The Function And Meaning Of Umpasa In Toba Batak's Traditional Wedding Ceremony

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Abstract

This study seeks to reveal the menaing and function of umpasa in Toba Batak's wedding ceremony. This qualitative research method is based on qualitative content analysis (Marying, 2010). The research data is 40 *umpasa* of Toba, taken by recording and video-taping 5 wedding ceremonies held in Medan. The findings show that the meanings and functions of the *umpasa* are also closely related to the wedding process of the Toba Batak society and also to Toba Batak's philosophy. *Umpasa* is used in Toba Batak's traditional wedding ceremony to refine and beautify the language. This shows a sense of mutual respect between host and invited guests, especially between *hula-hula* (the wife giver) and *boru* (the wife receiver). Of all the *umpasa* presented at the Toba Batak traditional wedding ceremony, the meaning and function of *umpasa* is usually used to show: blessing, respecting, praising, advising, thanking, agreeing, expecting, opening and closing.

Key Word: Toba Batak, traditional weeding ceremony, meaning, function, qualitative content analysis.

1.Introduction

Toba Batak society is one of Batak sub-ethnic in Indonesia besides Batak Simalungun, Karo, Pakpak, and Mandailing. This sub-ethnic group is not much different from other Batak's sub-ethnic group that exist in Indonesia, Toba Batak's community has a language as a symbol of identity and manifestation of existence. Existence in question is a beneficial creature or social creature in which society itself is formed by the existence of language   (Subyakto,   1992:   1).

Language is a verbal means of communication used throughout the thinking process. Language is a means of thought of communication to convey the what other's thingking. Man can think well because he has a language. Without language, humans will not be able to think abstractly and elaborately, as is commonly used in the scientific world. In other words, language allows humans to think abstractly where factual objects are transformed into abstract language symbols. Given this transformation, people can think of a particular object, even though it is not in fact where the thinking is done. If we examine further, then the language actually communicates three things: thoughts, feelings, and attitudes.

Toba Batak language continues to grow and serves as a means of communication, support, and symbol of identity of Toba Batak society. Such functions can be observed through the activities of community members in communicating among themselves. To reveal the intention and content of a language speaker often convey it through literary works. One of the oral literary works that was born, lived and developed in the Toba Batak society and passed down from generation to generation is *umpasa*. As an oral oral tradition, *umpasa* is classified into an old poetical form, since the set is made on the terms of hook, rhymed and rhythmic, and consists of two rows of one, and four rows of one, the first row consists of samples and the second row as contents, two the first line of sampling and   the   last   two   lines   are   the   contents.

Formerly the *umpasa* of Toba Batak is often used by young people and parents

when conducting an activity, such as young people in special occasion such as *martandang* (dating out), and by parents in Toba Batak's traditional ceremonies, such as *marhata sinamot* (dowry negotiation). *Umpasa* in the context of Toba Batak community culture is not only to beautify the string of words, but also to convey a very broad meaning, that contains the philosophy of life, ethics of decency, laws, and society. But the *umpasa* is more likely to contain the philosophy of life that is the life ideals of the Toba Batak based on the following respects: *hamoraon* (wealth), *hagabeon* (having many children), and *hasangapon* (honor).

The frequency of *umpasa* is more commonly used when compared with other types of literary works owned by Toba Batak's community, such as *turi-turian* (the parable) and others. The use of the *umpasa* is always done during every traditional ceremony. The traditional ceremony is more meaningful when accompanied by the use of *umpasa* because *the raja parhata* (spokesman) is considered highly as using *umpasa*.

The existence of *umpasa* in the community at the present time, especially the people who are in the overseas, can be said to be worried about. This is due to many parents of the Batak Toba community who can no longer know the meaning and the function of *umpasa* and how to use it in Toba Batak's traditional ceremonies. Surely this situation has a negative influence on the development of the *umpasa*. Based on the reasons mentioned above, research on Toba Batak's umpasa is very important to find out the meanings and the functions of Toba Batak's umpasa in traditional wedding ceremony.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis emerges as a reaction to pure linguistics that can not fully reveal the essence of language. In this case discourse analysts try to provide an alternative in understanding the nature of the language. Discourse analysis examines the language in an integrated manner in the sense of not separate, all elements of language bound to the context of language usage (Darma: 2009: 15). Therefore, discourse analysis is essential to understanding the nature of language and language behavior.

Discourse analysis is a discipline that seeks to examine the use of real language in communication (Darma, 2009: 15). Stubbs (1983: 1) says that discourse analysis is a study that examines and analyzes the language use naturally, whether oral or written. Stubbs further explains that discourse analysis emphasizes his study of the use of language in a social context, especially in the use of language among speakers. So, the explanation of the analysis aims to look for order rather than rule. What is meant by regularity, i.e matters relating to the acceptability of language use in society in reality and tend not to formulate language rules as in the grammar.

