi & Nasution, 2018). Tradition plays a role in conveying knowledge about a culture through advice, parables, and comparisons, all of which can be realized in proverbs (Hartati, 2015). In addition, according to Djamaris (2002), proverbs are sentences or expressions with deep, broad, precise, subtle, and figurative meanings. According to Keraf (2002), learning proverbs requires experience rather than general language knowledge. Proverbs in the culture of the Minang people are also called *petatah petitih* Minang proverbs (Munir, 2013).

Minangkabau language has thousands of *petatah-petitih* (Nafis, 1996; Oktavianus, 2012). Errington (1984) state that Minangkabau people are not straightforward in saying something. *Petatah-petitih* is a collection of short proverbs in Minangkabau that are part of *kato pusako*. It plays an essential role in Minangkabau people's lives because they serve as guidelines, life guidelines, and moral values on how to live their lives (Wasana et al., 2019). However, its usage is not always restricted to formal contexts. Otherwise, Minangkabau people tend to use idioms and symbols when expressing sensitive topics. (Zabadi, 2009). Three characteristics distinguish *petatah petitih* categories in terms of language structure: 1) the lines (sentences/speech), 2) they are not preceded by *sampiran* (shadow lines/puzzles), 3) the number of lines are looser in nature because they are not bound by quantity (Munir, 2013).

Exploring Minangkabau proverbs can be beneficial in several ways. First, Minangkabau proverbs offer insight into the values, beliefs, and cultural practices of the Minangkabau people, who are one of the largest ethnic groups in Indonesia. Understanding these proverbs can provide a deeper appreciation of their culture and way of life. Secondly, studying proverbs can also enhance language skills, particularly in the area of figurative language and idiomatic expressions. Proverbs are often used to express abstract concepts in a concise and memorable way, and they can help learners to grasp the nuances of a language more effectively. Lastly, many Minangkabau proverbs contain wisdom that is still

relevant today, and can offer valuable guidance on a range of issues, from personal relationships to business dealings. As such, exploring these proverbs can help individuals to develop a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them.

The use of *petatah-petitih* is part of communication style in Minangkabau community (Oktavianus, 2019). *Petatah-petitih* with moral messages are sometimes used by Minangkabau people in social interactions (Zubaidah, 2019). It passed down from generation to generation that is preserved both orally and written as the Minangkabau people's pattern and purpose of life (Rahim, 2017). As traditional, *petatah-petitih* are examples of indigenous and local communities' knowledge, innovations, and practices that have evolved, adapted to the local culture and environment, and passed down orally from generation to generation.

Proverbs contain advice or teachings from parents (usually used or spoken to break the other person), such as ***Tong Kosong Nyaring Bunyinya*** which has meaning “*unintelligent people boast a lot*” (KBBI, 1988). Furthermore, *petatah-petitih* is a component of Minangkabau literary works that must be preserved because literature contains elements of values that can be taught and communicated as moral messages in behavior, ethics, and speech (Iqbal et al., 2017). This proverb can be a means to remind oneself to behave well, especially when in a community environment, as an example of a Minangkabau proverb that can inspire us. “*Alat baaluah jo bapatuik makanan banang siku-siku, kato nan bana tak baturik inggirin batin nan baliku*”. It has the meaning that “someone who does not want to lead down the right path has a damaged mentality”. This *petatah-petitih* illustrates that if a person does not want to be advised nor want to improve himself.

The correlation between a proverb and its meaning is complex, and can depend on a number of factors. For example, the meaning of a proverb can be influenced by the cultural and historical context in which it was created, as well as by the language and dialect in which it is expressed. Meaning is the mutually agreed-upon relationship between language and the outside world by language users so that they can be mutually understood. Furthermore, proverbs often rely on metaphorical or symbolic language to convey their meaning, and as such, the meaning of a proverb can be open to interpretation. Depending on the context in which a proverb is used, different meanings may be inferred from it. However, despite these complexities, there is generally a strong correlation between the proverb and its intended meaning. Proverbs are often used to convey a specific message or idea, and as such, they are carefully crafted to ensure that the intended meaning is clear and concise. As a result, the relationship between language and meaning does not change synchronously, but it can vary diachronically depending on the development of the culture and society in question (Chaer, 1995). The Minangkabau people always use a proverb as family advice. One piece of advice is not to isolate yourself. “*Batolan mangko bajalan mufakat mangko baliko*” means *not to isolate oneself and act without consensus in the Minangkabau family*. Referring the urgency of preserving the culture preserved in the use of *petatah-petitih* in Minangkabau society, this study attempts to depict how *petatah-petitih* are used, and to explain the meanings of *petatah-petitih* by the Minangkabau people in Bromo, Medan, Indonesia.

