

## USELESS EFFORT EXPRESSIONS IN INDONESIAN PROVERBS

### EKSPRESI USAHA SIA-SIA DALAM PERIBAHASA INDONESIA

I Dewa Putu Wijana<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Gadjah Mada University

\*Corresponding Author: [putu.wijana@ugm.ac.id](mailto:putu.wijana@ugm.ac.id)

Article History:

**Posted:** 17/8/2023; **Revised:** 5/11/2023; **Accepted:** 20/12/2023

#### Abstract

*This research article deals with Indonesian proverbs used to express “useless efforts” with focus of attention on the syntactic structures, and various causal factors that make the works expressed by the verbs impossible to realize. By using data collected from proverb collection book entitled 7700 Peribahasa Indonesia [7700 Indonesian Proverbs], it is found that the Indonesian proverbs convey useless efforts can be delivered through various types of syntactic structure: predicate-object (P-O), conjunction-predicate-object (Conj-P-O), predicate-object-adverbial (P-O-Adv), conjunction-predicate-object-adverbial (Conj-P-O-Adv), predicate-complement (P-Comp), predicate-adverbial (P-Adv), conjunction-predicate-adverbial (Conj-P-Adv), subject-predicate-object (S-P-O), subject-predicate-adverbial (S-P-Adv), conjunction-predicate-adv (Conj-P-Adv), predicate-subject (P-S), and adverbial-subject-predicate (Adv-S-P). Based on these various types of structure, in the proverbs involving no subject slot, the impossibilities can be caused by the objects, object attributes, complements, and adverbials that explain the location, time, purpose, and instrument by which the efforts are executed. Meanwhile, in the proverbs involving subject constituent, the impossibilities are caused by the subjects filled by words or phrases of having referents human, non human, or entities which are improper or incapable realizing the actions.*

**Keywords:** *proverb, structure, theme*

#### Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas peribahasa Indonesia yang digunakan untuk mengungkapkan “usaha sia-sia” dengan fokus perhatian pada struktur sintaksis dan berbagai faktor penyebab yang membuat karya yang diungkapkan oleh verba tidak disadari. Data-data dikumpulkan dari buku kumpulan peribahasa berjudul *7700 Peribahasa Indonesia*. Dari data-data tersebut ditemukan bahwa peribahasa Indonesia mengungkapkan makna dari usaha sia-sia melalui berbagai jenis struktur sintaksis: predikat-objek (P-O), konjungsi-predikat-objek (Conj-P-O), predikat-objek-adverbial (P-O-Adv), konjungsi-predikat-objek-adverbial (Conj-P-O-Adv), predikat-pelengkap (P-Comp), predikat-adverbial (P-Adv), konjungsi-predikat-adverbial (Conj-P-Adv), subjek-predikat-objek (S-P-O), subjek-predikat-adverbial (S-P-Adv), konjungsi-predikat-adv (Conj-P-Adv), predikat-subjek (P-S), dan adverbial-subjek-predikat (Adv-S-P). Berdasarkan berbagai jenis struktur tersebut, peribahasa yang tidak memiliki subjek dapat disebabkan oleh benda, atribut benda, pelengkap, dan kata keterangan yang menjelaskan tempat, waktu, tujuan, dan alat yang digunakan untuk melakukan upaya tersebut. Adapun pada peribahasa yang melibatkan unsur pokok, ketidaktunggalannya disebabkan subjeknya diisi dengan kata atau frasa yang mempunyai acuan manusia, bukan manusia, atau sesuatu yang tidak tepat atau tidak mampu melaksanakan perbuatannya.

**Kata kunci:** peribahasa, struktur, tema

## INTRODUCTION

Any speech community certainly has various traditional formulas which exploit to meet the need of various communicative functions to maintain the existence of social cohesion among its members. One of those traditional formulas is proverb. Proverb according to Hornby (2015, 1199) is “a well known phrase or sentence that give advice or says something that is generally true”. Depending on their pragmatic uses, in spite of giving advice, proverbs can also be used directly or indirectly for expressing other intentions, such as criticizing, insulting, commanding, prohibiting, etc. Because of its broad communicative functions, this traditional formula covers wide range of topics concerning human life matters. One of those topics is “useless efforts” often done by the speech community members. Accordingly, in order to avoid them to do so, based on their daily life experiences, they create various proverbs bearing useless effort themes. Consequently, there would be a lot of proverbs expressing such matters found in any language. More narrowly speaking, in Indonesian, there are many proverbs can be used to deliver this intentions. For more clearly consider proverb (1) to (6) below:

- (1) Berdiang di abu dingin 'To warm in cold ash'
- (2) Bagai menampung air dengan limas pesuk 'Like to retain water with full of holes leaf container'
- (3) Bagai menggantang anak ayam 'like measuring chicken offspring'
- (4) Menerka anak ayam dalam telur 'Like predicting chicken young inside egg shell'
- (5) Memeras darah dari batu 'To squiz blood from stone'
- (6) Orang buta diberi suluh 'The blind is given a torch'

