

The Semantics of Body Parts in Acehese: A Comparison to English

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Keywords: Body parts, Acehese language, Universal semantics.

Abstract: This study attempts to compare the meanings of body parts in Acehese and English. This is to support the general principle of body conceptualization as reflected in semantic organizations across languages and to explain that ethnoanatomy can be described and compared through the use of natural semantics. The results of this study show that the meaning of body parts in Acehese is relatively similar to English, despite there are differences in its descriptions. This proves that semantic typology does have slight differences but the specific manifestation of language from the universal category has the same foundation.

1 INTRODUCTION

This research on body parts is based on a number of studies related to universal semantic typology. Van Staden, Gaby, Burenhult (Riemer, 2010) has examined the semantic typology of a number of languages with body part references, such as Tidore (Papua), Thaayoore (Pama-Nyungan, Australia), and Jahai (Mon-Khmer, Malaysia/Southern Thailand). The research that has been done referred to the question of how different languages categorize parts of the body. The body is an integral whole that is indivisible, but is made of perceptually disconnected parts such as torso or trunk, limbs, and head at the top. Each of these sections presents an easily distinguishable part (chest, back, fingers, elbows, mouth, ears). Since the separation of body parts is particularly prominent, the natural hypothesis is that all languages exploit it for the purpose of labeling body parts.

Research related to body parts has also been done by Wierzbicka (2007). The concept of body is considered as an important part of the humankind. In his paper entitled "General principles of human anatomical partonomy and speculations on the growth of partonomic nomenclature", Brown

(Wierzbicka, 2007) labeled the human body on the basis of human anatomy. Andersen (Wierzbicka, 2007) agrees the body is labeled in all parts of the body. It is common sense that the concept of body is very universal, especially when the problem of polysemy and borrowing words are known. The Natural Semantic Metalanguage framework confirms the fundamental role of the 'body part' idea as universal in the organizing principle on all ethnoanatomies.

A number of studies show that some languages do not have a particular word for body, head, hand, eye and mouth. Levinson (2006) argues that in the language spoken by people on Papua (YéliDnye), it does not have the term for the upper and lower legs. Furthermore, it also does not have the term for foot, hand, and face. The domain of the human body is the ideal focus for semantic typology, especially when it is associated with cognitive anthropology because the body is universally conceptual. According to Enfield, et al. (Wierzbicka, 2007) all languages have terms referring to the body and its parts. Each language also has variations in lexical details, including Acehese.

Aceh is one of the provinces in Indonesia which has 13 indigenous ethnic groups. The largest ethnic group is the Acehese, who inhabit coastal

areas, ranging from Langsa on the northeastern coast to Trumon on the southwestern coast. Among the regional languages of Aceh, the Acehnese language is the largest and most widely spoken language of the region, at 70% of the total population (Daud&Durie, 1999). Native speakers of Acehnese are spread across the east coast and the west coast of Aceh.

This study focuses on comparing the meaning of the human body parts in Acehnese and English. English is selected as a comparison because there has already been research in English that examines the body and its parts. The problem in this study is, “How are the parts of the human body interpreted in Acehnese?” Is there a universal uniformity or similarity in the interpretation of body parts in Aceh and English?”

This study refers to the theory and approach of cross-language meaning comparison. The Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) theory framework is highly relevant in this research. The NSM feature is that meaning is represented strictly and constrained, but expressively flexible (Wierzbicka, 2007). Vanhatalo, et al. (2014) describes NSM as a semantic analysis method used for various linguistic studies. An important part of this theory is the minimal lexical unit used to describe words, cultural scripts, and other concepts.

NSM is considered capable of expressing semantic nuance because its meaning expression seems to be easily understood by many, framed in a metalanguage sourced from natural language. Thus, NSM is perfect for practical applications. The NSM theory has four basic principles. First, the definition of a word or an expression is explained by natural language. This feature is embodied in the Natural Language Principle which states that the basic meaning and syntax is essentially a minimal device of natural language (Goddard 1994: 3). Second, human concepts are hierarchical. This means that in addition to complex concepts there are also simple and intuitive concepts that are easy to understand. Third, the original meaning is used as a universal metalanguage. Fourth, the theory of NSM advocates the ‘isomorphic principle’ of the original meaning based on lexicon and syntax. This principle assumes that although there is a difference of ‘resonance’ between two different exponents of the same original meaning of two different languages, these two exponents correspond semantically (Mulyadi, 2010).

