

# Pepatah Petitih: Its Interpretation On Instagram

Wasana<sup>1</sup>, H N Hidayat<sup>2</sup>, T Immerry<sup>3</sup>, F Dahlan<sup>4</sup>, Pramono<sup>5</sup>, E Meigalia<sup>6</sup>, M N Sari<sup>7</sup>

{<sup>1</sup>wasana@hum.unand.ac.id, <sup>2</sup>herryrh@hum.unand.ac.id, <sup>3</sup>immerry20@bunghatta.ac.id,  
<sup>4</sup>femmydahlan@bunghatta.ac.id, <sup>5</sup>pramono@hum.unand.ac.id, <sup>6</sup>ekameigalia@fib.unand.ac.id,  
<sup>7</sup>melanisari979@gmail.com }

<sup>1,2,5,6,7</sup>Universitas Andalas Padang, Indonesia

<sup>3,4</sup>Universitas Bung Hatta, Indonesia

**Abstract.** As it's evolved, the Minangkabau idiomatic expression now appears in different forms in the internet world and has a form that most often appears as its transformation. This paper presents various interpretations of the Minangkabau proverb in meme form. The object of the study was a Minangkabau language meme collected from several accounts on Instagram. The memes are then sorted into groups of text and images. The analysis is done by comparing the similarities and differences between the actual meaning of the saying proverb with the meaning contained in memes. Through memes text, images, and content in the Instagram account, there are expansions of the Minangkabau proverb interpretation as a social product. At the same time, the interpretation shows the survival of the Minangkabau traditions in today's digital era.

**Keywords:** *Pepatah petitih, Minangkabau, Meme, Instagram*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As one of folklore, *pepatah petitih* cannot be separated from the daily life of the Minangkabaunese. Because of its content, *pepatah petitih* has a function that is closely related to life guidelines and guidance. However, its use is not always in a formal context. Otherwise, Minangkabaunese tends to use idioms and symbols in expressing something that is considered sensitive [1]. Daily behavior is common things that are conveyed in the *pepatah petitih* besides describing nature. Philosophy *alam takambang jadi guru* remains to be the basis for the use of connotation, especially *pepatah petitih*. This implies that *pepatah petitih* fulfills the communication function. Symbols and connotations are used to show the Minangkabau local wisdom in conveying a matter that is considered sensitive.

*Pepatah petitih* is classified as oral folklore [2]. *Pepatah petitih* also classified as a proverb. A proverb is description through something else, symbolism, or commonly called a figurative speech. Other proverb forms are peribahasa, pemeo, bidal, and so on. Keraf [3] states that learning proverb needs experience, not general language knowledge. Someone must learn it from native speakers and not only through the word meaning.

According to Navis [4] the figurative speech form in Minangkabau is divided into a *pepatah*, which is containing advice; *petitih*, which is a sentence that departs from *pepatah* sentence by inserting one or two words; *mamang* (commonly called *mamangan*) which is a sentence containing life guidelines, orders, recommendations, and prohibitions; *pituah*, which

is meaningful sentences as words of wisdom or aphorisms; and *pemeo*, which is a sentence that contains contradictions that are not possible.

Because of its content, figurative and connotation, a proverb is considered to a nonlogical pattern. According to Aminuddin [5], figurative language is divided into two types, figurative language related to the way of processing and imagining ideas, and figurative language related to the way of structuring and ordering words in sentence construction.

Added by Keraf [3], figurative language is formed based on similarities and comparisons. Comparing something with other things means find similarities between the two things. In line with this, Aminuddin [5] stressed that the comparison is proportional in the sense that the potential of the words being moved in describing new ideas.

In the Minangkabau concept, Navis [4] explains that figurative speech is words that are intended indirectly and are considered polite language without demeaning. This understanding of figurative speech is very important in the communication of kinship social relations that demand politeness, mutual respect, without missing self-esteem among each other.

In addition, figurative speech is used in order to maintain Minangkabau behavior. In conveying thoughts, debating, or advising, Minangkabau states it in figurative terms. [6]. Minangkabau idiomatic expression is rich with local wisdom which refers to Minangkabau philosophy *alam takambang jadi guru* thus it is applicable in life [7], [8]. The thought of Minangkabau people is based on natural phenomena. Minangkabau people learn from everyday life environment. Sometimes the Minangkabau proverbs are presented in form of poetry. Poetry is the most important kind of Minangkabau literature. Those poems and proverbs are Minangkabau traditional community knowledge (local genius) in the past [9].

On the other hand, the development of technology and information did not prevent the use, distribution, and development of *pepatah petitih*. The notion that folklore is ancient, classic, uninteresting, or boring seems to be broken by the rapid advances in information technology today. Folklore, in this case *pepatah petitih*, is no longer delivered verbally. The use is no longer limited to space and time, even users are no longer limited to a meeting [10].

Through social media, folklore evolved and even evolved not only in the context of its delivery but also in its meaning. Social media users choose the *pepatah petitih* in conveying their intentions by changing and modifying them into visual forms, memes. Benaim [11] mentions memes representing sources of innovation in many sectors (cultural to financial) that ultimately influence the direction of policy.

As a communication, memes contain the function of speech acts [12]. Memes also have a complete and complex communication device. Communication performed through memes does not only rely on text but additionally images. Huntington [13] refers to it as visual rhetoric.