All proverbs above have the same thematic content, i.e. “to do useless effort”. However, all of them are built by linguistic units that have different constructions. Proverb (1) is constructed by a clause having predicate (P) *berdiang* ‘to warm’ and adverbial (Adv) of place *in cold ash*. Proverb (2) is constructed by a clause consisting of conjunction (Conj) *Bagai* ‘like’ and predicate (P) *menampung* ‘to contain’ and object (O) *air* ‘water’ and adverbial (Adv) of instrument *dengan limas pesuk* ‘with perforated leaf container’. Proverb (3) is constructed by a clause consisting of conjunction (Conj) *bagai* ‘like’ and Predicate (P) *menggantang* ‘to scale’ and object (O) *anak ayam* ‘chicken offspring’. Proverb (4) is built by a clause consisting of predicate (P) *menerka* ‘to predict’, object (O) *anak ayam dalam telur* ‘chicken young in the egg’. Proverb (5) consists of predicate (P) *memeras* ‘to squiz’ plus object (O) *darah* ‘blood’ and plus Adverbial (Adv) of place *dari batu* ‘from stone’. Finally, proverb (6) consists of a clause having functional elements subject (S) *orang buta* ‘blind person’, predicate (P) *diberi* and adverbial (Adv) *suluh* ‘torch’. In addition, there are various actions which will bring no result if there are done in certain conditions. For example *berdiang* ‘to warm the body’ in (1) will bring successful result if it is done *abu panas* ‘in hot ash or coal’ instead of in *abu dingin* ‘cold ash’. So, the work is made impossible by the place where the work or activity is done. In proverb (2) the work *menampung* ‘to retain’ is made failed because of the condition of instrument used for carrying it out is improper. In proverb (3) the work *menggantang* ‘to scale’ is impossible to do because of the characteristics of the object always moving when someone want to measure it. In (4) the impossible realized job is caused by the place of the object. The place can also involve from where the object coming from (5). Finally (6) the impossibility is caused by the subject *orang buta* ‘blind person’ can not take benefit from the thing *suluh* ‘torch’ given to them.

Based on this back ground, this paper will try to describe varieties of syntactic structure of proverb expressions of having theme “useless effort” in Indonesian. The verbs as central elements of useless efforts occur with various arguments that make the works or the jobs are impossible to realize. The other matter want to investigate by this paper is various causing factors that make those impossibilities. These two issues so far have not been profoundly discussed by the experts who are interested in investigating and exploring proverbs in general, or Indonesian ones in particular.

English as the most widely spoken international language will bring direct impact on the massive studies on all of its linguistic aspects in order to ease the English learners’ mastery the language. Accordingly, proverbs as one of the most important language properties are also becoming study objects which will attract many English scholars to investigate. Therefore, many contrastive studies on English proverbs or other similar formulas and ones found in other languages are carried out. A study done by syarfuni (2014, 26-50) try to compare similarities that exist in English and Indonesian idioms and proverbs. Syzdykov (2014, 318-321) tries to compare British and Kazakh proverbs of having the same thematic content. Mulatabi (2019, 30-38) describes various of communicative functions of English Proverbs. Sudiran (2007, 129-141) has explored the role of English proverbs in enhancing writing skills which can give a lot of benefits either to the students and teacher/lectures. In relation of English learning, Indrawati’s study (2019) concerns about the student’s ability to understand proverbs, and their perception on learning this formula. Several scholars try to focus their intention on the difficulties and possibilities in translating proverbs to another languages. For example studies done by Neupane (2021) tries to translate Nepali proverbs into English. El Shehab M. (2016) concerns with translation ability of English class students at Jadara University, Jordan in translating Arabic proverbs into English and vice versa.

As far as Indonesian and local languages in archipelago are concerned, several researches dealing with proverbs are important to mention. Arimi’s doctorate dissertation (2016) comprehensively discusses Indonesian proverbs from the aspects of categorization, cognitive structures, and their vitality. Meanwhile Hendrokumoro’s dissertation (2017) discusses structure, meaning, and function of Javanese proverbs. Inspired by Hay Yan’s comparative study (2016) who found *ma* ‘horse’ as the most prominent source domain in Mandarin proverbs and *ayam* ‘chicken’ in Indonesian ones, Wijana (2023, 361- 377) try to describe the possibility of *ayam* ‘chicken’ can figuratively represent in Indonesian proverbs. In his other work, Wijana (2022) has written about the many kind of referents can possibly be represented by *air* ‘water’ in Indonesian proverbs. Kinanti’s study (2012, 85-96) focuses on the positive and negative association can be represent by animal *gajah* ‘elephant’ in Indonesian proverbs. With regard to positive association, *gajah* can refer to powerful, rich, meritorious, and important human beings. Contrarily, it can be associated with a cruel greedy, and frequent confronting leader and big mistake, big disturbance, or unlucky human for its negative representation.

