

## Revealing Malay Intellectuality through Language Expression in Selected Folk Stories

Nik Rafidah Nik Muhamad Affendi, Arba'ie Sujud, Roslina Abu Bakar, Rahimah Hamdan

Malay Department Faculty of Modern Language and Communication University Putra Malaysia

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJAROSS/v11-i12/11622> DOI:10.6007/IJAROSS/v11-i12/11622

**Published Date:** 16 December 2021

### Abstract

Language plays an important role in expressing Malay intellectuality. Research on selected folktales shows intellectual features are related to the socio-cultural aspects. The objectives of this study are Identifying and analyzing the language expression in revealing Malay intellectuality in selected folktales. The traditional Malay community uses subtle and effective language in expressing the socio-culture of the community around them. They are very concerned with courtesy and good values in their lives. Through the language expression, the far-seeing Malay values can be seen. Each story contains lessons delivered in a beautiful and understandable language that symbolizes Malay intellectuality. This study is important to preserve folk tales that have beauty from the aspect of language.

**Keywords:** Language, Intellectuality, Malay Values, Folk Tales

### Introduction

The mind is often associated with the intellect. In a literary work, the intellectual element plays an important role in the formation of creative and positive thinking. Audiences are trained to think about the phenomena happening around them. They must know the development of their society. They must learn the cultural rhythm of societal life around them, from here they can judge the good and bad and then know which path they should follow. That is why Socrates said that 'wisdom is knowledge'. For him, a knowledgeable person is virtuous. According to him, evil deeds come from people who are not knowledgeable. This is because they cannot make the right judgments. This opinion of Socrates was supported by Plato by presenting the ethical essence of intellectual and rational. Plato also argued that knowledgeable people are more rational in their actions (Hatta, 1982:66-84). Therefore, from an early age, children should be exposed to the vicissitudes of society according to their age.

Every reading material presented to an audience will often contain elements of intellectual opinion. The role of cognition is as an intellectual process. This is in line with the opinion of Mohamed (2001: 172) that cognition is an intellectual process. This means that cognition

involved higher mental processes such as thinking, speaking, storing information in memory, and using stored information to reason, make decisions or solve problems. This element plays an important role in shaping the cognition of the growing child.

The intellectuality of the traditional Malay society is largely traced through the use of language that is simple and subtle, but full of meaning. Each expression is symbolic and has its deep meaning. Literary works also reveal intellectual elements that are also beautiful. Through the intellectual element, the knowledge or thought of the author or writer is embedded. Therefore, a literary work is a message and author's ideas to be conveyed, shared, or pondered together by the audience of readers. In addition, the question of thoughts, messages, or ideas in a literary work is the main and important question that a writer must think about before the production or creation of imaginative work. It is clear to us that literature is closely related to language.

Through language, literature can be conveyed and disseminated. From the language, the reader will feel the beauty of literature. With language as well, all the content and purpose that the literature wants to convey can be understood by the reader effectively. Readers will also appreciate the experiences and feelings displayed in the literature depicted in the form of clear and beautiful language. Therefore, the meaning of literature can be concluded as the creation of art conveyed through language. Here, the intellectuality of the traditional Malay community to create classic stories is highlighted.

The objectives of this study are:

1. Identifying the language expression in revealing Malay intellectuality in selected folktales.
2. Analyzing the language expression in revealing Malay intellectuality in selected folktales.

### **Revealing The Malay Mind Through The Language Expressions From The Sociocultural Aspects**

Folktales express a lot of Malay minds and thinking. The literal and implicit elements are conveyed subtly. According to Hasan (2006: 17) studies in the field of parapsychology have proven that by using the mind, humans can communicate with others through nothing organic and this is called telepathy. It has also been proven, the mind can see something far away and this is what is called clairvoyance. In addition, it has been proven that the mind can influence the behavior of an object and this is called psychokinesis. Based on the above statement, the Malay mind found in folktales continues to thrive from time to time. It is "eternal". Malay society is traditionally far-seeing, the message contained in the stories can be received from one generation to another. Furthermore, the values are quoted as a guide of life.

In folk tales, the creator's wisdom of the mind to use a subtle and effective language style can be seen in the sociocultural expression of the society around them. The language is simple but loaded with implicit elements to serve as a guide to the audience. Each word is loaded with meaning that contains didactic elements. Regarding this, Puteh (1991: 12) stated that Malay life (Malay worldview) is reflected in Malay folk literature. The Malay worldview of life is concerned about good relations between fellow human beings and between human beings

and their nature. Thus, in folk literature, there are all kinds of metaphors that contain elements of education and example. All this proves how traditional society lives in a community. The traditional society also seemed inseparable from nature.

