

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF INDONESIAN TRADITIONAL PROVERBS BY DERRIDA'S DECONSTRUCTION

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Abstract: This research uses qualitative case studies with Derrida's deconstruction method. The object of research is the text of traditional Indonesian proverbs. The results of the research conclude that several mythical meanings of traditional Indonesian proverb texts can be shifted by another meanings, the analysis shows that the proverb of *air beriak tanda tak dalam* means someone who talks a lot without knowledge can be reconstructed with meaning "a person who talks a lot is a person with knowledge so it must be present as many arguments as possible." The proverb of *buah jatuh tak jauh dari pohonnnya* means parents and children have the same temperament and character, can also be reconstructed with meaning "that a child can be shaped by a good or bad environment, not just by the parents." The proverb of *hujan emas di negeri orang, lebih baik di negeri sendiri* can be reconstructed also with the meaning of "it would be better live in someone else's country if it can give a guarantee of prosperity". Finally, the proverb of *biar lambat asal selamat* can be reconstructed by some meaning based on considerations of effectiveness and efficiency of work. Meaning will continue to move and look for new traces of meaning, therefore meaning is never single and absolute but continue to be born along with each dimension of perspective.

Keywords: *proverb; reader-response; deconstruction; binary-opposition; horizon-expectations*

INTRODUCTION

The idealism of life is built in literary stories generally come from the inner experience of the author, the meaning of literary texts is entirely in the mind of the writer. The application of the reader response approach to literary works is how literary readers interpret literary works based on the reader's individual experience, (Mart, 2021).

Several themes of literary works also appeared are talked about personal experiences, incidents, and also the interpretation of the Scriptures (the Bible) have also colored the development of literary criticism in the early 19th century. Textual criticism is a method in Biblical studies to study and understand the meaning of the Biblical text scientifically, (Jura & Rambitan, 2023).

The revival of literary critics in the early 20th century was triggered by an author-centered approach that shackled the critical attitude of readers' responses to literary texts, literary texts only leads to artistic and aesthetic impressions that are only aimed at writers and literary texts of writers, readers should respond as a form of reaction to the text he reads. In literary studies, readers should not only rely on literary texts but need criticism. Literary works contain artistic and aesthetic values where the artistic value is the

literary text itself and the aesthetic value is what the reader wants to achieve in literary works, (Iser, 1978).

In era post-structuralists due to their rejection of the structural flow which still maintains a linear (directed) reading model with a binary opposition structure, reader respon theory. The emergence of a new theory in literary criticism began around the 1930s which questioned the form of literary works, this theory was introduced by Louise Rosenblatt in 1991, (Lee & Gopal, 2023).

Reader's response for Gadamer and Jauss in Jean Michel is that readers should have a subjective view called the horizon of expectation in interpreting the literary text they read. The readers is very important in interpreting literary works because the readers theirself who brings literary works in to real life (Singh & Pratima, 2022).

Russian formalists want literary work to be autonomous and independent of the author's biography, context and interests. Formalists want literary works to be something autonomous, apart from the biography and aims of the author and apart from the social context (Stougaard-Nielsen, 2020). Even though the formalists have different views on literary studies, their studies focus on the

intrinsic aspects, the study of literary texts and do not extrinsic aspects (Manshur, 2019).

Woodruff and Griffin in Elena Spirovska stated that in responding the meaning of the text, the reader must reject the author's intention and must focus on the reader's interpretation even though subjectively (Spirovska, 2019). The same statement also stated by Umberto Eco in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on February 23, 2016, he said readers have autonomous rights in interpreting books, regardless of the author. Likewise, Barthes wants the readers to be independent of the author in interpreting the text. Readers have the autonomous right to deconstruct the author's text (Stougaard-Nielsen, 2020).

Barthes offers a free reading of literary texts which demands more *erotica* than hermeneutics, and the thesis of *The Death of the Author* wants the reader's views and interpretations regardless of the reader's wishes and tastes (Stougaard-Nielsen, 19). Assessing and interpreting literary works should be on the authority of the reader as a result of the reader's response, interpreting literary work must be subjectively depend on readers' point of view, Didipu (2021). Readers construct the meaning of the text based on personal experience, (Kunjanman & Aziz, 2021).

