

## Article

# What WATER tells: Understanding Views of Life through Water-Based Proverbs In Chinese and Indonesian Language

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**Abstract:** Water is one of the most common substances on earth and an important resource for all living organisms. Since water is more dominant than the land of Indonesia and Taiwan, it is not surprising that water in different realization is embodied in Indonesian and Taiwanese people's minds. Thus, we aim at investigating how water is conceptualized by Indonesian and Taiwanese with opinions, values, and attitudes toward life in their cultures. Proverbs were collected from written and electronic sources. They were analyzed by using referential and inferential methods and applying embodiment, blending, and conceptual metaphor theories. The result indicates that Indonesian and Taiwanese use water to show their opinions, values, and attitudes toward life. Both societies have similar embodied experiences but different tendencies in choosing the features, functions, or behaviors of water for the same ideas.

**Keywords:** Water, Proverb, Metaphor

## 1. Introduction

Language, as part of the culture, does not only have its universal characteristics of language as a system but also its uniqueness in representing culture. To show the uniqueness, the representation of Taiwanese and Indonesian worldviews in water-based proverbs has been investigated. Meaning is considered a label that is arbitrary or agreed upon by the speakers but also a concept that is constructed creatively. Meaning is constructed by conceptualization from one concept to another (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; 2003). The construction is based on what is embodied in the mind due to experience (Lakoff and Johnson 1999) or what is blended from two mental spaces of the concepts that people have stored in the mind with other new concepts (Fauconnier and Turner 1998).

Proverbs are simple, concrete, traditional sayings that express a truth based on common sense or experience, and they are often metaphorical and use formulaic expressions. Collectively, they form a genre of folklore. From a cognitive linguistic point of view, a proverb is a crystallization of ideas about what human experiences. People use their experiences in expressing values, norms, ethics, or other positive values, but sometimes proverbs represent what people do not agree with or what they criticize about how they look at society. By using proverbs, people minimize threats among speakers, because they do not express ideas directly. For example, in advising someone who has an opportunistic personality, they say "Don't be like air di daun talas (water on the taro leaves)". In terms of their forms, proverbs are expressed in sentence forms with a single proposition.

The background underlying this research is that Indonesia is an archipelagic country surrounded by the sea. The size of the sea is even larger than that of the land (three fourth of the land). In the Indonesian mind, water is dominant in the worldview of Indonesian. Like Indonesia, Taiwan is surrounded by the East China Sea to the north, the Pacific Ocean (the Philippine Sea) to the east, the South China Sea to the south, and the Taiwan Strait to the west. As a result, water is important to both Indonesian and Taiwanese cultures.

### 1.1 Water in Taiwanese and Indonesian Cultures

Chinese proverbs are adopted to indicate Taiwanese culture. Chinese is the official language of Taiwan, and Chinese culture is deeply rooted in Taiwanese' minds. As a result, there is always a Taiwanese version of a Chinese proverb. Fengshui (風水), literally "wind and water", is a traditional Chinese science of detecting an ideal place to build a house or a grave. It is important in Chinese and Taiwanese as they believe Fengshui influences the fortune of a family. Such a belief makes the water important in Taiwanese culture. Water in Taiwanese culture is influenced a lot by Chinese culture. In Chinese culture, water is important as it is one of the five elements in Wu Xing. The Wu Xing (五行), also known as the Five Elements or Five Phases, contains Wood (木 mù), Fire (火 huǒ), Earth (土 tǔ), Metal (金 jīn), and Water (水 shuǐ). It is a fivefold concept that many traditional Chinese

contexts have used to explain a wide array of phenomena. The system of five phases is used for describing interactions and relationships between phenomena. It has been employed in many fields of early Chinese thought, including geomancy, astrology, traditional Chinese medicine, music, military strategy, and martial arts. It is still used as a reference in the forms of complementary and alternative medicine and martial arts. In addition, water is an important subject in Chinese ancient academic thoughts. Water is not only the essential element for all living things on Earth, but also takes an important symbolic position in philosophy, literature, mythology, and religion. The images of water produced by its features are much more than that of water in nature. Therefore, water is the most powerful metaphor in early Chinese philosophical thought. Water is an important metaphor for the thought of pre-Qin philosophers, and water metaphors are prevalent in classic literature including ‘Analects of Confucius’, ‘Mencius’, ‘Laozi and Zhuangzi’.

In Indonesian society, water is used in every aspect of life. Therefore, there is local wisdom to preserve water as water is used to maintain life. For example, Kamun (2010) studied water conservation in Papua. Aulia (2010) studied how people in Bogor conserve water springs. In Bali, for example, there are many different symbols meaning fertility, healing, holiness, immortality, cycle, prosperity, and conservation (Rema, 2013). In Lampung, people have local wisdom for conserving water by conserving forests (Muhammad Rasyid Lubis, Hari Kaskoyo, Slamet Budi Yuwono, and Christine Wulandari, 2018). In both cultures, water is important. Since both countries have geographical similarities and similar views on the water, we aim to study whether the two cultures share the same experiences with WATER.

