

# The Features of Human Metaphors in Sabunese Language as The Reflection of Sabunese Culture

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study explores the features of human metaphors in Sabunese language, local language used by Sabunese people living in the island of Sabu as one of the islands in the province of East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. along with its function as the reflection of Sabunese culture. The study is viewed from the perspective of cultural linguistics with special reference to nominal human metaphors. The study focuses on the forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena used in human metaphors in Sabunese language. The results of study show that the meanings stored in the forms of linguistic phenomena used in human metaphors in Sabunese language designate the cultural knowledge of Sabunese people in viewing and making sense of their world reflected by the use of the organ of human body attached to the nonhuman entity or object. The attachment causes the extension of meaning from denotative to connotative revealing the way Sabunese people as the native speakers of Sabunese language think about the world surrounding them.*

**Keywords:** feature, human metaphor, Sabunese language, Sabunese culture

## I. INTRODUCTION

Culture is one of the prominent features which not only identifies a society as members of an ethnic group, but also differentiating them from those of other ethnic groups. The function of culture as a sense of identity as well as a symbol of identity or distinctive feature a society as members of an ethnic group is reflected in language they employ. This is because both language and culture belonging to a people or society as members of an ethnic group are closely related and the relationship is manifested in conceptualization ascribed in their cognitive map that functions as the frame of reference for them in viewing and making sense of the world. The conceptualization is reflected in such cognitive processes as metaphor, including human metaphor as a subdivision of nominal metaphor (Wahab, 1990). Bearing the matters stated above in minds, this study explores the features of human metaphor in Sabunese language as reflection of Sabunese culture as the identity marker of Sabunese people as members of Sabunese ethnic group residing in the island of Sabu, one of the islands in the Province of East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. As the relationship is pervasive that the study focuses on the two poles of linguistic signs, including forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena in human metaphors in Sabunese language. The study is conducted for the basic reason that the forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena used in the human metaphors in Sabunese language are unique and specific in some respect to Sabunese culture as the parent culture in which Sabunese language is embedded or hosted. The meanings stored in the forms of linguistic phenomena used in the human metaphors in Sabunese language designate the cultural knowledge of Sabunese people regarding the ways they view and make sense of the world by using the organs of human body which are attached to non-human entities. The attachment causes the extensions of meaning from denotative or textual meaning to conotative or contextual meaning.

## II. FRAMEWORK

This study is viewed from the perspective of cultural linguistics as an emerging paradigm in cognitive linguistics which explores the relationship of language, culture, and conceptualization belonging to a society as members of a social group. Cultural linguistics is identified as an emerging paradigm or model of cognitive linguistics as it draws on the combined resource of anthropological linguistics and cognitive linguistics in providing an account of the communicative behavior of a society as members of a social group (Palmer, 1996; Palmer and Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2011; Malcolm, 2007). In the perspective of cultural linguistics, language used by a society is explored through the lens of culture they share aimed at uncovering the conceptualization ascribed in their cognitive map in viewing their world (Palmer, 1996; Palmer and Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2011; Goodenough, 1964) because language they employ is the window into their cognitions (Yu, 2007; Casson, 1981; Stross, 1981; Whorf, 2001). As it puts emphasis on the cultural elements of mind or cognition the main concern or interest of its study (Casson, 1981; Wallace, 1981; Keesing, 1981; Stross, 1981), cultural linguistics is also aimed at identifying the differences between languages due to cultural differences (Palmer, 1996; Palmer and Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2011; Occhi, 2007; Cassirer, 1987). This view is in line with the conception of Humboldt that the diversity of languages is not the diversity of signs and sounds, but the diversity of cultures (Miller, 1968; Cassirer, 1987; Foley, 1997). The conception comes closest to the theory of linguistic relativity proposed by Sapir and Whorf that the varying cultural concepts and categories inherent in different languages affect the cognitive classification of the experienced world in such a way that the speakers of different languages think and behave differently. Therefore, the basic principles that should be taken into account when we study the differences between languages are as follows: (a) we perceive the world in terms of categories and distinctions found in our native language and (b) what is found in one language may not be found in another language due to cultural differences (Sapir, 1949; Miller, 1968; Richards, et al, 1992; Bilal and Erdogan, 2005; Cakir, 2006).

