



## The Value of Family Education from the Perspective of Local Wisdom in Malay Proverbs: Inquisitive Semantic Study

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### ABSTRACT

Malay proverbs constitute an important part of oral cultural heritage that not only preserves the collective experiences of society but also functions as a medium for transmitting life values across generations. One proverb that remains widely used in daily communication is the apple does not fall far from the tree (*buah jatuh tidak jauh dari pohonnya*). This expression is commonly employed to describe similarities between children and their parents in terms of behavior, habits, and character. Beyond its simple usage, however, the proverb reflects the Malay cultural perspective that positions the family as the primary environment for shaping individual identity and character. This study examines the meaning of the proverb *buah jatuh tidak jauh dari pohonnya* through an inquisitive semantics approach by exploring its lexical, grammatical, contextual, cultural, and inquisitive meanings. The study applies a qualitative descriptive method using literature review and textual analysis. The research data consist of the linguistic unit of the selected Malay proverb, which is analyzed in relation to its cultural context and family education values. The findings reveal that the proverb does not merely express intergenerational resemblance but also contains essential family educational values, including role modeling, parental responsibility, value transmission, self-awareness, and hope for future generations. These findings indicate that Malay proverbs remain relevant as a form of local wisdom that can contribute to strengthening character education within the family context.

*Keywords: value, family education, local wisdom, Malay proverbs, inquisitive semantic study*

## Nilai Pendidikan Keluarga Perspektif Kearifan Lokal dalam Peribahasa Melayu: Kajian Semantik Inkuisitif

### ABSTRAK

Peribahasa Melayu merupakan bagian dari khazanah budaya lisan yang tidak hanya merekam pengalaman kolektif masyarakat, tetapi juga menjadi medium pewarisan nilai kehidupan antargenerasi. Salah satu ungkapan yang masih bertahan dalam penggunaan sehari-hari ialah *buah jatuh tidak jauh dari pohonnya*. Peribahasa ini lazim digunakan untuk menggambarkan adanya kemiripan antara anak dan orang tua, baik dalam perilaku, kebiasaan, maupun karakter. Di balik penggunaannya yang sederhana, ungkapan tersebut menyimpan pandangan budaya masyarakat Melayu mengenai keluarga sebagai ruang awal pembentukan identitas individu. Artikel ini mengkaji makna peribahasa *buah jatuh tidak jauh dari pohonnya* melalui pendekatan semantik inkuisitif dengan menelusuri lapisan makna leksikal, gramatikal, kontekstual, kultural, hingga makna inkuisitifnya. Kajian dilakukan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik studi pustaka dan analisis teks. Data penelitian berupa satuan lingual peribahasa Melayu yang dianalisis berdasarkan keterkaitannya dengan konteks budaya dan pendidikan keluarga. Hasil kajian memperlihatkan bahwa peribahasa tersebut tidak hanya mengandung makna tentang kemiripan antargenerasi, tetapi juga memuat nilai pendidikan keluarga berupa keteladanan, tanggung jawab orang tua, pewarisan nilai, kesadaran diri, serta harapan terhadap kualitas generasi berikutnya. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa peribahasa Melayu tetap relevan sebagai bentuk kearifan lokal yang dapat dimanfaatkan dalam penguatan pendidikan karakter berbasis keluarga.

*Kata kunci: nilai, pendidikan keluarga, kearifan lokal, peribahasa Melayu, kajian semantik inkuisitif*

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## INTRODUCTION

Language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for transmitting cultural values and knowledge between generations (Khadiz et al., 2025). In the context of Malay society, one form of linguistic expression rich in cultural values is proverbs. Malay proverbs are an oral heritage containing life views, social norms, and moral guidelines born from the community's collective experiences (Nasir & Subet, 2019). Their presence is not merely a linguistic decoration, but also an informal educational tool that instills life values in the younger generation.

