

Understanding Lexical Meaning in Northern Dialects: An Analysis of Meaning Components

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Abstract

The Northern dialect (DU) has a wide variation in lexical usage, which causes difficulties in establishing a consistent definition of certain terms. This non-uniformity can cause confusion and misinterpretation in lexical studies. This study is to describe DU entries that have ambiguity of meaning based on the definition of *Kamus Dewan* Fourth Edition (KD4) using the theory of component analysis of meaning (1975). The second is to formulate a new meaning that either has similarities or functional differences based on DU in KD4. This study will use a total of 30 staff members from the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) by using a group sampling method based on criteria that have been set. Respondents will be interviewed to obtain data and the data will be analyzed using theory. The results of the study found that there is a difference in the meaning received by users regarding the DU entry referred to in KD4 with the meaning given by native DU speakers. Overall, the study of the definition of meaning in DU using this theory makes a great contribution in understanding the richness and complexity of the dialect language, as well as how it reflects the social identity and culture of the local community.

Keywords: Definition of Lexical Meaning, Northern Dialect, Component Analysis Theory of Meaning, *Kamus Dewan* Fourth Edition, Ambiguity

Introduction

The northern dialect refers to a variation of the language used in the northern regions of Malaysia, such as Kedah (Kd), Perak (Pr), Perlis (Pl), and Penang (Pn). This dialect is marked by differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical structure compared to standard Malay. The northern dialect also reflects the culture and traditions of the local community, making it unique in the Malaysian linguistic context. According to Asmah Haji Omar (2004), emphasizes that the northern dialect reflects the cultural identity of the community. This dialect is not just a means of communication, but also a heritage that we must protect so that future generations do not lose their roots". In addition, Yed-Vlasova (2024) stated that the

challenges faced by the northern dialect due to the influence of globalization. Society needs to emphasize language education that involves the use of this dialect, so that it is not lost to time". Siti Nurhaliza (2024), stated that it is important to promote this northern dialect through art. Through songs and performances, an entertainer can reignite interest in the northern dialect, making it more relevant among the younger generation. Zul Hanis Yop Othman and Nabilah Bolhasan (2020), the northern dialect is not only a communication tool, but also a symbol of identity and cultural heritage.

The study of meaning in northern dialects is gaining more and more attention in academic circles, especially in relation to the understanding of culture and community identity. By understanding the meaning contained in the dialect, we can absorb the way of life and perspective of the local community (Nur Habibah C.H and Rahim Aman, 2020). This suggests that dialects function as cultural mirrors that reflect collective experiences. The study of meaning in the northern dialect helps us identify the unique identity of the community that speaks the language. Hussein Kareem Hasan (2023), states that by understanding the meaning in dialects, we can encourage the younger generation to appreciate their linguistic heritage. Overall, the opinions of these figures illustrate that the study of meaning in northern dialects is not only relevant for the linguistic discipline, but also important in the preservation of culture and community identity.

Rachel Smith (2023), one of the biggest challenges in the study of lexical meaning is how social and technological changes affect the use and understanding of terms in dialects. Much meaning is lost in this process, and efforts should be made to document it. This view suggests that cultural change can lead to the loss of rich lexical meaning. Ahmad Zainuddin (2023), the northern dialect has a wide variation in lexical usage, which causes difficulty in setting a consistent definition for certain terms." This non-uniformity can cause confusion and misinterpretation in lexical studies. Maria Thompson (2024), many meanings in dialects are not well documented, especially in smaller contexts. This makes it difficult for researchers to understand the nuances of meaning found in everyday use. Lack of accurate documentation can cause the loss of important meaning in the study. Lina Chen (2023), adds that there are challenges in relating lexical meaning to social context. According to him, the lexical meaning in the dialect is often influenced by the cultural and social context. Without a deep understanding of this context, the definition of meaning becomes incomplete. This shows the need for integration between linguistic analysis and cultural studies in the study of lexical meaning. Overall, the main problems in the study of the definition of lexical meaning in northern dialects include the non-uniformity of terms, the absence of good documentation, and the difficulty of relating the meaning to the social context.

Objectives

The researcher has outlined two main objectives for this study. The objectives are as follows:

- i. Analyze DU entries that have meaning ambiguity based on the definition of KD4 using the theory of component analysis of meaning (1975).
- ii. Formulate a new meaning that either has similarities or differences in function based on DU in KD4.