Cutting (2002: 1) says that discourse analysis is an approach that examines the relationship between the language with the underlying context. Thus, discourse analysis can lead us to examine the social background and cultural background of the use of a language. In other words, discourse analysis is able to examine the language more than just describe it, but it can also help us understand the rules that are part of the language user's knowledge reflected in daily communication (Paltridge, 2000).

Samsuri (1998: 81) reveals that discourse is a complete recording of the language of communication events, both oral and written, which can be transactional when the importance of the content or interactional when concerned with mutual relationships.

Whatever the form and its nature, discourse always assumes the presence of the recipients and the vice versa. Furthermore Brown and Yule (1991: 1) describe the function of language into two terms. The language function for expressing "content" is described as transactional, and the language functions involved in the disclosure of social relationships and personal attitudes are described as interactional. In the function of language as transactional, the speaker (or writer) views language as something that plays a role in effective information delivery. Thus, the language used in such situations is more message-oriented. In the function of language as interactional, the speaker (or writer) views language as something that is used to establish and maintain social relationships.

Discourse analysis in the social context is defined as the practice of its use. Because language is a central aspect of the description of a subject, and through the language of ideology is absorbed in it. Discourse analysis is used to find the meaning intended by the speaker in oral discourse, or by the author in written discourse, and also examines how the language becomes meaningful and concise to the user. In addition, through discourse analysis we do not only know how the content of the text, but also how the message was delivered.

Text and Context

Halliday and Hasan (1976: 1) interpret the text as a unit of the use of language, not grammatical units such as clauses and sentences and not defined according to size. In their opinion the text can also show a kind of unity or texture that gives the text itself the ability to be considered socially as a whole. The text has a meaningful unit that is the source of the maker of meaning and contains sound quality for spoken or written text.

Text is the result of the discourse process. In the process, there are values, ideologies, emotions, interests, and so on. Thus understanding the meaning of a text, can not be separated from only the understanding of the text itself, but also must understand about the context that accompanies the text. If it is wrong to interpret the context then the understanding of meaning and text messages will be hampered. The combination of text and context is called discourse.

Aminuddin (2000: 4) states that discourse is the whole of the elements that construct the expression of language in the event of communication. The concrete form can be spoken discourse or written text (written texts). The scope of discourse analysis in addition to referring to the objective form of language exposure in the form of text, also related to the context reference world.

On the other hand, Sumarlam (2005: 47) states that the context of discourse is the internal aspect of discourse and everything that externally surrounds a discourse. Based on this understanding, the context of discourse can be broadly divided into two groups namely the context of language and the context outside the language. Halliday and Hasan (1992: 14) mark the context of the language / context as the internal discourse context while everything that surrounds the discourse, both the context of the situation and the cultural context as the external discourse contex.

In a similar vein, Saragih (2006: 4), also explained that context is a vehicle for the formation of text. There is no text without context. Context refers to everything that accompanies the text. The context includes, (1) the internal linguistic / context context and (2) the social context / external context.From the above description, it can be concluded

that the context is everything that surrounds the text. Text and context are always related and inseparable. The meaning realized in the text is the result of the interaction of the language user with the context, so the context is the vehicle for the formation of the text.

Based on the above limitation, it is understood that the context has two forms: (1) linguistic context / internal context (language context) (2) social context / external context (external context of language). The linguistic context refers to other linguistic units that accompany a unit under discussion. Another linguistic unit that accompanies a linguistic unit under discussion is often called an internal or cotext. It says the internal context because this context is inside and is part of the text being discussed. The social context refers to something outside that is written or spoken, which accompanies the language or text in the event of language usage or social interaction. This context is also called the external context. The social context is divided into three categories, namely the context of the situation, cultural context, and ideological context (Martin, 1992). The closer context to the text is called more concrete or real and the further context of the text is called the abstract context (Saragih, 2003: 193). How language relation with context is described below.
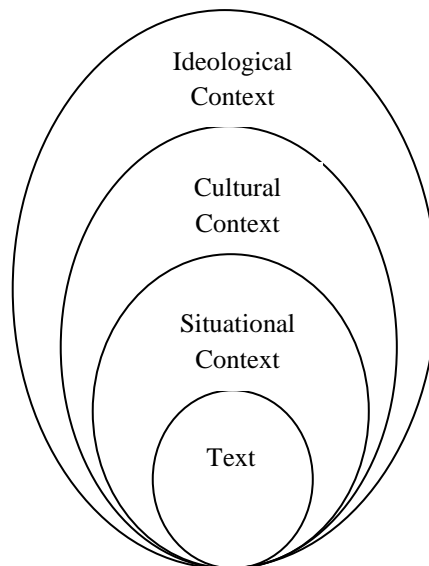

