

## Erotical Riddles in Javanese and Indonesian

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### Abstract

This article is about erotical riddles found in Javanese and Indonesian. By using data collected and formulated through an introspective method, it is found that the addressers commonly construct erotic riddles in odd interrogative sentence types intended to deceive and mislead the addressees. The riddled topics are mostly about human genital and everything related to it, woman's breasts, and sexual activity. The humorous riddle discourses are created by various riddling techniques, such as analogy and metaphor, homonymy, sound change, word and syllabic permutation, and metonymy. Javanese and Indonesian erotic riddle discourses often contain code-mixing of the two codes mastered almost equally well by the bilingual interlocutors living in bilingual and diglossic speech communities.

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### Abstrak

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### Kata Kunci:

Teka-teki; erotis;  
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### Teka-Teki Erotis dalam Bahasa Jawa dan Indonesia

Artikel ini berkenaan dengan teka-teki erotis yang terdapat dalam bahasa Jawa dan Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan data yang dikumpulkan dan diformulasikan dengan metode introspektif, ditemukan bahwa teka-teki erotis umumnya dikonstruksi oleh penanya teka-teki dengan kalimat tanya aneh yang ditujukan untuk mengelabui dan menyesatkan lawan tuturnya. Topik-topik yang dijadikan bahan sebagian besar berkaitan dengan alat vital manusia dan segala yang berhubungan dengannya, payudara wanita, dan aktivitas seksual. Wacana teka-teki ini dikreasikan dengan berbagai teknik, seperti analogi dan metafora, homonimi, perubahan bunyi, permutasi kata dan suku kata, dan metonimi. Teka-teki erotis bahasa Jawa dan Indonesia sering kali mengandung percampuran kedua kode bahasa yang dikuasai hampir sama baiknya oleh peserta pertuturan yang hidup di dalam masyarakat bilingual yang diglosik.

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## 1 Introduction

Language play is enjoyed by most language speakers even though with different gradience. There are speakers who are extremely fond of punning, and there are ones who are just average or mild to like this activity (Crystal, 1998, 1; Wijana, 2003, 1). Mainly, play on words will be found in all speech communities. This fact is essentially a direct consequence of human destiny as *homo luden* in a line of other kinds of “*homo*” labeled to them, such as *homo symbolicum*, *homo faber*, *homo loquen*, *homo sapien* etc. Accordingly, various kinds of humorous discourse genres is not surprising. Riddle is one kind of discourse that belongs to this genre. Riddling activities are also pervasive in all communities that cause the emergence of various kinds of riddle in terms of structure, theme, punning technique, etc. among the society members. This paper will focus on one type of riddle that exists in the use of Indonesian and Javanese, i.e., erotic riddles. Those are riddles used among adult Javanese community members who automatically have fluent and sufficient mastery in Indonesian, their national and official language. They are called “erotic riddles” because their themes or contents are

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mainly about sexual matters related to activities and human body organs related to them. For more clearly, consider erotic riddles (1) and (2) below:

### Riddle 1

Question:

Apa bedane wong wedok karo pit?  
what difference the human female with bicycle  
What is the difference between a woman and a bicycle?

Answer:

Nek pit, dipompa dhisik lagi ditumpaki  
if bicycle to be pumped first then to be ridden  
The bicycle is pumped first and then it is ridden  
Nek wong wedok, ditumpaki disik lagi dipompa  
if human female, to be ridden first then to be pumped  
The woman is ridden first, and then she is pumped.

### Riddle 2

Question:

Apa bedane soto karo Siti?  
what difference the soto (chicken/beef soup) and Siti  
what is the difference between Soto and Siti?

Answer:

Nek Soto mine putih  
If Soto (chicken/beef soup), the noodle is white  
Soto has white noodle  
Siti mine ireng  
Siti the noodle black  
Siti has black noodle

From these two examples, it seems that several problems that can be questioned concerning Indonesian and Javanese erotic riddles. The first is the types of sentences commonly used to ask riddle questions. Are they always concerned about the differences between two extremely different entities or are there other types of questions. Second, what are the topics that dominate the erotic riddles found in Indonesian and Javanese? If they are mostly concerned about human body parts, which body parts mostly do the questioners use as the targets of riddling activities? Third, both riddle (1) and (2) consist of riddling techniques, a woman is analogously compared with a bicycle, woman public hairs are compared with noodle, pumping and riding bicycle is compared with sexual activity movement, the word Soto 'chicken/beef soup' is compared with Siti 'personal name' which has the only slight phonological difference. These phenomena arise the third question, which can be formulated, what are riddling techniques commonly exploited by the riddlers in creating their erotic riddles. So far, these problems have not been extensively explored by the scholars who have carried out research on riddles in Indonesian or local languages in Indonesia.