As its definition implies, the basic concepts that should be taken into account in the study of cultural linguistics are language, culture, and conceptualization. As the term 'language' can be defined differently, in the perspective cultural linguistics, language is defined as a cultural activity and, at the same time, as an instrument for organizing other cultural domains (Palmer, 1996; Palmer and Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2011). Similar to language, as culture may mean different things for different people (Kaplan and Manners, 1999), in the perspective of cultural linguistics, culture is defined as the source of conceptualization of experiences faced by a society in their contexts of living together (Palmer and Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2011; Palmer, 1996; Wallace, 1981). Culture in this light can also be defined as a cognitive map shared together by a society as members of a social group (Foley, 1997; Goodenough, 1964). This is because it functions as a display illustrating how they organize their ways of thinking about items, behaviors, and beliefs in cultural domains (Palmer and Sharifian, 2007; Sharifian, 2011).

As cultural concepts are embedded in language, the relationship of both language and culture belonging to a society as members of a social group is reflected in their conceptualization as fundamental cognitive processes which naturally lead to the development of schemas, categories, metaphors, and scripts. Apart from the others, metaphor is not seen as a kind of figurative language, but a conception of thinking because the conception of thinking for human beings are reflected in the use of metaphors. In terms of the class of word that functions as its core word, one of the kinds of metaphor is nominal metaphor which can be divided then into several types. One of those nominal metaphors is human metaphor indicated by the use of human body or its organs attached to nonhuman nonhuman entities or objects. The attachment causes the extension of meaning from denotative to connotative meaning considered along with similarities in qualities on the basis of cultural conceptualization of ascribed in the cognitive map of the native speakers of that language. The forms and meanings of linguistic phenomena used in human metaphors, as in other types of nominal metaphors, are unique and specific in some respect to culture as the parent culture in which that language is embedded (Bustan and Kabelen, 2023).

### III. METHOD

The method of study was descriptive-qualitative its main aim is to describe the features (forms and meanings) of human metaphors in Sabunese language as the reflection of Sabunese culture with special reference to conceptualization ascribed in the cognitive map of Sabunese people as the native speakers of Sabunese language as the frame of reference. The approach used was dialogic ethnography elaborated through interview as the main method of data collection. The interview was conducted with Sabunese people as the native speakers of Sabunese language especially those living in Seba as the main location of the field research as the sources of data. For the purpose of this study, however, they were represented by 3 (three) persons (men) as the key informants selected on the basis of the ideal criteria proposed by Spradley (1987). The collected data were then analyzed by using inductive method as the process of analysis was started from the data to the concept appearing in the form of local-ideographic theory which is concerned with the forms and meanings of human metaphors in Sabunese language in view of cultural linguistic perspective.

### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

The result of study shows that the features of linguistic phenomena used by Sabunese people in human metaphors are unique and specific in some respect to Sabunese culture as the parent culture in which Sabunese language is embedded. The unique and specific features of linguistic phenomena used by Sabunese people in human metaphors can be seen in their forms and meanings. The meanings stored in the forms of linguistic phenomena used in the human metaphors of Sabunese language uncover the conceptualization of Sabunese people regarding their ways of thinking about the world indicated by the use of the organs of human body attached to the nonhuman entities or objects that causes the extension of meanings from denotative to connotative meanings considered along with similarities in qualities on the basis of cultural conceptualization of Sabunese people as the native speakers of Sabunese language. Based on the result of data selection, the corpus of data regarding the human metaphors in Sabunese language are as follows: (01) *kattu rai*, (02) *kattu 'dara ammu*, (03) *u'ba boto*, (04) *lakoko boto*, (05) *dallu rai*, and (06) *kae kedera*. The forms and meanings of these human metaphors designate a set of conceptualization ascribed in the cognitive map of Sabunese people regarding the ways of thinking about the world (Lakoff, 1980).

#### Discussion

The following discusses in more depth the forms and meanings of human metaphor in Sabunese language as reflection of Sabunese culture in view of cultural linguistics along with conceptualization ascribed in the cognitive map of Sabunese people as the frame of reference.

