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by Tiarnita Maria Siregar

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Oral Tradition : Idioms In Batak Toba's Death Ceremony (A Semantics-Cognitive Study)

Tiarnita Maria Siregar¹, Rina Trie Syahputri², Dinda Nurul Fadillah³, Marchel Natanel Sipahutar⁴, Naufal Nasution⁵

¹⁻⁵English Language Education Program, Faculty of Languages and Arts, State University of Medan, Indonesia

Author Correspondence: lian.nita2010@gmail.com*

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ABSTRACT

Batak Toba is one of the many ethnicities that exist in Indonesia as well as having unique cultures especially regarding to ceremonies and family especially when it comes to holding death ceremonies, in Batak Toba culture they have many. It is due to the fact that culturally and historically they are used to live under the circumstances of different status in the community. As modern as it gets, the death ceremony is still being held in its traditional ways with different ceremonies for different person according to how many families they have. Culture certainly influenced a lot in a community to the oral tradition by saying phrases and idioms that may sound different to another community from different background. This paper is intended to demonstrate the technical meanings of idioms that are commonly used in Batak Toba's death ceremonies using semantics-cognitive study. This paper used a descriptive-quantitative approach with also the study of library study. The idioms that are written in this paper is searched from asking relatives who are of Batak Toba origin as well as from books, journals and several website articles.

Corresponding author: Tiarnita Maria Siregar

University of Medan

Email: lian.nita2010@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

In North Sumatra, there is a sub-ethnic that made up the majority of ethnicity there and they are called Batak Toba. This sub-ethnic is popular for their tough personality and their accent that for most people from different ethnicities would have called them "rude". Though this stereotype is somehow true, Batak Toba people (who prefer calling themselves as plain "Batak") are also known as people who put family beyond everything and their respect for the elders is beyond words. That explains how being an older people with many children and grandchildren is very much desirable in Batak Toba culture.

Batak tribe treats the lifeless body in a unique way where they celebrate this dead person's death. They give the ceremony differently according to their age and how many descendants they have owned. For their deep affection for old people, the ceremony for these elders who have had reached their "peak and desirable" stage of life (having all their children wedded left a few or many grandchildren already), they have separated and different death ceremony done for them and it is called Saur Matua. The death of Saur Matua is not to show

the sadness of his descendants but to express the joy (Simorangkir, 2018). There are also many other ceremonies for deceased people who are not yet reached the Saur Matua stage written in a book about Dalihan Na Tolu (Harvina, Fariani, Putra, Simanjuntak, & Sihotang, 2017) such as *Tilahaon* (when the deceased person is still a infant), *Mate Dakdanan* (the deceased person is still a child) *Mate Bulung* (the deceased person is a teenager), *Mate Ponggol* (the deceased person is an adult who has not yet married), *Mate Makar* (when the deceased person has already tied the knot. Mate Makar has five sub-types such as :

1. Mabalu Jongjong (a husband or a wife passed away childless, and either one of is still young).
2. Mattoppas Tataring (By the time of a woman's death, she has already had a child)
3. Matipul Ulu (By the time of a man's death, he has already had a child)
4. Mate Punu (The death of either gender, but left only a daughter)
5. Mate Pupur (it is exactly the same as Mabalu Jongjong but the deceased person passed away in an old age).

Mate Hatunganeon (the deceased person has a married son or daughter but they are still childless), *Sarimatua* (the deceased person has children and grandchildren, but some children have not yet been wedded), and then *Mauli Bulung* (the deceased person has the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren). Although by stage Mauli Bulung is the most desirable one, but it occurs very occasionally and regarded as "almost impossible".

