

CATCHING FISH CONCEPT IN BALINESE LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This paper is intended to explore to what extent the Theory of Natural Semantic Metalanguage can be employed to minimize the ambiguity resulting from different interpretations of the Balinese verbs indicating the action 'ngejuk bé' (catching fish). As far as such verbs are concerned, it can be stated that the Balinese language is more sophisticated and richer than Indonesian, as it has so many verb phrases used to refer to the activity of catching fish.

The data were collected through the interview and note taking techniques, and were analyzed using Natural Semantic Metalanguage. The result of the study shows that the verbs which can be used to express the activity of 'ngejuk be' (catching fish) are *ngenyat*, *mencar*, *nyau*, *memancing*, *nuba*, *mekena bubu*, *memancing tungguh*, *menumbak*, *nudul* and *nyuluh*, depending on how such an activity is done and what tools are used.

Keywords: *catching fish, Natural Semantic Metalanguage*

I INTRODUCTION

The theory of Natural Semantic Metalanguage is part of the theory of semantics and is similar to the componential analysis proposed by Larson (1989). It is used to avoid ambiguity resulting from different interpretations of a lexical item. It analyzes the features of a lexical item as intended by the speaker. The features of a lexical item can be explicitly explained using the theory of Natural Semantic Metalanguage. One lexical item which currently appears may disappear in the future as a result of the language contact, the mobilization of the speakers of a language, the ability of being able to speak more than one language. In this case, the theory of Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) is badly needed to analyze the words or phrases a language has.

According to Givon (1984), verbs can be divided into three; they are (1) the verbs indicating situation, (2) the verbs indicating process and (3) the verbs indicating action. In this article, the Balinese verbs indicating the action 'ngejuk (be)' (catching fish) are analyzed using the theory of NSM. They are transitive verbs which certainly need objects, meaning that in the construction using such verbs, there are two arguments needed; one argument functions as the subject and the other functions as the object. In Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM), the subject is the agent and the object is the undergoer.

II MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data of this present study were obtained by interviewing two informants whom the writer knows since they were young. One of them is a

retired soldier and the other is a farmer. They stay at the same village and are highly fond of catching fish. The information provided by them was then noted down and was descriptively analyzed.

According to Wierzbicka (1972) and Cliff Goddard (Wierzbicka, 1996), NSM refers to an attempt made to “express the same thing” in a paraphrase composed of maximally simple, intelligible and translatable words. It is an approach which is based on reductive paraphrase, in a very strict and literal sense. The concept of semantic prime is the most fundamental in NSM. It is the first meaning of a certain word which cannot be changed although the culture in which it is used changes.

III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The verb indicating ‘action’ implies that (a) there is someone who does something (X); (b) there is something which will occur to Y. The verbs referring to the concept ‘ngejuk be’ (catching fish) can be described as follows:

3.1 THE VERB ‘NGENYAT’

It indicates that X (someone) does something and as a consequence something will occur to Y (fish). The agent catches fish without using any tool; he catches it using his hands. It is expected that X (the agent) catches Y (fish); as a result, the fish will be caught and cannot free itself.

X does something and something happens to Y.

X does this by something (using his hands)

X does it without anything (any tool)

Something happens to Y (Y becomes caught and cannot free itself)

X does this like this

3.2 THE VERB ‘MENCAR’ (CATCHING FISH USING A TYPE OF NET)

It indicates that X does something and as a result something will happen to Y. The agent (X) does it using a tool and as a result the undergoer (Y) will be caught in the net. The net is usually conventionally woven in such a way that when the fish is inside it, the fish will be trapped; finally, the agent catches it using his hands. The net is usually made of plastic string or nylon, and lead is attached to the edge, making it easily go down to the bed of a river, shore or pond. In this way, fish can be caught automatically.

X does something and something happens to Y (the undergoer)

X does it by something (using a net made of plastic or nylon)

X does something to Y (throws it in such a way that it can catch Y)

X wants this

X does it like this

3.3 THE VERB 'NYAU' (CATCHING FISH USING A TYPE OF NET WITH A WOODEN FRAME)

The information which can be obtained from this lexical item is that X (the agent) does something and, as a consequence, something happens to Y (the undergoer). Unlike 'mencar' which is a type of net without any frame but with lead attached to its edge, 'nyau' is a tool without lead attached to it; it is framed and its far end is tied in such a way that it is impossible for the fish to get free. Narratively, this verb of action can be explicated as follows:

"X does something and something happens to Y"

X does it by something (a net which is made of plastic string or nylon and equipped with a wooden frame).

X does something to Y (goes down to a river, pond or ditch to catch Y)

X wants this

X does it like this

3.4 THE VERB 'MANCING' (CATCHING FISH)

The information which can be obtained from this lexical item is that X (the agent) does something and, as a result, something occurs to Y (the undergoer). In this activity, X (the agent) uses a fishing rod with fishing hook and bait for catching Y (the fish). When the fish eats the bait and the fishing rod is raised, then the fish will be caught. The explanation of this verb is that: X does something and, as a result, at the same time, something happens to Y.

