

# Metaphors in Minangkabau Language: Meaning Shift and Change

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## ABSTRACT

Metaphor is a tool to explain the nature of shifts and changes in meaning because it is able to serve the thoughts and feelings of language users. Metaphor serves as a source of strong motivation to express such thoughts and feelings and becomes expressive means of language. Not all meanings can be conveyed literally, and if speakers feel that there are no words with literal meaning available, they will convey the meaning figuratively which can be more captivating to the listener's attention or can bring out complexities that cannot be done in other ways. Minang native speakers consider settlement in the outside of deliberation to be bad. To avoid disputes, they must be good at finding and uttering expressions whose meanings are different from the sentences that are said, so, they do not immediately feel offended or humiliated. The utterance in (8) means 'to clean village from all threats and disturbance.' The analogy of red in (10) refers to saga fruit and the sentential meaning of (11) is associated to a person who has capability to posit him-/her-self. Meanwhile, the sentence in (13) might mean 'what is hoped appears.' There are similarities in the nature of animals equated with human character, for example, in Minang, the phrases *pipik andak menjadi elang* 'the sparrow wants to be an eagle' and *gajah dilulue ular lidih* 'elephant is wrapped around by a small snake' refer to a weak against a strong person or can be described as a person who is not aware of his abilities.

**Keywords:** Metaphor, ontological, structural, inference, Minangkabau, meaning shift and change

## INTRODUCTION

Metaphor is the biggest and most important phenomenon in explaining the nature of shifts and changes in meaning. It becomes an output to serve the thoughts and feelings of language users and the source of strong motivation to express feelings, deep emotions, and expressive means of language.

Cruse argued metaphor and ambiguity carry a literal meaning and a metaphorical or metonymic meaning at the same time<sup>[1]</sup>. Even some of the meanings of polysemy come from the lexicalization process of metaphors and metonymy. The Indonesian word *mengamankan* 'to save' is metaphorically referred to the actions of businessmen or security forces to arrest or detain people who violate the law for the sake of public safety and security from possible business actions<sup>[2]</sup>. Some people think that the use of metaphors is a deviation from normal forms, but, in fact, their uses are caused by the worldly experiences of everyday language users which cannot be avoided.

Not all meanings can be conveyed literally, and if speakers feel that there are no words with literal meaning available, they will

convey the meaning figuratively which can be more captivating to the listener's attention or can bring out complexities that cannot be done in other ways. The use of metaphors can make it possible to understand concepts such as the mind which cannot be seen with eyes or with a touch<sup>[3]</sup>. The expression "eye of a needle" is previously strange to foreigners but, now, people no longer compare an eye with a small hole in Indonesia<sup>[4]</sup>. For foreigners, several Indonesian metaphors are found unknowledgeable such as *catatan kaki* 'footnote', *mata kaki* 'ankles', *kepala suku* 'tribal chiefs', *pantat kual* 'cauldron bottoms', *pucuk pimpinan* 'top leaders', and *ranting organisasi* 'organizational branches.' When the meaning of a metaphor is no longer felt as a metaphor, semantic experts argued this change is a dead metaphor<sup>[4],[5],[3]</sup>. Metaphor is limited to understand or realize experience in one field based on or in a referring to another field<sup>[5]</sup>. Although metaphor is not new in language and is known as things that deviate from the naturalness of language and is also seen as language decoration tools, intensive studies have only recently been carried out by cognitive linguistics in international languages such as other English. Metaphoric studies in BI have not been carried out much as well as in ethnic languages in Indonesia although limited studies are available, such as, types of meaning, synonyms, antonyms, ambiguities and others, while elaboration on one particular aspect is still scarce.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Several concepts of meaning shift and change have been noted<sup>[6]</sup> with a historical perspective. Meaning change is an indication of expansion, narrowing, connotation, synesthesia, and association of a word's meaning that still exists. In meaning shift, the initial meaning of reference does not change or is replaced, but undergoes an expansion of the reference from the same sound symbol. This means, there is a change of reference that is different from the original reference<sup>[1]</sup>.