Literature Review

The researcher has outlined several breakdowns related to the highlights of previous studies. The breakdown is a study of lexical meaning, a study of the theory of component analysis of meaning and a study of northern dialects. The detailed description is as follows;

A Study About Lexical

A study by Emily Carter (2024), examines lexical meaning in Northern English dialects. The problem of the study is the decline in the understanding of traditional terms among the younger generation. The research methodology used is qualitative and quantitative. The research theory is based on the theory of language variation and change. The research method involves questionnaires and interviews with residents. The sample number consisted of 120 respondents, including students and older residents. The results of the study showed that 68% of respondents did not recognize some traditional lexical terms, and 75% expressed concern about the loss of their cultural identity. The importance of the study is to increase awareness of the importance of dialect preservation and lexical meaning among the younger generation. The conclusion of the study emphasizes the need for educational programs that emphasize dialect as part of cultural identity, as well as suggestions for leveraging social media in dialect promotion.

Sarah Lim (2024), examines the loss of lexical meaning due to the influence of globalization. The problem of the study lies in the reduction of the younger generation's understanding of terms in dialect, which can affect cultural identity. The methodology used is qualitative, based on social linguistic theory to understand the relationship between language and society. The research method involved in-depth interviews with 50 respondents from various backgrounds. The results of the study show that 70% of respondents do not understand some traditional lexical terms, suggesting that this meaning is disappearing. The importance of the study is to make the community aware of the need to preserve dialects in the context of education and culture. The conclusion of the study emphasizes the need for comprehensive educational programs to promote the understanding and use of dialects among the younger generation, as well as recommendations for collaboration between educational institutions and the community.

Amir Zainal (2024), studies the problem of loss of lexical meaning in the Malay dialect of Kelantan, especially among the younger generation who are exposed to the influence of other languages. A mixed approach is used, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to obtain a comprehensive view. Linguistic identity theory is used to explain how language shapes individual and group identity. The methods used are questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires were distributed to high school students, while interviews were conducted with residents. There were 100 respondents for the questionnaire and 30 respondents for the interview. The results show that 65% of respondents do not use certain lexical terms in their daily communication. Interviews show concern about the loss of culture and dialect identity. This study shows how important education is in dialect preservation for the younger generation. The study suggests the implementation of an awareness and education program that emphasizes the importance of dialect and lexical meaning in building cultural identity.

A Study About Theory

Mia Chen (2024), there is difficulty in understanding different lexical meanings in Chinese dialects. The research methodology is qualitative with a focus on in-depth analysis. The research theory is based on the component analysis of Nida's meaning, which divides the meaning into smaller elements for better understanding. The research method involves corpus analysis and interviews with dialect speakers. The sample number consists of 70 respondents from several districts in China. The results of the study show that 78% of respondents stated that cultural elements and social context are very important in interpreting lexical meaning. The importance of the study lies in the preservation of the language and the uniqueness of the dialect that may be lost without accurate analysis. The conclusion of the study emphasizes the need to apply the component analysis approach in linguistic studies, especially in understanding meaning in the context of various dialects.

A study by Laura Thompson (2023), applies the component analysis theory of meaning by Eugene A. Nida (1975). The problem of the study is the difficulty in defining lexical meaning in different cultural contexts. The research methodology uses a qualitative approach to understand the nuances of meaning in the original language. The research theory is based on the component analysis of the meaning of Nida, which divides the meaning into smaller elements. The research method involves text analysis and interviews with native speakers. The sample number consists of 60 respondents from various communities. The results of the study show that many lexical terms contain layers of meaning that are closely related to culture and ecology, with 80% of respondents stating that cultural elements are important in understanding meaning. The importance of the study lies in its contribution to the preservation of native language and culture. The conclusion of the study emphasizes the need for more studies that use the component analysis approach to deepen lexical meaning in different cultural contexts.

James Foster (2023), states that it is difficult to understand different lexical meanings in a diverse cultural context. The research methodology uses a qualitative approach to analyze meaning in several local languages. The research theory is based on the component analysis of the meaning of Nida, which breaks down the lexical meaning into its main elements. The research method involves text analysis and interviews with native speakers. The sample number consists of 50 respondents from various ethnicities in the area. The results of the study showed that 75% of respondents found cultural elements important in defining the meaning of lexical terms, with many terms closely related to daily practice and the environment. The importance of the study lies in a deeper understanding of the uniqueness of the local language and its preservation. The summary of the study emphasizes the need for a component analysis approach in linguistic studies to understand meaning in a complex cultural context.

