Europe in Multidisciplinary-Perspectives Seminar Proceeding

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EUROPE IN MULTIDISIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES

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GERMAN THOUGHTS REFLECTED IN GERMAN IDIOMS

Pratomo Widodo

A. INTRODUCTION

The old idiom that says "language shows its nation" somehow is always relevant. Language is a cultural expression which always related to its cultural background. Therefore, it is very often that an idiom in one certain language is not easily, or even can not be translated into another language, so that the idiom is taken into words of another language (which is called *loan word*), of course it is followed by the concept included in that particular idiom. Cabré (1999:89) said that Societies which depend on importing technological and scientific knowledge need to designate the new concepts and therefore tend to use a large number of terms from other languages which, once a part of usage, are very difficult to displace. For example, the word *bungalow* is actually from Bengali (India). The word is derived from the Gujarati *balagalo* and used elliptically for a "house in the Bengal style" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bungalow). However in its development it turns into a terminology in the modern architecture.

Mutually affecting or, to be more precise, mutually completing one to another with the idioms contribution from another language is a certainty in the social intercourse among nation of the speech communities, especially in this globalization era. There are so many idioms in technology, especially information technology, become a common idioms, which sometimes people do not know the origin of the idioms. For example, most people do not know what the term PIN (Person Identification Number) stands for. However, many people can use that term easily and correctly in their communication. Limbach (2007:7) says: Wer von uns denkt bei der Verwendung von Wörtern wie Fairness, Portemonnaie, oder Sport noch daran, dass es sich um Wortanleihen aus anderen Sprachen handelt? Gebrauch ist uns im Alltag so selbsverständlich geworden, dass uns ihre Herkunft aus einer fremden Sprache gar nicht mehr bewusst ist. 'Who might think, that the words like Fairness, Portemonnaie, or Sport are loan words? The use of such words is very common and we are not aware, that these words originated from foreign language'.

As a part of Imperium Romanum (Roman Empire), Germany got many influence from another countries, especially from European countries. However, Germany also gives some contributions to other countries as well. Those cultural exchanges can be traced by the idioms in some languages. Those idioms reflect the society culture that uses the language that can be a thing, a concept, an institution, an activity, etc. For example words from Latin language (Roman Empire) colors the German's vocabulary and culture. Words like vinum, murus, and fenestra which become one of the German vocabularies through Roman and German interaction in the time of Roman Empire. After modification or phonology adaption process those words become Wein 'wine', Mauer 'wall', dan Fenster 'window'. At that moment, the Roman was a very civilized nation. It can be identified by the idioms mentioned above, and at the same time the German people had not had the idioms that Roman had already had, like vinum (Wein) 'wine', murus (Mauer) 'wall', dan fenestra (Fenster) 'window'. The German then took those idioms into its language, and of course with a full concept of reference of the idioms. From the illustration above, it can be concluded that the German "learned" from the Roman of the grape cultivation, how to build a wall, and making a window in their buildings.

The question now is: How has the German given thought contributions to the world's civilization which are reflected in the German idioms? In the linguistic point of view, such contributions are genuine; they are so genuine that the idioms are usually still remaining in its original form.

B. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The idioms that are used in the idiomatic and common terminology are in the form of (1) words, whether it is monomorphemic or polymorphemic, and (2) phrases. Polymorphemic words that used in the idioms are mostly in the form of compound words or compositions. Composition in German can be a word which semantically is very detail, so that the meaning of the word can be very precise, as seen in the following example from Weinrich (1993:926).

DETERMINANT

BASE GLOS

Vertrag 'agreement'

Tarif<u>vertrag</u> 'rate agreement'

Angestellten<u>tarifvertrag</u> 'employee rate agreement' Bundes<u>angestelltentarifvertrag</u> 'federal employee rate agreement' The German compositions are so précised that can be suitable loan words for other language (Limbach, 2007). Cabré (1999:11) emphasizes the importance of criteria of economy, precision, and suitability in the use of the idioms. There are several reasons for using idioms from a foreign language. Sapir and Whorf (via Pelz, 2002) said that someone can only feel something, which can be expressed in words. According to this argument, the idioms are firstly only existed in the certain speech community then spreads to other speech communities with the same lingual form. The loaning words or idioms caused by the unequal linguistic unit to express neither the thought nor the feeling. For example the idioms from France language, coup d'état, that is used globally. In Indonesia, the idioms coup d'état changes into kudeta, somehow it is no doubt that the word kudeta is a form of phonology adaptation from the French idiom coup d'état.

