

Research Article

Exploring the Socio-Cultural Functions of Metaphors of Ethnic Karo, Indonesia

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**ABSTRACT:** Ethnic metaphors play an important role in the social interaction and national character building of the developing nation, such Indonesia. This research paper upholds the Karo metaphors of Karo ethnic of North Sumatra Province in finding the socio-cultural functions. It should be noted that the theory of metaphor of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) is based on the Anglo-American speakers, so Indonesia needs the theory based on the natives or ethnic languages. A fieldwork study was conducted in Tanah Karo Regency of North Sumatra to observe the use of metaphors in various social interactions in by the end of 2014. A number of informants were observed and interviewed to get the primary data in the community. This research made use of a mapping model from the construction of some of Karo ethnic metaphors that contribute to human relation sustainability and solidarity at various levels. The data show that the mode of expressions in ethnic Karo metaphors has a rich potential of images of nature and animal in mountain area. This model is helpful for the utterances education in the provincial and national levels.

**KEY WORDS :** Metaphors, Karo ethnic, nature & animal images, socio-cultural, orientation

1. Introduction

A gap between the theory of metaphor and practice that have been used in Indonesia for many years make the analysis of local language metaphors is so crucial. The practice in social interactions makes this research article tries to find the social functions of metaphors of ethnic Karo of North Sumatra, Indonesia. The metaphors in a general theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) lead to a problem in Indonesia. Lakoff and Johnson focus on English and cognitive scholars. Using theory of Lakoff and Johnson in English metaphors have tended to the misleading of language use and the understanding in the investigation of the expressions in local languages of Indonesia. Lakoff and Johnson’s theory of metaphors this way, in any great detail, is to make a side the local cultures.

Map of Field Research Location



If the theory of Lakoff and Johnson in English metaphors determines the creative ways in which individuals negotiate, resist, and consolidate conceptual metaphors in English then, Indonesians will need a new theory for educational and national purposes. Their theory is not a very universal though, and so it has a big problem when applied to all languages. The scientific method in a finely developed reasoning system needs to use to discover phenomena of local languages. For instance, the new grounded theory of conceptual metaphors of ethnic Karo who has living in the plateau of Tanah Karo should be sought from fieldwork. It is noted in Linguistics that the conceptual metaphor typically tends to employ a more abstract concept, so the local culture particularly plays important role in understanding metaphors. Differences of conceptual metaphors tend to be invoked when the speaker is trying to make a case for a certain point of view. An Indonesian might find it difficult to perceive of an English metaphor “Go ahead” because in Indonesia people say: “*Silakan duluan*” (please go first); it associates with readiness to give a way to a friend. Elicited metaphors tend to be directed by a subconscious or implicit habit in the mind of the speaker or person who is employing various kinds of metaphors.

Metaphors are living naturally with community in the all transactional interactions and dialogues. Siregar (2005:24) makes a category of metaphors, such as the ontological form in a political metaphor; it maps out scenarios where the choices related the visible meanings. Thus, Siregar (2005:7) shows an ontological relationship between metaphor and metaphor of power. Through the power observed and metaphors usage, the classification system metaphor the societal changes and conceptualization, rationalization, and the perception of the changes should analyzed properly.

Referring to the particularity of metaphors in community, this research article explores the social functions of metaphors in ethnic Karo conversations and dialogues which might be used a new model of understanding metaphors. Ethnic Karo metaphors would be used as potential linguistic data to enrich the theory of metaphors in Indonesia.

## 2. Theory of Metaphors

Theory of metaphor explains the usage of metaphors in communication is very high, but not all the speakers realize that they often metaphors. Principally, metaphors are based on cultural agreement in the understanding of expressions. Very often cultural factors play central role in metaphors not linguistic structure. Metaphor is an analogy or relation of similarity across different levels of signs. Modern people in urban areas know that sign of red traffic light means stop driving. The second is metonymy; a relation between objects in the same level of signals, for instance, a sedan implies a rich person.