### 1.2 Previous Studies

Water-related proverbs in Indonesian and Chinese cultures have been studied by many scholars. Yolanda, Saryono, and Dermawan (2018) studied Indonesian proverbs conveying the quantity and quality of water. Davidko (2012), by studying water-based proverbs in Chinese, stated that water is usually adopted to symbolize other things in languages. Davidko (2012) discovered that the concept of water was used in economics. Lu (2012) studied water metaphors in the ancient Chinese text *Dao de Jing* (168 BC), the foundational text of Daoism and a primary source of modern Chinese ideas about life and politics. She found the following metaphors to state that *dao* and *de* are described mostly in terms of 水 (*shui*, “water”) and water-related images such as 淵 (*yuan*, “deep pool”) and 谷 (*gu*, “mountain valley”).

Dao is Water  
 Dao in the Form of Water  
 Dao Flows like a River  
 Dao Preserves as a Deep Pool of Water  
 De is Water  
 De Applies to Water  
 De is Water Running through a Deep Valley

Oxford (2010), a writer dealing with proverbs of water, presented proverbs of water which is related to ‘Moon shadow Pond’ of Guangdong province in China. The concept of the water is studied in the realization of water as the sea, river, pond, and drinking water. He wanted to depict morality in Chinese society in terms of how people evaluate themselves and others in behaving in daily life. According to Nie (2008), the concept of the water is metonymically and metaphorically extended to six super-domains: NATURE, LIFE SUSTAINER, MOVEMENT, POWER, PURITY, and WOMAN. However, the most salient feature of water is ‘being liquid’. According to Davidko (2012), water is perceived as a liquid that has no shape of its own, runs freely, is easily absorbed by other substances, and has three physical states of water namely solid (frozen) or gaseous (vaporized). Water may be perceived as a flow like running brooks, rivulets, or rivers or as a flood when overflowed rivers drown the land. Water may be seen as rainfall of different intensities from several drops to showers to torrents. Water may be presented as aquatic spaces (geographically divided into lakes, seas, oceans, etc.) which have surface and depth. For centuries, water has been a source of energy for producing electricity by turning wheels. Water is often associated with danger and death. All these ontological properties make up the concept of water. However, the current research is a contrastive study that compares Indonesian and Taiwanese proverbs to present a cross-cultural understanding dealing with how different societies perceive the water. How water is perceived by Indonesian and Taiwanese is presented in this research to show the similarities and differences in conceptualizing water to portray values, opinions, and attitudes toward life.

### 1.3 Theoretical Background

The present paper uses some theories related to cognitive linguistics, embodiment theory, metaphor theory, and blending theory. Cognitive linguistics has three approaches, namely experiential, prominent, and attentional views. To use experiential approach, Ungerer and Schmid (2006) claimed that humans use their experience in using words. Prominent view is used when we choose

and organize words that are suitable for representing the content to express. Then attentional view emphasizes the part that attracts people mostly. These views lead us to see how expressions are constructed. Meaning is constructed based on the concept which is visually witnessed, felt, or experienced. The process of meaning construction in cognitive linguistics is usually called conceptualization. Dealing with such meaning, cognitive linguists such as Evans and Green (2006), Geeraerts and Cuyckens (2007), Ungerer and Schmid (2006) believed that language represents what people think, feel, and do. To uncover what is conveyed in the expressions to indicate culture, the embodiment theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1999) and the blending theory Fauconnier and Turner (1998) are applied in this research. Since the expressions studied contain metaphors, the metaphor was analyzed based on the metaphor theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (2003).