Metaphors are not merely decorative additions to beautify everyday language, but they exist in our everyday language, also in thinking and acting, so in their view basically, both in thinking and acting, our conceptualizing system is a natural metaphor<sup>[7],[9]</sup>. Lakoff and his followers use evidence from everyday linguistic expressions to infer the existence of metaphorical relations or mappings between domains in the human mind. Metaphor is a mapping between domains, from one model in one domain to a similar structure in another.

The object metaphors used for ideas, and thoughts, for example, map our knowledge and experiences about objects that can be bent or straightened to a form of understanding that ideas, and thoughts as something that can be straightened and bent so that we can say: his mind is crooked or his thoughts are straight, bending the law, straightening out his statements, and so on. The way metonymy works is almost the same as metaphor. The difference is the conceptual mapping in metaphor: the mapping of A as B between two domains.

Association is the basis for shifts and changes in meaning. The theory of the adherents of the association basis appears in two forms. Some semanticists admit a naïve associatism. They try to explain meaning shifts and changes as a product of isolated associations between words. Lately, there has been a shift in explanation from association theorists. Association theory has left associations between words isolated and opened up horizons of associations<sup>[1]</sup>.

Through field research and by obtaining a large number of examples of metaphorical expressions, from the results of the analysis carried out, both of them came to the conclusion that the many metaphorical expressions actually originate from conceptual metaphors which are more limited in number than the realization of the metaphorical expressions<sup>[3]</sup>. They argued both creative metaphors that are still productive and conventional metaphors that are archaic, come from conceptual

metaphors<sup>[8]</sup>. Conceptual metaphors are also synonymous with schemes (schemata). Initially, metaphorical expressions are taken from existing schemes and then complete it with the aim of obtaining certain direct effects for listeners or readers.

From Lakoff's 1993 research, further understanding was obtained that metaphor is not in language at all but in the mental realm of a person who is conceptualized in the mental realm of language speakers. Metaphor comes from the word *meta* meaning *half* or *not fully bodily* and *fora* (phora). All this means "to submit or to refer. Based on the meaning of this word, metaphor refers to something that is not completely or only half refers to something in understanding or expressing experience in other fields or fields. Thus, metaphor includes two views on one problem.

Metaphors can be divided lexical metaphors (LMs) and grammatical metaphors (GM)<sup>[5]</sup>. The LMs show that lexical meanings are used in part to express or understand other meanings. For example, a *snake* as a lexis is an animal that has creeping, noisy, coiling, venomous, and other characteristics. The clause *snake creeping in the grass* gives a general or literal meaning, namely that there are animals that have all four of these characteristics creeping in the grass. However, if the Indonesian sentence *si Diah diceritakan bahwa si Diah seekor ular* (Diah is being told that she is a snake), that clause is already filled with metaphors because some of the characteristics of snakes have been made in *si Diah* characteristics.

The LMs can exist in various realizations which generally state one phenomenon seen from two perspectives. In the following description, lexical metaphors are discussed from five aspects<sup>[5]</sup>. Firstly, the LMs exist with the meaning of nouns compared to other nouns, as in *try to open the door to your heart* with another noun, as a noun compared to your heart as a noun as well. For example, we cannot find the root of the problem (the problem is compared to the root of the plant) today ends the page of his

life (sheet compared to life) we all strive for our nation's flowers to bring big changes in this country (interest compared to nation)

Secondly, the LMs exist with nouns compared to verbs that are related to or can be derived from other nouns, such as expressing their opinion in the meeting. In that clause the opinion is compared to a rock, but it does not say the opinion of a rock. Instead of expressing opinions, the verb *throw* is usually related to or can be derived from the noun *stone* or other hard object; what is usually thrown is a rock or other hard object, for example, the funds must be disbursed within this week (funds - disbursed):

Prices of goods have soared. (*price - soar*)

The problem must be solved ASAP. (*problem - solve*)

Thirdly, the LMs can compare nouns with adjectives or adjectives from or related to other nouns, such as we would like to say *thank you very much* compared as an attribute of numbers or money.

Fourthly, the LMs appear as a comparison between two social concepts or ideologies in two communities. For example, ex-US President, R. Nixon during his appointment, was faced with a corruption allegation known as the Watergate scandal which dropped him from office, as well as President Bill Clinton who was involved in Freshwatergate; the word or morpheme *gate* as a metaphorical marker. The same incident was also addressed to the Indonesia's President Abdurahman Wahid (Gus Dur) in 2000 pertaining to Buloggate, Bruneigate, Borobudurgate and other gates.

