



A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF MINANGKABAUNESE VERBS CONNECTED TO THE SEMANTIC PRIMES TOUCH: A NATURAL SEMANTIC METALANGUAGE STUDY

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Abstract

This article analyzed words in Minangkabaunese that share the same semantic prime: TOUCH using Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM). This research was conducted using the descriptive qualitative approach. The data that were found in this research were the words connected that are connected to the semantic prime TOUCH in Minangkabau language. The sources of this data were the 11 informants from the 11 districts in Padang city, which is the capital city of the West Sumatera Province. The data were collected using interview guidelines, recording equipment, and writing equipment. An interactive model of data analysis is used to analyze the data. From the data that were collected and analyzed there are a total of 6 words that are connected to semantic prime TOUCH: *maawai*, *manggaduah*, *maambiak*, *marabuik*, *marameh*, and *maresek*. These words are similar but not exactly synonymous that they will create a misconception in diction.

Key words: *Natural semantic metalanguage, Minangkabaunese, semantic primes, TOUCH, allolexy, polysemy*

A. INTRODUCTION

All languages in this world have a similarity. They share the same concept of meaning in their vocabulary. This means that it is possible to track down the concept of each word in every language in the world. This could be done by using Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM), which is a theory that was created by Anna Wierzbicka in her book *Semantic Primitives* in 1972 from the concept developed by Polish professor Andrzej Bogusławski.

Even though there are many synonyms in one language (see Rosa, 2013), NSM can be used to prove that there are few differences in their core concepts. Two scholars in Indonesia named Effendi and Muchammadun (2018: 284) used NSM to find out the difference between 3 Indonesian words: *bahagia*, *senang*, *gembira*.

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Even though these 3 words seem similar they are not exactly synonymous. The differences can be seen from the following sentences:

- 1 (a) *Ia bertekat selamanya akan bahagia*
- (b) *Ia bertekat selamanya akan senang*
- (c) *Ia bertekat selamanya akan gembira*

The literal English translation of the sentences in (1a-c) is “he was determined to be happy forever”. However, the three Indonesian words – *bahagia*, *senang*, and *gembira* – are not interchangeable in meaning. When the words *senang* and *gembira* are used to replace the word *bahagia* the sentences become odd. This is because in Indonesia there are different words that can be used to express happiness depending on the range of time. The word *bahagia* can be used to express a lifelong feeling. Though it can also be used to express a prolonged happiness, *senang* cannot be used for as long as *bahagia*. The word *gembira* is even less so.

One of the languages that have not yet been analyzed often by using NSM approach is Minangkabanes, which is the native language of people located in Padang city, Indonesia. Only did Rosa (2018) do a research on semantic prime SEE in Minangkabaunese language using NSM approach. Minangkabaunese is a language that is rich with vocabularies and meanings, which means that a number of allolexy and polysemy might be found in Minangkabaunese. Semantic prime TOUCH can be found in many polysemy of Minangkabaunese language. For example: the words *mamacik*, *maambiak*, *marabuik*, *maresek*, *maawai*, *manggaduah*, etc. have TOUCH as one of their core meanings. Below is the example of misconception in using words with polysemy TOUCH/WANT:

- 2 (a) *Inyo ambiak dompet di lamari*
He took the wallet from the wardrobe
- (b) *Inyo ambiak dompet dari tangan den*
He took the wallet from my hand

While the used of the word *ambiak* in (2a) is acceptable among the native speaker of Minangkabaunese, the sentence in (2b) is quite peculiar. Because of the forceful nature of the sentence in the (2b) the correct choice of the word would be *rabuik*. Even though both *maambiak* and *marabuik* can be translated “took” in English, in Minangkabaunese they are not exactly synonymous.

Because they share the same semantic primes, there is a high change of ambiguities or mishaps in choosing the correct word. It is very easy for people who speaks Minangkabaunese to make mishaps and used the wrong words to express themselves. To diminish ambiguities and mishaps this article analyzed each words connected to the semantic prime TOUCH.

Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) is a theory that focuses on deconstructing the meaning of words until the core meanings are found. Goddard (2008) explained that NSM is a system that deconstructs meaning by using the universally accepted semantic primes (p. 1). This means that it is a tool in finding the core meaning of words. This also means that it used something that is

universally accepted which are the semantic primes. Goddard (2002: 7) also explained that NSM is a tool which is used to define something that is indefinable. This shows that there is no such thing as indefinable words in this words, this is because there is a theory called NSM that can be used to crack the code on what is supposed to be indefinable.