So far it is rarely found a proverb study which is based on thematic content. In fact there are a lot of proverbs found in any language have the same themes but they are delivered in different expressions. For example the following (7) to (10) below are all proverbs that can be used to express using a lesser quality of thing in case the better ones do not exist or are not

possessed, while (11) to (14) are used to express multiple luck got by certain person or party in the proverb deliverance.

- (7) Tak ada rotan akarpun berguna ‘No rattan root can be useful’
- (8) Tak emas, bungkal di asah ‘No gold, stone polished’
- (9) Tak air peluh diurut ‘No water, the sweat can be massaged’
- (10) Tak beras, antah dikisik ‘No rice, rice chaff can be winnowed’
- (11) Sambil berdiang nasi masak ‘While warming, the rice is cooked’
- (12) Sambil berdendang biduk hilir ‘While singing, the raft flows down stream’
- (13) Padi masak, jagung mengupih ‘The rice is ripe, the corn is leaf sheath’
- (14) Sambil menyelam, minum air ‘While diving, drinking water’

The richness of Indonesian proverb shows this phenomena. Many identical thematic proverbs can be said in various different proverbial expressions. Based on this fact this paper will discuss the use of Indonesian proverb of having useless effort themes. Various types of proverb structure able to use delivering useless effort intentions, and causes that potentially make actions mentioned in the proverbs difficult to realize.

Language of any speech community is used to fulfill unlimited communicative functions one of which is to express comparison. Accordingly, all languages are enriched by a lot number of formulas that are essentially created to enable the language speakers comparing something to other things which are equal or not equal in quality, quantity, size, etc. Those formulas are metaphor, simile, idiom, and proverb. Proverbs are phrases, clauses, or sentences containing figurative meaning bearing truth and wisdom for giving advice and reminder to the speech community members for enable them controlling and sustaining the social cohesion. This is in line with Wardaugh’s insight that one of most important functions of language is social maintenance to keep an individual society going. In other words language is used to sustain reality (1986, 233). With regard to its function to control social behavior of the community members is also in line with one of seven Halliday’s (1975) language function theory, i.e, regulatory function (see also Siregar, 2011). As far as comparing activities are concerned, there are a lot of matters to compare because the use of language covers a wide range of human activities. One of which is useless efforts done by the community members. In carrying out their life activities, human beings are often doing many kinds of mistake, and somethings they have done brings no result, wastes time and energy. To enable them more concretely describing and imagining this situation, they must create comparisons based on certain similarities between what they have done and something they are more familiar with. To realize this purpose, speech community members create various kinds of proverbs expressing useless efforts. To ease the people imagining the useless efforts, this matters are figuratively compared with various realities they often experienced in their life time. Accordingly a lot of proverb of having such themes exist in the use of language, including Indonesian. The variety of the proverbial expressions can at least be viewed from two aspects, i.e the proverb structure and causal factors that make the human actions difficult to realize.

## METHOD

This research begins with data collecting which are extracted from book of proverb entitled *7700 Peribahasa Indonesia* (7700 Indonesian Proverbs). Firstly, all proverbs containing “useless effort themes” are collected and their literal translations are provided. There

are at least 65 proverbs of having such themes are obtained. They are further classified on the basis normal order of syntactic structures starting from proverbs without subject and followed by ones involving subject, and from ones without comparative conjunction and followed by ones using comparative conjunction. Several distributional techniques, such as insertion, addition, paraphrase, and permutation are applied to enable the researcher identifying correctly the structure of every proverbs. Finally, the investigation is continued by explanations concerning several factors that make the actions mentioned in the proverbs difficult to carry out. Some proverbs are possible to analyse from different perspective for they might be appear more than once using diferent number.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

After having carefully observed all of data collection, It is found that there are various syntactic structures of proverbs intended to express “useless effort”. This variety is caused by the wide range spacial, situational, and referential use of the proverbs. Those syntactic structures can be systematically ordered as follow: the proverbs that have structure: predicate-object (P-O), conjunction-predicate-object (Conj-P-O), predicate-object-adverbial (P-O-Adv), conjunction-predicate-object-adverbial (Conj-P-O-Adv), predicate-complement (P-Comp), predicate-adverbial (P-Adv), conjunction-predicate-adverbial (Conj -P-Adv), subject-predicate-object (S-P-O), Subject-Predicate-Adverbial (S-P-Adv), conjunction-predicate-adv (Conj-S-P-Adv), predicate-subject (P-S), and adverbial-subject-predicate (Adv-S-P). Meanwhile, the causal factors that make the efforts carrying out in the proverbs hard to realize are also various. In proverbs built by (P-O), conjunction-predicate-object (Conj-P-O), the causal factors are the appearances of objects (O) or their attributes.