Fifth, the LMs can exist with sound markers only. Usually, animals such as chickens, cats and dogs are chased away by saying *hus*. Someone who prevents a number of children from leaving the place and annoyance says the same words, then children go away<sup>[5]</sup>.

Grammatical metaphors (GMs) show grammar that is usually used for a certain experience being used for another experience. In other words, GMs give sense describing usual realizations of experience

(experiential, logical, interpersonal, and textual) in transitivity systems, complex clauses, modes, themes/rhymes, and certain cohesions; they are realized with or in grammatical (structural) aspects.

Understanding language metaphors include relocation of ordinary meaning realization and of common meaning realization. First, relocation of ordinary meaning realization into other grammatical aspects, at the same level, is related to activities which are commonly coded in several words conveyed in just one word. Second, relocation of the realization of common meaning at one level (rank) is encoded in another grammatical level that is lower (as in the experience exposure metaphor) or higher (as in the experience exchange metaphor). For example, the meaning is usually coded in clauses, groups or phrases, as shown in (1a-e) in Indonesian language:

- 1a. Ular melilit di pohon  
'A snake coiled the tree'
- b. Kami berlari  
'We ran'
- c. Dia berjalan cepat di lapangan  
'He walked fast on the field'
- d. Dia absen karena sakit  
'He was absent due to illness'
- e. Buku itu di kamar  
'The book is in the room'

If the material experience is encoded by the material process of the coding, it is commonly seen in the Indonesian text in (2a) and (2b).

- 2a. Anak gadis itu menikmati angin senja  
'The girl enjoys the evening breeze'.
- 2b. Mereka mengadakan pertemuan minggu lalu.  
'They had a meeting last week.'

Metaphor is the biggest and most important phenomenon in explaining the nature of shifts and changes in meaning. Metaphors become an output to serve strong motivation to express feelings, deep emotions, and expressive means of language.

Metaphor and metonymy tend to reduce polysemy because of the ambiguous nature of metaphor and metonymy by carrying a literal meaning and a metaphorical or

metonymic meaning at the same time. In fact, some of the meanings of polysemy found in KBBI come from the process of lexicalization of metaphors.

Prepositions with the meaning of 'person' in KBBI are basically the result of the lexicalization process of metonymy<sup>[5]</sup>. A number of linguists <sup>[7],[8],[9],[10],[4]</sup> have intensively studied these two aspects of meaning in English.

Eynon<sup>[3]</sup> and Croft<sup>[11]</sup> have also studied these two aspects of meaning by including them in cognitive linguistics<sup>[3]</sup>. The vocabulary of a language is always increasing and developing. One of the developments in the meaning of vocabulary is the shift and change of meaning. What factors facilitate shifts and changes in the meaning of vocabulary can be read.

The term metaphor is often associated with Lakoff and other linguists, such as Johnson. This is reasonable to consider that they have done special research on conceptual metaphors<sup>[3]</sup>. They argued metaphorical expressions actually came from conceptual metaphors<sup>[3]</sup>. Creative metaphors are still productive and conventional ones are considered archaic; these two types come from conceptual metaphors according to Johnson who argued conceptual metaphors are also identified with schemes and then complete with the aim of obtaining certain direct effects for listeners or readers<sup>[8]</sup>.

On the basis of Lakoff, metaphor is not at all in language but in mental realm of a person who has been conceptualized beforehand<sup>[7]</sup>. So, a conceptual metaphor is a basic metaphor that is conceptualized in the mental realm of language speakers.

Following the cognitive semantic view, metaphor is seen as an analogical principle and involves the conceptualization of one conceptual structural element through another conceptual structure that occurs between the same conceptual domains, which organizes the everyday conceptual system of language speakers, including the most abstract concepts that lie behind everyday language use.

Metaphors facilitate thought by providing an experiential framework in which newly acquired abstract concepts can be accommodated. The network of metaphors underlying thoughts in this way forms a cognitive map, a network of concepts, which is composed of which concepts then function to seek the basis of abstract concepts in the physical experiences of cognitive actors, a network of abstract concepts in the physical experiences of cognitive actors and in relationships actors with the outside world.