The traditional Malay community attaches great importance to virtue. They are not only virtuous between human beings but also between humans and animals to achieve the level of harmony of life. In the story *Kerana Budi (Because of Good Deeds)*, Pak Jani is described as being kind to a sparrow that injured its wings. In the end, good deeds are rewarded well and appreciated by the sparrow. One day, Pak Jani got lost in the forest. He was about to spend the night in the woods. While he was thinking, he heard a chirping sound. Immediately Pak Jani looked up. Pak Jani could see there was a sparrow on the branch of the tree. The bird was the bird he once helped. Here, the traditional Malay community wants to show its community to be kind regardless of whether it is to humans or animals because kindness is well rewarded. This can be seen through the language expressions as follows:

Sungguh mulia hati Pak Jani (Pak Jani's heart is noble),  
Membantu kita yang cedera (Helped me, who was injured);  
Kini kita ingin membalas budi (Now I want to reciprocate),  
Ikutlah jalan yang kita hala (Follow the path I showed).

In the story, Pak Jani is described as surprised to hear the bird's poem. He followed the direction of the sparrow. Finally, Pak Jani found his way home. Appreciation for Pak Jani's kindness did not stop there. The sparrow sang again. This can be seen through the language expression below.

Budimu sungguh mulia (Your character is noble),  
Membantu insan tak kira siapa (Helping people no matter who);  
Kubalas budimu tiada curiga (I replied kindly without suspicion),  
Mudah-mudahan hidupmu bahagia (I hope your life is happy).

Based on the above language expression, it can be seen that even birds know how to reciprocate kindness. The use of language is subtle and unpretentious but leaves a deep impression. This shows the importance of kindness in traditional Malay society.

The traditional Malay community also uses fine language when reprimanding its members. This can be seen through the expression of the language of its creator. For example, in the story *Seuncang Padi (A Pouch of Paddy)*, it can be seen that the traditional Malay community does not harshly criticize the attitude of a couple who are lazy to work and live in poverty. Words of advice combined with the subtlety of kindness can change human behavior from negative to positive. In this case, the old man does not talk about the lazy attitude of the couple but seems to tell them to look ahead to change their destiny. This can be seen through the language expression below.

"In this pouch, there is something magical. It can make you rich,"  
said the old man. He gave the bag to the husband.

"Tomorrow morning, sprinkle the contents of this bag in the backyard. You will be rich soon," said the old man again. He then asked for permission to leave.

(pg.: 10)

The old man used a simple but hopeful tone that come from the observation of the plight of the couple. The process of cognition involves high mental processes such as thinking and language that can lead to a shift in the Malay paradigm from negative to positive. Something 'magical' is rice. Therefore, when paddy or rice is sown/planted, then the result is obtained. This would make the couple rich. Soon, the old man returned to see what had happened to the couple. Their fate had changed. The old man was entertained by the couple. The next day the old man thanked the poor man and his wife. Before leaving the poor man's house, he said;

"I pray that God will always bless your lives. I am the old man who gave a handful of rice before."

The poor husband and wife were shocked to hear those words. They were thankful that they were happy thanks to the old man's advice.

In the story of *Padi Berbuah Emas (Paddy bearing Gold)*, it can also be seen that in the traditional Malay society, agricultural products such as rice are considered an important source of income for the community. However, in continuing life survival, society must also prioritize human values to achieve harmony in life. In this story, in Kampung Jeram, there was a farmer named Kasan. His job was to grow rice. When the rice was matured, Kasan came to his hut. That morning the rice was eaten by sparrows. He chased away the sparrows. Still, the sparrow came back to eat his rice. Kasan was so upset, he decided to kill the sparrow. On the way, he met an old woman. Through the language expression, it can be seen that the traditional Malay society has a very delicate manner. Their thoughts are sharp and sublime. This can be seen in the passage below.

"My rice had matured. But it was eaten by sparrows," said Kasan.

"Your rice is a blessing of your honest efforts. You are not jealous, envious, and angry," said the old woman.

"Your sustenance is bountiful, but you are greedy. You want to earn the sustenance alone. What's wrong with sharing it with others," said the old woman again.

"The sparrow is also a creature of God. Let the bird eat a little," she said.

Kasan was taken aback by the old woman's words.