This paper focuses on finding the meaning in idioms used in the process of death ceremony using semantics-cognitive theory. Semantics is a study of a traditional meaning in language. Quoting Lobner in (Acheoah & Olaleye, 2018), meanwhile cognitive refers to the mental process by which external or internal input is transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored and recovered and used (Neisser, 2014). When being put together, these two formed a linguistics study called cognitive-semantics which is a part of cognitive linguistics movement. Cognitive semantics holds that language is a part of a more general human cognitive ability, and can only therefore describe the word as conceive of it (Croft & Cruse, 2004). In semantics-cognitive, meaning is a conceptual structure that has been conventionalized and language is a way of externalization from all mechanisms that has occurred in humans' brain (Fatikhudin, 2018). Semantic-cognitive theory can not be separated from image schema. According to Wikipedia, image schema is a recurring structure within our cognitive processes which establishes patterns of understanding and reasoning. When yielding about the condensed characteriation of Mark Johnson and George Lakoff's image schema, Beate Hampe (Hampe, 2005) stated that:

- 3 1. Image schemas are *directly meaningful* (“experiential”/“embodied”). Preconceptual structures, which arise from, or are grounded in, human recurrent bodily movement through space, perceptual interactions, and ways of manipulating objects.
2. Image schemas are highly *schematic* gestalts which capture the structural contours of sensory-motor experience, integrating information from multiple modalities.
3. Image schemas exist as *continuous* and *analogue* patterns beneath conscious awareness, prior to independently of other concepts.
4. As gestalts, image schemas are both *internally structured*, i.e., made up of very few related parts, and highly *flexible*. This flexibility becomes manifest in the numerous transformations they undergo in various experiential contexts, all of which are closely related to perceptual (gestalt) principles.

In short, image schema is what creates the meaning to different person or a community based on their own understanding about an object. Image schema is very much subjective for it is based on someone or a community’s experience and cultural activities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using a descriptive-qualitative approach. (Calderon, 2006) described *descriptive* study as a purposive process of gathering, analyzing, classifying, and tabulating data about prevailing conditions, practices, processes, trends, and cause and effect relationships and then making adequate and accurate interpretation about the data with minimal aid of statistical methods. As well as because the research was in the form of library research/literary data to obtain a deep understanding of the idioms used in death ceremonies in the Toba Batak tribe with a semantic-cognitive study. And the qualitative approach is being used because, the most observable and obvious reason is due to the lack of statistical data being put in this paper. Qualitative approach is described as an effective model that occurs in a natural setting that enables the researcher to develop a level of detail from being highly involved in the actual experiences (Creswell, 2003). The sources were taken by asking authors’ relatives who are an origin of Batak Toba. And it studies the idioms in Batak Toba which area of study has not yet broadly observed and studied.

DISCUSSION AND RESULT:

In this part of this paper, authors would like to primarily explain and elaborate more about idioms before embarking on to idioms that is there in Batak Toba language, most significantly in the process of death ceremony in Batak Toba culture.

1. Definition of Idiom

Idiom is one type of meaning found in the field of semantic studies. Being at the linguistic level, it makes meaning the object of semantic analysis. The term semantics is then approved for use in linguistics which studies the meaning or relationship between linguistic signs and what they signify (Chaer, 2013). It can be said that idioms are a combination of words that cannot be guessed or predicted based on the elements that form them (Pratiwi, 2018).

From some of these definitions, it can be concluded that the meaning of idioms is the meaning of language units in the form of words, phrases, clauses or sentences that have other meanings or are independent of the elements that form them.

Idioms are often confused with expressions, metaphors and proverbs. These terms actually cover almost the same object, but the perspective is different.

2. Types of Idiom

a. Types of idioms are seen from the closeness of the elements forming idioms in producing new meanings. Chaer (2013:7) divides them as follows:

- (1) Full idioms are idioms whose constituent elements as a whole have become a single unit with one meaning. For example: "slam the bones" means "work hard". Another example is "wrap my head around" which means trying to understand something. Every word in this idiom has been merged into one meaning and cannot be separated anymore.
- (2) Partial idiom is a form of idiom that still has lexical or grammatical meaning in one of its constituent elements. examples of partial idioms include "storm brewing in his eyes" which refers to the emotions seen from the eyes of others. The word "storm" has a different meaning from the original, while the rest can still be interpreted literally, namely in "other people's eyes".

b. Types of idioms by form

1. Expressions

According to Chaer, expressions are forms whose elements are assembled in a fixed way and can express a certain message. For example, the expression "oily water" in Indonesian means "good at praising because it has a certain meaning".

