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Malay Proverb Semantic Values: A Paremiological Approach to the Communication Process

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Abstract. The interest in semiotic and semantic aspects of the proverbial genre is to obtain a clearer picture of the proverb's social and cultural functions. Studies of the main 712 Malay proverbs' usage with particular interest to non-verbal communicative elements as a context is a case of simultaneity-oriented syntactics, studying the combination of heterogeneous signs into a compound sign complex. This kind of interest can be characterized by pragmatic approaches to the proverbs in the field of paremiology. Proverbs are special units and signs of language, necessary elements of human communication, which convey specific information, designate typical life and mental situations or relationships between certain objects. Talking about the values of the Malays proverbs means talking about Eastern values as ethnic groups that occupy the Eastern world. The Malay ethnic group delivers original ideas and becomes a regional medium influencing the three major world civilizations and religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. Proverbs sum up a situation, pass judgment, recommend a course of action, or serve as secular past precedents for present action. This paper analyzes the interconnectivity of Malay proverbs using the paremiological method. Based on the analysis, it is found that the system of ideas of Malay communication has been arranged in a slick, systematic, and interlocking nature. The composition formed as a kind of onion in layers, and in the middle lies the concept of *Budi (Mind)*, which is a core value of the entire Malay system of ideas about Communication. In the second layer appeared the concept of *Basa nan sesuai (Appropriate language)*, followed by the third layer, which shows the *Five Maxim of communication (Politeness, Contextualization, Middle Path, Juxtaposition, Appropriateness)* which guides everyday communication activities, and finally, on the outer part of the onion is stated *Keseimbangan (Harmony)*.

Keywords: semantic, paremiological method, system of ideas, belief systems

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Семантическая ценность малайских пословиц: паремиологический подход к коммуникационному процессу

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Аннотация. Интерес к семиотическим и семантическим аспектам жанра пословиц заключается в получении более четкой картины их социальных и культурных функций. Проведенные исследования бытового использования основных 712 малайских пословиц с особым интересом к невербальным коммуникативным элементам как контексту являются примером синтактики, ориентированной на одновременность, изучающей сочетание разнородных знаков в сложный знаковый комплекс. Подобный интерес объясняется прагматическими подходами к пословицам с позиции паремиологии. Пословицы — особые единицы и знаки языка, необходимые элементы человеческого общения, которые передают определенную информацию, обозначают типичные жизненные и психические ситуации или отношения между определенными объектами. Исследовать малайские пословицы означает говорить о восточных ценностях как этнических группах, которые занимают восточный мир. Малайская этническая группа, абсорбируя оригинальные идеи, становится региональным модератором, влияющим на три мировые цивилизации и религии: индуизм, буддизм и ислам. Пословицы резюмируют ситуацию, выносят суждение, рекомендуют курс действий или служат светскими прошлыми прецедентами для настоящих действий. В данной статье анализируется взаимосвязь малайских пословиц с использованием паремиологического метода. Проведенный анализ подтверждает, что система идейного наполнения малайской коммуникации, помимо четкой структурированности, отличается системностью и взаимосвязанностью. Собственно композиция сформирована как своего рода луковица, в сердцевине которой лежит концепция *Буди* ‘разум’, являющаяся основной ценностью всей малайской коммуникативной системы. Во втором слое расположена концепция *Баса нан сесуай* (соответствующая лексика), за которой следует третий слой, который представляет собой *Пять Максим общения* (вежливость, контекстуализация, срединный путь, сопоставление, уместность), направленных на повседневную коммуникативную деятельность, и, наконец, внешняя оболочка луковицы — *Кейсембанган* ‘гармония’.

Ключевые слова: семиотика, паремиологический метод, система идей, системы убеждений

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Introduction

The three great civilizations have shaped the identity and values of Malay in the past, which may also be so in the future. The Malay proverb and idioms belong to the discipline of paremiology, at the same time, the proverb has traditionally been served as a research object for disciplines such as folkloristics, pedagogy, linguistics, all of them looking at the proverb from different methodological perspectives. Comprehensive and systematic semiotic analyses of the proverb still today represent some kind of research desideratum. Talking about the values of the Malays communication means talking about Eastern values as ethnic groups that occupy the Eastern world. The Malay ethnic group not only delivers original ideas but also becomes a regional medium that has influenced the three major world civilizations and religions, namely Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. The three great civilizations have shaped the identity and values of Malay in the past, which may also be so in the future.

So far, the study on Eastern values highlights the civilizations of India (Hinduism and Buddhism) and China (Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism) and is then followed by the Islamic civilization. The seminar on communication theories from an Asian perspective organized by AMIC (Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Center) in 1986 was the world's first scientific seminar on Asian/eastern values and also focused on those three Eastern cultural centers.

A variety of studies of the concepts, philosophy and even communication theories based on Asian values have appeared after the AMIC seminar was over. These include *the Face Negotiation Theory of Stella Ting-Toomey*, *the Indian Rasa Theory*, *the Japanese Kuuki theory (Youichi Ito)*, *the Chinese Harmony theory (Guo Ming Chen)*, and *The Shadaranikaran Model of Communication of Nirmala Mani Adhikary*. Wimal Dissanayake is one of the important figures in building the “Eastern Communication Movement” and then pioneered the publication of *Communication Theory: the Asian Perspective*.