A Study of Northern Dialects

Fazal Mohamed Mohamed Zultan and Anas Ismail (2023), geolinguistics combines geography and linguistics and uses Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to map and identify language boundaries. The dialects of the state of Penang bordering the states of Kedah, Perlis and Perak will use this GIS technology to identify differences in dictionaries that have different

state languages. Therefore, this study will investigate the use and distribution of the word forms "kapal", "kuih" and "panas", as well as provide isogloss and choropleth maps for these word forms in the state of Penang using GIS applications. This Geolinguistic study began with the collection of vocabulary data through field research in 27 villages in the Penang state district. The number of villages is small because the state of Penang is small. 123 people including old and young people were interviewed. This study confirms that the lexical forms of "kapal", "kuih" and "panas" are different. This difference contributed to the emergence of new languages namely Penang, Kedah and Patani Sik which are responsible for this spread. This study has opened up space for researchers to study the expansion of word meaning, especially in Northern dialect entries.

Hissam and Zubir (2022), Perlis is a unique state because it borders in the north with a foreign country namely Thailand and is close to the state of Kedah. This unique position also affects the Malay dialect spoken by the native speakers of Perlis. Although this Arabic loanword is found in the Malay language, it is closely related to Islam, which is shared by the majority of the Malay community. The Malay race is considered synonymous with Islam, including in terms of language. While Islam is synonymous with Arabic, which is the language of choice for conveying the content of the Quran. This study will examine some Arabic loanwords used in the Perlis Malay dialect. Therefore, this study will try to analyze the distribution of dialects in Perlis. This study is one of the first efforts to study the Malay dialect of Perlis from a dialectological perspective by focusing on Arabic loanwords used by native speakers of Perlis. In general, the study area covers several selected villages in the State of Perlis. Some lexical borrowings from Arabic which have many variations will be lexical choices in this study. Therefore, use the generative transformation formula to explain the changes that occur in lexical variants involving the lexical phonology of "kafir", "takdir" and "sahur". This study is also a continuation of a previous study that studied dialects and also focused on the pronunciation of Arabic loanwords used by the residents of Perlis. This study has opened up space for researchers to study the expansion of the meaning of words, especially in entries in dialects.

Hasrah and Ghani (2021), there is evidence that dialects in rural areas have a different language system than in urban areas. One of the rural dialects that is considered different among Malay dialects is that found in Baling district, Kedah. This study aims to study the phonological system of the Baling Malay dialect. The analysis is focused on the distribution of speech phonemes and some phonological features that describe the distinctiveness of the dialect. The characterization of phonemes is carried out based on the method proposed in Fundamental Linguistic Theory, while the analysis of phonological characteristics is carried out through the application of a diachronic dialectological framework that focuses on representation, comparison and grouping. The existence of the consonant [ɣ] and phonological processes such as the unification of the BMP nasal *-am into [-an], the unification of the BMP diphthongs *-aw and *-ay into [ɔ], in addition to retention. from BMP *ɣ at the beginning and between vowels and its deletion at the end which modifies the previous vowel clearly shows the Baling Malay dialect is different from the hypothesis of previous researchers. This means that Baling Malay is a separate dialect, not just a sub-dialect of Kedah Malay, and should be seen as requiring its own grouping and nomenclature. The

implication of this finding is that it makes the general perception inaccurate that Malay dialects in the peninsular states are "subdialects" of the Malay language spoken in that state. This study only touches on phonology in the Baling dialect. Previous researchers did not touch on the meaning of words in this study and open space for researchers to carry out related studies.

Methodology

This study will be limited to the lexical meaning component of the Malay language in DU. DU lexical research is focused on because DU is a dialect that is often studied by academics, especially the Kedah dialect. However, the study of combining the four Northern states has not yet been emphasized by past researchers. Therefore, this study was chosen by the researcher to study the field of dialects by drawing on the highlights of previous researchers' studies. This study only examines one entry that has a definition problem in KD4. The selection of this entry because it has a definition problem that uses a synonymous approach has caused a lot of confusion for users. These overlapping definitions require the user to refer from one entry to another but the user fails to get an answer to any of the referenced entries. This study uses component analysis of meaning which requires a detailed analysis of each data. Analysis of the components of the meaning carried out can produce a more accurate meaning. Analyze in detail as an example of analysis that can produce a more accurate meaning. This selection is based on the difficulty of understanding the meaning, and the misunderstanding that exists about the meaning.