The rareness of studies on humorous issues seems rooted in the vehement insights about the importance of roles might be played by humorous discourses, to which riddles belong, in enhancing the quality of human life. In fact, a lot of puns can release human beings from various tensions they come across during their lifetime. Consider the following quotation cited from Cook (2000, 81):

*In the contemporary science-dominated world punning is kept at arm's length; people frequently apologize for punning (by saying 'no pun intended') and the ritual response is a groan, even when*

*their wit is also simultaneously enjoyed and admired... European people according to Ahl as quoted by Cook (2000, 81) are trained to admire irony, but to disapprove puns. Puns are regarded as childish trivia, unsuitable for serious subjects or discourses, and in a sense all puns, even good puns are bad puns.*

All of these matters are regarded as unfair because other kinds of wordplay full of semantic incongruities, such as rhyme, alliteration, metaphor, and irony, are highly respected in literary works. In literary criticism, punning is largely neglected. The literary critics did not realize that the works of Shakespeare are full of punning which are intended either for comic or tragic purposes. In Indonesian literary works, this phenomenon can easily be found in the famous Sutardji's Poem entitled *Tragedi Winka & Sihka* (The tragedy of Winka & Sihka), in which two semantically related Indonesian words *kawin* 'get married' and *kasih* 'love' played through syllabic permutation and typography. Sutardji's Poems are considered to bring many innovations in Indonesian poetry writing (Pradopo, 2012, 111). The same phenomena are also found in Indonesian local traditional plays such as *Sam Pek Eng Tai* in Bali and *Arya Penangsang* in Java. The skeptical attitude also comes from philosophers. Aristotle regards punning as a treat to philosophy (Ulmer, 1988). These trivial insights towards play on words may also cause indolence of scholars in Indonesia to conduct research on wordplays including riddles. In fact, as reported by Stokhof (1981), a lot of riddle materials have been available in various languages, such as Bengkulu, Lampung, Basemah, Acehnese, Batak, Nias, Dayak, Toraja, Madura, Sundanese, Tabaru, Alfuru, Javanese, etc. As far as riddle studies in Indonesia are concerned, several types of research related to them have done by a few scholars. Wijana (2014b) has written a book entitled *Wacana Teka-Teki* regarding Indonesian modern riddle discourse structures, punnings, communicative functions, and themes. Meanwhile, in Wijana (2022), he investigates how internal aspects of language are juxtaposed or confused with the external ones, which are widely known as referents. Wijana (2019) and Wijana (2014a) conducted researches on various kinds and language plays of riddles found in Javanese and Balinese. Stokhof (1981) has done intensive studies on various aspects of 100 Woisika riddles. As explicitly stated by the title this paper will deal with Indonesian and Javanese erotic riddles with focus of attention on three issues have been mentioned above.

Several societies, in the past time and probably are still remaining recently, have special occasions in conducting riddling activities. As Stokhof (1981) has reported that riddling activities in Woisika community are commonly prescribed in certain occasions such as: during the night vigils over the dead before burial in East Toraja of the Bola'ang Mangondo, or during the period that the grains come out in Western Toraja. However, with regard to Javanese and Indonesian erotic riddles, it seems there is no tight restriction concerning the riddling time or whom the riddles should be played with, except they must be played in appropriate time and with proper interlocutors. Usually, this kind of riddle is uttered among and enjoyed by adult males in informal, relaxed, and happy circumstances. From pragmatic view point every riddle consists of two parts, i.e. question and answer. Unlike ordinary questions that serve information seeking, riddle questions are exploited to test the addressee's knowledge in witty and funny ways. Like any other humorous discourses, riddle including the erotic one is yielded from a non-bonafide process of communication (Raskin, 1984, 102-103) in which Grice's cooperative principles that in ordinary speech are tightly obeyed, are massively flouted. Compare the 4 maxims outlined by Grice for ordinary conversations and the way of speaking for eliciting laughter commonly exploited in creating jocular discourses below:

#### **Ordinary Discourse > Bonafide Communication**

Maxim of quantity: Give exactly as much information as required

Maxim of quality: Say only what you believe to be true

Maxim of relation: Be relevant

Maxim of manner: Be succinct (see Grice, 1975, 45-47)

### **Humorous Discourse > Non-bonafide communication**

Maxim of Quality: Give exactly as much information as is necessary for the joke

Maxim of quality: Say only what is compatible with the world of the joke

Maxim Relation: Say only what is relevant of the joke

Maxim of manner: Tell the joke efficiently

As products of a non-bonafide process of communication, most kinds of humorous discourse, including riddles, will be full of various kinds of linguistic violations which considerably different from what are commonly found in the ordinary ones. By this theoretical approach, this paper seeks to find out the characteristics of language use exploited by the creators of Javanese and Indonesian erotic riddles.