Harnish and Mieder call proverbs one of the most common forms of representation in expressing the values or belief systems of a society. In this context, *peribahasa* (proverb) is defined as a set of words that are compact and concise, containing values, norms, principles, wisdom, morals, or rules of behavior that appear in the form of parables, comparisons, questions, or statements of fact which are easy to remember. In this context, the concept of values itself can be specifically defined as guiding principles of what people consider important in life [1].

According to some researchers like A. Dundes, proverbs are the essence of the philosophies of societies [2]. They state that a proverb is but an expression of the worldview of a society that has a value to guide for a better life in its various aspects [3]. As to *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the contents of proverbs usually express ideas and beliefs held by the public¹. A proverb is essentially talking

¹ URL: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Malay-people> (accessed: 23.12.2024).

about real life and providing guidance on appropriate behavior and inappropriate philosophy of practical life that all work in harmony. Like all narratives they are selective though somehow related to planning and problem solving. It is a whole, an internally consistent, self-contained unit of expression; reality reconfigured in order to create meaning [4].

Therefore, a proverb is the crystallization of values and norms derived from the experiences and practices of everyday life members of the community or the result of reflection or intellectual thinkers about the nature of life in which they live. Eventually researchers termed the meaning of the concise and wonderful sentence “The wisdom of many and the wit of one”².

Based on these explanations, it can be said that understanding the proverbs of society means gaining a better understanding of the values and belief systems underlying the way people act and behave in everyday life, including all communication. Communication is realized by every community, including the Malay ethnic group, as the most important instrument in building relationships, maintaining social harmony, and keeping the continuity of ‘living together’ among them. That is why every society strives to build values, belief systems, or ideas about how communication should be done based on life experiences and struggles.

In Malay society, it seems that communication has become an important theme in daily life. It can be said that there is almost no aspect of life that is not touched by communication, ranging from marriage and family life, parenthood, study, leading people, resolving conflicts, and even measuring the quality of a man.

Communication goes into all spaces of human life and becomes the basis for the Malays in building their entire life activities together. The strong communication perspective of Malays can be proven by an abundant amount of Malay proverbs and idioms that explore communication.

Then who are these Malays with whom we are concerned with this communication? What is the terminology used to describe the Malays’ communication activities? What basic values become the core ideas of Malays’ communication? And what is the Malays’ opinion of how to communicate well? This paper attempts to answer the three fundamental questions by reviewing the content, meaning, interconnectivity, and implications of using Malay proverbs by Paremiological analysis.

Methods

The main sources of Malay proverbs in this study are: 1. *Ungkapan Melayu (Malay Expression)* with 3,450 *peribahasa* which will be abbreviated as UM [5], 2. *Kamus Peribahasa Melayu-Inggeris (Malay-English Dictionary of Proverbs)*, containing 1,320 *peribahasa* and will be cited as KPMI, and 3. *7700 Peribahasa Indonesia* by Nur Arifin Chaniago and Bagas Pratama [6], with 7700 *peribahasa*

² URL: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proverb> (accessed: 21.12.2021).

and will be quoted as PI. The first source is taken as the contents are complete and supported by a systematic explanation. The second source was chosen because of its comparisons with the English expressions, while the third source are books widely used in Indonesian schools and prepared based on the themes that are easy to follow.

Peribahasa/proverbs which are quoted will be cited according to the title-number system, for example, *Nan baik budi nan indah basa* 'Kind and beautiful language' (PI, 1710) or *Bercakap berlembut lidah, berbual bermanis muka* 'Speak with a soft tongue, talk with a sweet face' (UM, 1358) and *Bercakap siang mendengar-dengar, bercakap malam mendengar-dengar* 'Talk during the day and listen, talk at night and listen' (KPMI, 422). As a complement, the proverbs will also be taken from *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* [7] which contains hundreds of proverbs with comprehensive explanations and will be cited as KBBI. and the last reference that is used as the source of proverbs is *Kesantunan and Semangat Melayu* 'Malay Politeness and Spirit' [5], and will be abbreviated as KSM.

Quantitative data is concerned with numbers, whereas qualitative data is concerned with meanings. This has implications for analysis because we analyze meanings by conceptualizing them, but we analyze numbers by using statistics and mathematics. In qualitative research, like in quantitative research, such as ethnographies, researchers use theory as a general explanation. It could also be a theoretical lens or perspective that raises issues of gender, class, race, or a mix of these factors. A qualitative study's endpoint, a developed theory, a pattern, or a generalization that develops inductively from data gathering and analysis are all examples of theory [8].

Qualitative analysis — methods for examining social research data without converting them to a numerical format [9]. The researcher used literature studies or can also be referred to as documentation analysis. This technique is an activity of analyzing documents in the form of writing. Research with data sources in the form of texts, books, newspapers, novels, advertisements, and so forth are materials that must be analyzed by the scholar [10]. The literature study conducted by the researcher is by collecting material from various references related to this research. The researcher took data sources from various books, journals both national and international journals, theses, and dissertations that mentioned Malay Communication Value.

The term Malay in this book refers to the ethnic group inhabiting Sumatra, Borneo (including Brunei Darussalam), Southern Thailand, Southern Philippines, The Malay Peninsula, and other small islands in the archipelago [4]. It is said in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* that the most important factor that becomes the easiest way to identify Malays is the Malay language or Malayo Polynesian. This language in Indonesia is used as a native language by over 20 million people while worldwide used this language as a native language by over 40 million speakers, especially in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Southern Thailand, and the

southern Philippines. In the aforementioned four countries, the Malay language became the official language for a total of over 300 million speakers³.