Literary works should be in an autonomous status and free of interpretation to let the readers are given space to assess and interpret literary works based on their cognitive schema. The thematic significance in literary works will produce a new perspective as expected by the reader, Hou (2023). And modern schema theory according to Yang, he wants readers to build new knowledge structures based on readers' life experiences, Yang, (2023).

Proverbs are a type of literary product that contains meaningful texts, so understanding the meaning behind proverbial texts requires an interpretation process. Proverb is used by the wearer as an effort to utilize the wealth of language to cause certain effects in the ideas they convey. In addition, proverbs are also used as heirs of local cultural values transmitted from generation to generation. (Saragih & Mulyadi, 2020).

In Indonesia, traditional proverbs used by the majority of Indonesian people are cultural product and the meanings contained in them have become the truth and way of life for majority of Indonesian people. Proverb is combination of words or sentences, containing advice and principles of life and their meaning is expressed implicitly using figurative or metaphorical language. Proverbs are

sometimes in the form of prose or a simple and short poem and often slang and in short verses have emerged from the depths of people's culture and are the most original and heartfelt element of the pillars of this ancient culture, (Bassak & Hesar, 2021).

The mythical meaning in the text some traditional Indonesian proverbs has been accepted as absolute truth and cannot be changed until today. The things made mythical meaning of proverbs are accepted by some Indonesian people is the value of local wisdom on them such as life guidelines, advices, and hopes. Sunarni (2017) stated that proverbs are a product of local wisdom and mythical meanings in proverbs are used as life guidelines, appeals, hopes and commands.

However, a critical thinking proposes a question that, is the mythical meaning in several traditional Indonesian proverbs still worthy of being a guiding for life to every ones of Indonesian people? The researcher assumes that the mythical meaning in the proverb will no longer be accepted as absolute meaning and it cannot be used as a guide for human being. Therefore, the mythical meaning must be changed with another myth that will give benefit of life.

Proverbs can be categorized as a type of limerick and generally used analogous or metaphorical in language style. Ndraha (2021) stated that the use of metaphorical elements in literary works by writers or speakers is aimed to convey their feelings, ideas, and imagination, Kinanti & Rachman (2019) said the metaphorical element in proverbs is the power of creativity, the aim being that the language is not monotonous but is concise and contains broad meaning. The emergence of metaphors originates from ideas and experiences and then becomes myths by its users (Zakaria, 2022). Proverbs can be in the form of parables, advice, mottos and also in the form of life guidance (Juniati, 2021) and Siarta (2020) stated that proverbs are communication tools that contain criticism and advice and are spoken softly and politely. According to Puspitaningsih & Xiaoyan (2022) proverbs are divided into three types: 1) proverbs that contain advice or teachings; 2) pameo, proverbs containing life principles and mottos; and 3) parables, proverbs that are presuppositions or comparisons.

The use of traditional proverbs in communication by Indonesian people aims to maintain and maintain the order of life and community norms so that community relations can run well, insted that, proverbs in Indonesian society have become a reflection of culture which

contains local wisdom values (Dewi, 2022), proverbs like “*tong kosong nyaring bunyinya*”, “*besar pasak daripada tiang*” is a proverb that contains teachings and advice. The first proverb means satire, this proverb is directed at people who talk a lot but are reluctant to work, the second proverb means advice aimed at people who have the habit of living wastefully. A proverb of the type of pameo parody such as “*sekali layar terkembang, pantang surut ke belakang*”, “*bersatu kita teguh, bercerai kita runtuh*” is principle of life these two principles are meant a brave and firm attitude. Then parable like phrases “*lain lubuk, lain ikannya*”; “*lain rumput, lain belalang*” both are expressions of comparison which mean that each place or region has different social and cultural rules.

The aim of applying Derrida's deconstruction model to Indonesian (traditional) proverb texts is to explore and find alternative meanings as new meanings that are relevant to the views and context of modern life. The meaning of a proverb may no longer be maintained and believed absolutely, so an alternative meaning is needed as a new meaning in the context of modern life. The meaning of the text behind the proverb must be seen as *an sich* text, means that the interpretation of the meaning of the proverb text does not depend on one's awareness but is open to everyone.

