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# PROCEEDINGS

## International Seminar

LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT IV

November 18, 2014



Master Program in Linguistics, Diponegoro University  
in Collaboration with  
Balai Bahasa Provinsi Jawa Tengah



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### EDITORS’ NOTE

This international seminar on Language Maintenance and Shift IV (LAMAS IV for short) is a continuation of the previous international seminar with the same theme conducted by the Master Program in Linguistics, Diponegoro University on 18 November 2014.

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the seminar committee for putting together the seminar that gave rise to this collection of papers. Thanks also go to the Head and the Secretary of the Master Program in Linguistics Diponegoro University, without whom the seminar would not have been possible.

The table of contents lists all the papers presented at the seminar: The first four papers are those presented by invited keynote speakers. They are Dr. Sugiyono (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, Jakarta, Indonesia), Dr. Zane Goebel (La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia), Prof. Yudha Thianto, Ph.D. (Trinity Christian College, Illinois, USA), Dr. Deli Nirmala, M.Hum (Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia).

In terms of the topic areas, there are 21 papers in applied linguistics, 20 papers in sociolinguistics, 14 papers in theoretical linguistics, 18 papers in discourse/pragmatics, and 13 papers (miscellaneous).



SCHEDULE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT IV

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	I Nyoman Udayana	INCHOATIVE VERBS IN INDOONESIAN		278-282		
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**FROM LITERACY TO IDEOLOGY:  
SEMANTIC SHIFT ON THE REPRESENTATION OF “TUHAN” MEANING**

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**Abstract**

*Revisiting and re-describing the meaning of “Tuhan” (Allah or God) are currently predicated to reset the thought of thinking on how so far “Tuhan” is represented as signified code. The word “Tuhan” is literate in such a thing as a textual understanding. But, “Tuhan” is sometimes distorted as a manifestation of certain ideology of language either in religion or politic. This article is aimed at describing the phenomena of using the word “Tuhan” in some current issues. A short overview of semantic system of the word “Tuhan” is given, capturing on the semantic rules therein. The semantic analysis of “Tuhan” is also combined with the analysis of ideology. In this article, the meaning of “Tuhan” is semantically changed from the source meaning. The change of the meaning can be seen from the role. There are five dimensions of which the meaning “Tuhan” varies ideologically: 1) belief, 2) religion worship, 3) experience, 4) knowledge, and 5) consequence.*

**Key Words:** Literacy, Ideology, Semantic Shift, Tuhan

## 1. Introduction

One important thing that can be a major description of this study is a concept which I have traveled from the idea of Toshihiko Izutsu with his conception of linguistics or semantics through wishing to understand the Qur’an. The thrill thought of Izutsu is that he brought his thought into contextual import. The term *Allah*, for example, was used by some pre-Islamic Arabs not only to mean a deity among deities but even a supreme deity in hierarchy of deities.<sup>2</sup>

The word *Allah* (henceforth, God or Tuhan) is the highest focus word in the Qur’an and the other Holy Books. It is surpassed in rank and importance which is essentially theocentric and quite sacred in utterance. It loads a system of divine rules that imbue our entire life. It is not merely a piety rule, but a political rhetoric and “ideologized” agenda that can be seen so rampant from among Islamists of various hues.

That might be one lingering question that keeps haunting me time. If someone is said to be religious, hurling desperately holy words such “*Allahu akbar*” (God is great) at someone else is a persuasive argument. In other words, to speak louder doesn’t make us holier than others. Embedding the word *Allah* in the expression *Allahu akbar*, *Insyallah*, *Alhamdulillah*, *Barokallah*, *Tuhan* in *Tuhan menyertaimu*, and *God* in *God bless you* screamed at certain situations with thunderous chant, imply certain ideology for all.<sup>3</sup>

Six simple expressions above, you may be thinking ridiculously, are semantically formed on passion to the represented meanings. Too much in use of uttering is sometimes lost in literal meaning even though they seem to be sacred at the outset. For instance, people must ascertain the meaning of *insyaallah*. That *insyaallah* meaning “if the God wishes” has a sacred meaning from its applied

<sup>2</sup> Yet, the Qur’an wrought a most fundamental change in the *weltanschauung* of the Arabs by precisely changing the contextual use of term, by charging it with a new import. Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur’an: Semantics of the Qur’anic weltanschauung*, (Tokyo Japan, Keio University, 2008), p. viii.

<sup>3</sup> Ideology is a much-contested terms these days. Some social theorists think that it has outlived its usefulness, particularly given its historical connections to the Marxist tradition and Marxism’s many disputes. They prefer instead to talk about discourse, episteme, habitus, tradition, language game, interpretive community, and a host of other terms for characterizing the social nature of human thought. J. M. Balkin, *Cultural Software: A Theory of Ideology*, (London, Yale University Press, 1998), p. 2.

expression consists of three related Arabic words: *in, sya'a*, and *Allah*. Therefore, what can be implied from certain literacy delivers certain ideology.

