



Preserving Javanese Proverbs in the Digital Age Revealing Values, Meanings, and Contemporary Adaptations

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ABSTRACT

Javanese proverbs hold significant cultural significance within Javanese society. However, in the era of technological advancement, their familiarity among the younger generation has dwindled. This research endeavors to elucidate the values, meanings, and evolution of Javanese proverbs. By understanding the essence of local wisdom embedded within them, it is hoped that the younger generation of Java can employ these proverbs appropriately, ensuring their continued relevance. This study adopts a descriptive-qualitative approach, selecting representative Javanese proverbs and expressions as samples. Data collection employs purposive sampling. The data is categorized into Javanese proverbs with similes, those without similes, and Javanese expressions in the age of technological advancement. The findings reveal that some Javanese proverbs incorporate similes, serving to emphasize or satirize meanings. The values of local wisdom encapsulated in these proverbs encompass patience, wisdom, respect for elders, honesty, humility, fairness, and avoidance of arrogance. Additionally, Javanese proverbs convey advice, prohibitions, and directives. In contemporary times, new Javanese expressions have emerged, often infused with humor by the younger generation. Some of these are entirely original, while others involve modifications to existing Javanese proverbs.

Keywords: *Humour, Javanese proverbs, local, speech.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Javanese people are part of the Indonesian nation, most of whom live in Central Java, East Java, and the Special Region of Yogyakarta. The Javanese people have a philosophy and culture that are expressed, among others, in Javanese proverbs. The Javanese proverb contains local wisdom values that include advice, prohibitions, orders, and suggestions.

With the high value of local wisdom, Javanese proverbs should be understood by the younger generation of Java. However, in reality, many of the young Javanese generation still do not understand Javanese, let alone high-level Javanese speech. Javanese proverbs are the result of literary works; the words used are in the form of archaic words, so sometimes they seem difficult. (Hadiatmadja, 2019).

This lack of understanding of the Javanese language resulted in a lack of understanding of Javanese proverbs. This is as stated by Prasetya and Junanah (2018); that is, in this modern era, some people are not familiar with the values contained in Javanese proverbs. In Jamilah's (2014) research, it was argued that educational policies need to be reviewed to improve the morality of the younger generation by revitalizing local wisdom. According to Setiyadi and Herawati (2019), the values of character education contained in Javanese proverbs, which contain local wisdom, need to be emulated by the younger generation.

In Javanese proverbs, the behaviors symbolized by puppet characters are reflected, such as patience, dexterity, and *nerima* (Nugroho et al., 2020). Acceptance of obtaining sustenance is taught in Javanese society in the proverb *nerima ing pandum*, 'accepting what is part of it' (Latumahina & Widyastuti, 2018). Javanese people's behavior is regulated based on a philosophy of life to achieve inner and outer peace (Normalita et al., 2021). Javanese marriages can occur because men and women often meet, which in Javanese proverbs is known as *tresno jalaran saka kulina*, 'love grows

because you are used to it' (Eko et al., 2022). This attitude of accepting what is and not being ambitious makes life peaceful.

In an old Javanese proverb, the word *eling* 'remember' is usually accompanied by the word *waspada* 'alert', such as the proverb *eling lan waspada* 'remember and alert' to remind people to avoid bad things (Sukatun, 2019). The concept of *banyu*, 'water', found in Javanese proverbs is considered an ideological conceptualization as a guide in interacting (Noviana & Saifudin, 2021). Relatively many Javanese proverbs use the word *banyu*, 'water'.

The function of Javanese proverbs is to persuade social control (Sumarlam, 2019). Metaphorical forms in proverbs are used in the philosophy of life (Prasetyoningsih et al., 2020). In Javanese proverbs, satire is sometimes used to convey opinions, advice, or ideas. It is hoped that with this innuendo, people will not be offended and can change for the better (Irfansyah et al., 2020). In Javanese proverbs, there is no direct advice (Siswoyo & Nirmala, 2021). The values *unen-unen* in Javanese elements can be a means of binding and strengthening the pride of the Javanese people in building relationships through online media in the international world (Rakhmawati & Istiana, 2021). Javanese proverbs can be used as a guide to attitude (Nirmala, 2013). The community's obligation to protect the land in Javanese proverbs is stronger than the right to make decisions about land (Pujiriyani, 2020). This attitude of tolerance reflects that society uses the Javanese term *tentrem lan ngajeni*, 'peaceful and appreciative', which is beneficial to the government, society, and religion (Permatasari, 2020). The teaching to respect other people is also contained in the Javanese proverb with the choice of the word *ngajeni*.