To interpret the text using Derrida's deconstruction approach is an effort to free everyone to interpret ambiguous texts and then reconstruct them in reverse, (Nugraha et al., 2020). Likewise, the meaning of texts in Indonesian proverbs that are no longer in accordance with critical views in the current context must be criticized and reconstructed. Deconstruction is a model recommended for the solution to the problem of absolute textual meaning, it strongly opposes the logo-centric tradition of European philosophical thinking, always move and find new meanings in the text, according to Derrida in Webster words are interpreted with other words which in turn do not reach the substance even though the meaning of the words is progressive, (Webster, 1996). For Derrida, the meaning of literary text can change (relatively) according to cultural context, so that the multiple interpretations in reader's response may happen on the text.

Deconstruction is a way of understanding the contradictory meaning of a text that lies behind the text itself, Hasanah & Adawiah, (2021). Reading process in deconstruction model intends to look for paradoxical meanings in literary texts then

rebuild new meanings as desired by the readers. Deconstruction theory explains that in the reading text there are two opposing elements, which is called binary opposition. Binary opposition aims to open the reader's mind to see other meanings and not stick to one thing only', Aprillia & Arianto (2021). So it can be assumed that the operational model of deconstruction in reading literary texts, readers can build new meaning based on the reader's knowledge, experience and cultural context.

The way of deconstruction in reading the text is not limited but always in a suspended condition in presence of new meanings, and for the text is not in full but is in a veiled area as mentioned again. The core idea of Derrida's deconstruction is the suspension of the author's meaning by the reader, which is then reconstructed by the reader from the many existing references, Stougaard-Nielsen (2020).

Derrida explained that text is autonomous and apart from the author, the sign (language) is not static but dynamic and can change so that the meaning of the text can be reconstructed by the readers through knowledge, experience and their cultural context when the text interpreted. Ronidin who explained Derrida's view that the meaning of the written element signifier/signifiant and the element referred to signified/signifie never existed, only the effect of meaning and meaning was never in an absolute position (Ronidin, 2015).

The method of interpreting deconstruction can be assumed to be a paradoxical and radical one into the meaning, in contrast way to the method of interpreting by structuralism opposition-binary. The meaning of the text is dismantled and then reconstructed based on the logic of the reader's thinking based on the context, for example between the meaning of *white* and *black*, the meaning of white is generally interpreted as *positive* one, but generally the meaning of black is interpreted as being *negative*, the meaning of *men* is generally interpreted as *superior* but the meaning of *women* is generally interpreted as *imperial*, and so on then marginal meaning ones are reconstructed by using the logic of knowledge, experience and existing contexts of readers so as to give birth to alternative meanings or new meanings upon word of black and women above that are even given importance things.

The deconstruction approach emphasize the marginal meaning and reconstruct it into a number of new alternative meanings based on the reader's knowledge and logic, then the new meaning is emphasized or interested. The word marginality

in human interests as quoted in Varghese & Kumar (2022) is limiting and denying access to facilities, resources and territory to individuals or community groups by authorities's policy. Marginal text in literary works refer to concepts or meanings interpreted as negative, so that this negative meaning is considered to be deconstructed and gives positive meanings and values into the whole of the text.

Reading literary texts will provide the widest possible space and give effect for readers to interpret literary texts based on the reader's own perspective. The existence of meaning has proven that our understanding of a text is never the same and always has the possibility of new, unexpected interpretations, Kurniawati & Annabil, (2022).

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative case study approach, namely research that is oriented to empirical and realistic data that exists in the society. The purpose of case study research is an effort to understand each individual in order to help that individual get better (Assyakurrohim, 2023) and used Derrida's deconstruction in conducting the analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Traditional proverbs used by society can be reconstructed because their values and meanings are not productive and relevant to the current context and the critical viewpoint paradigm of most people in this modern era. The author's assumption is that some traditional proverbs are no longer productive and relevant in the current context, the value and meaning of these traditional proverbs require a new (different) meaning. According to Derrida, values and meaning are constantly moving, looking for their traces, stopping and then moving again, looking for their traces. Meaning is not absolute, therefore unproductive meanings can be reconstructed and then constructed into new meanings of productive and useful value.