Figure 1. The relation between text and context (adapted from Martin, 1992: 494)

Saragih (2006) explains the most concrete context is the context of the situation because it directly relates to language or text. In other words, the context of a situation is a bridge of social context to the language. A very abstract context is an ideological context because it is the furthest away from the text. Between the context of the situation and the ideological context there is a cultural context. All contexts use language as a means of realization, so to be able to understand the meaning of a language, one must be able to recognise all the contexts.

2.Methods

The study is qualitative descriptive in nature. The data of the study was 40 *umpasa* (verses) purposively taken from 5 video-taped wedding ceremonies of Toba Batak in Medan. The data was also driven from online sources.

The method of research is based on qalitative content analysis. It is a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative data (Marying, 2000; Schreier, 2002). This method application is based on coding frame and categories of the data. The categorization of the data is at the heart of the method, and it contains all the aspects that figure in the description and interpretation. The other strenght of qualitative content analysis is that it is highly systematic. As the beginning, the examination of each single part of the material that is in any way relevant to the research question is indeed required by this method.

The procedures in carrying out a qualitative content analysis are expalined in 8 steps: (1) deciding on a research question; (2) selecting material; (3) building a coding frame; (4) segmentation; (5) trial coding; (6) evaluating and modifying the coding frame; (7) main analysis; (8) presenting and interpreting the findings.

3. Finding and Discussion

The research revealed that the function and meaning of umpasa presented in Toba Batak's wedding ceremony are categorised into:

1. Opening

The first umpasa as the opening of the conversation between *suhut parboru* (wife giver hereafter WG) and *suhut paranak* (wife receiver, hereafter WR) is almost but not always as following.

> *Sai jolo ninangnang do ninna asa ninungnung*
> *Sai jolo pinangan do asa sinungkun*

This umpasa is the introduction by the speakers of WG to begin the conversation with WR. The question is related to the party being held. Usually after a reception is held then the event continued with the dowry talk of the woman. In this case, Toba Batak usually tradition *manise* (ask) to the WR by using the above *umpasa*.

2. Thanking

The function of the *umpasa* also shows gratitude to the host for their warm welcome as well as the food served. The example of a match is used as follows.

> *Sititi ma sihompa golang-golang pangarahutna*
> *Tung so sadia pe i nuaeng na hupatupa hami i sai godang ma pinasuna*

The meaning of this *umpasa* is that the speaker (the guest) feels grateful for the food served and then blesses the host. This *umpasa* shows that the Batak Toba people are always grateful for what others have given him. Then the reply from the host also shows their humbleness, and hopefully the food served gives blessing to the invited guests.

3. Blessing

Umpasa in Toba Batak marriage also serves to bless. Usually the WG bless the WR. Examples of data showing this function as following.

Bona ni aek Puli dolok ni Sitapongan
Sai tubu ma di hamu angka na uli, jala sai lam tamba ma pansamotan

This *Umpasa* means that the guests especially WG bless the bride and bridegroom to have beautiful and handsome child, and given wealth so that they can support their children in the future. In the Batakese philosophy that *hagabeon* (son), *hamoraon* (wealth), *hasangapon* (pride) is an inseparable part of Batak society. In other words, the success of a Toba Batak tribe is seen from these three factors: having many children and successful children, having wealth; and pride or respected/honored by others.

4. Praising/Persuading

The function of the *umpasa* on the marriage of the Toba Batak tribe is to praise the kings: the host or invited guests. *Parboru* (wife receiver) should praise *hula-hula* (wife giver) and vice versa. The instance of such a *umpasa* can be seen below.

Pat ni gaja do tu pat ni hora
Anak ni raja do hamu, pahompu ni na mora

The meaning of this *umpasa* is the WG praised the WR as a honored person that have wealth inherited from generation to generation. *Umpasa* is used for the WR to pay the dowry of the woman (bride) with the appropriate amount because it is considered that the WR is able to pay the amount of money requested by the WG.

5. Expecting

Umpasa can also serve to express the expectation of the WG to the WR and vice versa. The example of this *umpasa* can be seen below.

Pitu lili nami paualu jugia nami
Na uli do nipi nami ai gohan muna ma hajut nami

This *Umpasa* has the meaning that the WG hopes that the WR will give a big amount of dowry or worthy given because WR is considered as an honored and wealthy person. The WG persuaded WR to give them the dowries they asked for.