#### Data (01): *kattu rai*

The term *kattu rai* is a nominal phrase in Sabunese language which appears in a form of human metaphor made up of two words serving as its component parts or immediate constituents. The two words serving as its component parts or immediate constituents are the word (noun) *kattu* 'head' which refers to the organ of human body as the core word that functions as Head (H) and the word (noun) *rai* 'village' or 'land' as nonhuman entity that functions as its Modifier (M) or Attribute (A) as it modifies the word (noun) *rai* 'village'. It is worth noting that, in terms of its structure, the core word that functions as Head (H) distributes preceding the word that function as Modifier (M) or Attribute (A). The attachment of the word (noun) *kattu* as the Head (H) with the word (noun) *rai* that functions as its Modifier (M) causes the extension of meaning from denotative or textual meaning to connotative or contextual meaning. As human metaphor, the term *kattu rai* in Sabunese language refers to a village leader or land leader. As it is conceptualized in the cognitive map of Sabunese people as the native speakers of Sabunese language, the human metaphor of *kattu rai* is a specific term in Sabunese language that symbolizes the highest

position in the social structure of a clan residing in a village, as the head is in the highest position and functions as the controller of the body, who is charge of controlling the members of clan living in a village as a whole.

**Data (02): *kattu 'dara ammu***

The term *kattu 'dara ammu* is a form of human metaphor in Sabunese language consisting of two words serving as its component parts or immediate constituents. The two words serving as its component parts or immediate constituents are the word (noun) *kattu* 'head' as the core word that functions as Head (H) and the word (prepositional phrase) '*dara ammu* 'in the house' as its Modifier (M) or Attribute (A) or Attribute (A). It is worth noting that, in terms of its structure, the core word that functions as Head (H) distributes preceding the word that function as Modifier (M) or Attribute (A). The attachment of the word (noun) *kattu* as the Head (H) with the word (noun) '*dara ammu* that functions as its Modifier (M) or Attribute (A) causes the extension of meaning from denotative or textual meaning to connotative or contextual meaning. As human metaphor, the term *kattu rai* in Sabunese language refers to a village leader or land leader. As it is conceptualized in the cognitive map of Sabunese people as the native speakers of Sabunese language, the human metaphor of *kattu 'dara ammu* signifies the person who holds the highest position in the family. The Sabunese people view this as an expression of respect for the leader of the household. Just as the head is the highest body part and functions to control the body, the Sabunese people view the *kattu*, or head, as the highest and most controlling. Meanwhile, the phrase '*dara ammu* "in the house" describes a family, so the human metaphor *kattu 'dara ammu* refers to the person who holds the highest position in the a family. The Sabunese people view the human metaphor as an expression of respect for the leader of the household.

**Data (03): *u'ba boto***

The term *u'ba boto* is a nominal phrase in Sabunese language which appears in a form of human metaphor made up of two words serving as its component parts or immediate constituents. The two words serving as its component parts or immediate constituents are the word (noun) *u'ba* 'mouth' which refers to the organ of human body as the core word that functions as the Head (H) and the word (noun) *boto* 'bottle' as nonhuman entity that functions as its Modifier (M) or Attribute (A) as it modifies the word (noun) *u'ba* 'mouth'. It is worth noting that, in terms of its structure, the core word that functions as the Head (H) distributes preceding the word that function as its Modifier (M) or Attribute (A). The attachment of the word (noun) *boto* 'bottle' as nonhuman entity or object as the Modifier (M) or the Attribute (A) to the word (noun) *u'ba* 'mouth' which refers to the organ of human body as the core word that functions as the Head (H) causes the extension of meaning from denotative, canonic, or textual meaning to connotative, noncanonic, or contextual meaning. As a human metaphor, the term *u'ba boto* in Sabunese language refers to the upper part of a bottle that functions similar to the mouth of a human being in which water is in or out when it is filled.