The embodiment theory presents that meaning is constructed through conceptualization based on bodily experiences. The bodily experiences are derived from how the body feels or sees or experiences. For example, “my car has broken down” is created based on the experience of how something is broken in terms of its appearance and its function. When something is broken, it is in bad condition as it breaks when it falls into pieces. Besides, it does not function well or it stacks. The ideas are inferred from the theories given by Lakoff and Johnson (1999) dealing with embodied concepts. They consist of color concepts, basic-level concepts, and spatial-relation concepts. Those three concepts are embodied in our mind based on the experiences of our body including the sensorimotor system in interacting with the world or environment. We categorize objects or things due to the ability of our sensorimotor including human retinas catch the color or shape of the objects. We categorize something from something else due to the sensorimotor system. Besides, in terms of spatial-relation concepts, there are the container schema, the source-path goal schema, and bodily projections. The schemas are embodied in our minds due to our experiences. The words like in, on, out, and over are the indicators that we perceive as a container. In the spatial-relation schema, besides the container schema, we also have the source-path goal schema. The concept of go, come, and move indicates that there is a starting point, a destination, and a path/line of movement. Bodily projections also support a concept of spatial relation. The phrases like ‘the front of’, and ‘the back of’ indicate bodily projections. The embodiment theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1999) was challenged by Frank et.al (2008) stating that conceptualization happens not to individual beings but in the collective society. The water-based proverbs focus on the use of water in the expressions, based on the embodiment theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999), and the three approaches to cognitive linguistics (Ungerer and Schmid, 2006). Water is embodied in Indonesian and Taiwanese minds due to the environment or the world they live in. What they see and experience and how they interact with the environment are embodied in their mind due to the sensorimotor system they have dealing with the colors, categories, and movements or projections they encounter.

In addition to embodiment theory, blending theory by Fauconnier and Turner (1998) is used to uncover the metaphorical expressions in the water-based proverbs. The theory states that in the mind there are four mental spaces namely generic schema, input schema 1, input schema 2, and blend schema. Regarding metaphoric expressions, these four schemas play roles in constructing meaning. The construction process happens in the mind indicating human creativity (Nirmala, 2018). In constructing expressions like proverbs, the writer found metaphorical expressions in the proverbs.

Metaphors used in this research are those related to the theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980; 2003) dealing with conceptual metaphors. They are different from those proposed by Aristotle stating that metaphors are expressions for presenting aesthetics in literary works. Metaphors discussed in this research are those used in daily context. In their theory, Lakoff and Johnson (2003) stated that human thought it is metaphorical. In the language we find metaphorical expressions, our thought is metaphorical. For example, in the conceptual metaphor ‘ARGUMENT IS WAR’, we map the domain of ARGUMENT to the domain of WAR in our concept. As a result, words about WAR are used to describe ARGUMENT, such as ‘defend one’s argument’ and ‘argue against an opponent’. The mainframe of the conceptual metaphor in this study is ‘\_\_\_\_\_ IS WATER. The main task is to figure out which experiences of Taiwanese and Indonesian people are conceptualized for WATER.

## 2. Materials and Methods

To study water-based proverbs in Taiwanese and Indonesia, we collected both electronic and written sources (Pusposaputro, 2003) and <http://pustamun.blogspot.com/2017/03/air-contoh-peribahasa-tentang-air-dan.html>, among other things. From the collections, we selected the proverbs containing the concept of water. The concept of water may be realized in different ways like water, sea, river, rain, and dew. The expressions were analyzed based on the reference. After that, they were classified according to conveyed messages in the proverbs. Besides, they were classified based on which part of the water is used to convey the messages. For example, the messages are conveyed from the nature, characteristics, and behavior of water. The nature of water is indicated by its capability in flowing, while its characteristics are seen from water as a liquid substance. It can melt and is transparent, clear, and pure. Its behavior is seen from its ability to be ups and downs, to drag, to roll up or to roll over, to drown. For the proverbs containing water concepts, the referential method was used to uncover the meaning of the expressions. Inferences were also applied to the expressions containing water concepts to obtain the meaning constructed by the society. The context was used to apply both

referential and inferential methods. The last step in inference is to propose cultural values of both societies, Indonesian and Taiwanese.

### 3. Results

In Indonesia, the water-based proverbs are the most dominant among the proverbs in Indonesian sources owing to the experience of the importance of water in life and the geographical aspect that the water is larger than the land in both Indonesia and Taiwan.

#### 3.1. Water-based proverbs

The concept of water used in both Indonesian and Taiwanese proverbs is manifested by different words. In Indonesian proverbs, it is realized by words such as *air*, *laut* (sea), *danau* (lake), *sungai* (river), *banjir* (flood), *embun* (dew), *arus* (stream), *mata air* (spring), *air terjun* (water fall), *hujan* (rain), *kolam* (pond), *muara* (mouth of a river), and *lumpur* (mud). However, in Taiwan, the concept of water is more limited to *tsuí* (water), *hai* (sea), *ke* (stream). The concept of water in the proverbs only refers to water, sea, river, rain, mud, dew, and the mouth of a river. To elaborate on how proverbs are used, we use the representation of water in both Indonesian and Taiwanese proverbs and the parts of the water used in both languages. This contrastive study presents how these two societies use water in expressing their opinions, values, and attitudes toward life. The aspects of water in this research are its nature, function, and behavior of water. From these aspects, we understand the literal meaning of the expressions and the conceptualization in constructing the meaning of water-based proverbs representing both Indonesian and Taiwanese cultures.