Table 1: Semantic Primes – Acehnese Exponents

(Adapted from Goddard 2006:12)

Meaning Tool	English	Acehnese
Substantive	I, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING/ THING, PEOPLE, BODY	LÔN, KAH, SIDROE-DROE UREUNG, SIPEUPEU, UREUNG, TUBÔH
Relational Substantives	KIND, PART	MACAM, BAGIAN
Determiners	THIS, THE SAME, OTHER/ELSE	NYOE, SAMA, LAEN
Quantifiers	ONE, TWO, SAME, ALL, MUCH/MANY	SA, DUA, SAMA, MANDUM, LE
Evaluators	GOOD, BAD	GÔT, BRÔK
Mental predicates	KNOW, THINK, WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR	TEUPEU, PIKÉ, HAWA, RASA, LIHAT, DENGAR
Speech	SAY, WORDS, TRUE	HABA, KATA, BETÔI
Action, events, movement, contact	DO, HAPPEN, MOVE, TOUCH	BUET, TERJADI, GERAK, SENTUH
Location, existence, possession, specification	BE (SOMEWHERE), THERE IS/EXIST, HAVE	NA (TEMPAT), KEUDEH/PATNA, ATA
Life and death	LIVE, DIE	HIDUP, MATI
Time	WHEN/TIME, NOW, BEFORE, AFTER, A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME, MOMENT	SABOH WATÉE/WATÉE, JINO, SEGOHLOM, LHEUHYAN, TRÉP, SINGKAT, SIAT, SAAT
Space	WHERE/PLACE, HERE, ABOVE, BELOW, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE	PAT/TEMPAT, SINO, ATEUH, BARÔH, JIÔH, TÔ, SAMPENG, DALAM
Logical concepts	NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF	KÔN, MUNGKÊN, JEUT, KARENA, MISEU
Intensifier, augmenter	VERY, MORE	PALÉNG, LEBÈH
Similarity	LIKE	GALAK

Based on a number of studies that have been conducted among the framework of NSM, it is agreed that the humankind body is somewhat universal. This agreement is reached after having plenty of semantic tests rigorously. Goddard (2001) and Wierzbicka (2007) note that the initial survey of nomenclature of body parts, it claims that the meaning of body is pronounced universally

The hypothesis in which human body parts are universal is based on many assumptions in among researchers in the linguistics. In the field of NSM, the initial assumption is taken as a hypothesis. Approximately, there are 14 elements of human body parts have been considered as original meaning

(Wierzbicka, 1972). This assumption is then re-affirmed by Mentalist Linguistics a decade later in which there are some further explanations about human body parts (Wierzbicka, 1980).

Research on the universality of the human body is a study closely related to universal semantics. A number of articles that examine the universal semantics include Universals in Semantics (Fintel and Lisa Matthewson: 2008), Semantic Universals and Variations in second language Article Choice (Ko, et al.: 2008), Semantic Fieldwork and Lexical Universals (Goddard and Anna Wierzbicka: 2014), Universal Semantic Parsing (Reddy, et al.: 2017), On the Universal Structure of Human Lexical Semantics (Youn, et al.:2015), and Towards Universal Semantic Tagging (Abzianidze, et al.:2017).

2 METHOD

This study used descriptive qualitative method in which it is characterized by its purpose, relating to the understanding of social life and its method generally described in the forms of words, not numbers (Patton, 2007: 2).

The data in this study is the interpretation of body parts in Acehnese which is compared with the interpretation of body part in English. Data on the interpretation of body parts in Acehnese is obtained from native speakers of Acehnese, while the data on the interpretation of body parts in English is obtained from the research of Wierzbicka (2007).

The data is then analyzed qualitatively by undertaking some steps as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1992) those are reducing the data and focusing on the related data, then presenting date through the form of table and drawing conclusion from the resource data.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The names of the body parts in Acehnese analyzed in this study are tailored to the needs of the study. The semantics of the body part lexicon in Acehnese is compared with the semantics of the body part lexicon in English from Wierzbicka (2007). The researchers divide the body in three parts, namely upper, middle, and lower parts. Three body part lexemes were taken from each part.

