

Simpulan Bahasa, Conceptual Metaphors and Malay Knowledge

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Introduction

This study will be focusing on Malay proverbs. To be exact, it deals with Malay *Simpulan Bahasa*. Za'ba (2002: 157) states that the “idiom” is also referred to as an ‘expression’, and the meaning of each idiom is conveyed by the combination of the two or more words that are fixed and structurally place in a special arrangement. The data in this study is taken from only one secondary source which is *Kamus Bunga Bahasa* (1961). The *Simpulan Bahasa* (SB) chosen for this study consist of only two-word figurative fixed formations. The objective of this study is to show how the meaning of the selected SB can be disambiguated using the Interactive Metaphorical Theory by Black (1962) and Cognitive Semantic Theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980; 2003). According to Tenas Effendy (2003), many among the Malays today do not understand Malay proverbs. Nor Hashimah and Junaini (2010) also state that almost 60 percent of teens in Malaysia are unable to understand and master the SB well.

The study on Malay *Simpulan Bahasa* has never lacked the attentions of researchers. Charteris-Black (2000) looks at selected Malay figures and disambiguates the lexical items in the figures by attempting to relate Malay cognition and culture. His corpus-based study attempts to uncover Malay cognition by looking at *mata*, and *kaki* as components lexical items in SB. It is of some significance to note that he did not classify them as idioms but as figurations. His study shows that Malay cultural resonance appears in SB with human body parts and these parts of the human body are attuned to spatial conceptual metaphors. The word *kaki* referring to ‘leg’, the lower part of the human anatomy has a negative connotation. Thus, although the ‘hand’ is the active limb in gambling, a sinful activity for the Malay Muslims, it is the ‘leg’, i.e. *kaki* is the metaphorical construct for *kaki judi*, a person addicted to gambling, literally ‘leg gamble/gambling’. Hassan Ahmad (2003) elaborated that *kaki* is used in Malay metaphorically as a symbol for ‘strength’. For example, *kaki botol* [*botol* = bottle], *kaki perempuan* [*perempuan* = woman/women], and *kaki judi* [*judi* = gamble/gambling] carry negative meanings for someone who always drink alcohol, a serial womaniser and always gambling respectively.

Lia Mohaini’s study (2006) is based on conventional metaphorical. This study uses cognitive metaphorical theory suggested by Lakoff and Johnson (1980; 2003). The results of the study found that the words *bulan* and *bintang* have been expanding in meanings. She shows that the two lexical items are also referents that are not limited to the satellite of our planet, i.e. *bulan* ‘moon’, and celestial bodies, *bintang* ‘stars’ respectively.

A further discussion on SB looks at the cognitive processes that occur in the formation of the idioms containing the word *makan*. Anida Sarudin (2012) applies one of the principles in the cognitive semantic theory introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) specifically on metaphorical conceptions. The study highlights that *makan* has developed metaphorical meanings. This is because the word *makan* has been used to convey other meanings that are not physically restricted to the literal consumption of food via the mouth, for example, *makan hati* as in ‘sad; saddened and hurt by the action of another’ (the authors’ translation of

Abdullah). The study found that cognitive semantics is a very effective framework in explaining the formation of the SB created by the Malay speech community.

Nor Hashimah (2014) readdressed questions that she felt were not dealt adequately by Charteris-Black (2000). This was in relation to how the metaphorical lexical items in the SB convey its metaphorical meaning. Both Nor Hashimah (2014) and Hassan Ahmad (2003) claim that inquisitive semantics (Ciardelli, Goenenjik & Roelofsen, 2013) is an appropriate theory in disambiguating non-literal meaning. They have separately carried out detailed analysis of selected SB surreptitiously based on inquisitive semantics, but they did not provide detailed analytical framework of their methodology.

To date, it appears that conceptual metaphors provide a simple yet rigorous cognitive process that any language user can consciously or unconsciously utilise in working out the non-literal meaning of SB.

Methodology

This qualitative research involves secondary data which consists of SB taken from Abdullah Sidek's (1961) *Kamus Bunga Bahasa* (KBB). A total of 91 SB is identified which contain lexical items relating to animals. In total there are 36 types of animal. The 36 types of the animals are further classified into 19 different domains. These domains are treacherous or dishonest (*buaya darat* and *lintah darat*), vain (*membabi buta* dan *kutu embun*), activity (*kelawar malam* and *kaki kuda*), intelligent or efficient (*akal kancil* and *lipas kudung*), and the physicality of the animal (*pekak badak* and *bunting kerbau*). This paper will only look at the five domains mentioned above. These domains were chosen based on the frequency of related animal collocates, i.e. the domain with more than two instances of animal collocates. Only one SB with animal collocation randomly chosen from the five domains will be analysed in this abstract. All SB chosen are two-word collocations, such as *buaya darat* [crocodile + land]. The analysis adopts Aniswal's (2000: 229) diagrammatic representation of Black's (1962) interactive metaphorical theory. The researchers also apply the cognitive theory of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980: 2003) conceptual ontological metaphor in the analysis of the animal collocates. Using the two theories adopted, the researchers will show (1) how Malay *Simpulan Bahasa* (SB) are formed and conversely, (2) how to analyse the meaning of SB based on the framework in (1).