In proverbs of having predicate-object-adverbial (P-O-Adv), conjunction-predicate-object-adverbial (Conj-P-O-Adv), predicate-complement (P-Comp), predicate-adverbial (P-Adv), conjunction-predicate-adverbial (Conj -P-Adv), the causal factors are the emergence of the complement or adverbials (Adv) expressing place, time, purpose, benefactor and instrument, and the subject.

### **Predicate-Object Structured Proverbs**

As far as the syntactic structures are concerned, the proverbs consisting predicate-object (P-O) constitute the simplest structured proverbs. These proverbs consist of transitive verbs and directly be followed by noun or noun phrases as the object. Consider (15) to (18) below:

(15) Menjaring angin ‘Filtering wind’

P            O

(16) Menegakkan benang basah ‘To straight up a wet thread’

P            O

(17) Menantikan ara tak bergetah ‘Like waiting for an oak to have no sap’

P            O

(18) Menerka anak ayam dalam telur ‘Like predicting chicken young inside egg shell’

P            O

(19) Menghitung anak ayam sebelum ditetaskan ‘Counting chicken young before being hatched’

P                            O

Proverb (15) consists of transitive verb predicate *menjaring* ‘to filter using net’ and noun object *angin*, while (16), (17), (18), and (19) consecutively consists of transitive predicates *menegakkan* ‘to stright up’, *menantikan* ‘to wait for’, *menerka* ‘to predict’, and *menghitung* ‘to count’, and noun phrase objects *benang basah* ‘wet thread’, *ara tak bergetah* ‘oak with no sap’, *anak ayam dalam telur* ‘chicken in egg shell’, *anak ayam sebelum ditetaskan* ‘chicken young before being hatched’. The objects are noun phrases because they are paraphrases of *benang yang basah* ‘the wet thread’, *ara yang tak bergetah* ‘the oak with no sap’, *anak ayam yang ada dalam telur* ‘the chicken young inside egg’, *anak ayam yang sebelum ditetaskan* ‘the chicken young before being hatched’.

### Conjunction-Predicate-Object Structured Proverbs

Proverbs are generally used to express various kinds of comparison. Therefore, this traditional formula often use conjunction for expressing this intention, such as *bagai(kan)* ‘like’, *seperti* ‘like’, dan *bak* ‘like’. This fact directly cause the existence of proverbs of having structure conjunction-predicate-object (Conj-P-O). See (20) to (25) below:

(20) *Bagai menetak air* ‘Like cutting water’

Conj P O

(21) *Bagai menggantang anak ayam* ‘Like measuring chicken offspring’

Conj P O

(22) *Bagai menyukat anak ayam* ‘Like measuring the young chicken’

Conj P O

(23) *Bagai menanti ara hanyut* ‘Like waiting for an oak drifting’

Conj P O

(24) *Bagai mencari belalang di atas kacang* ‘Like looking for grasshopper in bean plant.

Conj P O

(25) *Bagai mengail kucing hanyut* ‘Like fishing a drifted cat’

Conj P O

All of the last five proverbs (20) to (25) consist of conjunction-predicate-object (C-P-O). The conjunction is expressed by *bagai* ‘like’, predikat is filled by *menetak* ‘to cut’, *menggantang* ‘to scale’, *menyukat* ‘to scale’, *menanti* ‘to wait for’, *mencari* ‘to look for’, and *mengail* ‘to fish’. Meanwhile, *air* ‘water’, *anak ayam* ‘chicken young’, and *kucing hanyut* ‘drifted cat’. *Kucing hanyut* in (25) is a phrase because it paraphrases with *kucing yang hanyut* ‘a cat which is drifted’.

### Predicate-Object-Adverbial Structured Proverbs

Indonesian proverbs can also appear to have functional structure predicate-object-adverbial (P-O-Adv). These proverbs is a little bit longer than ones having predicate-object (P-O) structure above. See the following examples (26) to (30) below:

(26) *Menabur biji di atas batu* ‘To sow seeds on the stone’

P O Adv

(27) *Membalikkan hujan ke langit* ‘Like returning rain to the sky’

P O Adv

(28) *Membandarkan air ke laut* ‘To irrigate the sea’

P O Adv

(29) Membuang air liur saja 'Just wasting saliva'  
P O Adv

(30) Mencari cempedak di bawah kerambil 'Looking for aromatic jack fruit under  
coconut tree'  
P O Adv

All of the last five proverbs consist of predicate (P) and object (O), but followed by different semantic role of adverbs. Proverb (46), (47), (48), (49), and (50) are consecutively ended with adverb of place *di atas batu* 'on the stone', adverb of intention *ke langit* 'to the sea', adverb of intention *ke laut* 'to the sea', adverb of frequency *saja* 'just', and adverb of place *di bawah kerambil* 'under coconut tree'.