##### 3.1.1. Nature of water

The first feature of water to conceptualize meaning in the proverbs is being a liquid. Because water is a liquid, water is splashed, rubbed, and dipped. Splashed water is no longer gathered, so it refers to something unrecoverable. Besides, other examples are used to conceptualize working hard to reach goals, a human relationship that is not easily broken and even quarreling. As a liquid, when it is burnt, there is nothing left. It is to describe an action that is useless to do. The other meaning is that intention easily disappears. The concept of water is realized as dew on the tip of the glass. Based on the embodiment theory, human vision witnesses that it disappears quickly. The experience of the sensorimotor is stored in the mind to become concepts. Examples are the concept of splashing, splitting, and disappearing. Both Taiwanese and Indonesian use water as a liquid in proverbs. Taiwanese uses the concept of splashing, while Indonesian uses the concept of disappearing as water is not catchable. To explain this, we used the embodiment theory to see what happens when water is splashing and how to obtain water. When water splashes, it dries. It cannot be gained anymore. The meaning of the proverb are (1) supported by Indonesian society in seeing how hard it is to reach a goal. They must struggle to achieve and (2) depicted that there is no rain, no sweat, and no gutter, and how water is obtained. The experience of gaining water in the condition where there is no rain, no sweat, and no gutter, water cannot be obtained. The difficulty of gaining the water is shown in the following proverb.

(1) 水 潑 落 地 歹 收 回<sup>1</sup> (Taiwanese)

tsuí phuah lóh tè pháinn siuhuê

water splash fall floor hard regain'

'It is hard to get back the splashed water.'

(It is no use crying over spilled milk.)

(2) *Tak air hujan ditampung; tak air peluh diurut, tak air talang dipancang* (Indonesian)

No rainwater is caught in a bucket, no sweat is rubbed, no gutter water is beheaded.

(It is all out for what is wanted)

The second feature of water is being able to flow or drip. It is a property of a liquid. Since it is a liquid, it flows when it is in a big quantity and flows from high to low positions. There is a force that makes water flow. It may be wind or gravity. The flowing or dripping of water is frequently mentioned in proverbs. In addition, since flowing water leaves its trail in humans' concepts, the flow of water is adopted to describe something abstract to emphasize the long period, depth of love, eternal love, child's character as the parents' hereditary, goodness which is not reciprocated, and instructions from the authority. It implies that the concept of dripping or flowing is embodied as something happening continuously without stop or change like the following.

(3) *Selama gagak hitam, selama air hilir.* (Indonesian)

<sup>1</sup> The Chinese and Taiwanese data are displayed as the following: the first line lists orthography; the second transcribes the pronunciations; the third gives the literal meaning of each word; the fourth presents the free translation; the last gives the idiomatic meaning of the proverb.

since crow black since water downstream

‘since crow is black and water flows’

(eternal love)

- (4) 父母疼兒，長流水，兒疼父母樹尾風。(Taiwanese)

pē-bú thiann kiánn tng lâu-tsuí, kiánn thiann pē-bú tshiū-bué hong.

parents love children long flow water children love parents tree end wind

‘Parents love their children like endless water, but children's filial piety to their parents is like the wind of the treetops.’

(Parents’ love is endless.)

The next two features, drowning and being clear are used to conceptualize that a small or simple thing becomes a large and dangerous thing such as (5) and (6). The clearness of water also applies to the human domain. Clear water stands for a good person while muddy water represents a bad human. In this case, the lake indicates the environment such as (7). In (8), clear water represents an observant person in Taiwanese. The drowning ability is perceived the same both in Indonesian and Taiwanese, but being clear is perceived differently. The clearness of water stands for an observant person in Taiwanese but a good person in Indonesian.

- (5) 水能載舟，也能覆舟 (Taiwanese)

tsuí lîng tsài tsiu, iā lîng hok tsiu

water can float boat also can sink boat.

‘Water can help a boat float, but it can also sink it.

(Nature can be a help and danger)

- (6) *Sekepal menjadi gunung, setitik menjadi laut.* (Indonesian)

A clod becomes mountain, and a drop become sea

‘A clod of the earth becomes a mountain, while a drop of water becomes the sea’

(A small case becomes a big one)

- (7) *Dari telaga yang jernih tak akan mengalir air yang keruh* (Indonesian)

From a clean pond, no dirty water flows.

‘Is there any dirty water flowing from the clean lake/pond?’

(Are there any dirty words coming from good persons?)