Until the middle of 2019, memes developed in various varieties. In general, memes are used by social media users (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) to comment on or joke based on the latest event [14], [15] and past events which in this case is folklore [16]–[18]. The themes displayed through memes include satire [19], [20], politics [21]–[23], jokes [24], learning [25]–[27], even religion [28]. It shows that nowadays, memes can be used as a media which can tend many things in live.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This paper briefly presents various memes that contain the Minangkabau *pepatah petitih* found on Instagram. Objects are downloaded and collected from January to June 2019 with the hashtags *#minangkabau*, *#pepatahminang*, and *#pepatahpetitih* without uploading time

limit. Objects with pepatah petilih content are selected and grouped based on their visual form, particularly the dominance of text and images.

Based on the assumption that folklore has changed both in text and context [29], the meme containing the *pepatah petilih* is analyzed by comparing the original meaning of the *pepatah petilih* with the meaning in the form of memes. Furthermore, an analysis of the creativity of meme creators is based on the assumption that memes are a form of speech [14] and as a structure [30].

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As a speech act, memes answer the requirements of communication. Memes are created and accepted only by users who understand the message context who then spread it. This is in line with Gold [31] which states the meaning and purpose of messages in a communication produced and received in various ways by interested recipients. In the internet media term, Jewitt [32] states that communication media has developed from oral, to text, to CD, to computer applications, from pages to screens.

Meme, which is dominated by visual forms, requires a different way to understand than other conventional communication. It is demanded not only an understanding of the word meaning but requires the context and knowledge contained within the text itself. As Coskun [33], states, images are used to convey something that cannot be expressed through words. Images will clarify meaning in ongoing communication.

Based on the result, *pepatah petilih* memes are grouped based on its visual form into two categories. First, text memes and second are memes with text and images. The second group is classified into two, illustrative images relating to text and illustration images that are not related to the text. All of the four groups, there is a meme that displays the meanings and not.



Figure 1. Sinking boat (source: IG @otalapau)



Figure 2. Silent (source: IG @sambaladomudo)

Figures 1 and 2 are examples of memes that display text only. In general, memes with the pattern above prefer fonts that look artistic, soft, and not too strict. This is in contrast to the selection of colors that tend to be firm which is dark colors contrasted with bright colors. Regarding the meaning, several memes with this form display the meaning on image caption made by the uploader (figure 2). While the meme as in figure 1, the meaning seems to be given to the reader interpretation and shown in the comments that appear after the image was uploaded.



**Figure 3.** No use (source: IG @anak.lapau)



**Figure 4.** Poisonous words (source: IG @bukittinggiku)

Figures above (figures 3 and 4) are examples of meme with text and illustrations. However, the image shown is not related to the text. Memes in this form mostly use firm and rigid fonts. Because displaying illustration images, the color selection does not show a certain pattern because it depends on the image selection. Human skull illustration (figure 3) does not relate to the *pepatah petitih* if conveyed in either the text or the meaning. In this group, there are many memes which display the meaning of the *pepatah petitih* (figure 4). In this case, the illustration is generally chosen to show the identity of the Minangkabau such as *gonjong* (figure 4), *rumah gadang*, *cart (padati)*, and *buffalo (kabau)*.



**Figure 5.** Big mouth (source: IG @kiasan\_minang)



**Figure 6.** No gain (source: IG @suranggalakgalak)

The last group is memes with illustrated images that relate to the *pepatah petitih* text. However, based on further analysis, the illustration shown is not related to the text meaning. The image displayed as a visualization form only. Illustration of foam on glass is merely a visualization of text *tinggi uok pado galeh* 'high foam from a glass' (figure 6). Likewise, the illustration of a spotted dove (*spilopelia chinensis*) is only visualized the *pepatah petitih arok jo balam, pipik di tangan balapehan*, assuming for spotted dove, sparrow in hand released' (figure 7).

As a communication form, images are regarded more effective than text. Oral and written communication has limitations which are the possibility of misinterpretation. Meanwhile, images can reduce this possibility [34]. It seems that the *pepatah petitih* meme in this form emphasizing with fonts and colors selection (figures 1, 2, and 3). In addition, further communication of this meme form is carried out through captions and comments.

Meme is a speech act [12] and meme of the *pepatah petitih* already fulfills the speech act requirements. Based on further analysis, the meme of *pepatah petitih* implies statements, orders, and prohibitions. This certainly relates to the function and role of the *pepatah petitih* that contains advice and guidance in daily life.

In this case, meme is communication that also contains assimilation, retention, expression, and transformation [35]. The assimilation of the creator's ideas comes from the retention of both creator and user knowledge which is expressed through a transformation form so that communication occurs. Furthermore, it can be said that memes, in this case, the *pepatah petitih* meme, are a new pattern of cultural information and knowledge. This is in line with Knobel's statement [18], memes are contagious patterns of "cultural information" that is passed on to the mindsets and significant forms of behavior and actions of a social group [36].

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

As a communication, the *pepatah petitih* meme is the transformation of folklore in technological advancement. Interpretational changes in traditional products are no longer considered as an effort to eliminate the traditional culture. But instead, it is creativity effort to preserve the tradition itself. Differences in interpretation are a necessity in those creative process. Otherwise, locality-based communication is no longer limited to space and time with internet technology. Traditional local wisdom cannot only be reached through face to face communication. Locality interpretation, in the end, moves and transforms itself within the framework of its locality. Cultural societies can still reach their traditions through technology and interpret them freely but still within their cultural framework.

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