## **2 Method**

Unlike non-erotic riddles which are much easier to find, erotic riddles are tough to collect. Javanese lesson books, restricted by moral and ethical conduct, contain no erotic riddles. Accordingly, nearly all data presented in this paper are obtained through introspective gathering method. Accordingly, those data are mostly my own collection that I formulated myself in such a way to be as similar as possible with the riddles uttered by their native speakers. Those data are further classified according to their types of sentences or question formulas, topics, and various kinds of linguistic elements used as the source of riddle creation.

## **3 Results and Discussion**

The following are my research findings concerning three interrelated issues: sentence types, topics, and riddling techniques or play on words of Javanese and Indonesian erotic riddles.

### **3.1 Sentence Type**

Structurally, all riddles are constructed by two elements, i.e., question and answer. Question constitutes the riddle problem, and the answer is its solution. The first part is given by the utterer, and because of the deceiving question, the second part is mostly also the utterer's respon since the addressee commonly cannot give the right answer intended by the addresser. All of the riddle problems are questioned by odd interrogative sentences in which the addresser wishes to know the differences of two entities that are clearly and considerably very different. For example, it is certainly a lot of differences can be stated between bakul jamu 'herbal medecine trader' and pegawai PU 'public work workers', godong kathes 'papaya leaf' and wong wedok 'woman', gajah 'elephant' and wong lanang 'man', etc. But, the addressers do not need the serious and the right answers relating the differences of those clearly different entities. What he needs is irrelevant and not serious answers for achieving effective jokings of erotic matters. Consider (3), (4), and (5) below:

#### **Riddle 3**

Question:

Apa bedane bakul jamu karo pegawai PU (pekerjaan Umum)?

What difference trader herbal medicine with worker work public

What is the difference between an herbal medicine trader and public work worker?

Answer:

Nek pegawai PU gaweane ngambakake dalan.

If worker public work, task the to widen road

Public worker's work is to widen the road

Bakul jamu nyilikke dalan

The herbal medicine traders work for narrowing the road

#### **Riddle 4**

Question

Apa bedane godhong kates karo wong wedok?

What difference the leaf papaya and person female

What is the difference between papaya leaf and a woman?

Answer:

Godhong kates isa ngempukke daging.

leaf papaya can soften meat

Papaya leaf can be used to soften meat

Wong wedok isa ngathoske daging.

person female can harden meat

A woman can be used to harden the meat

#### **Riddle 5**

Question:

Apa bedane gajah karo wong lanang

What difference the elephant and person male

What is the difference between an elephant and a man

Answer:

Gadjah, ndhase ana tlalene

elephant, head there is trunk the

With regard to elephant, the head has a trunk

wong lanang, tlalene ana ndhase

person male, trunk the there head the

With regard to a man, the trunk has head

Riddle (3) deals with woman genital perceived as road constructed by public workers. Because in Javanese it is often said *dalan bayi* 'the way of baby'. Riddle (4) does with man genital which is compared with *daging* 'meat' that can be soften when it is boiled in hot water and *godong kates* 'papaya leaf', and with a woman that can stimulate a male sexual disire and to harden his penis associatively resembled with the meat. In (5) about a man penis which is compared with elephant head and its trunk. The other type of sentence riddle is causative interrogative using *ngapa* 'why', such as shown by riddle (6) below in which the urinate channel is compared with a tooth paste tube. This condition will cause a predestined male to be unable to have a baby.

#### **Riddle 6**

Question

Ngapa wong lanang ora isa nduwe anak

Why person male not can have child

Why a man can not have a baby

Answer:

Nek nduwe anak rupane koyok odhol

If have child face the like tooth paste

If he can, the child would be like tooth paste

### 3.2 Topics

Erotic riddles of Javanese and Indonesian are mainly dominated by 3 interrelated topics female or male genital and everything associated with it, woman breasts, and sexual activity. Several things associated with human genitals are woman public hair, testicle, male genital weight, and shape and characteristics. Discourse (7) deals with a woman genital, (8) with male genital, and (9) with woman's breast, and (10) with testical.

#### Riddle 7

Question:

Apa bedane wong lanang karo wong wedok?

What different between a man and a woman

What is the difference between a man and a woman?

Answer:

Wong wedok uyuhe ora isa diwadhahi gendul

person female urine the not can put in container bottle

A woman's urine can not be put in a bottle.