- (8) 水清沒大魚 (Taiwanese)

tsuí tshing bô tuā hû

water clear no big fish

‘When the water is crystal clear, there is no fish in it’

(When a man is sharply observant, he has no friends with him)

### 3.1.2 Functions of water

The main function of water is the source of life because we fish in water, and irrigate the field for planting or farming with water, and other benefits are obtained from water. Without water, we cannot live. Water is also used for describing its strength to split rocks. It is used to conceptualize how friendship breaks (11). This example is contradictory to the example about the nature of water as a liquid. If the sea is dipped, it dries. This concept is used for showing that maintaining wealth is important. (12) shows that even though you are wealthy, if you do not maintain it well, you will be poor.

- (9) *Ada air ada ikan* (Indonesian)

If there is water, there is fish

‘Where we live can provide our needs’

(The environment can be the source of income for a living)

- (10) 貯水防旱，積穀防荒。(Taiwanese)

thú tsuí hông hān, tsik kok hông hong

store water to prevent drought, store grain to prevent famine

‘Store up water to prevent drought and store up grain to prevent famine.’

(Nip it in the bud.)

- (11) *Air besar batu bersibak* (Indonesian)

sea big stone

‘Big water causes the rock to split.’

(A friendship can be broken due to a conflict.)

- (12) *Laut ditimba akan kering* (Indonesian)



sea dipped will dry  
 ‘The sea will dry if it is dipped’  
 (How much the wealth is will run out if it is used for shopping)

### 3.1.3 Behaviors of water

The behaviors of water in the proverbs are deep or shallow. The deepness and shallowness of water are used to conceptualize people who adapt to the environment easily, like in (13) and (14). Being ups and downs is to show that life is fluctuated like in (15) and (16). Good government is conceptualized as a cleansing behavior.

- (13) *pandai menyelam air dangkal* (Indonesian)  
 wise diving water shallow  
 ‘skillfully diving in the shallow water’  
 (People who adapt to the environment easily)
- (14) 水 深 不 響 響 水 不 深 (Taiwanese)  
 tsuí tshim put hiáng hiáng tsuí put tshim  
 water deep not loud, loud water not deep  
 ‘Deepwater is not loud; loud water is not deep.’  
 (People who have talents do not like to show off in public.)
- (15) *Air laut itu ada pasang ada surut* (Indonesian)  
 ‘The sea is sometimes up and sometimes down.’  
 (Life fluctuates, sometimes ups, sometimes downs)
- (16) 三 年 流 水 東 ， 三 年 流 水 西 (Taiwanese)  
 sann nî lâu-tsuí tang sann nî lâu-tsuí sai  
 three-year flow east, three-year flow west  
 ‘Water flows to the east for three years and to the west for three years.’  
 (Every dog has its day.)

### 3.1.4 Representations of ‘water’

The nature, function, and behavior of water represent the human environment, relationship, personality, money, benefit, and purity. Water is an important necessity in life. It exists in nature. Therefore, through the PART-WHOLE synecdoche, water refers to the environment in both Taiwanese and Indonesian, like in (17) and (18). The existence of water as rain is used to represent happiness after difficulty as in (19). The relationship is represented by water to indicate a relationship among friends.

- (17) *Ada air ada ikan* (Indonesian)  
 If there is water, there is fish  
 ‘Where we live can provide our needs’  
 (The environment can be the source of income for living)
- (18) 水 清 魚 就 現 (Taiwanese)  
 tsuí tshing hû tō hiàn  
 water clear fish then appear  
 ‘There will be fish if the water is clear’  
 (When there is righteousness, there are capable men)
- (19) *Setelah hujan akan panas jua* (Indonesia)  
 after the rain, it will be hot again  
 ‘After the rain, there will be the heat too’  
 (After difficulties, there will be happiness)

The relationship between water and other objects is used to tell a relationship. In the agricultural society of ancient Taiwan, water and fields were closely related. There were no crops if there was no water.

- (20) 美 不 美 ， 故 鄉 水 ； 親 不 親 ， 故 鄉 人 。 (Taiwanese)  
 bí bù bí kòo-hiong tsuí tshin bù tshin gùxiāng lín  
 beautiful not beautiful home water intimate not intimate home people  
 ‘The hometown water is always beautiful, and people of hometown are always friendly.’  
 (People from the same hometown always have a friendship.)

It is interesting that Indonesian likes to make use of the relationship between water and oil while Taiwanese prefers that of water and fire.

- (21) *Seperti minyak dengan air* (Indonesian)  
like oil with water  
'Like oil with water'  
(They cannot unite)
- (22) 水 火 不 容 (Taiwanese)  
tsuí hué bù iông  
water fire not tolerate 'Water and fire cannot tolerate each other.'  
(They are like cats and dogs.)
- (23) *Telaga di bawah gunung* (Indonesia)  
Lake below mountain  
'The lake below the mountain'  
(A woman who gives much fortune to her husband)
- (24) *Bagai air di daun talas* [SIMILE] (Indonesian)  
Like water on taro leaf  
'like water on taro leaf'  
(inconsistent people)

The water looks peaceful on the surface, but there is always a vortex beneath it. Because of the discrepancy between the surface and the bottom, Indonesian proverbs remind people not to judge a person from his appearance. In this case, calm water always refers to a wiser.