### **Conjunction-Predicate-Object-Adverbial Structured Proverbs**

Like predicate-object structured proverbs, predicate-object-adverbial structured proverbs can also be preceded by conjunction *bagai(kan)* 'like', *seperti* 'like', *bak* 'like', etc., such as shown by (31) to (33) below:

(31) Bagai menunjukkan ilmu kepada orang menetek 'Like showing skill to breast fed  
baby'  
Conj P O Adv

(32) Bagai mengalirkan air ke bukit 'Like flowing up water to hill'  
Conj P O Adv

(33) Bagai menampung air dengan limas pesuk 'Like to retain water with full of holes leaf  
container'  
Conj P O Adv

The adverbials of (31), (32), and (33) consecutively have semantic role of benefactor, intention place, and instrument.

### **Predicate-Complement Structured Proverbs**

There only one datum found regarding proverbs built by predicate-complement (P-Comp) structure, i.e. (34) below:

(34) Bertanam biji hampa 'growing empty seed'  
P Comp

### **Predicate-Adverbial Structured Proverbs**

Commonly proverbs having this kind syntactic structure have a predicate filled by intransitive verb and followed by prepositional phrase expressing semantic role of place and benefactor, such as shown by (35) (36) and (37):

(35) Berdiang di abu dingin 'To warm in cold ash'  
P Adv

(36) Berkelahi dalam mimpi 'Fighting in dreaming'  
P Adv

(37) Beramal kepada kera 'Giving charity to an ape'  
P Adv

(38) Bertepuk sebelah tangan 'To clap with one hand'  
P Adv

- (39) Menambak ke laut ‘To repress sea water’  
 P Adv

### Conjunction-Predicate-Adverbial Structured Proverbs

Without denying that (35), (36), (37), (38), and (39) are all possible to be preceded by conjunction *bagai(kan)* ‘like’, *seperti* ‘like’, *bak* ‘like’, etc. in the data collection, there is only one datum found showing to have conjunction-predicate-adverbial structure like (40) below:

- (40) Seperti tulis di atas air ‘Like writing on the water’  
 Conj P Adv

In (40) the predicate is directly followed by the adverbial of place, the object is just implicitly suggested by the structure.

### Subject-Predicate-Object Structured Proverbs

Indonesian proverb that shows to have this kind of syntactic structure is (41) below:

- (41) Si buta membilang bintang di langit ‘The blind counts the star in the sky’  
 S P O

The object is filled by noun phrase because it paraphrases with *bintang yang ada di langit* ‘the star in the sky’

### Subject-Predicate-Adverbial Structured Proverbs

The proverbs of this type can involve active or passive mood of sentences. Proverb

- (42) is expressed in passive voice, while (43) is in active voice.  
 (42) Orang buta diberi suluh ‘The blind is given a torch’  
 S P Adv

- (43) Si buta pergi bergajah ‘Like the blind goes looking for an elephant’  
 S P Adv

### Conjunction-Subject-Predicate-Adverbial Structured Proverbs

The comparison expressions in (42) and (43) can be explicitly uttered (43), and the other proverb of the same theme can be added (44) with or without element omission:

- (44) Bagai si buta pergi bergajah ‘Like the blind goes looking for an elephant’  
 Conj S P Adv

- (45) Bak si buta berbelalang, bak si kudung pergi berbelut ‘Like the blind catching grasshopper, and si kudung catching eels’  
 Conj S P

### Predicate-Subject Structured Proverbs

In very small number of cases, the syntactic structure of proverb can be inversion, such as shown in (46) and (47) below:

- (46) Tertanam biji hampa ‘Empty seed is unintentionally planted’  
 P S

- (47) Tak ada gunanya mencambuk kuda mati ‘It is useless whipping a dead horse’  
 P S



The subject of (47) is *Gunanya mencambuk kuda mati* ‘The importance of whipping a dead horse’ and the predicate is *tak ada* ‘there is no’.

### Adverbial-Subject-Predicate Structured Proverbs

Only one datum shows this kind of syntactic structure, i.e the following (47):

(48) Habis minyak sepasu, ekor anjing tak akan lurus ‘To use up a bowl of oil, the dog tail will not be straight’

Adv                      S                      P

The adverbial of (48) is filled by a clause *habis minyak sepasu* ‘to use up a bowl of oil’ and main clause *ekor anjing tak akan lurus* ‘the dog tail will not be straight up’. This proverb can be more explicitly expressed into (49):

(49) Walaupun habis minyak sepasu, ekor anjing tidak akan lurus

Conj              P                      S                      S                      P

### Causal Factors of The Useless Effort

This section will explain the various factors that make the efforts described by the proverbs can not be realized based on their syntactic structures. After carrying out careful examination towards the structures of Indonesian proverbs, it is found that the causes of impossibilities are closely related to the syntactic structures of the proverb expression. The proverbs with predicate-object (P-O) structure with or without conjunction, the causes are on the characteristics of entity or substance filled by the object. For instance in (50) and (51) below, the impossibilities are caused by the works expressed by the predicate *menetak* ‘to cut’ and *menjaring* ‘to catch, filter’ are not proper to apply to *air* ‘water’ or *angin* ‘wind’.