#### Riddle 8

Question:

Apa bedane tumbake Den Behi nek awan karo bengi?

What difference spear the Den Behi if noon and night

What is the difference between Den Behi's spears in the the day time and night?

Answer:

Nek awan pancen tumbak, nek bengi dadi Mbak Tum

If day time really spear, if night become Mbak Tum

In day time it is really spear, but in night it becomes Mbak Tum

#### Riddle 9

Question:

Apa bedane susu bendera karo susu cap nona

what difference milk flag with milk brand nona (virgin)

What is the difference between bendera (brand) milk and nona brand milk?

Answer:

Susu bendera kental manis

Milk flag thick and sweet

Milk flag is thick and sweet

Susu cap nona kental kenthul

milk brand nona always bounced

Nona brand milk is always bounced.

#### Riddle 10

Question:

Apa bedanya wanita dan laki-laki setelah berenang di laut selama 2 jam?

What difference the woman and man after swimming in sea for 2 hours

What is the difference between man and woman after having swum for two hours?

Answer:

Wanitaanya tidak membawa apa-apa, lelakinya membawa telur asin.  
Woman the not bring what-what man the bring egg salty  
The woman brings nothing, but the man does salty egg.

Meanwhile, sexual intercourse topic is shown by riddle (1) above which compares the erotic sexual activity with bicycle pumping.

### 3.3 Riddling Techniques

To create erotic riddles, Javanese speakers who are also fluent in Indonesian exploit various techniques in many occasions done by wittily mixing the two linguistic codes that they master almost equally well. They can effectively exploited them to construct various genres of jocular discourse. In riddle (11) below, they intentionally confuse the use of polite form of Javanese word *tiyang* 'person' and Indonesian word *tiang* 'post'. Meanwhile, in riddle (9) above, the use of Indonesian adjective *kental* 'thick' is combined with *kenthul* as part of Javanese sound modification reduplication proses *kenthul-kenthul* 'always bounced'.

#### Riddle 11

Question:

Apa bedane tiyang lanang karo tiyang listrik?  
What difference the person male with post electricity  
What is the difference between a male and electric post?

Answer:

Tiyang listrik isa madhangi.  
Post electricity can illuminate  
Electric post can illuminate (something)  
Tiyang lanang can methengi (something)  
Person male can methengi (a woman)

After carefully observing the data collection, it is found that several techniques commonly used to create erotic riddles in Javanese and Indonesian. Those techniques from the most common technique to the least common one are analogy and metaphor, homonymy, sound change, word and syllabic permutation, and metonymy. The following subsections will consecutively describe these riddling techniques.

#### 3.3.1 Analogy and Metaphor

The analogy seems to be the most common way the addressers exploit in creating erotic riddles. By this technique, the riddle topics are analogously perceived as other things to which they share certain similarities. For examples riddle (12), (13), and (14) below:

#### Riddle 12

Question:

Apa bedane tumbake Den Behi nek awan karo bengi?  
What difference spear the Den Behi if noon and night  
What is the difference between Den Behi's spears in the the day time and night?

Answer:

Nek awan pancen tumbak, nek bengi dadi Mbak Tum  
If day time really spear, if night become Mbak Tum

In day time it is really spear, but in night it becomes Mbak Tum

### Riddle 13

Question:

Apa bedane asi (air susu ibu) karo susu kaleng

what difference mother milk with milk can

What is the difference between mother milk and can milk?

Answer

Nek susu kaleng, susune kanggo bapake kalenge dinggo anake

if milk can, milk the for father the can the for the child

For the can milk, the milk is for the father, the can is for the child

Nek susu ibu, susune dinggo anake, wadhaha dinggo bapake

If milk mother milk the for the child container for father the

For the mother milk, the milk is for the child, the container is for the father

### Riddle 14

Apa bedanya kain sarung dengan kurungan

What difference the cloth and bird cage

What is the difference between sarong and bird cage

Kurungan dibuka burungnya terbang

The cage is open bird the flies

If the cage is opened the bird would fly

Sarungnya dibuka burungnya *nggandhul*

Sarong the is opened bird the hanging

If the sarong is opened the bird would be hanging

In riddle (12) by the speaker's cognitive knowledge, the male penis is analogously compared with a spear, a long-pointed weapon commonly brought by the kingdom troops. In riddle (13) the woman's breast has resembled with a milk can, and it is also resembled with the child toy their father fond to play. In (14) the male genital and the testicle is conceived similarly to a bird. It is relatively more common for a male penis analogously compared with a bird. However, it is less common this male's vital organ to resembled with spear and other things, such as tooth paste tube (see riddle 6) unless for rising comic effect. The first phenomenon is called dead metaphor, while the second is called alive metaphor or "double entendre" (Tiersma, 1985, 35-36; Wijana, 1995, 173). The other example of metaphor exploitation can be seen in riddle (15) in which woman genital is resembled with heaven and the bird is the male genital below:

### Riddle 15

Question:

Apa perbedaan wanita dengan burung cenderawasih?