- (25) *Air beriak tanda tak dalam* (Indonesian)  
In water, rippling marks are not deep  
'Rippling water indicates shallowness'  
(The empty vessel makes the greatest sound)
- (26) *Air tenang menghanyutkan* (Indonesian)  
sea at ease carry away  
'Slack water carries away'  
(A calm person is sometimes knowledgeable)

In Chinese, there is a proverb "Rénzhě yàoshān zhìzhě yào shuǐ 仁者樂山智者樂水 (a true man loves the mountains, and a wise man loves the sea)", which makes a direct connection of water and the wiser. Based on the conceptual metaphor 'BODY IS A CONTAINER', Chinese culture treats water contained in the body as the inner beauty of a person. A half bucket of water refers to an arrogant person without enough knowledge, and a full bucket stands for an exaggerated person.

- (27) 半 桶 水 響 叮 嚕 (Taiwanese)  
puànn tháng tsuí hiáng ting tang  
half bucket water ring jingle  
'Empty vessels make the most noise.'  
(A person without enough knowledge is always arrogant.)
- (28) 水 滿 自 流，人 滿 自 誇。 (Taiwanese)  
tsuí buán tsū liú lāng buán tsū khua  
full water self flows, people fully boasts  
'Water flows out when it is full; a person boasts when he is over-satisfied.'  
(A self-satisfied person will like to boast)

Water refers to money. In Taiwanese, salary is called *sin-suí* (薪水), *pá-tsui* (飽水) with the meaning of 'wealthy', and *tsinn-tsui* (錢水) means finance. The linking of the two concepts is probably based on the function of irrigation of water since water makes crops grow to bring money to farmers. In Taiwanese, the proverb *Shān wàng rēndìng shuǐwàngcái* (山旺人丁水旺財) states that water brings wealth, and the Taiwanese believe that with water, one is prosperous in business or wealth. In Indonesian, water refers to money, and the depth of water in (30) symbolizes the amount of money.

- (29) *Telah jadi air* (Indonesian)  
Have so water

‘It has become water’

(Run out of money)

- (30) *Air dalam berenang (berkumbah) air dangkal bercebok* (Indonesian)

deep water dips, shallow water cleans one’s anus

‘When the water is deep, you can swim or wash, but when the water is shallow, you can only clean your anus’

(When shopping, look at your income).

In human experiences, water brings benefits. As a result, it is not surprising that water stands for benefit/advantage. Both Indonesian and Taiwanese have the same metaphorical use.

- (31) *Bergedang air orang* (Indonesian)

enlarge water person

‘enlarging other person’s water’

(creating a job for other people’s benefit)

- (32) 肥水 袂使 流去 別人 坵 (Taiwanese)

puī tsuí bē sái lâu khi pát-lâng khu

fertile water cannot flow to others' fields

‘Don't let one's fertile water flow in others' fields.’

(Keep the goodies within the family.)

Since water refers to advantages, muddy water stands for disadvantages.

- (33) *Ikan belum dapat, airnya sudah keruh.* (Indonesia)

fish cannot afford water already dirty

‘You have no fish but you have made the water dirty’.

(You do not solve the problem wisely, so we see the disadvantages instead of the benefits.)

- (34) 慢牛 食濁水 (Taiwanese)

bān gū tsiáh lô tsuí

slow cow eat muddy water

‘A slow cow drinks muddy water.’

(If you move too slowly, you may not obtain a good chance)

The two characteristics of water -- transparent and colorless – are extended to the domain of PURITY. In proverbs, water is the tool for purification.

- (35) *Arang itu jika dibasuh dengan air mawar sekalipun, tiada akan putih.* (Indonesian)

Charcoal is washed with water but not will be white

‘Although charcoal is washed with rose water, it will not change white’

(Although a person with bad character is given goodness when having a chance to do evil, the person will do it again.)

- (36) 三條 港水 洗未清 (Taiwanese)

sanntiâu káng tsuí sé buē tshing

three-ports water cannot wash you

‘You cannot wash yourself clean in three ports’

(Being wronged)

#### 4. Discussion

The nature, function, and behavior of water are the sources of conceptualization. In this section, we discuss how water influences people’s attitudes toward life.