As part of oral folklore, Malay proverbs are characterized by being concise, symbolic, and rich in meaning. The use of natural elements, plants, animals, and daily activities in proverbs demonstrates the closeness of Malay society to their surroundings. One popular proverb that remains relevant today is "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree" (Jalaluddin & Mohamed, 2019). In general, this expression is used to describe similarities in nature, behavior, habits, or character between children and their parents (Nasir & Subet, 2023).

In modern family life, this proverb remains highly relevant. The development of a child's character is still heavily influenced by the family environment, particularly parenting styles, role models, and interactions between parents and children (Suryana et al., 2023). Various social issues emerging among children and adolescents today further emphasize that the family is the primary educational institution (Abdullah & Rahim, 2022). Therefore, the expression "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree" cannot be interpreted solely as a biological or character-based similarity, but also as a reflection of the relationship between education and the transmission of values within the family.

Studies of proverbs have tended to focus on denotative, connotative, or general pragmatic meanings. However, the meanings contained in proverbs are actually shaped by cultural experiences, collective thought patterns, and the under-

lying reasoning of the society. To understand meaning more deeply, an approach is needed that goes beyond linguistic meanings and also explores the cultural and conceptual reasons behind an expression's origin. In this case, inquisitive semantics is a relevant approach because it can reveal the literal meaning, cognitive meaning, and cultural philosophy underlying a linguistic expression (Jalaluddin, 2020).

Based on this description, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What is the meaning of the proverb "the fruit does not fall far from the tree" based on inquisitive semantics?
2. What family education values are contained in this proverb?

In line with these research questions, this study aims to analyze the meaning of the proverb "the fruit does not fall far from the tree" using inquisitive semantics and identify the family education values it embodies.

Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of semantic studies, particularly inquisitive semantics in the analysis of Malay proverbs. Furthermore, this research also broadens understanding of the relationship between language, culture, and value systems in Malay society. Practically, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for strengthening local wisdom-based family education, while also encouraging the use of proverbs as a medium for character education in families and schools.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on Malay proverbs have been extensively conducted in the fields of linguistics, literature, and culture. Proverbs are viewed as a form of linguistic expression that not only conveys implicit messages but also represents the thought systems, social values, and life philosophies of the communities they speak. Therefore, research on proverbs cannot be conducted solely at the level of lexical meaning; it also needs to explore the cultural di-



mensions and conceptual reasoning behind their emergence.

Several previous studies have shown that an inquisitive semantic approach is effective in uncovering the deeper meanings of Malay cultural expressions. Research by Jalaluddin (2020) suggests that inquisitive semantics is a development of semantic analysis that goes beyond the question of "what is the meaning" and continues to the question of "why is this form of language used by a particular community?" In her study of Malay proverbs, she found that natural elements such as plants, animals, and environmental phenomena are selected based on the collective life experiences of the Malay community.

Another study by Kasdan (2021) examined the symbolic meaning of floral elements in Malay proverbs using an inquisitive semantic approach. The results showed that the use of floral elements is not merely a linguistic metaphor, but rather a representation of Malay society's closeness to nature as a source of life lessons. For example, trees are often interpreted as symbols of origin, steadfastness, and the source of life, while fruit represents the results, offspring, or consequences of the growth process.

Furthermore, research on cultural values in Malay proverbs has also been conducted by several researchers, highlighting the function of proverbs as a medium for transmitting social norms (Saimon & Rashid, 2022; Nopiah et al., 2023). Their findings indicate that proverbs contain moral values such as responsibility, politeness, hard work, and family relationships. However, most of this research has focused on identifying cultural values in general and has not linked them specifically to family education.

Based on a review of previous research, it can be concluded that inquisitive semantic studies of Malay proverbs have developed quite well. However, research specifically examining the proverb "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree" from the perspective of family education values is still limited. Therefore, this study is novel in two aspects:

the selection of a specific research object and the integration of inquisitive semantic analysis with the perspective of character education in families.