In German language, the terminology or idioms is mostly defined in compound words, since the ease of the composition figuration affects the high use of compound words. Compare to the phrases figuration, composition figuration is much simpler, for example the phrase deutsche Abteilung 'German Department' consists of two elements which are an adjective deutsche and a noun Abteilung. In that phrase the adjective deutsch 'German' is an attribute that is declined by adding inflectional morpheme {-e} so that it becomes deutsche. By having the declination process, it produces an agreement in the gender, number, and case categories between the attribute and the governing word, which in this phrase is the noun Abteilung. Meanwhile, composition form (compound word) for the same terminology is Deutschabteilung. The composition's orthographic feature in German language is the written that is put it in one word. In the morphological process of composition, there is also no inflectional morpheme used to make agreement among the elements of the compound word.

C. GERMAN IDIOMS AS THE REFLECTIONS OF GERMAN THOUGHT

The German Idioms, which are reflected to the German thought, can be related to a thing, a concept, an institution, an activity, etc. They may have become a part of other language's glossaries as the loan words. As loan words, the German idioms may have changed their meaning or even their form. However, there are some of the German idioms that are still in their original form. Here are some of those idioms.

1. Kindergarten

Kindergarten is German composition, which consists of two words Kinder 'children' and Garten 'garden'. This is an institution for children education in the level of preschool. This institution was founded by Friedrich Fröbel in 1837 in Bad Blankenburg (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kindergarten). It should provide a place for the play and activity to give a social experience for children in their transition from home to school. In many countries, the term Kindergarten is still in its original form meanwhile in Indonesia it changes into Taman Kanak-kanak. However, the concept in that Indonesian term is still the same with the idea of Friedrich Fröbel the person who creates the term Kindergarten. Kindergarten is one of the contributions that German has given to the education system.

2. Diesel

One of the German idioms that are very well known in the mechanical term is Diesel. The diesel engine was developed by Rudolf Diesel in 1893. The Name of the engine is derived from the founder, Rudolf Christian Karl Diesel (1858-1913). He was a German inventor and mechanical engineer, famous for the invention of the diesel engine (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolf_Diesel). The name of Diesel has changed and extended from the person name to the mechanical term of the engine system that is applied in many industries and transportation machines nowadays.

3. Röntgen (Ronsen)

In the medical field, there is a tool to identify some disease called Röntgen (in Indonesian spelling and pronouncing *Ronsen*). The name of this tool is taken from the name of German physics expert who invented the tool, Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen (1845 - 1923). On 8 November 1895 Röntgen produced and detected electromagnetic radiation in a wave length range today known as X-rays or Röntgen rays, an achievement that earned him the first Nobel Prize in Physics in 1901 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelm_Röntgen).

Like Diesel, Röntgen is not just a person's name but it has experienced an extension meaning into medical equipment.

4. Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft

In the field of Sociology there are two important German terms, Gemeinschaft 'Community' and Gesellschaft 'Society'. Both terms are proposed by German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies in his influential work

Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft (1887). Gemeinschaft (communal society) refer to the rural societies. In the Gemeinschaft personal relationships are defined and regulated on the basis of traditional social rules. People have simple and direct face-to-face relations with each other. On the contrary, Gesellschaft refers to modern, cosmopolitan societies with their government bureaucracies and large industrial organizations. In the Gesellschaft human relations are more impersonal and indirect, being rationally constructed in the interest of efficiency or other economic and political considerations (http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/228066/Gemeinschaft-and-Gesellschaft). In Indonesia the term Gesellschaft is often translated into masyarakat, and Gemeinschaf into paguyuban (Heuken, 1987).

5. Leitmotiv

Leitmotiv literally means 'leading motif' or perhaps more accurately 'guiding motif'. A leitmotif, sometimes written leit-motif, is a musical term (though occasionally used in theatre or literature), referring to a recurring theme, associated with a particular person, place, or idea. It is closely related to the musical idea of idée fixe. (http://en.wikipedia.org/ wiki/Leitmotif). As a musical term, Leitmotiv is used widely as an universal term, especially in talking about classical music, in which Germany is known as a country with a big number of famous componists of the classical music. The term Leitmotiv is also used in the other fields. In these fields the Leitmotiv refers to 'the centre of idea' or 'the main theme that fuctions as reference' like election, a project, etc. The term Leitmotiv would be also used for expressing some things related with the principle of life (Salvatierra, in Limbach, 2007:35).

6. Okay

At first, the word okay is written with two capitals O and K with a period mark follows each letters (O. K.). The German immigrants in USA are not only dominating the beer industry but also in book printing industry. The scripts are always corrected before it printed into a book. The scripts that have been corrected and have not found any mistakes are sealed with the stamp O.K. The sign O. K. stands for Ohne Korrektur 'without any correction'. Furthermore, the acronym O. K. is adapted in English American language and written into okay. In its development the term O. K. is not only used written to state that a document is correct but also used orally in verbal communication. This term is so popular that it is now used internationally. That idiom in Germany is no longer written in double capitals O. K. instead it is written okay.