Historically, the entire range of the Malay language used in various countries, especially in Indonesia, is rooted in three languages and the cultural center of the Malay kingdom of Sriwijaya, Melaka, and Riau-Johor [11]. According to Collin Malay language can be a *Lingua Franca* as supported by three factors namely [12]; (1) Malay is very easy to learn and has a simple grammatical structure; (2) The support of large kingdoms which have a strategic role in the trade such as Sriwijaya, Melaka, Aceh, and the Johor-Riau using Malay language as the language of government, and the last (3) is supported by the Dutch and British colonial administrations which requires the use of the local language in order to be able to communicate with the natives.

Although the evidence of the existence of the Malay language can be traced back to the seventh century AD, in terms of the use or presence of apparently new Malay proverbs can be traced back to the 16th century, especially the ones recorded in ancient texts such as the Malay Anal (Malay History) and text Aqaid al-Nasafi and also Hikayat Siak 18th century [13]. The systematic effort to explore the Malay proverbs using Paremiological approaches was made by British researchers in the 19th century for the purpose of exploring ways of thinking and behaving of the Malay in their daily lives.

After M. Klinkert was the first person who systematically analyzed the Malay proverbs in 1863 and successfully recorded 183 proverbs, ten years later, W.E. Maxwell did more serious research to understand the customs and way of life through the Malay proverb approach. Maxwell was able to collect 301 proverbs in his research⁴. The endeavor of exploring the property values through the Malay proverb was first performed by Dr. WG Shellabear printed in Jawi (Arabic term for Malays) and published in 1906 entitled *Kiliran Budi*. In 1934, Mr. E.S. Hose C.M.C. published a book entitled *Malay Proverbs*.

Shellabear and Hose's work was continued by [15] A.W. Hamilton who selected 215 of the most popular phrases in the community at that time. But half of the proverbs that were written by Hamilton and were not covered by Maxwell, such as the phrases *Bahasa tidak berjual beli* 'Language is not buying or selling' or 'Let the slow home safely'.

The collection of Malay proverbs conducted by Tenas Effendi (Indonesia) and Abdullah Hussain (Malaysia) themselves says that there are approximately four thousand Malay proverbs today [5]. More than four thousand proverbs are based on the results of the analysis conducted by the paremiologist, and there are 716 proverbs and expressions associated with the notion of communication.

³ URL: http://ms.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahasa_Melayu (accessed: 13.09.2023).

⁴ URL: https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1172_2009-10-30.html (accessed: 01.12.2024).

Results and Discussion

Terms and Concepts of Malay about Communication

The results of the research stated that in Malay language (see Table 1), communication concept is expressed in various terms such as *bercakap* ‘to talk’ as in the phrase *Bercakap tidak mengulum lidah* ‘Talking without sucking the tongue’ (UM, 1358), *berkata* ‘to say’ as in the phrase ‘elok kata dalam muafakat, buruk kata diluar mufakat’ ‘Beautiful words in the agreement, bad words out of agreement’ (UM, *berbual* (to chat) as in the phrase ‘*Berbual memakai akal*’ ‘To chat by reason/wit’, *bertutur* ‘to tell’ as revealed in the statement ‘*Bertutur sesuai alur*’ ‘To speak according to plot’, *berbicara* ‘to speak’ as in the example, ‘*Berbicara berkira-kira*’ ‘Speaking with calculation’, *berbincang* ‘to converse’, in the saying ‘*Berbincang berdada lapang*’ ‘To converse with tolerant’ (PI, 5697), and *basa* ‘behavior of communicating’ as in, or ‘*Nan baik budi nan indah basa*’ ‘Beautiful deed, beautiful language’ (PI, 1710).

Table 1

The Malays Words for Communication Concept

No	Categories	Numbers of peribahasa entries [7]	Numbers of peribahasa entries [3]	Numbers of peribahasa entries [8]
1	<i>Basa/bahasa</i>	14	4	14
2	<i>Bercakap</i>	39	6	20
3	<i>Berkata</i>	22	10	16
4	<i>Bertutur</i>	4	1	1
5	<i>Berbual</i>	10	0	2
6	<i>Berbicara</i>	4	3	0
7	<i>Berbincang</i>	2	0	4