The use of the Javanese language hierarchically comes from modifications to the language of those in power (Goebel, 2010). There is a relationship between the Javanese language and social identity in the multicultural era (Amalo, 2022). The words chosen also reflect social status.

Previous research related to this research is still limited, including discussions of the structure, meaning, and messages contained in Javanese proverbs. Triyono et al. (2015) revealed in their research the characteristics, structure, style, meaning, and messages found in Javanese proverbs. Javanese proverbs created in the past were serious; their contents were advice, prohibitions, and suggestions. The novelty in this study is the result of linguistic analysis of the emergence of Javanese proverbs that are jokes or humor created by the younger generation in this era of technological advancement.

2. METHOD

This type of research is descriptive and qualitative. The samples are some Javanese proverbs or Javanese expressions that are considered representative. Data collection was carried out using the purposive sampling technique. The data was classified based on Javanese proverbs that used similes and those that did not use similes, as well as Javanese proverbs or expressions in the era of technological advancement. The next step was to explain the Javanese proverbs semantically and sociolinguistic.

In this study, six samples of traditional Javanese proverbs used similes, six samples of Javanese proverbs that did not use parables, and six samples of Javanese expressions or proverbs that were humorous. Data sources come from the book *Kamus Bahasa Jawa* by Prayitno (2013) and the internet. Data were analyzed using semantic theory from Lyons (1968) and speech level theory from Poedjosoedarmo (2017).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Lyons (1968) stated that the vocabulary of a language contains a lexical system whose semantic structure can be described in paradigmatic and syntagmatic terms. This study discussed problems in semantics and sociolinguistics. Before presenting the discussion, it is necessary to state the definitions of proverbs and similes as a theoretical basis for analyzing the problems in this research.

The definitions of proverbs and similes according to Triyono et al. (2015) are as follows: Proverbs are short language expressions that contain statements, opinions, or a general truth that reflect cultural values towards their environment and are usually used to convey something indirectly. A simile is a form of indirect speech.

Traditional Javanese proverbs, in their expressions, usually pay attention to language politeness. With the emergence of Javanese expressions created by the younger generation, some pay less attention to the use of speech levels. According to Poedjosoedarmo (2017), at the Javanese speech level, language politeness should be considered, among others, by using the correct speech level, telling the truth, being friendly, speaking according to the topic, and making polite gestures.

Speech level is also used in Javanese proverbs. Traditional Javanese proverbs that contain advice are usually written by people who are older or have power, so the language used is Javanese *ngoko*. In this era of technological progress, there are proverbs or expressions made by the younger generation that lack politeness, namely the inappropriate use of *ngoko* Javanese. This inaccuracy can be caused by the younger generation's lack of understanding of the speech level in Javanese (Nurhayati, 2013; Arfianingrum, 2020; Bhakti, 2020).

In the following, eighteen samples are included in the three classifications and their discussions.

3.1. Javanese Proverbs that Use Similes

Below are six samples of Javanese proverbs that contain similes.

Data 1

"*Dhemit ora ndulit, setan ora doyan.*" (Prayitno, 2013:48) 'Evil spirits don't touch, demons don't like'.

The word *dhemit* in Data 1 refers to an evil spirit. The parable with the words *dhemit* and *setan* cannot be separated from the belief that some Javanese people have in the unseen world. This Javanese proverb likens someone who is always safe, healthy, and does not get disturbed.

Data 2

"*Edom sumurup ing banyu.*" (Prayitno, 2013:56) 'The needle goes into the water'.

The meaning of Javanese proverb in Data 2 is someone who enters enemy territory in disguise. People are likened to needles, and enemies are likened to water. The needle is a small object, and if it is in the water, it will be difficult to see. This describes the state of the person in disguise, which is difficult for the enemy to know.

Data 3

"*Kakehan gludhug kurang udan.*" (Prayitno, 2013:82) 'Most thunderstorms lack rain'.

The word *kakehan gludug* in Data 3, 'mostly thunder', is used as a parable of many sounds. If you often hear the sound of thunder, it's usually not long before it rains. In this Javanese proverb, the phrase *kurang udan* 'less rain' is used. This Javanese proverb contains satire. The purpose of this satire is not to offend the person being teased. In Javanese society, to maintain politeness, utterances are usually conveyed indirectly.

Data 4

"*Kena iwake aja nganti buthek banyune.*" (Prayitno, 2013:92) 'The fish can be obtained, but don't let the water get cloudy'.