2. Method

This study employed qualitative content analysis. This research employed qualitative research that employs a descriptive method. According to Moleong (2005), qualitative research is a procedure that produces descriptive data about people and observable behavior in the form of written or spoken words. According to Semi (1993), the descriptive method is a method that is carried out by appreciating the interactions between concepts that are being studied empirically rather than using numbers. This study was done in Bromo district, Medan, Indonesia. This area was chosen due to the is one of the areas in Medan in which Minangkabau people inhabits the area.

The data were in the form of utterances. The data were collected by using documentation techniques. The steps are (1) identifying informants. The informants must be community leaders, and informants must be community members in the area. (2) Conducting interviews and recording informants' quotes to avoid data analysis errors; and (3) Recording the interview results. The analysis was carried out based on discussions and in-depth and open interviews, and the data present information. Then, observations were made by recording using a tape recorder, transcribing, and classifying the data collected, namely the proverbs and their meanings used by the Minangkabau people in the Bromo area of Medan city. The collected data were then analyzed using the steps outlined below. 1) writing down the recorded data, 2) classifying proverbs, 3) identifying moral values and their meanings, and interpreting the data.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the collected data, there are some *Petatah-petitih* found in Minangkabau community in Bromo, Medan presented as the followings.

- Batolan mangko bajalan*** (1)
Mufakat mangko bakato

Petatah-petitih (1) has a meaning in the Minangkabau family: *'don't isolate yourself and act without consensus'*. Humans are social creatures who cannot live alone. As a result, in society, we must interact with one another rather than isolate ourselves; if we isolate ourselves, we will lose ourselves. This proverb is a common expression used by the Minangkabau people to discourage their children from isolating themselves; with many friends, you will gain a lot of experience.

Bagai kabau jalang kareh (2)

Hiduang parunyuik pambulang tali

Tak tau dima kandangnya

Petatah-petitih (2) means *'a person who is stubborn and does not want to accept the advice of others while he does not understand something himself'*. He is stubborn but does not understand the problem at hand. This proverb is always used by family and relatives in Minangkabau society, especially when advising their children. A stubborn child should not obey his parents.

Ayah baling (3)

Anak kuriak

Tibo dicucu rintiak juo

Petatah-petitih (3) means *'the bad teaching of a father to his son is passed on to his grandchildren as well'*. Fathers are responsible not only for earning a living but also for providing an education for their children. A father should educate his children well as a parent because every upbringing is passed down from generation to generation. The meaning of the word *"kuriak"* is freckles, but it can also refer to ugly things. The same *petatah-petitih "Kalo kuriak induaknyo, rintiak anaknyo"* "If the parents are bad, the kids will be bad as well." The point of educating children is to involve both parents, not just the father. If the parents are bad, the children will be bad as well.

The Minangkabau community is known for adhering to their parents' teachings, so good teachings are required to ensure that good generations emerge. The Minangkabau people always use this proverb to refer to their relatives, family, and social relationships. It always reminds parents to teach their children well in Minangkabau society. It is because children will undoubtedly record every utterance of their parents, which will then be passed on to their children.

Ujuang jari digigik naniang (4)

Pangkal lengan panek-panek

The meaning of the word *ujuang* is *'just a little bit or bit that is bitten by a naniang or kumbang but the pain reaches the base of the arm.'* The Minangkabau people equate this proverb with *"a child who is reckless and has problems, but his family suffers."* It means that bad behavior in children is the result of poor parenting. Children who act out or have problems are their parents' fault, so parents are frequently affected by the child's behavior, and both bad behavior and parents are still carried around.

As a result, the Minangkabau people in Bromo, Medan, as well as their families and relatives, always use this proverb. Maintain good behavior in children so that what they do does not affect their parents. At the same time, parents educate their children positively so they behave well. At the end, good or bad, a child's parents will always be the standard against which others will measure him.