Results

The Interactive Metaphorical Theory (1962) by Black and Cognitive Semantic Theory (1980; 2003) by Lakoff and Johnson provides a useful tool in disambiguating the overall meaning of the SB in depth. The people who created the SB are wise and knowledgeable in bringing together two elements of nature present in every SB e.g. *buaya*/crocodile [animal] + *darat*/land [environment] to form a collocatively different meaning to the individual lexical items in the collocation. In order to understand the meaning of the SB, the language user needs to perceive or express (vehicle 1) and (vehicle 2) and matched them together cognitively to concepts relating to the lexical items.

In addition, this study also found that the application of the two theories unwittingly highlights Malay common sense and encyclopaedic knowledge of its world. These aspects of Malayness and Malay knowledge are reflected in the SB. The concerns of Tenas Effendy (2003) and Nor Hashimah and Junaidi (2010) may be addressed and aided by utilizing our

methodological framework above. Aniswal's (2000: 229) diagrammatic representation of Black (1962) provides a schematic cognitive process which can be adopted in the teaching and learning of Malay figurative language in primary and secondary schools. Teachers may find it suitable in helping students to locate the environmental and encyclopaedic knowledge already culturally inherent in their learners.

Discussion

This section discusses two data, the first is from the domain of dishonesty or treacherousness (*lintah darat*) and the second is from the domain of activity (*kelawar malam*). Analysis of data using Black's (1962) Interactive Metaphorical Theory.

Data 1: *Lintah Darat*

Data 2: *Kelawar Malam*

Data Analysis based on Ontological Conceptual Metaphor

This theory is Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphors (1980; 2003). Black (1962) is not seen as a study on this metaphor which is cognitive in nature although there are similarities in identifying vehicle and grounds in that conceptual nature of both are interacted as with Lakoff and Johnson's conceptuality of domains. The following will show Lakoff and Johnson's disambiguations of metaphors. The data above are analysed below using their cognitive theory of metaphors.

Data 1: *Lintah Darat* (Domain of Dishonesty or Treacherousness)

The cognitive description of Black (1962) has summarized the characteristics of the leeches. The researchers will explain why *lintah darat* refers to people who like to take excessive or extreme profits (Abdullah Hassan and Aion, 2002). Firstly, *lintah* will be elaborated encyclopaedically and this will show the co-relation to the meaning of 'land'.

In the Malay environment, leeches are easily found in the fields, water strips, and marshes, and a parasitic. This animal has a suction at the anterior ends of the body around the mouth and another suction at the posterior end. The leeches from the gnathobdellidae group are those that suck human blood. The blood sucking leech will stay on the body until it is full, then it goes down to digest food. Leeches produce and inject an anticoagulin material into the blood of the body. Anticoagulin works to delay blood clots to ensure the leeches get enough blood (Abdul Wahab, 1998: 135).

Meanwhile, 'land' means an area that is not flooded by water. This is significant as leeches are animals which live in the water as opposed to *pacat*, largely a land-based animal. Thus, *lintah darat* metaphorically refers to humans. The attitude of the greedy man who takes excessive profits is not good and is liken to the nature of the leeches when sucking the blood of the populace. The animal will suck the blood of its victim as much as possible until it is full. So, it is precisely this juxtaposition of concepts: blood sucking leeches at the expense of its victim and the man who likes to oppress the weak.

Data 2: *Kelawar Malam* (Domain Activity)

Bats fly at night and awake at dusk. This may be due to avoid more activities in the daytime, in order to prevent excessive heat generated when the bats fly in the heat of sunlight and avoid dryness due to their skin surface area exposed to heat and light (Jackie, 1994: 22).

One of the characteristics of a bat is that it sleeps during the day and wakes up at dusk. The use of the 'bat' here refers to a prostitute that works at night in the dark alleys. Prostitution

activities are legally wrongful and that why these activities need to be ‘hidden’. This is another metaphor of ‘night’. Surreptitiously prostitutions do not operate during the day to avoid detections by the authorities. If we observe the bat carefully: bats living in urban areas are particularly synonymous with the dark areas, especially the hallways of buildings that are rarely ‘trafficked’ by humans.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the Malay SB matches the whore to a bat as is active, goes out or is engaged in the evening. Thus, based on these simple observations of the characteristics of the bat, the researchers are inclined to conclude that the Malay speech community are aware of these characteristics thus equate *kelawar malam* to a woman who works as a prostitute.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *simpulan bahasa* is a legacy for the Malay speech community to be admired, studied and understood by every generation. The study found that human beings and the environment in the Malay world are intertwined. That the Malays of old have access to scientific knowledge of fauna and conceptually capitalized them in their everyday idiomatic language is to be acknowledged. This intimacy with the world around allows the Malay speech community to associate and juxtapose an element with another element and then translate it into the form of *Simpulan Bahasa*.

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