##### 4.1 *Life is doomed to have ups and downs*

The sensorimotor experience of the sea wave is stored that the tide is up and down. In life, humans experience changing situations. These two experiences are blended to create a metaphor ‘LIFE IS A WAVE’. This metaphor is derived from two concepts of life. The concept of ‘up’ means success or surplus while that of ‘down’ means failure or minus. The concepts are derived from the proverbs (15) and (16). Knowing the cycle of nature, Indonesian and Taiwanese know that they have to manage their life. For a high position in terms of career, economy, health, and success, they have to think that everything can change and stop or lose. People



have to be ready in any situation. As for those who encounter difficulties in life, the proverbs encourage them to look forwards to a bright future.

#### 4.2 Be at ease with current situations

As for the ups and downs in life, both cultures encourage people to feel at ease under all circumstances and not to worry about life. In life, the necessity is provided, and God provides them. There is an expression “God gives our need not greed”. In Indonesia, there are expressions ‘Semua sudah ada yang mengatur (everything is arranged)’, ‘Ada hari ada rezeki (everyday, you will obtain what you need)’, ‘Siapa yang mau berusaha, dia pasti akan mendapatkan (whoever is willing to make an effort, he/she will obtain it)’, and ‘Semua sudah ditentukan (all has been a destiny)’. This idea is similar to the Taiwanese. Taiwanese proverbs encourage people to be positive and make good use of what the environment provides them with. Here, Nie’s WATER IS LIFE SUSTAINER is in operation.

(37) 倚山吃山，倚海吃海 (Taiwanese)  
 ua sua jia sua ua hai jia hai  
 near mountatin, eat mountain, near sea, eat sea  
 ‘The mountain dweller lives off the mountain, the shore dweller lives off the sea.’  
 (Make the best use of local resources, exploit one's position to advance oneself)

(38) 近水知魚性，近山識鳥音。(Taiwanese)  
 kīn suí ti hī sing, kīn san sik niáu im  
 near water know fish nature near mountain know bird sounds  
 ‘The dwellers near water know the nature of fish, the dwellers near mountains know birds’ sound.’  
 (What talents you possess depends on what environment you are in.)

(39) 一枝草，一點露。  
 tsitki tsháu, tsittiam lōo.  
 one grass one dew  
 ‘When there is grass, there is dew.’  
 (All things in their being are good for something)

If one cannot make good use of the environment, he will encounter failures.

(40) 近山剝無柴，近溪擔無水。  
 kīn suann tshò bô tshâ, kīn khe tann bô tsuí.  
 near mountain cut no wood, near stream carry no water  
 ‘The dwellers near mountains get no wood, the dwellers near streams get no water.’  
 (A person encounters a failure if he does not work hard.)

(41) 近溪搭無船  
 kīn khe tah bô tsūn  
 near stream take no boat  
 ‘A person who is near a stream takes no boat.’  
 (If one does not acquire necessary material locally but abandons what is close at hand in favor of something far away, he will lose changes.)

#### 4.3 Mind one’s own business

In both cultures, interfering with others’ business is not advisable. In the proverbs for human relationships, humans are water or trash. The experience happens when witnessing the trash in the sea. The trash is on the seashore, scattered by water. This experience is conceptualized as humans unite with their family regardless they have quarrels or they are in a good relationship. If you interfere with them while conflicting, you will be ignored and feel hurt.

(42) Air sama air, sampah ke tepi jua (Indonesian)  
 water like water, trash in edge  
 ‘When water is with water, the trash will be on the seashore’.  
 (If you interfere with other people’s conflict with their family, when they have been in a good relationship, you will be ignored.)

(43) 河水不犯井水  
 hô tsuí put huān tsénn tsuí

river water not interfere well water  
 ‘The water in rivers does not interfere with the water in wells.’  
 (Mind your own business.)

4.4 *Do not be stubborn but act according to circumstances*

The Chinese proverb Bīngláijiāngdǎng shuǐ lái tǔ yǎn (兵來將擋，水來土掩) teaches people there is always a solution to a problem and make a decision depending on the current situation. A man puts himself into trouble if he is too stubborn to suit the current stream. There are proverbs such as (44) and (45).

- (44) 這溪無魚，別溪釣。(Taiwanese)  
 tsit khe bô hî, pát khe tiò.  
 this stream no fish, other stream to fish  
 ‘If there is no fish in this stream, go fishing at other streams.’  
 (If you cannot earn a living here, go to other places.)
- (45) 出門看天色，餵魚看水色(Taiwanese)  
 tshut m̄ng khuànn thinn sik tshī hū khuànn tsuí sik  
 outdoor see sky color, feed fish check watercolor  
 ‘Check the weather when you go out, check the water when you feed fish.’  
 (To understand the situation in advance, to see the surrounding environment, so as not to do anything wrong.)

4.5 *Act wisely using proper language*

This attitude is related to human relations. In communication, using proper language is advised since proper language is needed to build a good relationship. Language influences the relationship for the success of communication. Brown and Levinson (1987) stated that our utterances face threatening acts. Therefore, to minimize threats, human uses politeness.