The next day Kasan went to the field. He saw a sparrow was eating his rice. He let the bird eat as much as it wants. Suddenly Kasan saw on the places that the rice was being eaten by the sparrows was sparkling. He went there. How surprised Kasan was to see that his rice turns to gold. The golden luster is only found in places where the sparrows eat the rice.

"I will not be greedy again," said Kasan.

Based on the language expression by the author, it can be seen that the socio-cultural life of the traditional society is very far-seeing and mature in their action. 'Padi Berbuah Emas' is symbolic of the society that if the sustenance is given to others, it will not be decreased, but will increase in abundance.

The traditional Malay society also places great emphasis on respect for both parents. The parents' position is highly regarded in traditional Malay society. This can be seen in the story 'Melanggar Janji (Breaking Promises)'. In the story, Seman and his parents lived in Kampung Ulu Petai. He was not handsome. The skin of his face and hands were mottled. At the end of the village, there was a thick forest. At the edge of the forest, there was a large piece of flat rock. The villagers looked for *petai* (stinky bean) in the forest. They occasionally met a beautiful princess there. They said it was an elf.

One day, while looking for firewood, Seman got lost. He saw a large rock. Seman stopped and fell asleep there. When he woke up, he found that he was in a palace. The Princess was on his side. Seman was astonished. He felt his body fresh and fragrant. He touched his face. He saw the skin on both his hands was no longer mottled. Seman and his wife lived happily. After a while, he missed his village. He told his wife that he wanted to go back to the village. His wife gave him a black stone. The high position of parents in the view of the traditional Malay community can be seen through the language expression as follows:

"If you are in trouble, rub this stone. I will assist. But remember, don't be treacherous," said the princess.

However, Seman forgot about his wife's order. Seman was rude to his mother because his mother had thrown away the black stone. After all, it was thought to be useless. Seman's rude actions towards his mother can be seen through the language expression below:

"What, you threw it away? That's my wife's gift. Why didn't you ask me first?" Seman asked angrily. He stood in anger with his hands on his hips facing his mother. The old woman cried in fear. Immediately, Seman shivered. He fell to the floor. The skin of his face and hands became mottled again. He's not handsome anymore. Her father and mother were shocked and cried. Such is the great retribution of those who disobey their parents.

Being kind to parents is also a requirement of Islamic morality. On the other hand, Tenggang does not want to do good to his parents. Because of his insolence, Tenggang finally received his punishment, which he was turned to stone. Human beings who have disobeyed both parents will receive retribution from God.

The intellectuality of the traditional Malay society makes Tenggang a "symbol of the treacherous child" and this implied that the treacherous child has no blessing in life despite living in luxury and wealth. The author also inserts a picture that corresponds to the matter to be conveyed as shown in the passage below:

"Who are these two people?" Captain Tenggara asked the crew.

"They claimed to be your parents," replied the crew.

"Are they your parents?" Asked Captain Tenggara's wife.

Nakhoda Tenggara was ashamed to admit that the old couple was his parents. The hardships of life make Si Talang and Si Deruma look so poor and frail. Tenggara looks angry. This can be seen through the expression below.

"My mother and father? Oh, no! I didn't have parents anymore. They are not my parents," said Captain Tenggara. His face turned red with shame and anger.

"Oh my son, Si Tenggara! I'm your mother. I brought you smoked bananas and your favorite fish pies," said Si Deruma. She showed the smoked bananas and fish pies to Captain Tenggara.

"Go away. You are not my mother. Otherwise, I will hit you both!" Si Tenggara was insulted. The food brought by his mother was thrown away.

Oh, my son, have you forgotten your mother?" Deruma asked.

"Go!" Yelled Captain Tenggara. He hit his mother's finger that was clinging to the side of the ship.

Si Talang and Si Deruma felt very sad and disappointed. They did not expect that their beloved child had changed. Deruma's heart was full of sorrow. Si Tenggara whom she gave birth and breastfed has hurt her heart. She looked up to the sky. Raising both hands, she exclaimed:

"Oh, God! Show Si Tenggara that I am his birth mother."

Suddenly lightning rumbled. The wind blew hard. The water in the estuary turned choppy. The ship that was anchored bobbed wildly. At that moment, Captain Tenggara regretted his wrongdoing. He realized that God had answered his mother's prayers. Such is the case in the socio-cultural life of the traditional Malay community that elevates the position of parents. Disobeying the parents will get bad retribution.