Semantics is a branch of linguistics that studies meaning in language (Jalaluddin, 2020). In general, semantics focuses on the relationship between linguistic symbols and the concepts or meanings they represent. However, as it develops, the study of meaning is no longer sufficient to be understood solely through lexical definitions or sentence structure; it must also consider the social, cultural, and experiential contexts of the speakers.

Inquisitive semantics presents an approach that emphasizes the process of in-depth exploration of meaning. This approach not only questions the meaning of an expression, but also the conceptual and cultural reasons underlying the choice of a particular language form. In other words, inquisitive semantics seeks to understand the relationship between language, reason, and the lived experiences of society.

Inquisitive semantic analysis has several important components.

### **The Nature of Meaning**

Meaning in inquisitive semantics is viewed as a result of social and cultural construction. This means that meaning is not singular or entirely inherent in the language form, but rather emerges through the interaction between language, context, and the collective experiences of its speakers. Therefore, the analysis of proverbs must consider symbolic and philosophical dimensions.

### **Context**

Context plays a crucial role in understanding the meaning of proverbs. An expression can have different interpretations depending on the situation in which it is used, the relationship between the speakers, and its communicative purpose. In Malay society, proverbs are often used as indirect advice, subtle satire, or moral reminders.

## Interpreter's Experience

Inquisitive semantics places the interpreter's experience as a crucial element in the formation of meaning. Understanding proverbs is strongly influenced by a person's cultural knowledge, social experience, and cognitive background. Therefore, interpreting the meaning of proverbs requires the involvement of cultural experience so that the meaning obtained is not limited to the literal level. Through these three components, inquisitive semantics enables a more comprehensive analysis of the expression "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree," particularly in exploring the reasons for the use of the metaphor of fruit and tree to represent the relationship between children and parents.

Family education is the primary foundation for the formation of individual character (Lickona, 2020; Suryana et al., 2023). The family is the first environment where children learn moral values, social norms, habits, and behavioral patterns. In the context of character education, the family not only serves to meet a child's biological and psychological needs but also shapes their identity, personality, and value orientation.

The value of family education encompasses various aspects, such as role modeling, responsibility, discipline, compassion, communication, and the internalization of norms. Parents serve as primary role models observed and imitated by children. Thus, a child's behavior is often a reflection of the family environment in which they grow up. From a local wisdom perspective, family education cannot be separated from community culture. In Malay society, educational values are often passed down through advice, rhymes, folktales, and proverbs (Yusuf & Hamzah, 2021). Proverbs are effective educational instruments because they convey moral messages concisely, symbolically, and easily remembered.

The phrase "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree" conveys the message that a child's quality is closely related to the quality of the family environment, especially the parents. Implicitly, this proverb emphasizes the importance of role mod-

els within the family. Children not only receive verbal teachings but also absorb the concrete behaviors modeled by their parents.

Therefore, this proverb is relevant to modern character education, particularly in strengthening the values of integrity, responsibility, and developing positive habits from an early age.

## METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the meaning of the Malay proverb "the fruit falls not far from the tree" through an inquisitive semantics perspective. This approach was chosen because the research is not oriented towards quantitative measurements, but rather an effort to understand the meaning, values, and cultural perspectives implicit in language use in Malay society.

The research data, in the form of the proverb "the fruit falls not far from the tree," served as the primary object of analysis. This proverb was chosen because it is still used in everyday communication and represents strong family values in Malay society. Data were obtained through a literature review utilizing various scientific sources, such as books, journal articles, and research findings related to Malay proverbs, inquisitive semantics, local wisdom, and family education.

Data collection was conducted through documentation techniques by reviewing and examining various sources relevant to the research focus. Next, the data were analyzed using the inquisitive semantics approach introduced by Jalaluddin (2020).