Source: compiled by Anter V. Khadiz, Fitria Ayuningtyas, Valerii L. Muzykant

Beside the above terms, communication concept is also expressed through words related to behaviour of communication as well, such as; *Mendengar* ‘to hear’, *bermusyawarah* ‘to discuss’, *mufakat* ‘concensus’, *menggunting* ‘to cut’, *Bunyi* ‘sound’, *Tegur* ‘to greet’, *Selam* ‘to submerge’, *Tahu* ‘to know’, *Duduk* ‘to sit’, *Malu* ‘shame’, *Elok* ‘beautiful’, *Pandai* ‘brilliant’, *Retak* ‘crack’, *Contoh* ‘example’, *Khabar* ‘news’, *Kenal* ‘acknowledge’, *Kecek* ‘to talk’, *Jawaban* ‘answer’, *Kias* ‘analogy’, *Berani* ‘brave’, *Santun* ‘polite’, *Ajar* ‘teach’, *Diam* ‘silence’, *Nasihat* ‘advice’, *Pujian* ‘praise’, *Seloroh* ‘humor’, *Santan* ‘coconut milk’, *Perahu* ‘boat’, *Tong* ‘barrel’, *Air* ‘water’, *Angin* ‘wind’, *Api* ‘fire’, *Rumah* ‘house’, *Tanah* ‘land’, *Laut*, ‘sea’, *Arang* ‘coal’, *Muka* ‘face’, *Lidah* ‘tongue’, *Mulut* ‘mouth’, *Kulit* ‘skin’, *Rambut* ‘hair’, *Telinga* ‘ear’, *Bibir* ‘lips’, *Gigi* ‘teeth’, *Biduk* ‘canoe’, *Lading* ‘machete’, *sembilu* ‘knife’, *lahir* ‘birth’, *Kambing* ‘Goat’, *Tiung* ‘magpie’, *Tokek* ‘gecko’, *kerbau* ‘water buffalo’, *Anjing* ‘dog’, *Burung* ‘bird’, *Ayam* ‘chicken’, *tuah* ‘good luck’, *ketiak* ‘armphit’, *musuh* ‘enemy’, *usul* ‘propose’, *periuk* ‘pot’, and *sendok* ‘spoon’, *rebung* ‘bamboo shoots’, *tanduk* ‘horn’, *tebu* ‘cane’.

Among these words-related communications found in the Malay proverbs, *lidah* ‘tongue’ are on the top of the list with 50 entries, followed by *Lidah* ‘tongue’ with 50, *Muka* ‘face’ with 33, *Mulut* ‘mouth’ with 24, and *Bibir* ‘lips’, both with 4 entries. Besides the human body parts, animals like *ayam* ‘fowl’ with 7 entries, *Kerbau* ‘water buffalo’ with 5, and *Kambing* ‘goat’ with 3 entries are also frequently used to show human communication behavior and emotion. Parts of the human body used in the Malay proverbs are parts of the body that are directly related to human communication activities. Animals that were expressed in the proverbs were an important part of the Malay’s everyday life, especially in the past.

Altogether, there are 72 words that are related to communication activities and behavior. These words then formed 712 proverbs. Based on the results of the overall analysis of the proverb, thirteen intrinsic communication values include truthfulness, respect, cooperation, tolerance, understanding, adaptability, modesty, forgiveness, patience, trust, justice, prudence, and moderation.

These thirteen values (see Table 2), surprisingly, are also contained in the seven keywords that truly represent communication concepts, as stated earlier. The words are integrated into the Malays’ way of thinking about the essence of communication.

Among the seven words representing the concept and activity of communication is *Basa*, the most crucial word containing fundamental ideas about communication. *Basa* creates the core idea of communication based on the value of ‘*Budi*’ as suggested in a statement, ‘*elok budi basa sesuai*’ (good ‘*budi*’ or deed, good communication) (PI, 1715), or “*yang baik budi yang indah basa*”, or it can be summarized as ‘*budi basa*’ and ‘*basa nan empat*’. The word ‘*basa*’ also contains several ideas about communication such as *basa-basi* ‘small talk’ and ‘*basa nan empat*’ (In another proverb called ‘*Kata nan empat*’).

Table 2

The Communication Values contained in “The Seven Keywords”

Categories	Selected proverbs	Values (theme)
<i>Basa/bahasa</i>	<i>Elok Budi, basa sesuai</i> ‘good man speak well’ (PI, 1715)	Adaptability
	<i>Basa basi</i> ‘small talk’	Modesty
<i>Bercakap</i>	<i>Bercakap menggunakan adab</i> ‘speaking with manners’	Respect modesty
	<i>Bercakap lurus berkata benar</i> ‘straight talk telling the truth’	Truthfulness +Trust
<i>Berkata</i>	<i>Tertumbuk biduk dikelokan, tertumbuk kata dipikiri</i>	Prudence understanding
	<i>Seia sekata</i> ‘contentious’	Cooperation
	<i>Salah langkah kaki patah, salah kata minta maaf</i>	Forgiveness
<i>Bertutur</i>	<i>Bertutur menurut alur</i> ‘Telling with calculating’	Adaptability
<i>Berbual</i>	<i>Berbual memakai akal</i> ‘Converse by wit’	Understanding
<i>Berbicara</i>	<i>Berbicara berkira-kira</i> ‘Talking bu calculation’	Prudence
	<i>Santun berbicara tidak membawa cedera</i> ‘Polite talk is not carrying an injury’	Justice + Respect
	<i>Bercakap dibawah-bawah, tapi jangan kebawah sangat, nanti mati diinjak gajah</i> ‘To behave and speak necessarily and choose the middle path’	Moderation
<i>Berbincang</i>	<i>Berbincang berdada lapang</i> ‘Speak with a roomy chest’	Tolerance+ Patience

Source: compiled by Anter V. Khadiz, Fitriya Ayuningtyas, Valerii L. Muzykant

The term ‘*Budi basa*’ in Malay culture shows how strong the connection between ‘*base*’ and ‘*Budi*’ is. ‘*Basa*’ and ‘*budi*’ are a unit. ‘*Basa*’ is an extension of ‘*budi*’. Favorable language or communication behavior is always relative to good-mannerism or ‘*berbudi*’. Based on this notion, it can be inferred that communication is an effort based on ‘*budi*’ instillment. Then, what is ‘*Budi*’?