(50) Bagai menetak air ‘Like cutting water’

Conj              P              O

(51) Menjaring angin ‘To catch wind using net’

P              O

If the object is filled by phrases, the impossibilities are caused by the attributes of the phrases which function to characterize and give limitations to the head of the noun phrases. The limitations can involve specification, time, place, condition, etc. of the object elements. Consider (52) to (56) below:

(52) Bagai mencari belalang di dalam akar ‘Like looking for grasshopper in the root’

Conj      P                      O

(53) Bagai menyukat anak ayam ‘Like measuring the young chicken’

Conj      P                      O

(54) Menghitung anak ayam sebelum ditetaskan ‘Counting chicken young before being hatched’

P                      O

(55) Bagai menghitung bulu kucing ‘Like counting cat fur’

Conj

(56) Bagai mengisi gantang bolong ‘Like to fill a perforated bamboo scale’

Conj      P                      O

In (52) the causal factor is the locative attribute *di dalam akar* ‘in the root’, in (53) is the attributes ayam ‘chicken’ that make the object having special characteristics, i.e always

moving, impossible to measure, in (54) is the existence of attributive element *sebelum ditetaskan* ‘before being hatched’ which makes the counting task hard to do, in (55) the occurrence of attribute *kucing*, and in (56) the attributive *bolong* ‘perforated’ following *gantang* ‘bamboo scale’ is the causer. The other examples are (57), (58), and (59) which all place the causer on the attributes of the head constituent:

(57) Seperti meniup api di atas air ‘Like blowing fire on the water’

Conj P O

(58) Hendak meluruskan ekor anjing ‘Want to straight up dog tail’

P O

(59) Mendakikan selokan landai ‘To rise up a flat canal’

P O

Further, the proverbs with predicate-complement (P-Comp) and predicate-object-adverbial (P-O-Adv) or predicate-adverbial structure (P-Adv) with or without conjunction (Conj) structures their impossibilities are caused by the existence of the attribute’s complement or adverbs following the object that explain from where, to where, to which, or by which the action expressed by the predicate and object are intended, proposed or done.

(60) Memeras darah dari batu ‘To squiz blood from stone’

P O Adv

(61) Menghilirkan air ke bukit ‘To flow water to hill’

P O Adv

(62) Menabur biji di atas batu ‘To sow seeds on the stone’

P O Adv

(63) Melekatkan kersik ke buluh ‘To attach dried banana leaf to a bamboo’

P O Adv

(64) Bagai mengalirkan air ke bukit ‘Like flowing up water’

Conj P O Adv

(65) Berdiang di abu dingin ‘To warm in cold ash’

P Adv

(66) Menghendaki pucuk pada alu ‘To ask for point to rice pestle’

P O Adv

(67) Bertanam biji hampa ‘Growing empty seed’

P Comp

Meanwhile, it is important to note that non referential adverb *saja* ‘just’ certainly cannot cause impossibilities of any work expressed by the predicate object because the kind of proverb with which it occurs pragmatically corresponds to the useless effort, such as advising naughty person, teaching low intelligence person, etc. Consider (67) and (68) below:

(68) Membuang air liur saja ‘Just wasting saliva’

P O Adv

(69) Membuang-buang keringat saja ‘Just wasting sweat’

P O Adv

Finally proverbs involving subject slot of either contain conjunction or not, such as ones belong to subject-predicate-object (S-P-O), subject-predicate-adverbial (S-P-Adv), predicate-subject (P-S), adverbial-predicate-subject (Adv-P-S) structured Proverbs, place the impossibilities on the subject element commonly filled by individual or animal incapable or

inappropriate doing or executing the actions or the action is improper to apply for them. For more clearly see the following (60) to (75) below:

(70) Si buta membilang bintang di langit ‘The blind counts the star in the sky’

S P O

(71) Orang buta diberi suluh ‘The blind is given a torch’

S P Adv

(72) Bagai si buta pergi bergajah ‘Like the blind goes looking for an elephant’

Conj S P Adv

(73) Tak ada gunanya mencambuk kuda mati ‘It is useless whipping a dead horse’

P S

(74) Kelekatu hendak terbang ke langit ‘Like white ant flying to the sky’

S P Adv

(75) Habis minyak sepasu ekor anjing tak akan lurus ‘To use up a bowl of oil, the dog tail will not be straight’

Adv S P

In (69), (70), and (71) the action is done by or applied to *si buta* ‘blind person’, in (72) the useless thing is caused by the subject gerund *gunanya mencambuk kuda mati* ‘the importance of whipping a dead horse’, and in (73) or (74) the useless efforts are caused by the involvement of *kelekatu* white ant and *ekor anjing* ‘dog tail’. However in more lower levels the impossibilities are caused by *mati* which modifies *kuda* ‘horse’ and *anjing* ‘dog’ which does *ekor* ‘tail’.