The analysis process was carried out in stages, exploring lexical, grammatical, contextual, cultural, and inquisitive meanings. The final stage aimed to uncover the rationale behind the choice of fruit and trees as metaphors in the proverb, as well as the relationship between these elements and the life experiences, ways of thinking, and reasoning of the Malay people.

The results of the meaning analysis were then interpreted to identify the family education values



Contained in the proverb. This interpretation was carried out by linking the research findings to the concepts of family education, character education, and local wisdom. To improve the accuracy of the interpretation, the analysis results were also compared with various previous inquisitive semantic studies, particularly those by Jalaluddin (2020), Nasir & Subet (2019, 2023), and Kasdan & Nopiah (2021). Through this step, the meaning of the proverb is understood not only as a linguistic expression but also as a representation of cultural values embedded in Malay society.

## RESULTS

### 1. Inquisitive Semantic Analysis of the Proverb *The Fruit Does Not Fall Far from the Tree*

Based on the inquisitive semantic analysis, the proverb "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree" has five layers of meaning: lexical, grammatical, contextual, cultural, and inquisitive. The results of this analysis are presented in the following description.

#### Lexical Meaning

Lexically, the word "fruit" refers to the fruit of a tree's growth, which can be harvested when ripe. The word "tree" refers to a woody plant with roots, a trunk, and branches as its life-supporting structure. Meanwhile, the word "fell" indicates a movement from a top-down position, and the phrase "not far" indicates spatial proximity. Literally, this expression describes fruit falling near its source. This literal meaning serves as the foundation for subsequent expansion of its meaning.

#### Grammatical Meaning

Structurally, the relationship between the elements that make up this proverb creates a causal link. The phrase "not far from the tree" emphasizes the continuity of the relationship between the fruit and its source. Thus, grammatically, it conveys the idea that something born from a particular source tends to carry a connection with that source. This structure suggests that the relation-

ship between children and families cannot be easily severed.

#### Contextual Meaning

In social practice, this expression is used when someone wants to assess similarities in character, habits, behaviors, or tendencies between children and parents. Interestingly, its use is not always positive. In an appreciative context, this proverb appears as praise for a family's success in raising children. Conversely, in a critical context, the same expression can transform into a subtle satire on negative behaviors perceived as inherited. This means that its evaluative meaning is highly dependent on the context in which it is used.

#### Cultural Meaning

Culturally, this proverb reflects the Malay perspective, which places the family as a space for character formation. Children are understood not as entities entirely separate from their families, but as representations of the values that live within the household. Therefore, individual behavior is often read as an extension of the quality of their environment.

#### Inquisitive Meaning

The central question in this inquisitive reading is why the community chose the metaphor of fruit and tree. Fruit is chosen because it is a product born, grows, and depends on a tree. Its characteristics are influenced by the quality of its nutritional sources, environmental conditions, and the growth process. The tree, on the other hand, symbolizes the foundation, roots, and source of survival. This metaphorical choice demonstrates a collective awareness that a child's qualities are not born randomly (Saimon & Rashid, 2022), but rather are the result of the educational process, habits, and family environment.

The analysis shows that the meaning of the proverb evolves from a literal meaning concerning the relationship between fruit and tree to a sym-

bolic meaning representing the relationship between children and parents. At the inquisitive level, it was found that the choice of the metaphor of fruit and tree is related to the Malay community's view of the process of inheriting traits, values, and habits within the family.

## 2. Analysis of Family Educational Values in the Proverb *The Fruit Does Not Fall Far from the Tree*

### Role Modeling

The most dominant value in this proverb is role modeling. Children are positioned as individuals who learn through repeated observation of their parents' behavior (Lickona, 2020). In this context, family education is not simply carried out through verbal instruction. Parents' actual behavior becomes the most concrete curriculum, recorded and imitated by children in their daily lives.

### Responsibility

This expression implies parents' moral responsibility for their children's character development. A child's behavioral successes and failures are not viewed as merely individual events, but are closely related to the quality of family upbringing. Thus, the family is not only a place of residence, but also a primary educational space.