Budi as a Core Value in Malay Communication

The concept of *Budi* is the core of the communication notion and belief system of the Malays. Kling and Kim Hui [16] as well as Lim; [17] stated ‘*Budi*’ as the core value of the Malays’ existence and identity. The development of the ‘*Budi Melayu*’ concept, according to Wan Husin, is strongly related to Islamic teachings as Islam is the Malay’s main religion [18].

Since the Malaccan Era in the 16th century, the concept of *Budi* has been Islamized and reconstructed to align with Islamic teaching. One of the most important developments of the values of *budi* is the emergence of the concept of ‘*Budi nan tiga*’, including *Budi diri* ‘*budi to the self*’, *Budi negeri* (*budi to the nation*), and *Budi Illahi* ‘*budi to the God*’ [5]. Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana stated that the concept of ‘*Budi*’ as the core value, which combines reasoning and feeling (emotion), allows humans to live in balance and harmony. Wan Husin postulated the definition of *Budi* as “a set of internal values that shape one’s mentality and personality.” This set of values plays an important role in guiding the Malays behavior and actions in developing good interpersonal and social relationships [18].

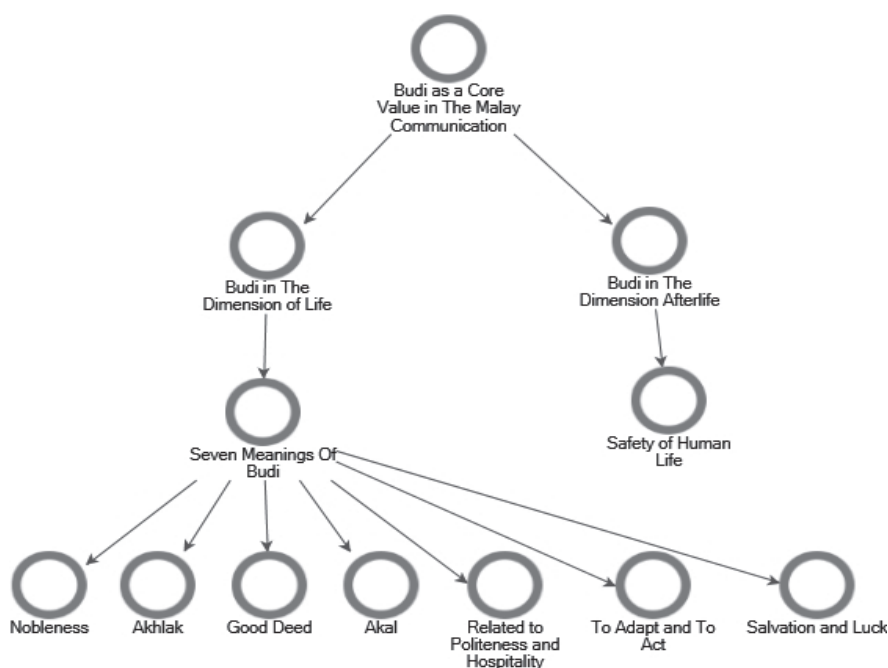


Fig. 1. *Budi* as a Core Value in Malay Communication

Source: Data was processed using NVIVO 12(2022).

In the Malay vocabulary of proverbs and idioms, *Budi* has seven meanings (Fig. 1); (1) nobleness, as in a saying “*Orang kaya bertabur harta, orang mulia bertabur budi*” ‘*The rich are abundant with wealth, the noble are abundant with budi*’; (2) ‘*akhlak*’, as in a proverb, “*budi elok perangai terpuji*” ‘*Good budi, good behavior*’ (PI, 1714); (3) good deed, as in a saying “*Bertanam budi*” /cultivating ‘*Budi*’ or kindness (PI, 1706), “*Membalas budi*” (*Returning the favor*) or “*Hancur badan dikandung tanah, Budi baik terkenang jua*” ‘*The body may decay, the deeds may not*’; (4) ‘*Akal*’ or wit, as in a saying “*Laut budi tepian akal*” ‘*One who is clever is witty*’; (5) related to politeness and hospitality, as in a saying, “*Budi elok basa setuju*” ‘*Good ‘budi’, good language*’; (6) to adapt and to act, as in a saying, “*Hidup kalau tak berbudi, ke mana pergi ke mari canggung*” ‘*One who misbehaves will have himself rejected wherever he goes*’; and the last is (7) salvation and luck as in a saying “*Tuah ayam pada sisiknya, tuah manusia pada budinya*” or “*Kurang budi teraba-raba, tiada ilmu suluh padam*” ‘*One who is uneducated will have an unfortunate life*’.

Budi has a prominent position in the Malay belief system not only in the dimension of the life of the world but also in the afterlife. The Malay proverb states ‘*Elok basa kan bekal hidup, elok budi kan bekal mati*’ ‘*Kind words for happiness in the world, good deeds for happiness in the afterlife*’ (PI, 2586). In that statement, ‘*basa*’ and ‘*Budi*’ are unitary values for the safety of human life. The Unity of ‘*Budi*’ and ‘*basa*’ increasingly visible in the unification of the two words are to be ‘*budi-basa,*’ which shows the interconnectivity of ‘*Budi*’ with the ‘*Basa*’ or communication.