3.1 Upper Body Parts (Head, Neck, Face)

3.1.1 Head

Table 2: Interpretation of Head in English and Acehnese

No	English (head)	No	Acehnese (ulèe)
a.	one part of someone's body	a.	one part of a human's body
b.	it is above all the other parts of the body	b.	it is the upper part of the human body structure
c.	it is round	c.	The shape is round
d.	when someone thinks about something, something happens in this part of this someone's body	d.	the place where the hair grows
		e.	the place where the thinking center (brain) is located
		f.	a very sacred body part

The table above shows there are similarities and differences in the interpretation of 'head' in Acehnese compared with English. In the context of location and form, English and Acehnese interpret it in the same way as in point (b) it is located at the upper parts of the human body (c) it is round. In addition to the same interpretation, there are different ones, namely 'head' in Acehnese is also interpreted as the place where the hair grows (point d) and the place where the thinking center (brain) is located (point e). In English, the head is interpreted as the place of thought process. In Acehnese, the 'head' is the most honored and respected part of the body so it is strictly prohibited to touch someone else's head, as in the saying, "*urueng Acèh bèk sagai neumat bak ulèe*", meaning "the Acehnese should never be touched on their head". In contrast, in British culture touching the head is a sign of friendship, as we often see in football matches. The head of the player who makes a goal is usually rubbed by his entire team.

3.1.2 Neck

Table 3: Interpretation of Neck in English and Acehnese

No	English (neck)	No	Acehnese (takue)
a.	one part of someone's body	a.	It is one of parts of a human's body
b.	it is near the head	b.	it is located in between the head

			and the torso
c.	it is below the head	c.	it connects head with all parts of body
d.	all the other parts of the body are below this part	d.	the side on the back is called <i>kudök</i>
e.	when this part of someone's body moves, this someone's head[M] moves at the same time		

In English, the points (b) and (c) 'neck' is interpreted as near the head and below the head. These two things are interpreted in Acehnese as the body part between the head and the torso (point b). In this context, the two languages are referring to the location where the neck is located, but with different interpretations. In point (d), the interpretation of 'neck' in English is also still related to the location, that is all the other parts of the body are below this part. Meanwhile in Acehnese, point (c) interprets 'neck' in the context of its function, that is connecting the head with the rest of the body. In point (e), English interprets 'neck' in the context of motion, that is, when this part of the body moves, the head also moves simultaneously, while in Acehnese there is no such interpretation. Both English and Acehnese involve other body parts in the interpretation of 'neck'. The difference is that in English it only involves the head while in Acehnese it involves both the head and the *kudök*, as it is in point (d), the side on the back is called *kudök*.

3.1.3 Face

Table 4: Interpretation of Face in English and Acehnese

No	English (face)	No	Acehnese (muka)
a.	one part of someone's body	a.	It is one of parts of a human's body
b.	it is a place on one side of the head	b.	it is located on the front side of a human's head
c.	the eyes are on this side	c.	it stretches from the forehead to the chin
d.	when other people see this part of someone's body, they can know who this someone is	d.	it is the main identification to distinguish one people from other people
e.	if other people see this part of someone's body when this someone feels something, they can know how this someone feels		

In interpreting 'face', English and Acehnese in (b) and (c) both refer to the location of this body part, that is in English it is said to be on one side of the head and the eyes are on this side, while in Acehnese it is stated to be on the front side of the head and stretches from the forehead to the chin. The interpretation in point (d), both English and Acehnese substantially state the same thing, that is this part is the identification of a person, only worded differently. English interpret the 'face' by stating that it is easier for people to recognize a particular person by looking at this parts of the body, while Acehnese states it as it is the main identification to distinguish someone from other people. The interpretation of 'face' in English is more detailed because it incorporates an element of feeling by stating that people would be easier to see the feeling of someone when looking at this part of body, while this interpretation is not employed in Acehnese.