In the researcher's observations, some meanings of traditional proverbs are no longer relevant to the current context so they can be abandoned and replaced with new (other) meanings. Meaning is not absolute, therefore unproductive meanings can be reconstructed and replaced with new meanings. There are two factors causing changes in meaning in traditional proverbs, the first is meaning through a critical perspective, the second is the encouragement of human life needs so that everyone interprets life

realistically. These two factors are the basis so that the meanings in proverbs are important to reinterpret. In this research, there are four traditional Indonesian proverbs will be analyzed, they are: 1) *air beriak tanda tak dalam*; 2) *buah jatuh tak jauh dari pohonnya*; 3) *hujan emas di negeri orang, lebih baik di negeri sendiri*; and the last 4) *biar lambat asal selamat*.

Reconstruct the meaning of proverb air beriak tanda tak dalam

This proverb is used daily by almost all Indonesian people, the language uses figurative language, associates nature with human behavior and is ironic. The series of words in this proverbial sentence has two phrases, namely *air beriak* and *tanda tak dalam*. The first phrase associates to the action of talking a lot and the second phrase associates to the impact of talking a lot. So the full meaning of this proverb is that if you talk a lot means you don't have much knowledge.

Critical questions arise when the meaning of a proverb is interpreted absolutely. "Why?" Because there were another meanings could be put upon the proverb by another perspective. The critical question is, "Are people who talk a lot definitely not knowledgeable?" Or the anti-thesis question, "Are quiet people definitely not knowledgeable?" These two questions will not provide a definite answer, testing needs to be done to confirm the answers to these two questions. As an anti-thesis answer, the meaning of the proverb can be reconstructed by finding a new meaning by the following explanations: *talking a lot* means having not much knowledge cannot be accepted as a single or absolute meaning, it was because there was a number of trace of meaning around the proverb.

The new meanings of the text can be found by tracing the anti-thesis of the conventional meaning of the proverb and to construct some new meaning such as the following analysis: 1) someone who has much knowledge has to be able to explain problems by talking a lot; 2) someone who has much knowledge, he or she has to provide a number of justification arguments comprehensively by talking a lot; 3) because someone has much knowledge, he or she certainly has a lot of accurate data which must be explained by talking a lot; 4) nowadays people have to be critical and much talking in conveying the truth, and so on.

The conclusion of the analysis states that the mythical meaning of this proverb can be reconstructed by considering at least the four

reasons above, people who are knowledgeable must to much speak up. So the construction of the mythical meaning of the proverb is "a knowledgeable person must be productive in speaking, do not silent".

Reconstruct the meaning of proverb buah jatuh tak jauh dari pohonnya

The proverb of *buah jatuh tak jauh dari pohonnya* has two phrases, the first phrase is *buah jatuh* means "fruit falls" and the second phrase is *tak jauh dari pohonnya* means "not far from its tree". This proverb is ironic by comparing the character and behavior of children and their father. The meaning of this proverb is accepted as absolute meaning and it is used by most Indonesian people as a word of wisdom in interpreting of person's character.

The icon of *fruit* associated to a child or children and the icon of *tree* associated to the father. The proverb explains that there is a relationship between the character of children and their father, they are binded one another, it means that the children character and do not differ much to their father but same character. If the children have good character so the father must also be the same his children, it being in vice-versa. The meaning of this proverb is inaccurate because there are no correlation characters between children and their father even though they have a genetic relationship.

The factors that determine a person's disposition and character do not depend on genetic relationships in their entirety but an important thing is environmental factors, they can also play the role in shaping a person's temperament and character. So the conventional meaning of this proverb can be reconstructed by some considerations such the following reasons: 1)human behavior can be formed by formal/informal educational factors; 2) human behavior can be formed by a good environment; 3) human behavior can be shaped by local wisdom; 4)human behavior can be shaped by religious education, and so on.

So the new meanings can be rised from anti-theses from the previous sentence and find out the new meaning around it. Formulation of words the sentence can be constructed like "fruit can be throwed out far from its tree".