Saketek katokan banyak (5)

Banyak katokanlah mamadai

Petatah-petitih (5) means *Saketek katokan banyak* is *'say a lot even if you get a little in other words, be grateful no matter how much you get'*. Furthermore, *"banyak katoakan mamadai"* means "say enough." It means say enough for what is received. Minangkabau people always use this proverb in their relationships and families so that humans remain grateful for what is received and remind humans of the sustenance received. You should be thankful if you have little or a lot of food.

Hiduik baraka (6)

Mati bariman

Petatah-petitih (6) means *'live with reason die faith (with faith).'* In essence, life moves and continues to adapt to live closely with social relations, and humans will be friends with other humans. The meaning of life reflects a person's existence in his social environment. Humans are created with as much reason and thought as possible, and of course, humans have the nature of *"baraka"* 'reasoning.' The term intelligent can refer to the ability to reason or think. Humans can foster and nurture life if they have a good mind.

Death signifies the end of life's journey. Death is the point at which humans will meet their Lord. As a result, if humans want to die in good health, they should have "*bariman*" or "faith." So, in summary, this *petatah-petitih* has a goal: during life, you must use your mind; when you die, you must be in a state of faith.

The Minangkabau people always use this proverb to remind people to live well and think well so that they can die well.

Barek samo dipikua 'berat sama dipikul' (7)

Ringan samo dijinjiang 'ringan sama dijinjing'

Petatah-petitih (7) means 'something heavy cannot be carried alone, so it must be carried by others.' This proverb is most commonly heard at weddings, which are part of a long-life journey. Marriage is a sacred relationship that cannot be carried out alone. So, the goal is for each other to shoulder every journey in marriage. In addition, this saying is also related to cooperation or cooperation, namely, to do everything together so that the work is lighter—for example, financial problems in a wedding ceremony. Minangkabau people use this proverb before the wedding ceremony begins to encourage family or relatives to work well together in financial matters and other jobs so that the burden feels lighter.

Bajalan banan tuo (8)

Balayie banakhoda

This *petatah-petitih* (8) means 'walking with an old sailing captain.' It means that if we take care of a group to visit another family to convey family wishes, such as proposing marriage or going on a long journey, someone must be appointed or an elder to lead the group as the head of the group or as a leader. The leader will act as a spokesperson and guide for his followers or entourage. "*Tuo*" refers to a person who is thought to understand both his own people's customs and the customs of the person he is visiting. "*Balayie banakhoda*" means that the group's leader must be someone who has eaten a lot of salt in their lives or has experience. The Minangkabau people always use this proverb to show courtesy in social situations.

Kok pai tampak pungguang (9)

Kok pulang tampak muko

This *petatah-petitih* (9) means, "*If you go out, look back; if you go in, look in the face.*" It means that a child and anyone else, such as a wife or husband, must become accustomed to asking permission. If a child must obtain permission from his parents before going to school, he must make it a habit to greet his parents before entering the house. Husbands must say goodbye to their wives before leaving the house, and wives must say goodbye to their husbands before leaving the house. When Minangkabau people want to go abroad, they always use this saying for their families.

Sigai mencari anau (10)

anau tatap sigai baranjak

Datang dek bajapuik

Pai jo baantah

This proverb means, "*the ladder is looking for palm trees, but the stairs are still moving.*" It also means "*they come because they are picked up, and they leave because they are escorted.*" The meaning of the above saying is that in every Minangkabau traditional marriage, the man is always delivered to his wife's house by being picked up by his wife's family according to tradition and accompanied by the man's family according to tradition husband then stays at home or in his wife's hometown. In a divorce, the husband must leave his wife's home, whereas the wife remains in the house where she lives with her children. Minangkabau people use this proverb to arrange marriage ceremonies in the Minangkabau environment or area.

Bajalan paliharo kaki (11)

Bakato paliharo lidah

Kaki tataruang inai padanannya

Lidah tataruang ameh padanannya

This *petatah-petitih* (10) means 'walk, look after your feet, say, look after your tongue.' The affix *kaki tatarung inai*, as well as the affix *lidah tertaruang emas*. This *petatah-petitih* means that human feelings are delicate and sensitive, and if he is offended, he will be hurt painfully and painfully. A good relationship can consider the feelings of others. It can be disastrous if feelings are hurt. As a result, custom teaches us to be cautious when socializing, both in our speech, behavior, and actions, so as not to offend the feelings of others. Modesty is one of the traits promoted by Minangkabau custom and is regarded as one of the most highly valued in Minangkabau custom. Minangkabau community always

uses this proverb when socializing and raising a family. As a result, every Minangkabau person is expected to be tolerant.