In study metaphors, there is a conceptual metaphor that relating to a language in our everyday lives. Conceptual metaphors shape not just our communication, but also shape the way speakers think and act. In George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's work, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), reveals how everyday language is filled with metaphors. Speakers may not notice. An example of one of the commonly used conceptual metaphors is "argument is war". George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argued that people map the unfamiliar onto the familiar to create new understanding. It shows that metaphor shapes English language in the way speakers view argument as war or as a battle to be won. In English, it is often expressed: "He won that argument" or "I attacked every weak point in his argument". The very way argument is thought of is shaped by this metaphor of arguments being war and battles that must be won. Argument can be seen in other ways than a battle, but speakers in English use this concept to shape the way they think of argument and the way they go about arguing.

Metaphors imply Semantic aspects in constructing the meanings. Saeed (2000) elaborates that the semantic meaning of the text can be divided into two categories, namely the literal sense and non-literal meanings. What is meant by literal sense is the meaning given by the language in the way that the original or neutral or virtually do not receive added significance or meaning beyond. In accordance with the recent semantic development, linguists or someone have a way to interpret some language elements with a different view. They go towards the elements of that language indifferent. Moreover, Lyons (1985) contents that the semantic analysis can be done with the used of conceptual theory. Allan (2001) argues that Semantic helps the analysis of meanings. It examines the conceptual metaphor of an object which can only be described by what is seen by users of the language in this universe, and also based on what is seen and experienced by users of the language. Looking carefully on the usage of

metaphors, it can be seen that the classical view of literal semantic, on the cognitive semantic approach, the metaphor is not understood as a means of conceptualizing domains experience. It is not felt in the realm of the concrete and familiar. Barcelona (2000) in Siregar (2005:164) argues that the metaphor is a cognitive mechanism where one realm of experience (source) partially mapped, which is displayed to the realm of experience of the other (target) so that the domain of the latter is mainly understood in terms of the realm of the first.

Conceptual metaphor can be characterized as follows:

- a) There is a concept of 'goal' AB needs to be understood for the specific purpose in a particular context;
- b) There is a conceptual structure that contains other concepts AB and BC;
- c) BC associated with AC or different with AB in the conceptual structure;
- d) Compared with AB, BC can be easier to understand, easier to remember, easier to recognize, or more directly beneficial for certain purposes in certain contexts.

Metaphor is a model of how BC is mapped to AB in the conceptual structure; this relationship is confirmed by the function of BC as AB. Lakoff (1989) provides construction and also introduced the theory of conceptual metaphor, which holds that cognition is the result of a mental construction, and the metaphor is the equalization of cross conceptual realm within the conceptual system that has the nature and structure of metonymy and metaphor.

Both metonymy and metaphor are not the behavior of the language, but the issue of the mind, because, in principle, abstract reasoning is a special case of reasoning based on the image that is both human and abstract reasoning; the reasoning is based on the image through the metaphoric views in the realm of the abstract.

To follow the views of semantic cognition, metaphorical process can be seen as a principle of analog. It involves conceptualization of the elements of conceptual structures through conceptual structures happened between the realm of conceptually the same, which can set the system conceptual everyday language speakers, including the concept of the most abstract lies behind the use of everyday language.

Furthermore, Kridalaksana (1982:106) inserts that metaphor is the use of another word or phrase to an object or another concept based on figurative or equation. Metaphor inference is a phrase that states a conclusion. The relationship between metaphor and inference is located on the meaning of the conclusions stated in the metaphor. Of course, metaphors tend to hint a word or expression and inference that taking place in the conclusion of the speech. Metaphors facilitate thought by providing an experiential framework where abstract concepts newly acquired can be accommodated. A network of

metaphor, which underlying thought in a way, can also form cognitive maps; thus, a network of concepts drawn from concepts which are used to find the basis of abstract concepts in the experiences of physical and cognitive actors. In relations with the doer with outside world actors there is a conceptual element for constructing cultural meaning. Lakoff (1989) hypothesized that metaphors serve cognitive maps of the realm of the source (i.e. vehicle) to the target domains (tenor), so as to cause the target to be tied in the physical spatial experience through the realm of resources. The schemes between the conceptual level and in the realm sensory source become active, so also in the realm of the target.