### Inheritance of Values

This proverb demonstrates that what is inherited within a family is not only biological factors, but also habits, ethics, ways of thinking, and value orientations. Through daily interactions, children absorb lifestyle patterns that then shape their identity (Putri & Wulandari, 2023). In the context of Malay culture, the continuity of these values is crucial for maintaining the moral and cultural sustainability of the family.

### Self-Awareness

Implicitly, this proverb encourages self-reflection in parents. Before demanding that children become ideal individuals, parents are first required

to assess their own qualities. This awareness is crucial because family education fundamentally begins with a process of self-improvement.

### Hope and Optimism

Besides its evaluative tone, this expression also conveys hope. If a tree is well cared for, it is expected to produce quality fruit. Symbolically, Malay society places the family as a long-term investment in the quality of the next generation. This implies optimism that a good education will yield good results.

Based on the analysis, five family educational values were found contained in the proverb: role model, responsibility, inheritance of values, self-awareness, and hope for the next generation. These five values demonstrate that the family is positioned as the primary environment for character formation from a Malay cultural perspective.

## DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that the proverb "The fruit doesn't fall far from the tree" has layers of meaning that develop from its literal meaning to a deeper cultural meaning. At the lexical level, this proverb describes fruit falling around the tree on which it grows. However, through an inquisitive semantic approach, this meaning goes beyond the physical relationship between the fruit and the tree, but rather develops into a representation of the relationship between children and parents as a source of character formation, values, and life habits.

In line with Jalaluddin's (2020) view, inquisitive semantic analysis aims not only to answer the question of the meaning of an expression but also why a particular linguistic form is chosen by the community that speaks it. In the context of this proverb, the choice of the elements "fruit" and "tree" is not accidental. Malay society chose these elements because they represent a common ancestral connection easily observed in everyday life. Fruit grows and develops from a tree, which is both the source of life and its place of origin. This analogy is then projected onto the social relationship



between children and parents.

This interpretation is reinforced by research by Kasdan & Nopiah (2021), which shows that the floral element in Malay proverbs was not chosen arbitrarily, but rather based on societal observations of natural characteristics, which were then conceptualized as symbols of human values and behavior. In their study, rice is interpreted as a symbol of humility and wisdom, while in this study, fruit and trees represent the relationship between origins, the inheritance of values, and the formation of character within the family institution. Thus, the use of floral elements in Malay proverbs demonstrates the close connection between the ecological experiences of society and the formation of cultural meanings embodied in language, including in representing family relationships and the process of intergenerational transmission of values.

Furthermore, the findings of this study align with those of Nasir & Subet (2019, 2023), who emphasized that understanding Malay proverbs requires knowledge of the cultural context and value systems of the speakers. The meaning of a proverb cannot be fully understood if read only literally. In the expression "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree," Malays convey more than simply an observation about the similarities between children and their parents, but also a life perspective on the importance of the family environment in shaping an individual's character.

At an inquisitive level, this study found that the choice of the metaphor of fruit and tree demonstrates a collective awareness among Malays regarding the relationship between the family's educational process and the formation of a child's personality. Malays understand that a person's behavior, habits, and value orientations do not emerge spontaneously, but are shaped through social processes within the family. Therefore, this proverb serves not only as a descriptive expression but also as a moral reminder of the importance of the family's role in social life.

However, the meaning of this proverb cannot be understood deterministically. In the context of modern society, the formation of a child's identity is influenced not only by the family but also by schools, the social environment, digital media, and individual experiences. Therefore, the deeper meaning of this proverb is more appropriately understood as an affirmation of the significant influence of the family in character formation, rather than as a determination of fate that completely determines one's future. This perspective demonstrates that Malay local wisdom remains relevant when read critically and contextually in light of current societal developments.

