

## ***Peribahasa* or ‘proverbs’ in Malay/ Indonesian**

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*Peribahasa* is a genre of folk literature that is observed in many languages in Indonesia. It is conventionally translated as ‘proverb’ in English, but as the definition above shows, its range is wider than that of what are generally called “proverbs” cross-linguistically, in that it also includes various kinds of metaphorical idioms. (e.g. *Seperti pinang dibelah dua* ‘as alike as split betel nuts’: as alike as two peas in a pod, *Minta tanduk pada kuda* ‘Ask a horse for a horn’: Crying for a moon)

This study gives a preliminary observation of Malay/ Indonesian *peribahasa*. The following points are observed as a tendency.

- Formally, when one *peribahasa* consists of two clauses, parallelism between the two clauses is often observed. It may be observed either in their (i) lexical constituent, that is, the two clauses of one *peribahasa* share at least one word (e.g. *Enggang sama enggang, pipit sama pipit* ‘A hornbill is with a hornbill, a sparrow is with a sparrow’: Birds of a feather flock together, (ii) structure, (e.g. *Kapal satu nakhoda dua*. ‘Two captains for a ship’: Too many cooks spoil the broth (Both of the two clauses consist of a noun and a numeral)), and/ or (iii) the number of syllables (e.g. *Duduk sehamparan, tegak sepematang* ‘Sitting on the same carpet, standing at the same path between rice fields’: about the same. (Both of the two clauses are of 11 syllables)).
- As for their contents, the majority of *peribahasa* express a negative situation or judgment. They are most typically used to make fun of, criticize, or blame the behavior of others.
- The other *peribahasa* have more canonically “proverbial” content delivering advice, a social rule or convention, or some common-sense truth. But it can be seen that the message is normally delivered inexplicitly. (e.g., *Kalah membeli menang memakai*. ‘losing in buying, winning in using’: You get what you pay for.) Negative imperatives and the deontic modality, which are quite common in English proverbs, are relatively rare.