7. Lecker

Lecker is a German word that is used to express the delicious taste of a food, like cakes or cookies. However, there is a food named *kue leker* in Indonesia. It is not easy to figure out whether the name of the food is derived from the German language *lecker* 'delicious' or it is derived from the Dutch language. There are many similarities among German and Dutch language since these two countries are neighboring, moreover both languages belong to the Germanic language family.

8. Blitzkrieg

Blitzkrieg is a German compound word consisting of Blitz 'lightning' and Krieg 'war', also the word means 'lightning war'. This terminology refers to military tactic calculated to create psychological shock and resultant disorganization in enemy forces through the employment of surprise, speed, and superiority in materiel or firepower.

The blitzkrieg was tested by the Germans during the Spanish Civil War in 1938 and against Poland in 1939. The blitzkrieg proved to be a formidable combination of land and air action. The essence of blitzkrieg is the use of mobility, shock, and locally concentrated firepower in a skilfully coordinated attack to paralyze an adversary's capacity to coordinate his own defences (http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/69464/blitzkrieg). The verb form of the noun *Blitzkrieg* is *blitz* (Cabré, 1999:90).

9. Panzer

The word *Panzer* comes from the German word *Panzerkampfwagen* 'battle vehicle'. It is series of battle tanks fielded by the German army in the 1930s and '40s. The six tanks in the series constituted virtually all of Germany's tank production from 1934 until the end of World War II in 1945. Panzers provided the striking power of Germany's panzer (armoured) divisions throughout the war (http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1057539/panzer). Panzer is well known for its strength; even the German football national team is called *der Panzer*, to illustrate to spirit power of the team as strong as the Panzer.

10. Weltanschauung

Weltanschauung composed of Welt ('world') and Anschauung ('view' or 'outlook'). It is a concept fundamental to German philosophy and epistemology and refers to a 'wide world perception'. Additionally, it refers to the framework of ideas and beliefs through which an individual, group or

culture interprets the world and interacts with it. Weltanschauung used first by Kant and later popularized by Hegel, was always used in German and later used in English to refer more to philosophies, ideologies and cultural or religious perspectives (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_view). This term is used worldwide since it has a universal characteristics and high integrative potential in the context to describe the value and religion system (Schäf in Limbach, 2007:33). The use of this terminology within still remaining in German language is because people cannot translate it in their language properly. (Almeyda in Limbach, 2007:32).

11. Schlep(p)

Schlep is derived from German verb schleppen 'to carry', 'to lug'. Schlep(p) or some times written shlep in American English refers to 'carrying lugage'. One day, an American who wished to go to Germany asked his German relative what kind of clothes he should have if he is in Germany. He asked his relative the question, because: "I don't want to schlep too much around". The use of the word schlep in American English has a special purpose. The word is used in the grumble tone, for example, in the sentence follows: "Oh man, I have to schlep my luggage all the way back to the hotel" (Limbach, 2007:21). The verb schleppen originally has a neutral meaning, however in the English language it experiences changing meaning and usage. In American English to schlep has less positive connotation.

12. Kaputt

The German idiom kaputt 'damage', 'exhausted' is also found in American English, France, and Kiswahili language (Limbach, 2007). In Indonesian language kaputt means 'damage', 'broken', and also 'very tired' (Heuken, 1987:258). In American English, German, and France kaputt has the same meaning. Meanwhile, in Kiswahili language kapput means 'anesthesia'. This meaning is probably adapted from one of the kaputt meaning which is 'exhausted', and in the situation of people being exhausted is they tend to fall asleep. Thus, in the Kiswahili language there is an idiom nusu kaputt. Nusu means 'half', so that nusu kaputt means 'half awake'.

13. Zeitgeist

Zeitgeist is composed of Zeit 'time' or 'era' and Geist 'spirit', it means also 'the spirit of the times' or 'the spirit of the age'. Zeitgeist is the general cultural, intellectual, ethical, spiritual, or political climate within a nation or even specific groups, along with the general ambiance, morals, sociocultural direction, and mood associated with an era (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/

Zeitgeist). The concept of Zeitgeist goes back to Johann Gottfried Herder and other German Romanticists, such as Cornelius Jagdmann, but is best known in relation to Hegel's philosophy of history. The use of the idiom Zeitgeist in English is because it is not easy to find the short, right, similar word in English to describe the idiom (Toldi, in Limbah, 2007:38). Many other languages also use that idiom in its origin form. In Indonesia language Zeitgeist is usually translated into 'spirit of the age', but it is very often that the origin word Zeitgeist in German language goes along with the translation.

Beside the German idioms above, there are still many other German idioms that are used and borrowed by other languages.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that German language has given many contributions in the forms of idioms to many other languages, both in European region and many countries around the world. Those idioms show that Germany has given some contributions to the world's civilization in terms of concepts, thoughts, institutions, and etc.

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