## CONCLUSION

Comparison is one of the most important matters in human life. Accordingly, all language are crowded by linguistic expressions by which the language speakers able to compare something with another that they are more commonly familiar with. Some of those expressions are metaphor, simile, personification, proverbs, etc. With regard to proverbs, this traditional formula is used to figuratively compare very wide range of life affairs, one of which is useless efforts done by the speech community members. The wide social, spacial, and stylistic use of proverbs make the useless effort themes appear in various syntactic structures, which in turn will vary the causal factors of the useless efforts. With regard to the syntactic structures, the useless effort themes can be expressed by proverbs of having structure that can be systematically ordered: predicate-object (P-O), conjunction-predicate-object (Conj-P-O), predicate-object-adverbial (P-O-Adv), conjunction-predicate-object-adverbial (Conj-P-O-Adv), predicate-complement (P-Comp), predicate-adverbial (P-Adv), conjunction-predicate-adverbial (Conj -P-Adv), subject-predicate-object (S-P-O), Subject-Predicate-Adverbial (S-P-Adv), conjunction-predicate-adv (Conj-S-P-Adv), predicate-subject (P-S), and adverbial-subject-predicate (Adv-S-P).

Meanwhile, the causal factors that make the efforts carrying out in the proverbs hard to realize are also various. In proverbs built by (P-O), conjunction-predicate-object (Conj-P-O), the causal factors are the appearances of objects (O) or their attributes. In proverbs of having predicate-object-adverbial (P-O-Adv), conjunction-predicate-object-adverbial (Conj-P-O-Adv), predicate-complement (P-Comp), predicate-adverbial (P-Adv), conjunction-predicate-adverbial (Conj -P-Adv), the causal factors are the emergence of the complement or adverbials

(Adv) expressing place, time, purpose, benefactor and instrument. Finally in proverbs involving subject, the causal factors are the subject elements, things or human beings that or who are not capable to perform or execute the actions.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Al Shehab, M. 2016. “The ability of Translation Students in Translating English Proverbs into Arabic and Vice versa at Jadara University Jordan.” *Journal of Literature, Lnguage and Linguistics*, 29:10—19.
- Arimi, S. 2016. “Peribahasa Indonesia: Kajian Kategorisasi, Struktur, dan Vitalitasnya.” Yogyakarta: Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Gadjah Mada.
- Halliday, M.A.K. 1975. *Learning How to Mean: Exploration in The Development of Language*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hendrokumoro, 2017. “Peribahasa Jawa.” *Disertasi*. Yogyakarta: Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Gadjah Mada.
- Hornby, H.S. 2015. *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English*. Oxford University Press.
- Indrawati, S. 2019. “Student’s Understanding on Proverbs: Studies of Learning in School”. *The 28<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Literature*, July 11—13. Banda Aceh: Syah Kuala University.
- Kinanti, S.P. 2021. “Metafora Gajah dalam Peribahasa Indonesia”. *Medan Bahasa*. 15(1).
- Mulatabi, M.M.Al. 2019. “Exploring The Significance of Proverb in English Language”. *Al Suna: Juornal of Arabic and English Language*. 2(1):30—38. <https://doi.org/1031538/alsuna.2i1.298>.
- Neupane, N. 2021. “Cultural Translations of Nepali Proverbs into English”. *Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, 24 (2). Doi:<https://doi.org/10.24071/Lit.v24i7>.
- Siregar, B.U. 2011. *Seluk Beluk Fungsi Bahasa*. Jakarta: Pust Kajian Bahasa dan Budaya Universitas Katolik Indonesia Atmajaya.
- Sudiran. 2007. “The Role of English Proverbs in the Development of Writing Skill”. *Celt: A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching, and Literature*, 7(2). <https://doi.org/1024167/celt.v7.12>.
- Syarfuni. 2014. “An Analysis of English Idioms and Indonesian Proverbs”. *Getsempena English Education Journal*, 1(1).
- Syzdykov, K. 2014. “Contrastive Studies on Proverbs”. *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 136 (318—321).
- Wardaugh, R. 1988. *An Introduction of Sociolinguistics*. Basil Blackwell.
- Wijana, I D.P. 2022. “Target Domains of Water in Indonesian Proverbs”. *Linguistic Issues: A Compilation of Working Papers*. Yogyakarta: TS Publisher.
- Wijana, I D.P. 2023. Target Domains of Ayam ‘Chicken’ in Indonesian Proverbs. *Linguistic Issues 2: A Compilation of Working Papers*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Larasan.

## **SUPPLEMENT**

### **Predicate-Object Structured Proverbs**

Menjaring angin > 'To catch wind using net'

Mengisi perian bubus 'To fill in a leaking bamboo tube'

Hendak meluruskan ekor anjing 'want to straight up dog tail'

Menghendaki tanduk kuda, (bilakah dapat?) 'To ask for horse horn, (is it possible?)'