X does something to Y

X does this by something (catches fish using the fishing rod)

X feels something good

X wants it

X does it like this

3.5 THE VERB 'NUBA'

This verb describes that X does something and, as a result, something will occur to Y. X uses the roots of a tree which are poisonous. When the fish (Y) consumes it, it will become powerless and die. However, before the Y dies, it becomes restless and finally it is caught by human. The situation can be explicated as follows:

X does something and something happens to Y

X does it by something (using the roots of a poisonous tree)

Something bad happens to Y (Y becomes powerless and finally it dies)

X wants this

X does it like this.

3.6 THE VERB 'MEKENA BUBU'

What can be described for the verb 'mekena bubu' is that X wants to do something and as a result Y (the fish) enters a trap better known as 'bubu' (a trap which is made of bamboo). X usually leaves the 'bubu' for one night and collects it the following morning. If X is lucky, Y will get trapped within the

‘bubu’. When Y is already trapped, it cannot get out as the ‘bubu’ is woven in such a way that it is impossible for Y to go out; it is tightly woven. This verb can be classified into two: the first one is ‘mekena bubu’ in order to catch eels. The ‘bubu’ (woven bamboo trap) with bait which is left when it is getting dark in the rice field and will be collected in the following morning. The eels which smell the bait will enter the ‘bubu’, which is woven in such a way that it is impossible for them to get out; in other words, they are trapped and caught. The second one is ‘mekena bubu’ in order to catch shrimps. This type of ‘bubu’ is bigger in size than the one described above. It is also made of bamboo. It is left in the river rather than in the rice field. It works the same way as the one described above; however, it may be left in the river any time, either during day time or at night. It can be narrated as follows.

X does something and something will happen to Y
 X does it by something (using a tool referred to as ‘bubu’)
 Something good happens to X
 X wants it
 X does it like this

3.7 THE VERB ‘MANCING TUNGGUH’

The information which can be obtained from this lexical item is that X (the agent) does something, and, as a result, something will happen to Y (the undergoer). X does it using a short rod with fishing line and fishhook with bait. It is different from the verb ‘mancing’ above, in which a long fishing rod is used. However, how X does it is similar to what he does when ‘mekena bubu’. The short fishing rod is left for a period of time in special areas of a river. After that, X comes back to check whether there is Y attached to it. If X is lucky, he will find Y attached to the short fishing rod. However, this way of catching fish is only used to catch relatively big fish. The fishhook is too big for the small fish to swallow. This verb of action can be explicated as follows.

X does something and something will happen to Y
 X does it by something (using a short fishing rod which is left for a relatively long period of time)
 X will feel good if something good happens to X (will be lucky if he finds Y attached to the fishhook)
 X wants this
 X does it like this

3.8 THE VERB ‘MENUMBAK’

The information which can be obtained from this verb is that X is in search for Y, which is in this case, turtle-like fish, popularly called ‘empas’ in the Balinese language using what is called ‘tumbak’ (a lance). X knows where Y usually hides. When X finds such an area, X stabs the lance and then Y (the empas) will be caught. Only talented people are good at this. This verb of action can be explained as follows.

X does something and something will happen to Y

X does it by something (using a tool termed as ‘tombak’)
 X does something in somewhere (the lance in particular places)
 Something bad happens to Y (Y will get stabbed)
 X wants it
 X does it like this

3.9 THE VERBAL ‘NUDUL’

This verb means that X (the agent) does something and, as a result, something will happen to Y. As in the verb ‘mancing’, a fishing rod completed with fishing line and fishing hook and bait is used. However, the way in which it is used is different from the way in which it is used when ‘mancing’. It is repeatedly moved upward and downward over the water surface. In addition, it is only used to catch a particular type of fish called ‘deleg’. The process is that when the fishhook with bait is moved upward and downward repeatedly, the ‘deleg’ will catch the bait before it is caught by X. The explanation of the verb ‘nudul’ can be explained as follows.

X does something and something will happen to Y
 X does this by something (using a fishing rod with fishing line and fishing hook with bait)
 X does it not once (repeatedly until Y catches the bait)
 Y is something (refers to a particular type of fish called ‘deleg’)
 X wants it
 X does it like this

3.10 THE VERB ‘NYULUH’

The information which can be obtained from this verb is that X (the agent) does something and, as a result, something happens to Y (the patient). X does this using what is called an oil lamp. This is done at moonless night when eels go out or when it is dark in the rice field. X also uses a pair of big scissors which are used for catching eels only. This is done starting from at about seven at night. What can be explicated from this verb is as follows.

X does something and something happens to Y
 X does this by something (using an oil lamp)
 X does this at certain time (night, starting from at moonless night when eels go out)
 X does this by something (uses a pair of big scissors for catching the eels (Y))
 X wants this
 X does something like this

IV CONCLUSION

It turns out that the Balinese language is a language which is sophisticated and rich enough. What is meant is that it has many verbs which can be used to express the same concept ‘ngejuk be’ (catching fish). Each verb is distinguished by the tool used and how the activity ‘catching fish’ is done. In this case, the Balinese language is much richer than the Indonesian language, our national language, which is used as a means of communication

‘vernacular’ among the ethnic groups in Indonesia. Each verb has its own features. The theory of Natural Semantic Metalanguage can be used to identify such features.

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