Conceptual metaphors are used very often to understand theories and models. A conceptual metaphor uses one idea and links it to another to better understand something. For example, the conceptual metaphor of viewing communication as a conduit is one large theory explained with a metaphor. So not only is our everyday communication shaped by the language of conceptual metaphors, but so is the very way we understand scholarly theories. These metaphors are prevalent in communication and we do not just use them in language; we actually perceive and act in accordance with the metaphors. A primary tenet of this theory is that metaphors are matter of thought and not merely of language: hence, the term *conceptual metaphor*. The metaphor may seem to consist of words or other linguistic expressions that come from the terminology of the more concrete conceptual domain, but conceptual metaphors underlie a system of related metaphorical expressions that appear on the linguistic surface. Similarly, the mappings of a conceptual metaphor are themselves motivated by image schemas which pre-linguistic schemas are concerning space, time, moving, controlling, and other core elements of embodied human experience.

The metaphorical process typically goes from the more concrete to the more abstract, and not the other way around. Accordingly, abstract concepts are understood in terms of prototype concrete processes. The term "concrete," in this theory, has been further specified by Lakoff and Johnson as more closely related to the developmental, physical neural, and interactive body (see embodied philosophy). One manifestation of this view is found in the cognitive science of mathematics, where it is proposed that mathematics itself, the most widely accepted means of abstraction in the human community, is largely metaphorically constructed, and thereby reflects a cognitive bias unique to humans that uses embodied prototypical processes (e.g. counting, moving along a path) that are understood by all human beings through their experiences.

### 3. Research Method

A fieldwork research was conducted in the Tanah Karo Regency of North Sumatra to collect the ethnic Karo metaphors in 2014. By using a purposive sampling technique this research observed the usage of metaphors among the

cultural interactions such wedding party and funeral. Data show the Karo ethnic form the metaphors in the orientation, ontological and metonym. It concludes that the introduction and teaching of the metaphors to the young generation helps this group to make their social interactions much softens than those of declarative and command phrases and sentences.

This study applied a qualitative field research (Duranti, 1997). In line with this research types, the researchers determined the number of informants which became the sources for the material to be analyzed. The informant has been set comprised of a number of community members who are also native speakers of Karo language. They, the informants' functions can also be as representatives of the user of Karo Language. Data collected from observation and interviews. The entire conversations and dialogues were recorded in a tape-recorder. Then, the recorded utterances of the informants thus were transcribed.

### 4. Discussion

Exploring ethnic metaphors plays an important role in the national character building of the developing nation, such Indonesia. This discussion exposes the Karo metaphors of Karo ethnic of North Sumatra Province in supporting the construction of national building. Some of Karo ethnic metaphors contribute variations of the mode of expressions in national levels. In this case the informants were observed in expressing metaphors or metonyms in Karo language. Indeed the data provided by the researcher were tested first with the traditional leaders who use the language in their daily lives. This is done because the researcher would treat the objective ways. Mappings between the source and the target area involve two types of relationships, i.e. epistemic and ontological models. An ontological relation occurs between elements of the territory and elements of other regions. The relationship epistemic is the relationship between the elements of the region and relations between elements in other regions (e.g. knowledge encyclopedia on the region). There many types of ontological metaphors used by the speakers in Tanah Karo Regency.

Example:

(1) *Ukurku enggo seri ras batu*. [ukurku əŋgo seri ras batu] 'My mind is the same as a rock'. Thus we can see clearly that the 'mind' is a manifestation of abstract, and is used in the metaphor as a form of concrete object.

(2) *Lagu langkahmu bali kuakap ras belkih*. [lagu langkahmu bali kuakap ras bəlkih] 'Your behavior similar to the deer. In this example we can also see 'song step' (actions or behavior or habit) is a form of abstract and equated with 'belkih' or deer. Means here occur also changes of the shape of the abstract into the concrete.

Another example:

(3) *Labo erta luah man kalimbubu, galah gedang*. [labo ərta luah man kalimbubu tapi galah gədaŋ] 'Bukan kekayaan oleh-

oleh untuk paman tetapi anak laki-laki' (3). Why the speaker use the ontological metaphor is that because material things is not a appropriate to present for an uncle, but 'galah gedang' which means to be helper. 'Galah gedang' means a son. Likewise, in the expression:

(4) *Pedah si ndube kap batang kegeluhen*. [pədəh si ndube kap batəŋ kəgəluhən]. 'Our predecessor advice is the trunk of life'. In reality Karo language has an ontological metaphor in abstracts.. As in this example we can see that the 'advice' is a 'pole of life'. So we know that the advice has no form, as well as the lives of intangible pole. Another example which states remain abstract is (4b) *Adat kap dalam lako enggeloh erlayas*. [dalam kap dalam lako əŋgəloh ərlajəs] 'Adat is the way to live peacefully.'