3.2 Middle Body Parts (Chest, Hands, Back)

3.2.1 Chest

Table 5 Interpretation of Chest in English and Acehnese

No	English (chest)	No	Acehnese (dada)
a.	one part of someone's body	a.	one part of a human's body
b.	it is a place on one side of the body	b.	it is the part on the front between the abdomen and the neck
c.	the face is on this side	c.	it is the body cavity where the heart and lungs are located
d.	it is one of two big places on this side of the body	d.	the breasts are on this part
e.	if someone is a man this place is flat		

In English, 'chest' is interpreted in a perspective that refers to the side. It is located on the front part of the body. (b) and the face is located on the same side (c). That is, the chest and the face are on the same side. In Acehnese, the side of the chest is described as the part on the front between the abdomen and the neck (point b). In English, the interpretation of 'chest' is also expressed as a large place comparable

to the abdomen. It is commonly known as two big body. In Acehnese, the interpretation of ‘chest’ is associated with the internal organs that reside in it, namely the heart and lungs as stated in point (c), the body cavity where the heart and lungs are located. In the context of what lies on the chest, Acehnese more explicitly declare it by mentioning that the breasts are on this part (point d), while English states implicitly by saying that if someone is a man this place is flat (point e). The interpretation of ‘chest’, both English and Acehnese all refer to the location, shape, and what lies on the chest.

3.2.2 Hands

Table 6: Interpretation of Hands in English and Acehnese

No	English (hands)	No	Acehnese (jaroe)
a.	two parts of someone’s body	a.	two parts of someone’s body
b.	they are on two sides of the body	b.	the body parts that stretch from the elbow to the fingertips
c.	these two parts of someone’s body can move as this someone wants	c.	these two parts have an identical or similar shape
d.	these two parts of someone’s body have many parts	d.	the body parts that are usually used for giving and receiving
e.	if this someone wants it, all the parts on one side of one of these two parts can touch all the parts on one side of the other at the same time	e.	the body parts that are usually used for shaking hands
f.	because people’s bodies have these two parts, people can do many things with many things as they want		
g.	because people’s bodies have these two parts, people can touch many things as they want		

The hands are considered as important parts of human body. In point (a), English interprets ‘hands’ by describing the place where the hands are located on two sides of the body. In point (b), Acehnese defines ‘hands’ by limiting its area, that is from the elbow to the fingertips. In point (c) in English, ‘hands’ are interpreted in terms of their function, which has two parts, left and right. Those parts could be moved as people like. In Acehnese in point (c)

parts of the body which are big placed in a human’s interprets ‘hand’ by mentioning these two parts have an identical or similar shape. In point (d) English interprets ‘hand’ by mentioning that these have many parts for example fingers, elbows, nails, and arms. In Acehnese, in the points (d) and (e), ‘hands’ are interpreted in terms of their function, that is the body parts that are usually used for giving and receiving and the body parts that are usually used for shaking hands. The mentioning of ‘shaking hands’ in Acehnese to interpret ‘hands’ is in line with the culture of the Acehnese people who commonly shake hands when meeting their friends or relatives as a form of hospitality. In points (e), (f), and (g), English interprets ‘hands’ in terms of their function, that is, these parts can touch and do many things one wants.

3.2.3 Back

Table 7: Interpretation of Back in English and Acehnese

No	English (back)	No	Acehnese (rueng)
a.	one part of someone’s body	a.	one part of a human’s body
b.	it is a place on one side of the body	b.	it is aligned with the buttocks
c.	the face is not on this side	c.	it stretches from over the buttocks right up to the neck
d.	it is one of two big places on this side of the body	d.	the widest part of a person’s part of body
e.	it is above the other big place	e.	The back part is flat
f.	this place is flat	f.	the hands are hard to reach this partentirely

The number of components to interpret the word ‘back’ is the same between English and Acehnese, that is six components. The interpretation of ‘back’ in English is emphasized on the location, position, and shape. In Acehnese, in addition to the interpretations in terms of location, position, and shape, there is also one component that interprets it in terms of function. The nuance of the difference in interpretation of ‘back’ is clearly visible between English and Acehnese. In English, in point (b) the ‘back’ is a place on one side of the body. From point (b) it is not yet clear which side it refers to. The point (b) is only clear when supported by interpretation in the point (c), the face part of body is not on the back side, therefore, it is clear that the position of the ‘back’ is. In Acehnese, point (b)

explains the position of ‘back’ sufficiently by mentioning that it is aligned with the buttocks. Point (b) is then supported again with the interpretation n point (c), it stretches from over the buttocks right up to the neck. The interpretations of the shape in English are illustrated in points (d), (e), and (f) which mention that back part is the biggest parts of the human body. This flat shape parts of the body is above other big parts of the body. The same is in the case of Acehnese in points (d) and (e) that mention that it is the widest part of a person's body and this part is flat. The contrasting interpretation in Acehnese is seen in point (f) which defines ‘back’ functionally by saying that the hands are hard to reach this part entirely.