In its socio-cultural life as well, the traditional Malay community believes that perseverance and patience will lead to success and happiness in life. All this can be seen through the language expression revealed in the story. This can be seen in the story, *Anak Raja Beruang* (Son of the Bear King). In this story, Laila's tenacity, perseverance, and patience in facing the torture of her stepmother and step-sister are described, which she finally finds happiness in life. Laila eventually marries the Prince and they live happily in the palace. Laila was told by her stepmother to look for firewood in the forest. One day, Laila went into the forest looking for firewood. She came across a large bear. Out of shock, she fainted. The bear splashed Laila's face with water. Laila was awake. The bear asked Laila to tell him what happened. Then, she told the bear the fate that befell her. The bear wanted to help Laila. He took Laila to a cave. This can be seen through the following language expressions.

"Take this box. Don't open it until you get home," said the bear.

After saying thank you, Laila went home. Laila was very happy because the bear was good to her. Before arriving home, she met Mak Limah. Mak Limah

snatched the box. Mak Limah opened the box and found gold in it. She shouted for Laili. Laila was left alone.

"Where did you get this gold, Laila?" Mak Limah asked.

Afraid of being beaten, Laila told Mak Limah what had happened. Mak Limah started to feel greedy. The next day, she forced Laili to go to the forest. At first, Laili was scared but after being persuaded, she finally obeyed. Laila was told to stay at home. Upon meeting the big bear, Laili pretended to faint. The bear knew the girl was not Laila. The bear gave Laili a box similar to Laila. This can be seen through the following language expressions:

"Well, take this box. You can only open it in front of your mother."

Laili was happy. She ran, leaving the forest. When she got home, she opened the box. It's full of centipedes and scorpions. They were bitten and stung. They eventually died. The bear went to Laila. He turned into a human being. The bear was the prince of the king of the state. He asked Laila to marry him. Here, it clearly showed that evil and greed ultimately bring misfortune. Traditional Malay society made the goodness wins. They believed that good will overcome evil.

### **Conclusion**

The socio-cultural life of a society can be seen through language expression. Through the language expression, the far-seeing Malay mind can be seen. Each story contains didactic elements, loaded with teachings either explicit or implicit to serve as a guide to the community. Based on the study, the above stories contain intellectual elements. Accordingly, cognition is an intellectual process. This means that cognition involves higher mental processes such as thinking, speaking, storing information in memory, and using stored information to reason, make various decisions, and solve problems. Cognition is also an active process. All information obtained from the environment is transformed, stored, and used actively in the cognition process. All information is obtained through the sensory system. It is then organized and interpreted by the perceptual system and the mind. The information that has been processed is then stored and retrieved from memory. It is used in various forms such as problem-solving and decision-making. In addition, cognition is a process that has specific functions. Each process has a specific purpose. For example, we think because there is something we need to understand more about. We use language to communicate with others. The problem is solved so that it does not interfere with our lives' harmony. In other words, cognition is used in all aspects of daily life. This study is important to preserve folk tales that have beauty from the aspect of language.

### **Theoretical and Contextual Contribution of This Research**

This study has identified the language expression in revealing Malay intellectuality in selected folktales and analyze the language expression in revealing Malay intellectuality in selected folktales. Through the language expression, the far-seeing Malay values can be seen. Each story contains lessons delivered in a beautiful and understandable language that symbolizes Malay intellectuality. Therefore, this study is important to preserve folk tales that have beauty from the aspect of language and shows intellectual features are related to the Malay socio-cultural aspect

## References

- Abdul Fatah, H. (2006). *Tenaga dan Keremajaan Minda: Untuk Meningkatkan Minda dan Potensi Diri*. Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications & Distributions Sdn. Bhd.
- Hatta, M. (1982). *Alam Fikiran Yunani*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Mahmod, N. M. (2001). *Satu Pengenalan Asas Kepada Jiwa dan Tingkah Laku Manusia*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Othman, P., & Aripin S. (2008). *366 Cerita Rakyat Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications & Distributions Sdn. Bhd.
- \_\_\_\_\_, (1984). *Sekitar Sastera Kanak-Kanak dan Remaja*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Hashim, A., Ramli, I., & Sahlan M. S. (1985). *Mendekati Kesusasteraan Melayu*. Petaling Jaya: Fajar Bakti Sdn. Bhd.
- Rahil, M., Maria, C. A., & Habibah, E. (2004). *Psikologi Kanak-Kanak dan Remaja*. Serdang: Universiti Putra Malaysia.
- Rahman, S., & Nurazmi, K. (1984). *Kesinambungan Sastera Melayu: Puisi dan Prosa*. Kuala Lumpur: Karya Bestari.