The word case in Data 4 is likened to *iwak*, 'fish', and the word fuss is likened to the phrase *buthek banyune*, 'the water is murky'. This proverb contains the advice that, in resolving cases, one should not cause commotion. Javanese people have been taught to always maintain harmony. These teachings are contained, among others, in the Javanese proverb above.

Data 5

"*Mendhem jero mikul dhuwur.*" (Prayitno, 2013:116) 'Push it deep, carry it high'.

Javanese proverb in Data 5 contains advice to cover disgrace and make your parents or family proud. This advice is to respect parents by forgetting their shortcomings or disgrace and doing good to make their name proud.

Data 6

"*Urip mung mampir ngombe.*" (Prayitno, 2013:201) 'Life only stops to drink'.

Proverb in Data 6 means that life is very short. This Javanese proverb contains advice to remind you that life is only a moment. The word for a while is likened to stopping by *ngombe*, 'stop for a drink'. This is following the ancient situation that when people drink, it does not take long or only a moment. Therefore, everyone should do good, act naturally, and not overdo it. This Javanese proverb describes the simplicity of the Javanese.

3.2. Javanese Proverbs that Do Not Use Similes

This section presents six samples of Javanese proverbs that do not use similes.

Data 7

"*Aja dumeh, aja gumunan, aja kagetan.*" (Prayitno, 2013:13) 'Don't be surprised; don't be easily amazed; don't be easily surprised'.

In Javanese proverb of Data 7, the principle of life is taught: not to be arrogant, not to be easily amazed, and not to be easily surprised by something new. Proverbs that contain advice are usually aimed at younger people as one of the principles of wading through life.

Data 8

“*Kalah wirang, menang ora kondhang.*” (Prayitno, 2013:82) ‘Losing is embarrassing; winning is not famous’.

The meaning of Javanese proverb in Data 8 is that smart people fight stupid people. If the clever person wins, it is only natural. However, if that clever person lost, it would be embarrassing. This Javanese proverb contains advice for people to always maintain harmony with each other without discriminating.

Data 9

“*Gremat-gremet waton slamet.*” (Prayitno, 2013:67) ‘Slowly, as long as you are safe’.

This Javanese proverb in Data 9 contains advice on doing something not to be in a hurry; the important thing is to be safe. One of the philosophies in Javanese society is to act carefully when doing something so that something that could cause harm does not happen.

Data 10

“*Manungsa saderma nglakoni*” (Prayitno, 2013:113) ‘Humans just go through it.’

In Data 10 of Javanese proverb, it is taught not to be ambitious and to surrender to God’s decree. So, if people do not succeed in achieving their desires, they will remember that there is a divine provision that cannot be exceeded.

Data 11

“*Rukun agawe santosa, crah agawe bubrah*” (Prayitno, 2013:168) ‘The pillars lead to peace; fighting causes damage’.

The desire to live in harmony in Javanese society is reflected in Data 11. This Javanese proverb contains advice for everyone to maintain harmony and avoid quarrels.

Data 12

“*Sapa obah mamah*” (Prayitno, 2013:175). ‘Who moves, chews’

The meaning of Javanese proverb in Data 12 is that whoever wants to work will get sustenance. In this Javanese proverb, it is revealed that motivation motivates people to want to work.

3.3. Javanese Expressions in the Era of Technological Advancement

In this era of technological advancement, Javanese language expressions have developed. Traditional Javanese proverbs are usually created by people in power. In this era of technological advances, the younger generation also creates Javanese expressions to express their feelings. The expressions created by the younger generation contain humor, prayer, or anxiety. Phrases containing jokes are made by the younger generation, who tend to like to joke with their friends. In the following, six samples of Javanese expressions are presented in the era of technological advancement.

Data 13

“*Urip iku akeh cobaan. Yen akeh saweran iku jenenge dangdutan.*” (Gradianto, 2023) ‘Life has many trials; if there are many challenges, it is called *ndangdutan*’.

Ndangdutan in Data 13 is singing and dancing, accompanied by certain musical rhythms and drum beats. In this Javanese proverb, there is a joke in the clause *yen akeh saweran, jenenge dangdutan*. In this Javanese proverb, the similar sound of the suffix [-an] is used at the end of the words *cobaan* and *dangdutan*. The sound equation is used to create a beautiful effect when pronounced.

Data 14

“*Gusti yen arek iku, jodohku, tulung cedhakaken; yen mboten, jodohku tulung jodohaken*” (Gradianto, 2023) ‘God, if this child is indeed my soul mate, please bring him closer.’