3.3 Lower Body Parts (Legs, Knee, Toes)

3.3.1 Legs

No	English (legs)	No	Acehnese (aki)
a.	two parts of someone’s body	a.	two parts of a human’s body
b.	they are below all the other parts of the body	b.	the body parts that support the body
c.	they are long	c.	they stretch down from the groin
d.	these two parts of someone’s body can move as this someone wants	d.	they are long
e.	because people’s bodies have these two parts, people can move in many places as they want	e.	they are used for walking

In terms of location where ‘legs’ are, there is a difference of interpretation between English and Acehnese. In English, the location of ‘legs’, as mentioned in point (b), is below all the other parts of the body, while point (b) in Acehnese mentions that they are the body parts that support the body. In Acehnese, it is then clarified in point (c) that they stretch down from the groin. In terms of shape, both English and Acehnese express that they are long. In terms of function, in English the interpretation of ‘legs’ is found in points (d) and (e), in which these parts of the body can be moved as people like. They are used to walk to particular places. Meanwhile in Acehnese there is only one functional interpretation, which is they are used for walking, as mentioned in point (d).

3.3.2 Knee

Table 9: Interpretation of Knee in English and Acehnese

No	English (knee)	No	Acehnese (teuôt)
a.	one part of someone’s leg	a.	one part of a human’s leg
b.	it is a round place on one side of the leg	b.	it is located where the thigh and the calf meet
c.	it is hard	c.	it is the place of the joint where the leg can be bent
d.	the leg has two long parts	d.	it is round
e.	one of these two long parts is on one side of this place	e.	it is hard
f.	the other of these two long parts is on the other side of this place		
g.	because people’s legs have this hard part, one of these two longparts can move when the other long part is notmoving		

The interpretation of the ‘knee’ in English refers to its location, shape, density, and function. The interpretation of ‘knee’ in Acehnese refers to its location, shape, and density, while the function is not mentioned. English describes the location of the ‘knee’ in four points, that is in point (b), the shape is round and is located on the bottom part of the human body, (d) the leg also consists of two parts, the point (e) one of them is on the right parts, and the point (f) the other one is on the left side. In Acehnese, the interpretation of ‘knee’ in terms of location are only mentioned twice, in point (b) it is located where the thigh and the calf meet and point (c) it is the place of the joint where the leg can be bent. In terms of shape, both English and Acehnese mention that it is round shaped, but English is more specific by mentioning that it has round shaped and it is placed on both sides of the leg, right and left (point b), while Acehnese only mentions it has a round shape (d). In terms of its density, both English and Acehnese describe ‘knee’ as hard.

3.3.3 Toes

Table 10: Interpretation of Toes in English and Acehnese

No	English (toes)	No	Acehnese (jari aki)
a.	many parts of someone’s feet	a.	several parts of a human’s feet

b.	they are small	b.	the segmented tips of the feet
c.	they are like fingers	c.	they are shorter than fingers
d.	these parts of someone's feet can move if this someone wants	d.	there are five of them on each foot

The interpretation of 'toes' in English refers to the shape and the movement, whereas in Acehnese it refers to the shape and the quantity. In terms of shape, 'toes' in English are interpreted by expressing that they are small (point b) and has a finger like shape (point c). In Acehnese, the interpretation of 'toes' is found in points (b) and (c), that is, the toes are the segmented tips of the feet and they are shorter than fingers. In English, the interpretation of 'toes' is made clear by declaring that people can move this part of the body as the wish (point d), while Acehnese clarifies it by referring to the quantity, that there are five of them on each foot(d).

4 CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study indicate that the reference of the body parts in Acehnese is relatively the same as English, which refers to (1) the location or position where the body parts are located, (2) the shape of the body parts, (3) the density of the body parts, (4) motion of body parts, and (5) the function of the body parts. The different interpretations of the body parts between Acehnese and English are found only in the description of the interpretation of the limbs. This proves that universal semantics apply to Acehnese. The semantic basis in typology does have subtle differences but the specific manifestations of language from the universal category share the same core. The concept of human body is closely related to the semantic organization of human body parts. In addition, it is evidence that the name of the body parts in many languages are similar in semantics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank semantic experts at the Indonesian Education Department of Syiah Kuala University and the Linguistics Department of University of Sumatera Utara who have supported us to complete this article.

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