Malompek samo patah

(12)

Manyaruduak samo bungkuak

Tatungkuik samo makan tanah

Tatalantang samo minum ai

This *petatah-petitih* (11) means 'jumping is the same as breaking, butting is the same as hunchbacking, lying face down is the same as the ground, lying on your back is the same as drinking water'. This proverb means that every Minang person should be patient and loyal, share the same fate, and form a circle of brotherhood. This quality is responsible for the birth of loyal friends, love for one's hometown, love for one's country, and love for one's country. From here, the attitude of helping, defending, and sacrificing oneself for the sake of others begins.

If Minang people are forced to decide, they will support the child or his family. Under these conditions, the Minang were just as fanatical as the British. Right or wrong is my country. Right or wrong is my dunsanak. Even though the Minang people's 'barajo right bana' means to rule over what is right, they will abandon the principle that right is right and wrong is wrong in a situation like this. This proverb is always used by Minang people in the family and the association, so we must have a loyal attitude.

Kok manyauak di hilie hilie

(12)

Kok mangecek di bawah bawah

Di mano langik dijunjuang

Di sinan bumi dipijak

Petatah-petitih (12) above teaches that as immigrants living in a different cultural environment. As a minority immigrant group, we must understand and situate ourselves. ***Kok manyauak di hilie hilie*** does not imply that we should feel inferior, but rather that we are people who recognize ourselves as foreigners. It depends on future developments whether you'll always be ***munyauak di hilie hilie*** as a newcomer. It is not uncommon for Minang people to become imams of mosques and local community leaders if we can adapt to the environment quickly, even if we become role models and community leaders in that new environment. He no longer needed to "***manyauak di hilie hilie***" at that time; instead, he could have been "***disaukkan di hulu-hulu,***" given one step first, and appointed as a leader in his environment like a prince. Humility is not the same as low self-esteem in the inferior sense. Humility is admirable, whereas low self-esteem is a disease. When Minangkabau people's families want to travel abroad, they always say this proverb.

Muncuang disuok jo pisang

(13)

Ikua dikaik jo duri

This *petatah-petitih* (13) means 'mouth fed with bananas, tail tied with thorns'. It refers to a leader skilled at a sweet talk and making convincing promises. However, after being elected to be arrogant (not knowing himself), even the first promises were not fulfilled. When there is a leader election in Minangkabau community, this proverb is always used by the Minangkabau people.

Kok cadiak waang, Ambo tidak batanyo

(14)

Kok kayo waang, Ambo indak mintak

This *petatah-petitih* (14) means, "If men are smart, I don't ask; if you are rich, I don't ask." This proverb means that someone arrogant because of knowledge and arrogance because of wealth always looks down on others. Minangkabau people always use this proverb in their family and social relationships, especially with their friends. It is usually very appropriate to say it to successful or knowledgeable friends. This type of friend will take pride in looking down on his friend.

Tiado rotan akapun jadi

(15)

Tiado kayu janjang dikapiang

This proverb has the meaning 'no rattan root is made. There is no wooden ladder split'. The proverb above means that one must take every available opportunity. Even if it appears to be difficult, take every opportunity, no matter how small. So, it would help if you dared to bet on something with uncertain odds, which ultimately proves successful. Minangkabau people always use this proverb in social situations, especially with relatives and friends.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of data analysis, it can be concluded that the use of proverb used by the Minangkabau people in the Bromo Medan area has a proverb advising that don't isolate yourself, don't be stubborn, teaches good advice, advises children to behave well, advice reminds people to live better lives, advice do not be arrogant. Then there are thanksgiving, wedding greetings, polite greetings, marriage ceremony greetings, greetings of tolerance, greetings of loyalty and humility, greetings of satire, and greetings of success. These proverbs are always used by Minangkabau people towards their families and relatives. Minangkabau people always use the proverb of advice against their families, especially when it comes to educating their children. The Minangkabau people holding a wedding will use the proverb for marriage ceremonies and wedding planning. The most common expression used by the Minangkabau people is a piece of advice, especially for their children.

It is also suggested for further research to explore how Minangkabau proverbs might be used in educational contexts, such as in language learning or cultural awareness programs. Then, in other areas such as digital humanities, it can develop computational methods to analyze large collections of Minangkabau proverbs, identifying patterns and trends that might not be immediately apparent through traditional qualitative methods.

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