**Data (04): *lakoko boto***

The term *lakoko boto* is a nominal phrase in Sabunese language which appears in a form of human metaphor made up of two words serving as its component parts or immediate constituents. The two words serving as its component parts or immediate constituents are the word (noun) *lakoko* 'neck' which refers to the organ of human body as the core word that functions as the Head (H) and the word (noun) *boto* 'bottle' as nonhuman entity or object that functions as its Modifier (M) or Attribute (A). It is worth noting that, in terms of its structure, the core word that functions as the Head (H) distributes preceding the word that function as its Modifier (M) or Attribute (A). The attachment of the word (noun) *boto* 'bottle' as nonhuman entity or object as the Modifier (M) or the Attribute (A) of the word (noun) *lakobo* 'neck' which refers to the organ of human body as the core word that functions as the Head (H) causes the extension of meaning from denotative, canonic, or textual meaning to connotative, noncanonic, or contextual meaning. As a human metaphor, the term *lakoko boto* in Sabunese language refers to the part of a bottle that functions to connect the head and body.

**Data (05): *dallu rai***

The term *dallu rai* is a nominal phrase in Sabunese language which appears in a form of human metaphor made up of two words serving as its component parts or immediate constituents. The two words serving as its component parts or immediate constituents are the word (noun) *dallu* ‘stomach’ which refers to the organ of human body as the core word that functions as the Head (H) and the word (noun) *rai* ‘earth’ as nonhuman entity or object that functions as its Modifier (M) or Attribute (A). It is worth noting that, in terms of its structure, the core word that functions as the Head (H) distributes preceding the word that function as its Modifier (M) or Attribute (A). The attachment of the word (noun) *rai* ‘earth’ as nonhuman entity or object as the Modifier (M) or the Attribute (A) of the word (noun) *dallu* ‘stomach’ which refers to the organ of human body as the core word that functions as the Head (H) causes the extension of meaning from denotative, canonic, or textual meaning to connotative, noncanonic, or contextual meaning. As a human metaphor, the term *dallu rai* in Sabunese language refers to the part of earth that lies in the center.

**Data (06): *kae kedera***

The term *kae kedera* is a nominal phrase in Sabunese language which appears in a form of human metaphor made up of two words serving as its component parts or immediate constituents. The two words serving as its component parts or immediate constituents are the word (noun) *kae* ‘leg’ which refers to the organ of human body as the core word that functions as the Head (H) and the word (noun) *kedera* ‘chair’ as nonhuman entity that functions as its Modifier (M) or Attribute (A) as it modifies the word (noun) *kae* ‘foot/feet’. It is worth noting that, in terms of its structure, the core word that functions as the Head (H) distributes preceding the word that function as the Modifier (M) or the Attribute (A). The attachment of the word (noun) *kedera* as a nonhuman entity or object that functions as the Modifier (M) or Attribute to the word (noun) *kae* ‘leg’ which refers to the organ of human body as the core word that functions as the Head (H) causes the extension of meaning from denotative, canonic, or textual meaning to connotative, noncanonic, or contextual meaning. As a human metaphor, the term *kae kedera* in Sabunese language refers to the lower parts of a chair that function like the legs that enable a human being stand up in balance. As conceptualized in the cognitive map of Sabunese people as the native speakers of Sabunese language, the human metaphor of *kae kedera* is a specific term in Sabunese language that refers to the lower part of the chair that maintains its stability or balance. The chair leg is supposed to support and maintain the balance of the chair as the position of the chair and the leg are side by side.

## V. CONCLUSION

The relationship between Sabunese language, Sabunese culture, and conceptualization of Sabunese people in viewing and making sense of the world is reflected in the features of linguistic phenomena that Sabunese people employ in human metaphors. The features of linguistic phenomena used by Sabunese people in human metaphors are unique and specific in some respect to Sabunese culture as the parent culture in which Sabunese language is embedded. The unique and specific features of the linguistic phenomena can be seen in their forms and meanings in which the meanings stored in the forms of linguistic phenomena used in the human metaphors of Sabunese language uncover the conceptualization ascribed in the cognitive map of Sabunese people regarding their ways of thinking about the world indicated by the use of the organs of human body attached to the nonhuman entities or objects. The attachment causes the extension of meaning from denotative or textual meaning to connotative or contextual meaning.

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