But, nowadays, we have several findings of what sacred expressions is not considered to be sacred. The word *Allah* or *Tuhan* is almost adhered in the political disease in every kind of reassuring people fanatic to participate the certain party. Conversely, it is also found in the academic students or fellows who created their chant of *Tuhan* in particular slogan.

This paper is aimed to describe all the phenomena of using *Allah* or *Tuhan* (God) as the representation of meaning based on semantic rules. It also describes the meaning in the worldview of theocentric as pertinently to base certain ideology.

## 2. “*Tuhan*” in the verse of “*Arrohmanu ‘ala ‘Arsy Istawa*”

Glancing at the central point of religiosity, Islam is born to agglutinate the man and God, namely to unify the man and God. In the basis of certain ideology, there is a single passage that has one meaning and one meaning only has been a long-established principle of Quran exegesis. Lately, there is a debated issue of God in theological studies among Muslims, especially a group of persons who claimed true in representing the God position. As we see the God represented in His position, we find exotic opposed-translation both in Indonesian and English between “*firm in power*” and “*bersemayam di ‘Arsy (residing at the throne)*”.<sup>4</sup> The verse is often used as an argument of reference to say the existence of God.

Both representations insist special tendency of strong and weak version. The strong version comes to the powerful God that has a power of empowering everything including the throne. Meanwhile, the weak version represents that the God is residing on the throne. Although the second version can be indicated to the God as if He were residing like a man, it needs more specific understanding. In this case, the strong version comes into the strong understanding for certain Muslims that the God is not like a man in positioning because there is no resemblance between the God and a man.

The noted Islamic scholars (*salafuna assholih* or *faqih*) never read the verse and say that the God is above the heavens or resides at the throne. But, they said, “I leave the matter to God”. They are very careful to interpret the word “*istawa*”. Moreover, throne is a part of the God’s creatures. If it is said that the God is on his creature, the God takes the creature. It is conversely said that a great form of “*Syirk*” (alliance) is to depict the God as being in needs and weaknesses.

Semantically, at least there are meaning shifts of the God between the literal meaning of English and Indonesian version. The first version represents the meaning of the God that He is powerful. The second version represents the meaning of the God that He is weak. In the theological approach, the second version comes to show that there is such a thing as semantically significant ironical meaning.<sup>5</sup>

From these ideological terms we find that the God cannot be imagined physically. It means that whatever we imagine the God position, we will obviously find the wrong one. Thus, the god can be viewed on His power and manifestation.

## 3. “*Tuhan*” in the slogan “*Tuhan Membusuk*”

The slogan of “*Tuhan Membusuk*” (God rots) is one of the big funny expressions that can be put into ideological meaning. The theme released by the Muslim activists of Philosophy and Ushuluddin Faculty of State Islamic University Sunan Ampel Surabaya seems to be controversial. The interpretation appeared to upload the probability of God’s role by attaching the verb “*membusuk*”. Either in good or bad term, the readers must have interpreted it in different perspectives. In one

<sup>4</sup> See Surah Thoha verse five. In the English version, we find the interpreted text as “*The beneficent Allah is firm in power*”. But, in the Indonesian version, it says “*Tuhan yang Maha Pemurah bersemayam di atas ‘Arsy*”.

<sup>5</sup> As Stern writes that whatever controversy surrounds the status of metaphorical meaning, the ironic “meaning” of an utterance is surely not a semantic meaning. So, such ellipsis facts do not demonstrate that a phenomenon is semantic. Josef Stern, *Metaphor in Context*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000). Jason Stanley, ‘*Semantics in Context*’, *Contextualism in Philosophy: Knowledge, Meaning, and Truth*, Gerhard Preyer & Georg Peter (ed.), (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 228.

interval, the word "*Tuhan*" means the real God, namely a single supreme God. In the other interval, however, "*Tuhan*" is represented as the superior things.

Understanding multi-interpretations of meaning cannot be separated from the eyes of the reader as well. It means that the power of the reader is at the forefront. In other words, the meaning of the phrase "*God rots*" requires the readers to think ideologically instead on how they interpret it. But, when we as the reader find many conventional understandings with the writer at the same time, the meaning will come true.

Conversely, if the reader's ideology is not the same as the writer's one, the meaning convergence will not be connected even contradicted. It includes misinterpretation of meaning.<sup>6</sup> There are semantically two roles of "*Tuhan*". First, the God is holy or sacred both in wording and meaning. So, if the verb "*membusuk*" is embedded to "*Tuhan*" and constituent in it, the sacred name of "*Tuhan*" is lost. Second, "*Tuhan*" produces logic representation. In this case, the representation of "*Tuhan*" meaning is based on the text maker. Of course it is possible to let the composition rules compose the plain semantic contents of the constituent expressions, thereby yielding the minimal proposition expressed by the sentence, namely an absurd proposition in many cases.<sup>7</sup>

The expression "*Tuhan membusuk*" includes certain reference to relate the role and the determiner. The first argument that a reference is semantic is that the literal meaning of the expression in the context provides a guide to its meaning. For example, the literal meaning of "*membusuk*" provides a guide to the deferred meaning of "*Tuhan membusuk*", which is the God who rots. So if the mark of the semantic is guidance in some sense by literal meaning, there is evidence that a reference is literally semantic.