Lakoff proposed the hypothesis that metaphors display a cognitive map from one source domain (i.e., vehicle) to one target domain (tenor), causing the target to become bound in spatial physical experience through the source domain<sup>[5]</sup>. Then, the schemes between the conceptual and sensory levels in the source realm become active, as well as in the target realm. A metaphorical scheme is a mental representation that binds the conceptual (intellectual) structure of one abstract realm into the sensory base (wisdom) of another physical domain<sup>[9],[10]</sup>.

Lakoff and Johnson argued that in using language like the one above, speakers do not add superfluous things to their language<sup>[12]</sup>. So, metaphor refers to conceptual structure found in everyday language.

According to Lakoff, cognition is the result of mental construction, and metaphor is an equation that crosses conceptual domains within a conceptual system that has the nature and structure of metonymy and metaphor<sup>[7]</sup>. Metaphor is not only language behavior but also a matter of thought, because, in principle, abstract reasoning is a special case of image-based reasoning and abstract reasoning is image-based reasoning through metaphorical presentation in the abstract realm.

Metaphors make us understand between one realm and another<sup>[12]</sup>. To know this function, there must be knowledge and concepts that cannot be fully understood through metaphor as a source realm (Metaphor allow us to understand one

domain of experience in terms of another. To serve this function, there must be some grounding, some concepts that are not completely understood via metaphor to serve as source domains).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data were collected from four sources: Amir Syarifuddin, Amir M.S., Upacara tradisional daerah Sumatera Barat, and Kumpulan Makalah (Pertemuan Linguistik Utara 3). A number of Indonesian sentences containing metaphors and metonyms were compiled and the informants were asked to find their initials in the Minangkabau language. Of course, a metaphorical expression in one language may or may not be the same in another. If the equivalent is not found or has not been found in the Minangkabau, then the informant is asked to provide a similar metaphorical expression. For example, in expressions in Minangkabau *banang kusuik* 'tangled thread' which is interpreted as "to justify wrongdoings".

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptual metaphors are also found in Minangkabau in various types as shown in 3 to 13.

3. Kusuik aka nyo  
'His mind is tangled'
4. Inyo Rancak dilabuh sajo  
'She is beautiful on the outside'
5. Rang Sumando lapiak buruak  
'Sumando people are bad mat'
6. Nan kuriak ialah kundi  
'The ewer has scab'
7. Lah putih mata memandang  
'Eyes become white of looking'
8. Masibit-bit langgai  
'To flutter village'
9. Panjang aka nyo  
'His mind is resourceful'
10. Nan merah ialah sago  
'The red one is the saga fruit'
11. Masuak ke kandang ayam, berkokok,  
masuak ke kandang kambing,  
mengambiek

‘Enter the chicken coop, crow; enter the goat pen, bleat’

12. Tiok liku aka menjala

‘Senses walk every time’

13. Pucuk dicinto ulam tibo

‘The shoots are thought, the side dish here comes’

The word *kusuik* ‘tangled’ in (3) is a noun and such sentence means ‘he has unstable thought.’ The words *labuah* ‘outside’, *lapiak buruak* ‘bad mat’, *kuriak* ‘scab’, *putih* ‘white’, *langgai* ‘village’, *aka* ‘thought’, *merah* ‘red’, *tiok liku* ‘every time’, and *ulam* ‘side dish’ in (4)-(13) are also considered nouns. The utterance in (8) means ‘to clean village from all threats and disturbance.’ The analogy of red in (10) refers to saga fruit and the sentential meaning of (11) is associated to a person who has capability to posit him-/her-self. Meanwhile, the sentence in (13) might mean ‘what is hoped appears.’

Conceptual metaphors include orientation, ontological, structural, and inference metaphors. Orientational metaphors are sometimes combined with special eros metaphors, either describing space or distance. In the orientational or special group, metaphors are oriented towards the dichotomy of UP - DOWN, each of which is interpreted as, for instance, the Indonesian words *kemaslahatan* ‘benefit’, *keberuntungan* ‘luck’, and *kebaikan* ‘goodness’ can be called UP or pointing up if they contain good values, and the words *kemudharatan* ‘harm’, *kerugian* ‘loss’, and *keburukan* ‘badness’ can be called DOWN or pointing down if they bring no values. This kind of metaphor is referred to as a depiction of human experience that sees the body can stand upright or lie down which is associated with things, such as a person's state of consciousness, health, fate, or strength<sup>[12]</sup>.