In NSM, semantic primes are needed to decode the meaning of words in all languages in the world. Goddard and Wierzbicka (2014) explained it better, in that semantic primes are units of word-meaning that cannot be furthermore elaborate (p. 11). Based from the quotation above it can be said that semantic primes are units that can no longer be decipher because it is already the root of the meaning of the words. This also makes it universal. This is because it is believed that all languages in the worlds share the same core meanings.

In his book Goddard (2008) explained that allolexy is when there is more than one word that expresses one semantic prime (p. 6). Goddard (2002: 20) also explained that allolexy was a concept created in 1980 by Wierzbicka, when she observed that the meanings of words are not free from variations. In other words, allolexy is when one semantic prime is able to explain more than one word. This also means that there is no word meaning that is not free from variations.

Though semantic prime is the core meaning of all the words in all of the languages in the world, not all words can use one semantic prime and capture the meaning perfectly. Polysemy is when one word is used to express two different semantic primes. (Goddard and Wierzbicka, 2014: 13). There are some words that needed more than one semantic prime to be able to express the core meaning comprehensively, hence the existence of polysemy.

Below are the semantic primes that have been group into several related categories:

Table 1 Related categories of semantic primes (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2014: 14)

Related categories	Semantic Primes
Substantives	I-me, you, someone, something-thing, people, body
Relational substantives	kind, parts
Determiners	this, the same, other-else
Quantifiers	one, two, some, all, much-many, little-few
Evaluators	good, bad
Descriptors	big, small
Mental predicates	know, think, want, don't want, feel, see, hear
Speech	say, words, true
Actions, events, movement, contact	do, happen, move, touch
Location, existence, possession, specification	be (somewhere), there is, be (someone)'s, be (someone/something)
Life and death	live, die

Time	When-time, now, before, after, a long time, a short time, for some time, moment
Space	Where-place, here, above, below, far, near, side, inside
Logical concepts	not, maybe, can, because, if
Augmentor	very, more intensifier,
Similarity	Like-way-as

Table 1 shows that there are 16 related categories that exist in all languages. Each category contains several semantic primes that are the core meanings or concepts of all the words of all languages in the world. From the table above it can also be concluded that there are several semantic primes that share the same categories. This will result in synonyms or similar words.

Analyzing the meaning of words using NSM can be done by using allolexy. In his book Goddard (2008) explained that allolexy is when there is more than one word that expresses one semantic prime (p. 6). Goddard (2002: 20) also explained that allolexy was a concept created in 1980 by Wierzbicka, when she observed that the meanings of words are not free from variations. Another way to identify the meaning of words using NSM is by using polysemy. Though semantic prime is the core meaning of all the words in all of the languages in the world, not all words can use one semantic prime and capture the meaning perfectly. Polysemy is when one word is used to express two different semantic primes (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2014: 13).

This research tried to find out what are the verbs that are connected to the semantic prime TOUCH using the natural semantic metalanguage approach in Minangkabau language.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used descriptive qualitative method. The data that were found in this research were the words connected that are connected to the semantic prime TOUCH in Minangkabau language. The sources of this data were the 11 informants from the 11 districts in Padang city, which is the capital city of the West Sumatera Province. An interactive model of data analysis is used to analyze the data. There are two kinds of instruments in this research. First is the key instrument. The key instrument that will be used in collecting the data to conduct this research will be the researcher herself. Second is the supporting instrument. The supporting instrument that will be used to collect the data of this research will be interview guidelines, recording equipment, and writing equipment.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are several similar words in Minangkabaunese that are connected to the semantic prime TOUCH that are similar but not exactly synonymous. NSM is used to find out the polysemy of the combined semantic primes to find out the core meanings of words in Minangkabaunese that are connected to the semantic prime TOUCH. The result from the acquired data is that the words that were found are the polysemy of the combination between the semantic prime TOUCH with other

semantic primes: MOVE, WANT, and FEEL to produce polysemy of TOUCH / MOVE, TOUCH / WANT, and TOUCH/ FEEL. This means that when someone is doing the act of touching something there are different words based on how roughly they MOVE the thing, how badly they WANT the thing, and how strongly they FEEL the thing.