The interrelatedness between *budi* and *basa* becomes more apparent, as in the saying, “*Budi baik basa sesuai*” or “*Nan baik budi nan indah basa,* ‘*A good ‘Budi’ equals to good language*’ (PI, 2591)” which emphasizes that good ‘*budi*’ is reflected on good ‘*Bahasa*’ ‘*Communication behavior*’ and vice versa.

From the above context, it is apparent that *Budi* is the platform of communication or *basa*. Communication is merely a representation of one’s internal values (*Budi*). It is a confirmation of what is already built in oneself. Therefore, to refine one’s communication, according to Malays’ belief system, is to refine one’s ‘*Budi.*’ With a refined ‘*Budi,*’ the ‘*Basa*’ ‘*Good communication*’ will be easier to apply.

The primary value of ‘*Kebudian*’ (*Good-mannerism*), which has wit and emotional aspects, taught that communication is in unity with wits and emotions. Separation will cause an imbalance in communication. When one solely employs his wit, he uses the truth criteria to define good communication. This can cause a situation where one assumes himself better than others in the name of truth, disregards or blames his communication partner straightforwardly, or humiliates his partner because the partner has difficulty understanding his message. When one solely exploits his emotions, he tends to speak illogically and nondescriptly. In this situation, one will become too emotional and only follow subjective emotions.

The primary value of *Kebudian* ‘Wisdom’ also taught that communication is cooperation in exchanging messages, and an expectation is neither a game nor a competition. The cooperation basis is represented into four communication basic terms, which are: *berkata*, *bercakap*, *berbual*, dan *bertutur*. On the word ‘*Berkata*’ or ‘*Bakato*’ is a result of four guidelines of communication, which are: ‘*Kato mandaki*’, ‘*Kato mandatar*’, ‘*Kato menurun*’, and ‘*Kato malereng*’.

Stemming on the term ‘*Kato*,’ there is another basic rule in Malay communication, ‘*Saiyo sakato*’ or ‘*Seia sekata*’ ‘Consentaneous’, which serves as the basis of communication as cooperation. The word ***Bercakap*** ‘to talk’ as in a saying, ‘*Bercakap tidak mengulum lidah*’ and ‘*Cakap siang melihat-lihat, cakap malam mendengar-dengar*’. The word produces the principles of precision, truth, and caution. The word ‘*Berbual*’ ‘to converse’ makes the concept of reasoning, stating that even in ‘social small talk’, one needs to be sensible and reasonable. Malay popular saying containing ‘*berbual*’ is “*Berbual memakai akal*’ ‘to think before speaking’. The word ‘***Bertutur***’ ‘to speak’ produces organized and systematically speaking behavior as in a proverb, ‘*Bertutur menurut alur*’ ‘To speak according to plot’.

The cooperation basis, which stands on ‘*Budi*,’ is as in the saying, “*Ada ubi ada talas, ada budi ada balas*” ‘Everything has a consequence’. This proverb is widely known in Indonesia and is considered an ordinary statement. The proverb contains many philosophical values which teach ‘*prinsip saling*’ ‘Mutual principle or reciprocal principle’ of instilling ‘*Budi*.’

To return a favor (*Balas budi*) is an act of virtue in Malay society. This principle is also emphasized in Malay’s way of life, which is based on cooperative acts, as in the following statement, “*Adat hidup balas membalas*” ‘Reciprocal way of life’ (PI, 70). This reciprocal principle is expressed in Malay’s *tunjuk ajar* ‘Teaching Values’, which is the basis for developing Malay values and identity. In Malay society, this principle is an effort to establish balance among humans to create harmony.

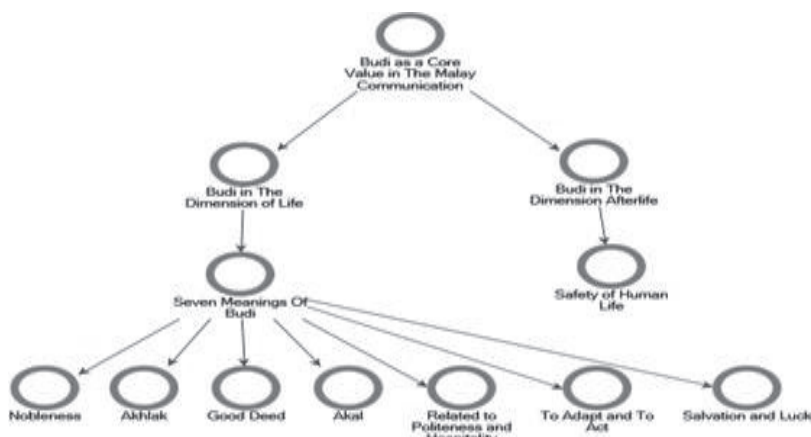


Fig. 2. Communication Principles in Malay Communication
 Source: Data was processed using NVIVO 12(2022).

The Maxim of Good Communication of Malay

Based on the value of *Budi*, which emphasizes cooperation and the balance between wit and feeling, and the Malays' conception of communication, especially on the seven main terms of communication mentioned above, a communication that describes communicating values and norms in Malay society can be constructed (Fig. 2). From this point forward, the model will be called 'Budibasa's model of Communication'.