### 5. Characteristics of Ethnic Karo Metaphors

The ethnic Karo metaphorical character has a mental representation that binds the conceptual structure (intellectual) of the realm of the abstract into the sensory basis (wisdom) other domains that is physical. Conceptual metaphor is also found in Karo language in various types; a human metaphor, plant metaphor, animal metaphors, and other metaphors. Here are the characteristics of Ethnic Karo metaphors:

(1) *Ukurku enggo ndauh kabang-kabang*. [ukurku əŋgo ndauh kabəŋ kabəŋ] 'My mind has been flying around and around'.

(2) *Mbaru-mbaru enda enggo turah ukurna pəhuli kuta kemulihenna*. [mbaru mbaru enda əŋgo turah ukurna pəhuli kuta kəmulihəna] 'recently has been growing his mind to develop the village where he was born'.

(3) *Ndai enggo reh katana, maka lanai surung reh Kuta*. [ndai əŋgo rəh katana maka lanai suruŋ rəh ku kuta] 'He told us that he would not come to the village'.

(4) *Ula kam mejarjar bas Kuta enda, perbahan melala i jenda nali kuda dibata*. [ula kam mədʒardʒar i bas kuta enda pərbahan məlala i dʒenda nali kuda dibata] 'Do not do as you please in this village, because there are many snakes around in this area.'

As we have seen some examples of metaphor (1) indicates the mind as poultry, (2) shows the mind as a plant or plants, (3) the word as a man, and (4) words that are taboo so that animals are used as a substitute inanimate objects (rope). Conceptual metaphor includes orientational metaphor, ontological metaphor, structural metaphor, and metaphor and inference. An orientational metaphor is expressed and commonly found in everyday life. Usually an orientational metaphor is to describe the spatial organization, the spatial space, many oriented with 'up-down' (up and down. For example, (9a) Zainab was heart broken, (10a). The young man fell in love with Zainab, and (2a) Zainab is on the rise. Some examples of orientation 'having' described, good, not good, healthy, happy, lost control, angry, as follows:

(5) *Bintang gajut sangana terang*. [bintaŋ gadʒut saŋana tərəŋ] 'Star Gajut being bright'

(6) *Mondul terperjak dragon*. [mondul tərperdʒak dragon] 'Mondul inadvertently trample the cliffs will crumble'.

(7) *Seninana enggo idilo dibata*. [səninana əŋgo idilo dibata] 'His brother had called the Lord'.

8) *Indong penakitna enggo mombak*. [indonŋ pənakitna əŋgo mombak] 'mother/ source of the disease has been washed away'

(9) *Meriah ukurna natap anakna ilantik*. [məriah ukurna natap anakna ilantik] 'He is very happy for his son graduation'.

(10) *Enggo bene ukurna perbahan anakna rusur ngisap marijuana*. [əŋgo bene ukurna pərbahan anakna rusur ŋisap gandʒa] he lost his mind because her son often smoked marijuana]

(11) *Kegeluhenna enggo erkelaling-kelaling* [kəgəluhenna əŋgo ərkəlaliŋ kəlaliŋ] 'Her life had oscillated/ frivolous overseas.

(12) *Enggo nangkih seberangsangku ngidah lagu anakta enda*. [əŋgo naŋkih səbərəŋsaŋku ŋidah lagu anakta ] 'My blood pressure raised to see the behavior of our son/daughter'

An ontological metaphor is related to structural, which usually makes the abstract concrete. Typically, the literature contains many metaphors, as has been discussed in terms or as a symptom of mind. Structural metaphor is a metaphor that gives a time limit on non-entity or object without form/ abstract. The basic idea is that the body experiences in feeling the environment, body movements, to press and to receive pressure, so as to make basic conceptual structure used to set the abstract realm of thought as far as range, called the scheme the shadows that begins with containment scheme.

E.g. for blood pressure, statement or expression is used as in the example sentence number (12).

Some pictures of metaphorical orientation through ride in different types or categories.