6. Respecting

Umpasa can also show respect from the speaker to the other person, or from the WR to the WG or vice versa. It is also based on the philosophical Batak people to respect each other, to help between *hula-hula* (WG) with *boru* (WR), and they must respect *dongan tubu* (people from the same clan). Below is a sample of the *umpasa* that define the function.

Mangula ma pangula di rura Pangaloan
Molo mangido Hulahula, dae do so oloan

The meaning contained in this *umpasa* is that the WR must respect the WG. In the case of dowries demanded by the WG, the WR should not be able to refuse the requested amount. But because the demand for the dowry can not be fulfilled, the WR tries to negotiate the amount of dowry to be lowered.

7. Agreeing

Umpasa can also be used to declare consent. In Toba Batak traditional wedding, *umpasa* can be used to express that all different parties must try to defeat each other's ego, so that the agreement can be reached. Below is a the example of the *umpasa*.

Aek godang, aek laut
Dos ni roha do sibahen na saut

The meaning of the above example is that if all parties have agreed with a decision then the decision will be carried out together. In this case, if both parties (the WG and the WR) have approved the number of dowries, then the marriage party will run peacefully.

8. Advising

The function of the *umpasa* can also be as an advice. In Batak tradition, advising is a duty which must be done by every Batak person to an older person or wife receiver. In the Toba Batak wedding ceremony, parents from bride will advise the bride and bridegroom.

Sisada urdot hamu, sisada tortoran
Sisada tahi ma hamu sisada oloan

The meaning contained in the *umpasa* l is that the spouse must always be love one another, respecting each other, and help each other to build a happy family.

9. Closing

Fungsi yang terakhir dari umpasa dalam perkawinan Toba Batak yaitu sebagai penutup dari semua umpasa yang diekspresikan. Biasanya umpasa ini berisikan doa dan berkat penutup. Contoh dari umpasa ini dapat dilihat seperti di bawah ini.

The last function of the *umpasa* in the Toba Batak wedding is as the closing of all the expressed *umpasa*. Usually this *umpasa* contains prayers to close all *umpasa* expressed. The example of this *umpasa* can be seen as below.

Sahat sahat di solu sahat tu bortean
Sai leleng ma hita mangolu jala dipasu pasu tuhan.

This Umpasa has a meaning that all parties get the blessing from God and given a long life, especially the bride blessed and guarded by God after the wedding is done.

Of the nine functions that have been found in the data analysis, the table below shows the number of on the *umpasa* based on their functions, so it can be seen the dominant role functions in traditional wedding of Toba Batak.

Table 1.the function and frequency of umpasa in Toba Batak's wedding ceremony

No	Functions	Frequency
1	Opening	2
2	Thanking	3
3	Blessing	10
4	Praising	7
5	Expecting	2
6	Respecting	8
7	Agreeing	2
8	Advising	5
9	Closing	1
	Total	**40**

As the description of the above table, it can be seen that the dominant role function of *umpasa* in the Toba Batak wedding ceremony is blessing (10). This indicates that the *umpasa* in the context of the Batak Toba culture is basically used to bless the bride and bridegroom, or the WG bless the WR. Then in the second sequence, the dominant is used to show respect (8) between the host and the invited guest, or the *boru* (WR) to the *hula-hula* (WG) and vice versa. Then the *umpasa* is also used as a means of mutual praise (7) between the WR and the WG especially when negotiating the amount of dowry to be given. This shows that Batak Toba people have the ability to persuade and negotiate by praising one another. Furthermore, the *umpasa* serves to advise (5), in this context both bride and bridegroom are given advice by the invited guests, especially by the *hula-hula* (WG) for happy and never ending marriage to. Then, the *umpasa* also serves as a thanking (3), between the WG and the WR. Then the other functions are : opening, expectation, and agreement, 2 *umpasa* respectively. Finally, the closing *umpasa* (1) is used to close the previous delivered *umpasa*.

4. Conclusion

In the Toba Batak traditional wedding ceremony, the role and function of the *umpasa* is very important. Without the presence of a *umpasa,* the language spoken by the speaker will be bland. The meanings conceived by the *umpasa* are also closely related to the wedding process of the Toba Batak society. The intentional delivery between WG and WR often uses *umpasa* to refine and beautify the language. This shows a sense of mutual respect between host and invited guests, especially between the WG and theWR. Of all the rituals presented at the Toba Batak traditional wedding ceremony, the *umpasa* is usually used to show: blessing, respecting, praising, advising, thanking, agreeing, expecting, opening and closing.

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