But, it is also the case that the ideological meaning of "*Tuhan*" and "*membusuk*", in the context of an expression of "*Tuhan membusuk*", provides a guide for the implicated property. So, the fact that the literal meaning is used in deriving the ideological meaning does not show that the contextual meaning is semantically controlled in the relevant sense.

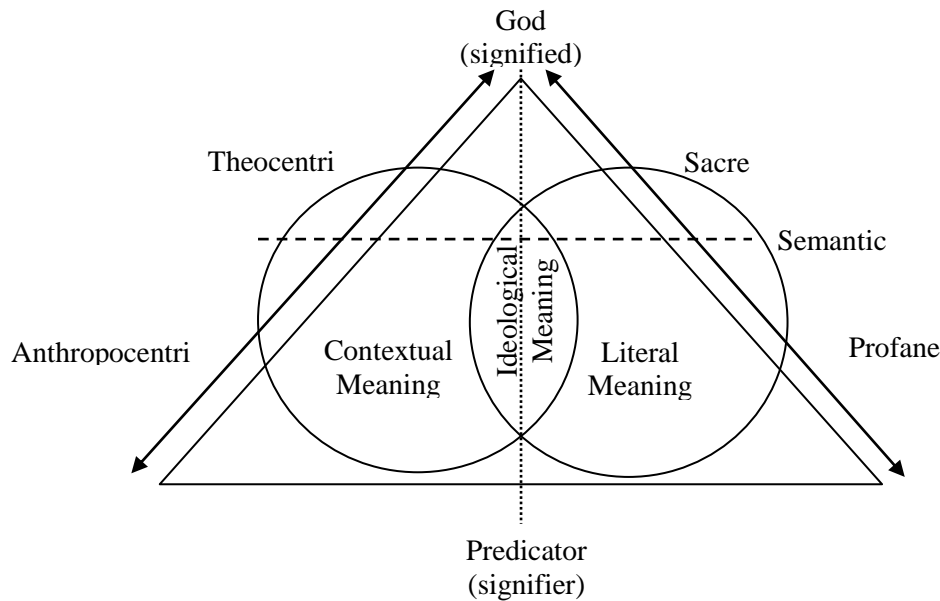
A more general argument can be given that ideological reference should not be treated as semantic. The mark of the semantic is that semantic content is constrained by linguistic meaning. At the very least, the semantic content of an expression, relative to a context, must be something of which the expression is true. If it is not, it is hard to see how the semantic content of that expression has been constrained by the conventional meaning of the expression. But in the case of deferred reference, that is not true.

If a reference were semantic, the denotation of signifier would be something of which the predicator was not true. Thus, it is hard to see how the reference of "*membusuk*" is semantic, since it is not constrained by the conventional meaning of the signified words used. So, one theoretical consideration that should lead us to say that there is semantic shift in the literal meaning to the contextual meaning brought into the ideological meaning.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> A tendency of "abusive word" is adhered to the text maker due to the distinctive meaning. Mohammad Aniq KHB, *Bukan Pemaki Tuhan* at Rakyat Jateng Newspaper, 5 September 2014, p. 12

<sup>7</sup> Francois Recanati. *Literalism and Contextualism: Some Varieties. Contextualism in Philosophy: Knowledge, Meaning, and Truth*, Gerhard Preyer & Georg Peter (ed.), (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 178.

<sup>8</sup> Without contextual modulation, no proposition could be expressed that is the gist of contextualism. In this framework the notion of a 'minimal' proposition collapses: there is no proposition that is expressed in a purely 'bottom-up' manner. Francois Recanati. *Literalism and Contextualism: Some Varieties. Contextualism in Philosophy: Knowledge, Meaning, and Truth*, Gerhard Preyer & Georg Peter (ed.), (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 165.



#### 4. Conclusion

The discussion, in this article, produces how we can see the ideological meaning of "Tuhan" as its representation is semantically viewed from the cultural construction. The representation of "Tuhan" meaning derives from two major factors that can indicate it to the ideological meaning. Both theocentric and anthropocentric are parts of determining ideology semantically. Semantic, here, is not only used for a study of sentence meaning generally, but also for a medium of expressing certain ideology. Indeed, there is something entirely fitting in bringing ideology into the certain ideological meaning to see how the language phenomenon is expressed and also to reset the thought of thinking on how so far "Tuhan" is represented as signified code. The word "Tuhan" is literate and ideological in such a textual and contextual understanding. There are five dimensions of which the meaning "Tuhan" varies ideologically: 1) belief, 2) religion worship, 3) experience, 4) knowledge, and 5) consequence.

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