There are two polysemes for the semantic primes TOUCH/MOVE: *maawai* and *manggaduah*. Both of them express the action of touching something and moving that something in some way. Both of them also evoke negative emotion to the other parties who are involved. Even though they are quite similar, they are not exactly the same. They are different in how or the force of how roughly the person do the action of touching and moving the thing.

- (3) *Maawai*
 X touches the thing (i)
 X moves the thing a little (ii)
 The thing moves a little to other place (iii)
 X touches the thing like this. (iv)
- (4) *Manggaduah*
 X touches the thing of Y (i)
 X moves the thing very much (ii)
 Because X wants Y to feel bad (iii)
 The thing be bad (iv)
 Y does not want this (v)
 X touches the thing like this (vi)

From the explications above it can be seen that both words are similar but not the same. They are both different in the force on how the act of touching and moving and how badly it affects the thing. In 3 (ii) it can be seen that the act of *maawai* is not done not so roughly resulting in the thing not badly bothered. Though the thing is not badly bothered the act of *maawai* still evokes negative emotions. This is because even though the intensity is not as hard as *manggaduah*, it is still enough to make the thing that was touch move from how it was before which evokes irritation and negative emotions.

Manggaduah, on the other hand, is much more forceful and rough as can be seen in 4(ii). While *maawai* can evokes irritation, *manggaduah* can actually made someone livid or angry. This is because *manggaduah* is naturally very forceful and could damage the thing that was touch.

The second polysemy is TOUCH/WANT. This is the action of touching something with the possessive desire of wanting the thing. The words that were found were: *maambiak* and *marabuik*.

- (5) *Maambiak*
 X touches the thing (i)
 X moves the thing (ii)
 Because X wants the thing for a short time(iii)

X touches the thing like this (iv)

- (6) *Marabuik*
 X touches the thing of Y (i)
 X moves the thing of Y (ii)
 Because X wants the thing for a long time (iii)
 Y does not want this (iv)
 X touches the thing like this. (v)

Similarly to the previous polysemy *maambiak* and *marabuik* differ only in the fact that one is forceful while the other is not. The act of *maambiak*, based on 5 (ii) can be done in favor of taking something as a favor for someone so it does not necessarily evoke negative emotions. *Marabuik*, based on 6 (ii) on the other hand, is extremely forceful and could be translated to “stealing” in English. This is because the act of *marabuik* can be done by taking something forcefully from someone's hand without their permission. This could evoke very negative emotions such as desperation and anger.

The last words that were found were: *marameh* and *maresek*. These two words represent the semantic primes TOUCH/FEEL. These words express how someone touches something while feeling the thing at the same time.

- (7) *Marameh*
 X touches the thing of Y (i)
 X feels the thing strongly (ii)
 Y does not like this (iii)
 X touches the thing that belongs to Y like this (iv)
- (8) *Maresek*
 X touches the thing of Y (i)
 X feels the thing (ii)
 X touches the thing that belongs to Y like this (iii)

The power used in the two words while doing the action of TOUCH/FEEL was very different. *Marameh*, as evident in 7 (iii) could evoke negative emotions this is because it is an action done with strong intent in causing harm or destroy the thing. In 7 (iv) it is clear that the action is harsh and rough. This was to feel the thing roughly in the hand usually with bad intent. This would, of course, generate negative emotions or pain. *Maresek*, on the other hand, is more gentle and friendly. This action is done with minimal energy and no ill intent in causing pain or harm towards the recipient.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Many words seem similar, but NSM is a tool that can be used as a way to differentiate them. In Minangkabaunese many words have semantic prime TOUCH

as their core concept of meanings. This makes it very easy for people who speak Minangkabaunese to make mishaps or accidentally used the wrong word to represent the concept in their brain. NSM theory can help give explanations that capture the meaning of each word. This sheds light to the problem of wrong diction in Minangkabaunese especially towards words connected to the semantic prime TOUCH.

This research focuses on the semantic prime TOUCH of words in the Minangkabau language. From the research, it can be said that Minangkabaunese is a language rich with synonymous words that can be used as data to analyze using NSM theory. Therefore it is suggested for future researchers to analyze the other Minangkabaunese words using NSM because of its richness in meanings. Because there are already researches focused on TOUCH and SEE, it is suggested that the next research will focus more on other sensory words. This also shines a light on the true meaning of words within the language used in everyday life.

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