Righteous Communication Model

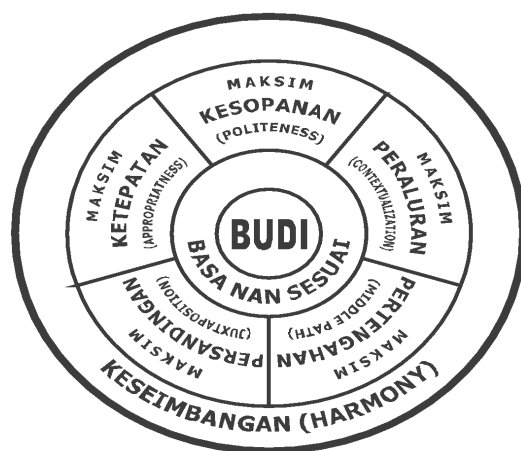


Fig. 3. Budibasa's Model of Communication
Source: Primary Data compiled by Researchers (2021).

The above model (Fig. 3) shows the inter-connection between the fundamental value of *Budi*, the intrinsic value of '*Basa sesuai*' and '*Keseimbangan*,' and communication principles (maxim), including the Juxtaposition maxim, Precision maxim, Courtesy maxim, Plotting maxim, and Moderation maxim.

Persandingan 'Juxtaposition' maxim states that communication is cooperation to juxtapose messages to develop a shared understanding more easily. Juxtaposition is not a competition where one aims to win a conversation, seek others' mistakes, or place oneself as the one who is truer or has more knowledge. Also, juxtaposition is not an action of mistreating others as competitors or subordinates who are not on par with us. In *persandingan* every party has an equal right to express themselves, as mentioned in proverbs '*Duduk bersanding lutut, tegak bersanding bahu*' (UM, 60).

Juxtaposition requires accommodative communication by developing two kinds of words: '*Seia sekata*' (*Agreeable*) and '*Kata nan empat*'.

The '*Seiya sekata*' norm means efforts to accommodate the other party's opinion by initiating a conversation with '*ia*' or '*iya*' to indicate that we take the other party's perspective to be juxtaposed with our perspective so that a common understanding can be built. In Malay terminology, this common understanding is called '*Kata*' to be '*Kata*,' it needs to be '*Seia*,' therefore '*Seia kata*.'

In the norm of '*Kata nan empat*' '*Four kinds of words*', communication accommodation is done by adjusting the content of a message according to the communication partner. There are four kinds of words: '*Kata mendaki*' '*Escalating word*' when the partner is older than the speaker, '*Kata mendatar*' '*Level word*' when the partner is at the same age as the speaker, '*Kata menurun*' '*Descending word*' when the partner is younger than the speaker, and '*Kata melereng*' '*Sloping word*' when the partner requires special treatment [19].

The second maxim is *Ketepatan* '*Precision and appropriateness*'. This principle strongly relates to the first principle stating that neither the truth nor the failure is all that matters. The purpose of communication is not to claim ourselves right and others wrong but instead to transfer the meaning of the message correctly. The Malays prefer the term *Tepat* '*Precise*' rather than '*Right*' in exchanging communication messages. The word *Tepat* for the Malays is viewed to be more thorough and productive in developing, more supportive, and complementing than the word '*Right*'.

The word *tepat* also means being cautious in communicating by checking the content of the message exchanged as stated in a proverb, "*Keruh air di hilir periksa di hulunya, dalam air dihulu periksa di muaranya*". The statement reminds us to analyze every event by investigating the scene and cause of an event. It is known in modern mass-communication principles as the concept of *Check and recheck*.

Ketepatan also related with *ketebukaan* '*Openness value*' as shown in a proverb '*Apa yang tersurat itulah yang tersirat*' (PI, 1390) and '*Bercakap tidak berselindung, bersedepan tidak berpaling*' (UM, 1384)' which mean people should try to speak openly in an appropriate way. The next is the Courtesy maxim. The Malays put courtesy virtually on top of all other matters. There are many Malay sayings emphasizing the importance of courtesy, among which is: "*Santun bertutur, berlidah lembut dan teratur*".

One of the essential communication concepts concerning courtesy is *Basa basi* (*Polite-talk norm*). The Malays widely use it as a social lubricant. Polite-talk expression is well-appreciated in Malay society for it has several rules. One of these is the word '*tak*', which is an introductory word. For example, a lady was on the terrace of her house and saw the uncle of her husband who walked by the house while the husband was not around. She greeted him, saying, "*Tak singgah kah pak cik?*" '*Wouldn't you stop by, Uncle?*' by putting the word '*tak*' in the beginning of the sentence; those who understand Malay customs would definitely say '*no*'.

This courtesy principle is also linked to modesty, gentleness in speaking, willingness to apologize, and even non-verbal interactions such as kissing elders' back hands by those who are younger. Modesty is reflected in the saying, "*Bercakap berlembut lidah, berbual bermanis muka*" '*to speak*

humbly with a warm attitude' (UM, 330), whilst apology making is reflected in, "*Salah langkah kaki surut, salah kata minta maaf*" (*Apology whenever it is necessary*).

The fourth principle is *Peraluran* 'Contextualization and plotting'. One of the most popular proverbs regarding this maxim is "*Berbicara menurut alur*" '*Speaking in line with context and plot*'. The principle *Alur* in this paper can be described as the context, and the principle *Plot* is the direction of conversation or simply the rules or norms arranging a communication process. A conversation with a good *Alur* '*Context*' is viewed by the Malays as being flowing, clear, smooth, and pleasing. The Malays are encouraged to follow *Alur* '*Plot and context*' of a conversation and not to go out of it. When a conversation is conducted according to *Alur*, the speakers will be connected. Therefore, we will laugh when others laugh, console when others are in misfortune, or respond to others' greetings.