The phrase ‘If it’s not my match, please match it’. In Data 14 contains a prayer request to God. The request was conveyed by force to be fulfilled by God’s will. Prayers that show coercion are found in the sentence *Yen mboten, jodohku, tulung cedhakaken*. There is a sense of humor in this expression because usually, people pray with submission, not force. In this Javanese expression, a mixture of Javanese ngoko and the suffix krama [-aken] is used in the word *cedhakaken*. The Javanese *ngoko* is found in the words *yen arek iku jodohku, tulung cedhakaken*. In this sentence, the Javanese language of krama should be used, namely *menawi tiyang menika jodoh kula, tulung caketaken*, and ‘if that person is my soul mate, please bring me closer’. Javanese krama is more appropriate to use

than Javanese *ngoko* because the person is praying to God. Prayers should be conveyed politely. The levels of politeness in Javanese are *ngoko*, *madya*, and *krama*. Javanese *krama* is the highest level.

Data 15

“*Mending alon-alon tapi sing penting move on*” (Gradianto, 2020) ‘It’s better to take it slow but move on’.

In Javanese proverbs as Data 15, the expression “*alon-alon waton kelakon*” means “slowly as long as it is carried out”. When *Waton*’s words are turned into plays, it is important to move on. This change still pays attention to the sound equation to create beauty, namely the sound [n] at the end of the words *alon-alon* and moves on. In this Javanese expression, a mixture of English is used, namely, *move on*. In traditional Javanese proverbs, the words used are usually not mixed with Indonesian or English.

Data 16

“*Kowe lungo nggowo kenangan, kowe teko maneh nggowo undangan*” (Tysara, 2021) ‘You go with memories; you come again with invitations’.

This expression in Data 16 describes the mood of a person who is disappointed because his girlfriend is getting married. However, from the choice of words used, it can be seen that the expression was carefully arranged. In this expression, the similar sound of the suffix [-an] is used at the end of the first clause, namely memories, and at the end of the second clause, namely *undangan*. The sound equation is used to create a beautiful sound when the expression is pronounced.

Data 17

“*Berakit-rakit ke hulu berenang-renang ke tepian. Mantan wis neng penghulu, aku iseh kesepian.*” (Tysara, 2021) ‘Raft upstream, swimming to the shore. My ex-boyfriend is married; I’m still alone’.

In a traditional Javanese proverb as Data 17, the expression reads “*berakit-rakit ke hulu, berenang-renang ke tepian. Bersakit-sakit dahulu, bersenang-senang kemudian*”. The Indonesian proverb was changed by mixing Javanese, which has the same sound [u] at the end of words, namely *hulu* and *penghulu*, and the similarity of the suffix sound [-an] at the end of the words *tepian* and *kesepian*. The purpose of this change is to create a beautiful sound when it is pronounced. This proverb reveals the mood of a person who is restless. However, behind this anxiety, it appears that there is a joke in the sentence “*mantan wes neng penghulu, aku iseh kesepian*”, I’m just lonely or my ex-boyfriend is married, but I’m still alone”

Data 18

“*Tresno iku kadang koyo criping telo. Iso ajur nek ora ngati-ati le nggowo*” (Abdi, 2023) ‘Love is like cassava chips. It can be destroyed if you are not careful when caring for it’.

This Javanese expression in Data 18 contains advice for people to be careful when caring for love. Love is likened to cassava chips. Cassava chips are one type of food made from cassava, which is thinly sliced, seasoned, and then fried. Cassava chips are easily crushed when exposed to pressure or a load. The simile that appears can be caused by the young generation’s love for chips, which are so abundant and varied in this era of technological advancement. In the past, chips were not as diverse as in this era of technological advancement.

4. CONCLUSION

As in general proverbs, in Javanese proverbs, figurative words are also used. In Javanese proverbs, there are words that contain parables and some that do not. Javanese proverbs, among others, contain satire, advice, prohibitions, and life principles. The values of local wisdom contained in Javanese proverbs include patience, respect for elders, honesty, not being arrogant, and being humble. These values are taught from generation to generation. In this era of technological advances, Javanese expressions containing humor were created by the younger generation. The younger generation shows their creativity in processing words, for example by changing or adding words in Javanese proverbs that were originally serious in nature to be filled with humor or jokes. The goal is to provide humor to entertain the people around them or their readers.

Some of these Javanese expressions were created completely, some were created by changing some of the existing Javanese proverbs, and some were created by mixing Javanese proverbs with Indonesian or even English. This proverb quickly spread or went viral because it was spread via social media or the internet.

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