This expression is an idiom that is used because in reality oil and water can never merge. So this expression states that what is said by someone is different from what is in his heart or true feelings.

2. Metaphors

Metaphors can generally be defined as idioms whose basic structure consists of two things, namely something that is talked about and also something that is used as a comparison.

For example, the metaphor "writing like chicken claws" means "his writing is messy or untidy". This is an idiom that compares a person's writing, which is difficult to read, to the messy soil of chicken scratches.

c. Ased on the type of structure

(1) Idioms with Regular or Irregular Structure

Idioms can have a regular or regular structure, as well as an irregular or irregular structure. In addition, it can also happen that the idioms that have been created do not match the structure and grammar.

For example, the idiom "I am good friends with him". If you pay attention, the structure and grammar of the sentence are not correct, because it should be "I am a good friend with him". It uses "friend" without "s".

(2) Regular Idioms with No Clear Meanin

Idioms that have a regular form and are structurally and grammatically correct can also have no clear meaning. An example is the idiom "to have a bee in one's bonnet".

However, the actual meaning is to talk about something continuously because someone thinks it is important.

(3) Idioms with Good Grammar but Irregular Meaning

This idiom is grammatically correct, but has an irregular meaning. An example is "to be in the swim". In this sentence, there are verbs, prepositions, and adjectives, but no nouns. This will look and sound very strange when spoken.

3. Examples of Idiom

- a. Come to blows, which means to fight or argue seriously. The example sentences are "Rachel and Ryan come to blows about this case."
- b. Come round, has the meaning of being aware or awake. The example sentences are "Andrew finally come round after someone hit her face until falls."
- c. Make eyes at, has the meaning of flirting. The example sentences are "Don't make eyes at another people happiness, if you don't to feel jealous".
- d. To hand over, has the meaning of handing over. The example sentences are "Don't handed over the book to Evelyn."

- e. Wash up, has the meaning of washing. The example sentences are "Eshal helped me wash up the cat."
- f. Call it a day, means to pause from working on a project or job when you have reached a point that is good enough to take a break. Example sentences are "Alright team! We've made plenty of progress. I think now is the perfect time to call it a day."
- g. Get down to business, has the meaning to stop the small talk and start talking seriously about business topics. The example sentences are "Enough with the small talk. Let's get down to business!"
- h. On the same page, has the meaning two or more people who have the same understanding of something. The example sentences are "Let's go over the study once again. I just want to make sure that we're on the same page."

It is unquestionably known that there are many idioms found when giving speeches about a deceased person, whether it is about how they were like when they were still alive or the hope, wishes and prayers arranged as beautiful and is often embodied into words as the expression of thought or to show sympathy to those who are in sorrow. There are some idioms in English *Kick The Bucket* whose meaning is to describe the tragic death of someone by committing suicide with rope and as they kicked the bucket away, but as the centuries passed by, the meaning of the idiom was changed into "to die". And there is *Go to Glory* whose meaning is "die and go to heaven". This idiom is related to a place where there is glory and happiness. Other idioms would be *Six Feet Under*, *Rest in Peace*, *Final Curtain*, et cetera. So does Batak Toba culture have its own meanings for some idioms relating to the death of someone, mostly being said at the death ceremony of the deceased person. Here are the semantic-cognitive analysis of some idioms relating to someone's death in Batak Toba language:

The high meaning of the traditional implementation of the death ceremony of the Batak Toba community not only exist in the selection of diction in words, but there are also some selection in phrases is also found. Some of these idioms are easy to understand because the correlation between these idioms when forming a whole new phrase are transparent and direct. Below are some phrases and idioms conveyed at the *saur matua* traditional ceremony are:

a. Mardos niroha

Mardos → Unite
Niroha → Heart

Mardos niroha is a phrase consisting of the words 'mardos' as 'unite' and the word 'roha' as 'heart', because in the traditional event it is not possible for the whole to speak up,