(13) *Ndehara Joni enggo kedabuhən month*. [ndəhara dʒoni əŋgo kədabuhən bulan]

Joni's wife gave birth to a baby girl.

In this example (13) we can see that by using the word fellout 'kedabuhən' usually people who it touches will be in pain, but in Karo, even though it was a downfall the meaning is a good news, namely the wife of Joni had given birth to a girl. So it's true we can see that the meaning carried by the word fall is not necessarily bad, but rather the opposite.

(14) *Gundari sukulna bas kam*. [gundari bas kam sukulna] 'Now you are in control'.

A similar metaphor is oriented towards a situation in which he is in control.

This means that he who holds the power and authority to make a decision about something.

(15) *Joni ena pais*. [ɖɔni ena pais] 'Joni is cunning'.

This same metaphor oriented nature of a person who is described as the nature of the type of animal called *Siamang* /baboon which is cunning. In the community of Karo, Siamang is known as one of the most ingenious forest dwellers. So if it expressed as number sentence (15) earlier, then the orientation is stated that he is clever and cunning. Because according to history, at a time *Siamang* 'Pais' was last in contact with the pitfalls of a farmer. When a farmer is sharpening his knife to cut *Siamang*, then *Siamang* message to the farmer so he cut off his tail first so that he heartbeat of will stop quickly. If not, or it got cut in any other part, he will just felt pain for a long time and it will take a long time for him to die. Because farmer felt sorry, then he too wanted to follow a direct request to cut the gibbon tail. Once the gibbon tail cut off, then he too flounder, hit her and hit her while looking for trace to run.

(16) *Roni ena kuda*. [roni ena kuda] 'Roni is a horse'

This same metaphor orientation to people who like to do something that has no value. So they use animal characters instead. If there is someone working on something that is not or has not been told, it was said to him 'horse partner' [horse əŋko] which means 'You are my horse.'

(17) *Manok Kinantan lanai erbisa*. [manok kinantan lanai ərbisa] 'Kinantan Chicken is no longer venomous'.

Those sentences are using metaphors that use the image of animals and have same model as birds with snakes. It can be seen that the chicken is said to have venom once, but now they no longer have. This kind of metaphor orientation is the Kinantan chicken as a substitute of a football team (PSMS Medan).

(18) *Katangku lanai masin man anakta ena, emaka kena sekali ndidiksa*. [katangku lanai masin man anakta ena emaka kena səkali ndidiksa] 'Words I do not salty again to our children, so you who taught him'. This metaphor used the word salty (*masin* as the description). Words are said not salty anymore. The orientation of this similar metaphor to say that someone is no longer respected his advice.

(20) *Lanai melas takalna, janah enggo entabeh Kulana*. [lanai məlas takalna ɖzanah əŋgo əntabəh daɟiŋna] 'He no longer has a hot head and his body was good.' This metaphor is using temperature model, and is said to be equal to the fire, because the heat is usually fire, not the head. This kind of metaphor orientation to someone who was sick and getting better the heat caused fever, and *enak* describes the return to a healthy condition as usual.

## 5. Conclusion

After analyzing the obtained data, it concludes that:

The Karonese metaphors and metonymys contain both

particular and universal meaning of life. It is said universal because some metaphors relating to the universal value is also owned by other people worldwide. Like the use of colors and nature phenomena. On the other hand, the particular metaphors have been used by Karonese for many years. The point can be seen from the view point of Karonese ways of thought. Karoese metaphors and metonymys are closely related to the habit of Karonese in the highland of North Sumatra Province. The use of metaphors and metonymys.

Metaphor oriented nature of a person who is described as the nature of the type of animal; like *Siamang* (a Baboon) which is cunning or a horse is a partner in the farm. In the community of ethnic Karo, Siamang is known as one of the most ingenious forest dwellers. A metaphor uses the same model, such as birds or snakes. It can be seen that the chicken is said to have venom once, but now they no longer have. This kind of metaphor orientation is the *Kinantan* (a mythical chicken) as a substitute of a Football Team (PSMS Medan). The same thing can also be found; 'custom' is 'way of life' while indigenous intangible may also be equated with a path to a peaceful life. The pattern remains abstract and unchanging; metaphors in the ontological types are overall the pattern or structure. In any circumstances, the change of the abstract into the concrete one has possibility too.

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