Reconstruct the meaning of proverb hujan emas di negeri orang, lebih baik di negeri sendiri

The proverb of *hujan emas di negeri orang, lebih baik di negeri sendiri* consists of two phrases, they

are phrase of *hujan emas di negeri orang* means "golden rain in someone else's country" and the phrase of *lebih baik di negeri sendiri* means "it's better in your own country". The language style of proverb used natural comparison, and the conventional meaning of this proverb is advisory in nature. The core meaning and message of this proverb is found in the phrase of *golden rain*, this phrase informs about a favorable situation (well-being) from an economic aspect.

The content of the message and meaning of the proverb is advice and to foster patriotism towards one's own country no matter the circumstances. The meaning of this proverb has a conventional, absolute meaning and is accepted as advice by almost all Indonesian people. The aim of traditional proverbial advice the nationalism and patriotism, but from another perspective this advice can be rejected for certain reasons especially in economic perspective.

In the modern era, the meaning of this proverb's advice can be criticized and considered for reinterpretation by economic dimension so that the meaning of the proverb can be reconstructed in several new meanings as follows: 1)It is better to live in someone else's country if it gives economic needs; 2)It is better to live in someone else's country if it gives welfare services; 3)It is better to live in someone else's country if it gives certainty of security; 4)It is better to live in someone else's country if it gives political rights; etc.

The results of reconstruction show that there are at least four traces of new meaning around the proverb. These new meanings have the same meaning as the old meaning, so critically the old meaning can be replaced by a new meaning in the perspective of economics, welfare, security, politics and so on.

Reconstruct the meaning of proverb biar lambat asal selamat

This proverbial sentence is formed by two phrases, namely *biar lambat* and phrase of *asal selamat*. The message of this proverb is advice when carrying out daily activities. These two phrases build compound adverbials that explain the *cause* and *effect* of a job. The phrase of *biar lambat* means "let it be slow" explains the nature and quality of the "cause" of a job and the phrase of *asal selamat* means "as long as it is safe" also explains the nature and quality of the "effect" of the job.

A critical view is on the meaning of the phrase *let it be slow* with a question "Why should work

be slowed down?" How effective and efficient it would be if a job was accelerated. Through this critical consideration, the meaning of the phrase can slowly be reconstructed and open up space for new meaning. The construction of the new meaning is to replace the word "slow" with the word "fast" so that the series of proverbial sentences becomes "fast and safe".

Reconstruct the meaning of proverb tak ada rotan akar pun jadi

Syntactically, the proverb of *tak ada rotan akar pun jadi* is built on two phrases, the first is *tak ada rotan* and the second one is *akar pun jadi*. This proverb uses plants to describe the benefits or function of *rattan* and *roots*. The myth of these two words describes a condition or situation, and the both *rattan* and *roots* interchangeable one another in performing their function based on the meaning of the proverbs.

But the critical question is "Can the both of *rattan* and *roots* be changed in functional quality dimension?" The functions of *rattan* cannot be samed with *roots* because they are differnt in functional qualities, and these two can be reconstructed by restoring their respective roles and functions. The function of *rattan* remains as a binding tool and the function of the *roots* remains as supporting the tree, their function is not same and cannot be changed.

CONCLUSION

The orientation of interpretation of literary texts in the era of structural focuses on the relationship between literary works and the author so that the process of reading literary works is only to understand the author's aims and objectives. This model closes the space for readers to give critical views and thoughts as a result of the reception process of literary works. Changes in the orientation of literary works occurred in the Formalist era. These people view literary texts as autonomous objects so that the meaning of literary works must be internal, namely the intrinsic aspect of literary works and not considering things outside of literature. The interpretation of literary meaning then changed again in the post-structural era, the orientation close to the authority of the reader, the reader has dominant rule in interpreting literary texts. The deconstruction model in the post-structural era provides novelty in the meaning of literary works and rejects absolute meaning in literary texts as absolute truth. According to Derrida, meaning is not single, there are other meanings around the text that have other

perspectives, therefore the meaning will continue to move looking for traces of new meaning in its perspective. Deconstructing the meaning of traditional proverbs is an effort to show a number of alternative meanings in the traditional proverb text itself. The meaning of the proverb which is considered absolute so far seems to be no longer tenable. The meaning must be changed with a critical view, work effectiveness and time efficiency which are demanded in this modern era.

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