the phrase *mardos Niroha* shows that there is an agreement by way of Deliberation. In short, one member of the Dalihan Na Tolu group has represented the others because they are 'united'. Group has represented the others because they are 'united in heart'. An example of this phrase in the sentence: *Mardos niroha ma dihita na mardongan tubu* 'Agree that we are of one descent'

b. Hata nauli

Hata → Word
Nauli → Good

Hata nauli is made up of the word 'hata' as 'word' and the phrase 'nauli' as 'Good'. Thus, this phrase means 'advice'. This phrase is usually used when you want to give words of comfort, advice or support to a bereaved family. An example of this phrase in a sentence: *Asa songon tangiangmuna i dohot Hata nauli hatamuna i ma nian lae sai tubu di hami dame dibagasan las ni Roha, tubu di hami angka bisuk dohot hapistaran*. 'As you pray and advise, may there be peace in your Heart, blessings and intelligence in us'

c. Marujung ngolu

Marujung → End
Ngolu → Life

Marujung ngolu is a phrase consisting of the word 'marujung' as 'end' and the phrase 'ngolu' 'life'. The word marujung, which refers to ending and is connected with the word Ngolu, which means life, can be interpreted as someone who has come to the end of his or a person who has passed away. An example of this phrase in a sentence: *Nungga marujung ngolu oppung ni si yusuf* 'Op.yusuf has passed away'

d. Ari na tiur

Ari → Day
Na tiur → The good

Ari na tiur is a phrase consisting of the word ari as 'day' and the phrase na tiur as 'the good'. Thus, This Phrase is usually used at the beginning of a condolence speech delivered to the bereaved family. Which means this word is a good day, this word is conveyed as a form of comfort in view of the death of one of the family so that the family left behind does not drag on in sadness but in happiness because the family has returned with the Father in heaven. Good day' Example of this phrase in a sentence: *diari na tiur on tapaborhat ma annon Inang on tu jabu naimbaru*. 'On this good day, we will send this mother to her new home/grave'

e. Sada ni roha

Sada → One
Ni roha → Heart

Sada ni roha is a phrase consisting of the word sada ‘one’ and the phrase ni Roha ‘heart’, thus this phrase means to unite the heart. This phrase is used to remind the bereaved family that the grief experienced is not a break in their family but a reason for them to continue to be united in heart. Example of this phrase in a sentence: **Sada ni roha ma muna tu ari naeng ro Namarhahaanggi**. ‘Be united in your heart in the future, brother and sister’.

f. Holong ni roha

Holong → Dear
Ni roha → Heart

Holong ni roha is a phrase consisting of the word holong ‘dear’ and the The phrase ni roha ‘heart’. Thus, this phrase means ‘affection’. This phrase is used to express the affection and struggle given from the family to the deceased family member during their lifetime. An example of this phrase in a sentence: **nungga di patudu hamu holong ni roho Tu natua-tuamuna, diboan hamu do marubat tu dolok tu toruan**. ‘You’ve shown love to your parents, you’ve taken them for treatment everywhere for their sake. You take them for treatment anywhere for their recovery’.

g. Uli ni lagu

Uli → Beautiful
Ni lagu → Behavior

Uli ni lagu is a phrase consisting of the word uli ‘beautiful’ and the phrase ni lagu means (relating to behavior). Thus, this phrase means ‘very good behavior’. This phrase can be used to express the kindness of someone's behavior, or to ask someone to behave better after experiencing grief. An example of this phrase in a sentence: **Uli ni lagu do na huparsinta sian bere nami** ‘The good behavior we want from our bere’

h. Jabu jabuna

Jabu → Home
Jabuna → Her/his home

Jabu jabuna is a phrase consisting of the world ‘Jabu’ as ‘Home’ and word ‘Jabuna’ as ‘Her/his home’. Thus, in simple language, Jabu means house. But the real meaning of the word in this case is the dwelling place for his final resting place, the coffin. An example of this expression is in the sentence: **Mauliate ma di hamu hulahunami, ala nunga ro hamu di bagasan**

manogoton mamoppohon natuatua on tu *jabu-jabuna*. 'Thank you to our hulahula for coming this morning to put the bodies of our parents into their new home, the coffin'.