- (46) Air yang dingin juga yang dapat memadamkan api (Indonesian)  
 water is cold as well, it puts off fire  
 ‘Coldwater can extinguish fire.’  
 (Proper language could extinguish others’ anger.)

In Taiwanese, the importance of language is mentioned, but there is no mention of courteous language. (47) means good words bring water to fortunetellers. The proverb encourages people to utter good words as there is an irony that the utterances of fortunetellers are untrustworthy.

- (47) 相命無褒，食水都無。  
 siòng-miā bô po, tsiáh tsuí to bô  
 fortuneteller not admire drink water all no  
 ‘A fortuneteller earns no money if he does not admire but tells bad things about one’s fortune.’  
 (Speak good words.)
- (48) 魚食溪水，人食喙水  
 hî tsiáh khe tsuí lāng tsiáh tshui tsuí  
 fish eat stream water, humans eat mouth water  
 ‘Fish lives with water, humans live with speaking.’  
 (People should use proper language.)

4.6 *Don’t judge a person from appearance*

(25) and (26) mention that calm water always refers to a wiser in Indonesian proverbs, which remind people not to judge a person from appearance. Taiwanese uses the measuring of the ocean to express the same opinion. The depth of the ocean is hard to measure, just like it is hard to know a person from his appearance, as shown in (49).

- (49) 人不可貌相 海水不可斗量 (Taiwanese)  
 lāng put-khó m̄au siòng hái-tsuí put-khó táu niū  
 human cannot appearance judge, sea cannot be measured  
 ‘A person cannot be judged from his appearance, the sea cannot be measured by a dipper.’  
 (Do not judge a person from his appearance)

Indonesian uses a difficulty in measuring an ocean to indicate the difficulty in knowing one's mind in (50). Knowing a person's mind is even more difficult than measuring the ocean ((51)).

- (50) Menyelami air dalam tonggak (Indonesian)  
 diving water with pillar  
 'Diving with pillar'  
 (It is hard to know one's heart)
- (51) Dalam lautan dapat diduga, dalam hati siapa tah (Indonesian)  
 sea can be predicted, human heart who knows  
 'The depth of the sea can be predicted but no one knows someone's heart'.  
 (It is hard to know one's heart.)

#### 4.7 Work hard for a living

Working hard is important in life to reach the goal. The proverb (52) means that JOB IS APPLYING WATER AND MONEY IS SAGO. Sago is a staple food of Indonesian living in the eastern parts of Indonesia like Sulawesi. It is conceptualized based on the experience when people want to obtain sago starch, they have to filter the starch from the waste by applying much water. The more water they apply, the more sago starch, they obtain. After being dried, sago starch can be consumed or sold. When you sell it, you will get money.

- (52) Tambah air tambah sago (Indonesian)  
 more water more sago  
 'More jobs, more sago'  
 (More jobs, more money)

The explanation means that both Indonesian and Taiwanese cultures have something in common yet peculiar. The common meaning is seeing water as the source of life in terms of water as media for life or basic need in life. From the analysis, metaphors are derived from both Indonesian and Taiwanese proverbs. As for the frame of the conceptual metaphor '\_\_\_\_\_ is WATER', the following is found.

PARENTS' LOVE IS WATER.  
 WISDOM IS WATER.  
 ENVIRONMENT IS WATER.  
 HUMAN RELATIONSHIP IS WATER.  
 PERSONALITY IS WATER.  
 MONEY/BENEFIT IS WATER.

From the explanation of how water is perceived in Indonesian and Taiwanese cultures, we have inferences regarding the use of the water concept in the proverbs. From the sensorimotor, water can be touched or felt that it is fluid. The function of water is perceived from the experiences with water. Then, the behavior and the representations can be discussed.

## 5. Conclusions

Proverbs are the accumulation of ancestors' wisdom that always shape the behaviors, values, lifestyles, etcetera in a culture. It is found that both Taiwanese and Indonesian societies have similar ways of thinking and acting in both society and culture. Similar environments bring similar experiences, and similar experiences lead to similar cultural wisdoms and values. Indonesian and Taiwanese cultures have similarities in embodied experiences dealing with water. Water is realized in different ways like sea, water, river, lake, and wave. The water-related proverbs give lessons that people should not worry about their life since, believe that they can live from what is provided in the environment, and work hard. Besides, they must be efficient in using resources. People have to be wiser in using resources because sometimes they are in surplus and shortage. In a relationship, people should not underestimate others and interfere with others' businesses. They have to use cautious and appropriate language. Proverbs strengthen the development of cognitive linguistics in seeing the interconnectivity between language, thought, and culture.

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