Plotting is also essential to interpret a message correctly. Interpretation of a message is based on many aspects, from context, experience, and custom to the content of the message. Misinterpretation in communication is fatal for the Malays as in a saying: "*Salah tangkap jadi rimu, salah tekad jadi hantu*" '*If one behaves out of norms or ability, he/she will be in hardship/it will come back to haunt him/her*'.

Ghosts are the worst of creatures in the eyes of the Malays and also represent *Badi*, the opposite of *Budi*. While *Budi* represents good influence, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia Badi* stands for 'Bad influence' (from deceased human and animal, sacred tree, etc.) [7]. The last is *Maksim pertengahan* '*Moderation maxim*', which prioritizes the nature of moderation or deficiency in carrying out matters. In the communication context, this principle is implemented on, for example, the amount of time of speech, the credibility of the message received, and how a person socializes.

Some of these maxims are "*Duduk pada yang patut, tegak pada yang layak*" (UM 320) dan *Kalau bercakap dibawah-bawah, tapi jangan ke bawah sangat, nanti mati diinjak gajah*" '*To behave and speak necessarily*' (PI, 1992). In Malay proverbs there are more than a hundred sayings using the word '*Terlalu*' 'Extravagant' such as "*Terlalu percaya kena perdaya*" (UM 2741) '*Don't take everything for granted*' or *terlalu garang kawan berkurang*' (UM 2756) '*Angry people have fewer friends*' [5].

In principle, the moderation maxim, along with the other maxims, are meant to educate the Malays to be selective in communicating, speaking with calculation, considering, and maintaining balance in the process of communication so that harmony can be achieved among humans. The most frequently used references with the meaning of Adaptability, Modesty, Prudence, Respect and Understanding are twice as much used in the Malaya proverbs and idioms (Fig. 4).

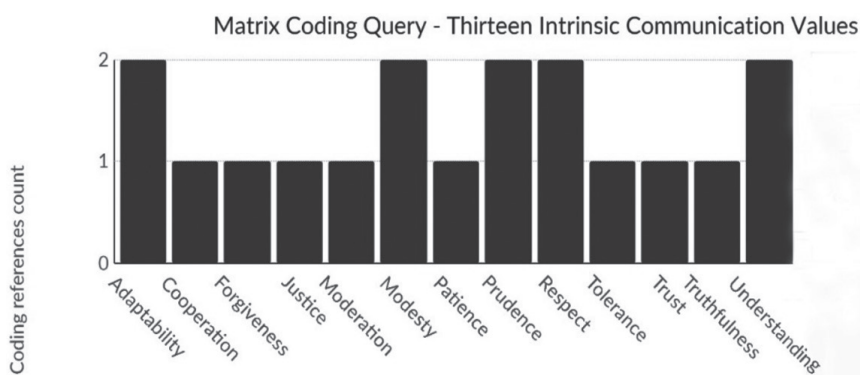


Fig. 4. Thirteen Intrinsic Communication Values
Source: Data was processed using NVIVO 12(2022).

Conclusions

Use of proverbs in the communication process is one of the main themes in the life of the Malay community that gets very high attention and interest. It was found out that proverbs talk about real life and provide guidance on appropriate behavior of practical life to live in harmony. The focus of researchers efforts is still given to the three cultural regions which use proverbs and saying common for Malaya communication tradition. Yet Asia is not only India, China, or the Middle East with their cultures language peculiarities which concentrates a mxture of communication traditions from Filipino, Thai, Korean, Pakistani, regions leading to Budi systemn as a symbiose of used semantic valued Malay proverb. This paper explored the models, concepts and perspectives of Malay about communication based on the Malay cultural as proverbs and idioms. Communication is a culture-bound activity. Each culture has its perspective on communication. Hence, the approach used in this study is a scientific method called paremiological analysis which is normally used to explore the values or belief systems of society that are reflected in the society's proverbs.

There are about 712 Malay proverbs related to communication activities and behavior were analyzed. In the whole all of these proverbs contain to some extant thirteen intrinsic communication values, including truthfulness, respect, cooperation, tolerance, understanding, adaptability, modesty, forgiveness, patience, trust, justice, prudence, and moderation. The most valuable for Malaya communication process proverbs and idioms as it is found with appealing to Adaptability, Modesty, Prudence, Respect and Understanding. Thee thirteen values can then be integrated into five maxims: the Persandingan maxim '*Juxtaposition*', Ketepatan '*Precision + appropriateness*', Kesantunan '*Courtesy*', Peraluran '*Plotting*', and Pertengahan '*Moderation*' maxim. And all of these maxims lead to the core values called *Budi* or *Budibasa* which are the most desirable and expected values by Malay people. *Budi* as a prominent position in the Malay belief system not only in the dimension of the life of the world but

also in the afterlife aimed to educate the Malays to be selective in communicating, speaking with calculation, considering, and maintaining balance in the process of communication so that harmony can be achieved among humans. The one of the most frequent used Malay proverb states that kind words for happiness in the world, good deeds for happiness in the afterlife compiles all unitary values for the safety living and harmony of human life.

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