i. Ingana Parsatongkinan

Ingana → Place
Parsatongkinan → Temporary

Ingana Parsatongkinan is a phrase consisting of the word Ingana as 'Place' and word Pasatongkinan as 'Temporary'. Thus, If the two words Ingana which means place and Parsatongkinan which means temporary, it can be concluded that this phrase means a temporary place. And the temporary place meant is the grave tomb. This is based on the belief of the Batak people who adhere to Christianity that the grave is only a temporary place because the eternal place is only with the Father in heaven. An example of this expression in a sentence: *Asa dilehon ma tutu di hami hagagoon dohot hahipason di na paadop-adop dohot di na laho pasahathon marsogot tu inganan parsatongkinan i natuatuanami on jala naborumuna on lae.* which means "As well as the strength and patience given by God to us in preparing for the burial ceremony that will be carried out later according to the prayers of our hulahula. "

j. Jabuna Naimbaru

Jabuna → Her/his home
Naimbaru → The new one

The word Jabuna means his house and the word Naimbaru means the new one. It can be concluded that the meaning of this phrase is his new home. This phrase is used to express a new dwelling place in the sense of his grave. An example of this expression in a sentence: *So apala di tingki on, naing paborhatonta ma natua-tuantatu jabu naimbaru.* 'So, at this time we want to go to his new grave home'.

k. Parbahul-bahulnabolon

Parbahul bahul → Bakul
Nabolon → The big one

Parbahul bahul nabolon is a phrase consisting of the word Parbahul bahul which means Bakul, and the word Nabolon which means big. So if combined can be a big basket, Batak people believe this is intended for someone who is elder and always generous willing to help others unconditionally, be it material or spiritual. This phrase is usually used to express the kindness of a person. For example "*Tulang nami olo do gabe parbahul-bahul nabolon tu hami akka berena*". 'Our uncle wants to help us his nieces and nephews materially or spiritually.'

CONCLUSION

The death of someone in Batak Toba culture can vary and each is according to the stage the deceased person has reached. There are Tilahaon, Mate Dakdanan, Mate Bulung, Mate Makar, Mate Hatunganeon, Sari Matua, Saur Matua and finally Mauli Bulung. All the idioms that are commonly used in these ceremonies are studied with semantic-cognitive study. Semantics-cognitive study is a study of words or phrase based on the understanding of different people and different community, to simplify. The study of these idioms are explained as detail as possible on what makes the Batak Toba community agreed on making separate words and then joined to create a whole idiom whose meaning is now a completely different meaning. There are expressions and metaphors in these idioms. These idioms in Batak Toba language that have previously been explained such as Mardos ni roha (Semantics: United at heart) which basically is for one person that can represent everyone's thoughts and prayers, Hata Nauli (Semantics: Good word) whose meaning is words that can be used to comfort the family that is still grieving, Marujung Ngolu (Semantics: End of Life) whose meaning is interpreted into someone who has come to the end of their life, Ari Na Tiur (Semantics: The good day) is used to describe the days the deceased person will have in heaven with Father in heaven, Sada ni Roha (Semantics: One heart) is to express the guests' feeling about the grieves the family is feeling, Holong ni Roha (Semantics: Dear Heart) is described to remember the good behaviours the deceased person have done to their family and others, Uli ni Lagu (Semantics: Beautiful Behaviour) whose meaning is somehow the same as Holong ni Roha, Jabu Jabuna (Semantics: Their house) refers to the deceased person's house which is their coffin and next place in heaven, Ingana Parsatongkinan (Semantics: Temporary Place) is used to describe the Earth as a place where humans live temporarily, Jabuna Naimbaru (Semantics: Their new house) which basically refers to the coffin like Jabu Jabuna but this describes their new house on earth, and Parbahul-bahul Nabolon (Semantics: Big Basket) usually exists in the Saur Matua and Mauli Bulung death ceremony, as it is to describe the good deeds the old deceased person have done and their kind personality.

15

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