Behind its metaphorical structure, the proverb "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree" conveys a fairly mature perspective on education (Abdullah & Rahim, 2022). This expression not only speaks of shared character but also fosters an awareness that family is the primary foundation for the formation of an individual's personality. From a Malay perspective, the relationship between children and parents is understood as a continuous process of transmitting values through daily interactions. Therefore, this proverb not only describes a biological relationship but also emphasizes the importance of the family as the primary educational environment.

Research findings indicate that the value of role modeling is the most dominant value in this proverb. Children are viewed as individuals who learn through observing their parents' behavior. This finding aligns with Lickona's (2020) view, which places role modeling as a key element in character education. Moral values are not only taught through advice but also passed on through daily life practices directly observed by children.

In addition to role models, this study identified the value of parental responsibility for children's character development. From a Malay cultural perspective, children's behavior is often viewed as a reflection of the quality of their education. Therefore, parents have a moral responsi-

bility to provide examples and an environment that supports the development of positive character. These findings demonstrate that the family functions not only as a social institution but also as an educational institution, playing a role in shaping the quality of the next generation.

Other values Identified include the transmission of values, self-awareness, and hope for the future of the next generation. These findings support the research of Siregar & Lestari (2021), which states that local wisdom serves as a medium for transmitting cultural and moral values within the family. Through proverbs, Malay communities convey messages about the importance of maintaining the continuity of values between generations to maintain cultural identity. Thus, proverbs serve not only as a means of communication but also as an educational instrument that enables the effective transmission of cultural values.

An examination of these values indicates that Malay communities have long had a family-based character education system, even before the concept was formalized in the modern education system. Proverbs serve as a concise, memorable, and reflective pedagogical medium. This finding aligns with Yusuf & Hamzah's (2021) opinion, which states that Malay oral tradition is an effective means of transmitting norms and worldviews in shaping social behavior.

In modern life, marked by changing family communication patterns, the development of digital technology, and shifts in social authority, the messages contained in these proverbs are even more relevant. Children do not grow solely from one factor, but the family remains the initial space where values, habits, and perspectives are first formed (Suryana et al., 2023). Therefore, the proverb "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree" not only emphasizes the similarity between children and parents but also emphasizes that the quality of future generations is rooted in the quality of family upbringing today.

Overall, this research demonstrates that Malay proverbs not only hold cultural meaning but also

possess pedagogical functions relevant to the needs of character education today. Through an inquisitive semantic approach, proverbs can be understood not simply as a linguistic heritage but also as a representation of the Malay community's intellect, which views the family as the center of character formation and the continuity of life values.

## CONCLUSION

A study of the Malay proverb "the fruit doesn't fall far from the tree" shows that this expression is not only used to express the resemblance between children and parents, but also reflects the Malay cultural perspective on the importance of family in shaping individual character. Through inquisitive semantic analysis, the meaning of the proverb is gradually understood, starting with the literal meaning derived from natural phenomena, then developing into a deeper meaning through the symbolic relationship between the fruit as a result and the tree as its source.

This metaphorical relationship demonstrates how Malay society interprets family as the primary foundation for the formation of values, habits, and personality. Children are not seen as individuals completely separate from their natural environment, but rather as part of the ongoing educational process within the family. The choice of fruit and tree demonstrates the Malay people's closeness to nature and their ability to transform empirical experience into educational social advice.

Furthermore, this study found that the proverb "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree" embodies several family educational values that remain relevant in contemporary life, namely, exemplary behavior, parental responsibility, intergenerational transmission of values, self-awareness, and hope for the formation of a better generation. The presence of these values demonstrates that proverbs are not only part of the oral cultural heritage but also have a pedagogical function that can be utilized to strengthen family-based character education.



Thus, Malay proverbs can be understood as repositories of cultural values that remain contextual amidst changing times. In the context of modern education, reinterpreting proverbs is crucial so that local wisdom does not cease to be a cultural legacy but remains alive as a source of moral learning and social reflection for society.

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