

Malay proverbs in inquisitive semantics approach lens: The case of Malaysian textbooks

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ABSTRACT

With reference to the Malay Language Secondary School Standard Curriculum, proverbs in Malaysian contexts are one of the language aspects that students need to use integrated in the language teaching. This research identified proverbs in the Malaysian secondary school textbooks analyzed using inquisitive semantic approach. The proverbs data were obtained from Form 4 and Form 5 Malay Language textbooks, from Ministry of Education Malaysia. Nine pieces of data were identified using the inquisitive semantics study framework involving three stages; surface meaning analysis, the semantics resonance analysis involving speaker's cognitive by applying the Cross-reference Framework (Kempson, 1986) in the Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1986; 1995), and the meaning analysis using the inquisitive semantics approach (Jalaluddin, 2014). The study indicated the proverb meaning analysis starting from the knowledge of the meaning from the dictionary, followed by the meaning of the proverbs in the context of sentences, and the exploration into the philosophy and common sense underlying the formation of the proverbs. The study proposed that the textbooks stimulated students' higher-order thinking skills with the inquiry method to create new discovery and knowledge. In conclusion, the textbooks offered teachers the proverbs analyzed by the inquisitive semantics approach as a teaching approach such to make the process of learning language in their classrooms more meaningful.

Keywords: Inquisitive semantics approach; Malay proverbs; philosophy; textbooks

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INTRODUCTION

Proverbs are part of the language, and all races have their own proverbs inherited from their forefathers for decades (Al-Azzam, 2018). They are "all the arrangements of short speeches that linger in the words of the mass, for a long time due to the fact that they sound pleasant and the words are smartly used" (Ahmad, 2022, p.152). There are rules in people's lives that are formed by religious teaching and cultural practices. These are arranged in short and precise utterances that eventually form proverbs (Omar, 2015). In the Malay community, they reflect the culture, nature, and the way the Malays think. A number of sources influences the creation of proverbs. They include the way the Malays see

things happening around them every day, the experience they gain in life, and the experience they have inherited for years from their ancestors.

In general, proverbs are used as a metaphor-oriented communication that has an orderly, brief, and precise line of words, carrying an accurate meaning (Jalaluddin, 2014). They also play a significant role in the life of Malay societies. According to the Malay Language of the Malay Secondary School Standard Curriculum by the Ministry of Education Malaysia, proverbs are taught under the language arts and language system through Forms 4 and 5 (2018). They are treated as equally important as other aspects, as proverbs are also one of the elements that portray language skills.

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