Menantikan ara tak bergetah 'Like waiting for an oak to have no sap'

Menerka anak ayam dalam telur 'Like predicting chicken young inside egg shell'

Menaikkan bendar sondai 'Like flowing up water to slanting canal'

Menegakkan benang basah 'To stright up a wet thread'

Menaikkan bendar sondai 'Like flowing up water to slanting canal'

Mendakikan selokan landai 'To rise up a flat canal'

Menantikan kucing bertanduk 'Waiting for a cat to have horn'

Menanti pelir kambing putus 'To wait for the fall of goat testicle'

Mengisi perian bubus 'To fill in a leaking bamboo tube'

Mencari kutu dalam ijuk'Looking for lice in the palm fiber'

### **Conjunction-Predicate-Object Structured Proverbs**

Bagai menetak air 'Like cutting water'

Bagai mencari belalang di dalam akar 'Like looking for grasshopper in the root'

Bagai menggantang anak ayam 'like measuring chicken offspring'

Bagai menyukat anak ayam 'Like measuring the young chicken'

Seperti meniup api di atas air > 'Like blowing fire on the water' > To do something difficult'

Bagai menanti ara hanyut 'Like waiting for an oak drifting'

Bagai mencincang air 'Like chopping water'

Bagai menghitung bulu kucing 'Like counting cat fur'

Bagai menyukat anak ayam 'Like brushing chicken ofsprings, enter one, exit two'

Bagai mencari belalang di atas kacang 'Like looking for grasshopper in bean plant.

Bagai mencari belalang di dalam rumput 'Like looking after grasshopper in the grass'

Bagai menyukat belut hidup 'Like measuring a living eel'

Bagai menghitung bulu kambing 'To count sheep fur'

Bagai menghitung rambut di kepala 'To count hair in the head'

Bagai mengail kucing hanyut 'Like fishing a drawn cat'

Bagai menghitung ketiak ular 'Like counting a snake arm pit'

Bagai mengisi gantang bolong 'Like to fill a perforated bamboo scale'

### **Predicate-Object-Adverbial Structured Proverbs**

Membalikkan hujan ke langit 'Like returning rain to the sky'

membandarkan air ke laut 'To irrigate the sea'

Memeras darah dari batu 'To squiz blood from stone'

Membuang air ke laut 'Throwing water to the sea'

Membuang garam ke laut 'Throwing salt to the sea'

Membuang air liur saja 'Just wasting saliva'

Membuang-buang keringat saja ‘Just wasting sweat’  
Mencari cempedak di bawah kerambil ‘Looking for aromatic jack fruit under coconut tree’  
Melekatkan kersik ke buluh ‘To attach dried banana leaf to a bamboo’  
Memeras darah dari batu ‘Like squeezing blood from stone’  
Memasang pelita di tengah hari ‘To set up lamp in the day’  
Minta tanduk kepada kuda ‘To ask for horn to a horse’  
Menabur biji di atas batu ‘To sow a seed on the stone’

#### **Conjunction-Predicate-Object-Adverbial Structured Proverbs**

Bagai mengalirkan air ke bukit ‘Like flowing up water’  
Bagai menunjukkan ilmu kepada orang menetek ‘Like showing skill to breast fed baby’  
Bagai menampung air dengan limas pesuk ‘Like to retain water with full of holes leaf container’

#### **Predicate-Complement structured Proverbs**

Bertanam biji hampa ‘Growing empty seed’

#### **Predicate-Adverbial Structured Proverbs**

Berkelahi dalam mimpi ‘Fighting in dreaming’  
Menambak ke laut ‘To repress sea water’  
Berdiang di abu dingin ‘To warm in cold ash’  
Beramal kepada kera ‘Giving charity to an ape’  
Bertepuk sebelah tangan ‘To clap with one hand’  
Menyurat di atas air

#### **Conjunction-Predicate-Adverbial Structured Proverbs**

Seperti tulis di atas air ‘Like writing on the water’  
Seperti menulis di atas air

#### **Subject-Predicate-Object Structured Proverbs**

Si buta membilang bintang di langit ‘The blind counts the star in the sky’  
Pungguk merindukan bulan ‘An owl is longing for the moon’

#### **Subject-Predicate-Adverbial Structured Proverbs**

Orang buta diberi suluh ‘The blind is given a torch’

#### **Conjunction-Subject-Predicate-Adverbial Structured Proverbs**

Bagai si buta pergi bergajah ‘Like the blind goes looking for an elephant’  
Bagai si buta pergi berbelut ‘Like the blind looking for an eel’  
(Bak si buta berbelalang), bak si kudung pergi berbelut ‘Like the blind catching grasshopper, and si kudung catching eels’

#### **Predicate-Subject Structured Proverbs**

Tertanam biji hampa ‘Empty seed is unintentionally planted’

Sia-sia mencambuk kuda mati 'It is useless to whip a dead horse'

Tidak ada gunanya mencambuk kuda mati 'No use whipping a dead horse'

**Adverbial-Subject-Predicate Structured Proverbs**

Habis minyak sepasu, ekor anjing tak akan lurus 'To use up a bowl of oil, the dog tail will not be straight'