What difference woman with bird name

What is the difference between woman and bird of paradise?

Answer:

Kalau burung cenderawasih burung sorga

If bird name bird heaven

Cenderawasih is bird of paradise

Wanita adalah sorga burung



Woman is heaven bird  
Woman is paradise of bird

The analogy can be pragmatic in character because it needs extralinguistic knowledges to comprehend, such as knowledge about how male people urinate and what they are different from horse, see riddle (16) below:

### Riddle 16

Question:

Mana yang lebih berat, kemaluan manusia atau kuda?

Which that more heavy, penis human or horse

Which one is heavier, human penis or horse penis?

Answer:

Kemaluan manusia, karena manusia harus mengangkatnya dengan tangan waktu kencing.

Penis human. because human beings must lift it with hand when urinated

Human penis, because human beings must use their hand to lift it when they urinated

### 3.3.2 Homonymy

Homonymic clashes is very common found in joking activities. The pairs are created in many ways. Sometimes the pairs are not exactly identical but only in part, and it is not rare the combined pairs are taken from lexical items of other languages. In a bilingual and stable diglossic community like Indonesia these phenomena massively occur. The exploitation of kental manis 'thick/strong and sweet' and kenthal kenthul 'always bounced' in (9), and tiyang 'person' and tiang 'post' in (10) are examples of homonymic clashes.

### 3.3.3 Sound Change

Sounds as phonemic entities in any language are used to distinct the meaning of linguistic units in lexical or word level (Verhaar, 1996, 67-68). So, the word soto 'chicken/beef soup' can be differentiated with Siti 'typical personal name of woman in Indonesia'. This phenomenon together with analogical technique that resembles mi 'noodle' and 'woman public hair' is effectively used to create riddle (2) above.

### 3.3.4 Word and Syllabic Permutation

Permutation of whether involving words or syllables which form words is also important technique to exploit by riddle creators. The permutation of burung sorga 'bird of paradise' and sorga burung 'the heaven of bird' and its potentials to metaphorically refer male genital in riddle (14), ndhase ana tlalene 'the head has trunk' into tlalene ana ndhase 'the trunk has head' together with its metaphorical potentials in riddle (5) are examples for this technique. Meanwhile, the changes tumbak 'spear' becoming vocative Mbak Tum 'Older sister Tum' is an example of syllabic permutation.

### 3.3.5 Metonymy

Finally the possibility the word susu 'milk' in susu cap nona 'virgin brand milk' and susu bendera 'frisian flag milk' together with its catchy phrase kental manis 'thick and sweet' to be associatively related to young woman breast with its characteristics to be kenthal-kenthul 'always bounced' is essentially an metonymic exploitation. See riddle (9) above and (16) below in which lontong 'long steamed rice' is associated with male genital if it is wrapped in banana leaf.

### Riddle 16

Question:

Mengapa koteka dibuat dari labu panjang  
Why penis sheath is made from pumpkin long  
Why penish sheath of Irian is made of long pimkin?

Answer:

Karena kalau dibuat dari daun pisang, nanti dikira lontong  
Because if made from leaf banana, later would think it *lontong* (long steamed rice)  
Because if it is made of banana leaf, people would think it *lontong*

In any metonymic process the semantic relation is made possible by various kinds of neighboring association (Riemer, 2010, 249).

## 4 Conclusion

From a pragmatic viewpoint, it can be outlined that ordinary questions are fundamentally different from riddle questions. Ordinary questions are generally intended to seek information, while riddle questions are done for testing and misleading the addressees in humorous ways. As such, with regard to erotic riddles, the use of language for conducting riddling activities has several specific characteristics. The type of riddle questions are considered very odd because they question the differences of two extremely different matters. Most erotic riddle themes concerns with human genital and everything related to them, such as public hair, testicle, urine channel, shape and weight, etc., breast, and sexual activity. The humorous questions and its solutions are full of language plays created through various techniques, such as analogy and metaphor, homonymy, sound change, word and syllabic permutation, and metonymy. The play on words are often carried out by mixing Indonesian and Javanese as a direct consequence of multilingual and diglossic speech situations. The riddle interlocutors master both Javanese and Indonesian almost equally.

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