Consider sentences in (14) to (18) containing UP and in (19) to (23) to refer to DOWN.

14. Lah naik daun nyo.

‘He is rich’

15. Jatuh tapai

‘Deserving of pity’

16. Lagi diateh angin nyo.

‘In the upper position’

17. Catuh hati

‘To fall in love’

18. Lah jatuah ta impik tango

‘he was crushed by the stairs after falling’

19. Mengangkek silo

‘Request permission to leave’

20. Lah makan angin nyo.

‘He takes the air’

21. Lah jatuh matahari

‘Old days/retirement’

22. Lah jatuh tempo

‘The time arrives’

23. Panjang kakinya

‘Good habit of walking’

### Ontological metaphor

According to Lakoff and Johnson, ontological metaphors are the ones in which non-physical phenomena in human's experience are described as ‘looking at concrete physical phenomena’. In this connection, containers can be visual objects, activities, and situations<sup>[12]</sup>. Concerning the visual field as a container, examples of ontological metaphors in Minang can be seen in (24) to (28).

24. Palawan di dalam hati

‘Fight inside’

25. Kareh kepala nyo

‘It's hard to organize’

26. Iyokan di urang lalukan di awak

‘Agree with another, forget own intention’

27. Keceknyo susah dipegang

‘It's hard to keep her words’

28. Bahu mamiku tangan manyinjang

‘Bear your responsibility’

### Structural metaphor

Structural metaphor refers the one in which a patterned concept is arranged metaphorically with other concepts. It becomes the largest group of metaphorical utterances and are widely used in language

showing the structure of a concept by comparing it with other structures. In structural metaphor, there is a similarity in structure or system. A combination of analogy between Indonesian and Mandailing metaphors are found in a phrase such as *jolma songon* in which, in this connection, the *jolma* 'human being' is conceptualized as an animal. Animal itself is a hypernym of various names for different animals with their own characteristics. Likewise, in the Minangkabau, the animals such as *pukang* 'lemur' and *baruak* 'ape' are conceptualized as animals.

There are similarities in the nature of animals equated with human character, for example, in Minang, the phrases *pipik andak menjadi elang* 'the sparrow wants to be an eagle' and *gajah dilulue ular lidih* 'elephant is wrapped around by a small snake' refer to a weak against a strong person or can be described as a person who is not aware of his abilities. In short, animal nature is equated with human one. According to our point of view, the characteristics found in sparrows, snakes, eagles, lemurs, and monkey can be related to strong, fierce, weak, lazy, and shy conditions.

### Metaphor and inference

According to Leech, the morphological and syntactic specifications between literal and metaphorical meaningful expressions are not different<sup>[13]</sup>. Inference means conclusion and there are three ways of inferring: deductive, inductive and abstractive. Because metaphor does not use letters, it requires inference. The metaphor of *time* is money which has certain inferences, namely something that should not be wasted but must be utilized.

Inference is sometimes based on physical, ontological, background of knowledge, and psychological contexts. Indonesian metaphor of *di tepi jurang* 'on the brink', for example, can be inferred according to context, either from the previous sentence or the one after it. Such metaphor often appeared during Gus Dur's reign. Metaphor,

according to Siregar, further produces a form of inference which is processed through a process of metaphorical logic.

### CONCLUSION

The utterance in (8) means 'to clean village from all threats and disturbance.' The analogy of red in (10) refers to saga fruit and the sentential meaning of (11) is associated to a person who has capability to posit him-/her-self. Meanwhile, the sentence in (13) might mean 'what is hoped appears.' There are similarities in the nature of animals equated with human character, for example, in Minangkabau, the phrases *pipik andak menjadi elang* 'the sparrow wants to be an eagle' and *gajah dilulue ular lidih* 'elephant is wrapped around by a small snake' refer to a weak against a strong person or can be described as a person who is not aware of his abilities. Minangkabau people consider settlement outside of deliberation to be bad. To avoid disputes, Minangkabau speakers must be good at finding expressions whose meaning is different from the sentences that are said so that the speaker does not immediately feel offended or humiliated.

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