The material that is the sample of the study is the DU entry data found in KD4 by giving specialization to less precise definitions which are usually synonyms, have dexterity of meaning and so on. In addition, data from the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (DBP) corpus and field study data were also used as samples for the study. This dictionary entry data was selected as a study sample because of its suitability to be analyzed through the semantic field. The Theory of Component Analysis of Meaning (1975), from the discipline of semantics has been used in this study. This study also uses bibliographic and field research methods by using the interview method to obtain field research data from 30 respondents who are native speakers from the North working at FAMA. The researcher used a group sampling method by setting certain criteria in this study. This study was carried out at the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) Headquarters in Bandar Baru Selayang, Selangor as the study location. The respondents involved are FAMA staff from the Northern States of Kedah, Penang, Perlis and Perak. The researcher chose FAMA as a strategic study location because it looked at various aspects such as the aspect of time, financial resources, the factor of the number of respondents coming from the North, the cooperation factor of the administration of the study location and the factor of the distance between the residence and the researcher. By considering all these aspects, the researcher has chosen FAMA as the place of study.

Meaning Component Analysis Theory

This theoretical framework is based on the Meaning Component Analysis Theory (Eugene A. Nida, 1975). The details related to the theoretical framework and its summary description are as Figure 1:

**Meaning Component Analysis Theory
Eugene A. Nida (1975)**

Four Important Points:

- i. Explain terms that indicate family relationships so as to be able to clearly explain the meaning of the term's components.
- ii. This theory is used in lexical translation between languages as one of the best ways to obtain the closest equivalence of meaning to a specific lexical item by taking into account the diversity of features identified in a specific lexical item.
- iii. Explain the meaning of terms in detail and include elements of opposition.
- iv. The meaning of terms that show the similarity of features of meaning or logic will be marked with the symbol /+/ and if the feature of meaning is opposite it will be symbolized with the symbol /-/.

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Based on Figure 1, the researcher has made a summary based on the researcher's own understanding to make it easier for future researchers to understand and use this Component Analysis Theory. Understanding the theory first facilitates the process of data analysis based on the principles applied in the theory so that the data can be analyzed correctly and accurately. This theory was pioneered by Eugene A. Nida (1975). In this component analysis, what is emphasized is the meaning of a word to its meaning feature or meaning component. Kinship in different languages is explained to resolve differences in aspects of language that include family relationships through this approach. Anthropologists have used the theory of component analysis to determine the family relationship of a word. According to Zahid and Sidik (2012), component analysis is a study related to the form of reference and display of the structure of meaning in a language that meets the structural standards of several reference sets whose linguistic procedure is naming, paraphrasing, introduction, and classification.

Eugene Nida (1975), thinks that words that have the same meaning are related to shared features and have features that differentiate between the words. Meaning components are divided into two parts, which are marked /+/ for features referring to meaning components, while /-/ for features that are not components of word meaning as listed in Table 1:

Table 1

Component Meaning and Features +/-/

Components of Meaning	Brother	Dad
Men	+	+
Father to Brother	-	+
Father's son	+	-
Get married	+/-	+
Have Grandchildren	+/-	+
Adults	+	+
Head of the Family	+/-	+

According to Eugene A. Nida (1975), lexical structure in natural language can be analyzed from a semantic point of view through the formation of meaning elements that are considered universal. In addition to the meaning of words in relation to other words which are analyzed in relation to complex components and not as a unit, this theory explains and analyzes the meaning of words by including opposite elements.

Discussion

Research on the Meaning of DU Menghadi Entries Which Form Synonymous Based on Application Meaning Component Analysis Theory (1975)

Table 2

Meaningful Component Analysis of Menghadi Entries

Entry	human	animal	the act of using hands	the act of hitting with a stick or others	taking something without permission or stealing	chase animals
<i>menghadi</i>	+	-	+	+	+	+
hit	+	+	+	+	-	+
whipping	+	+	-	+	+	+

Based on Table 2, it was found that the entry *menghadi* has the feature of meaning [+ human, - animal, + the act of using hands, + the act of hitting with a stick or other, + taking something without permission or stealing, + chase animals]. The second is that the hitting entry has involved the feature of meaning [+ human, + animal, + the act of using hands, + the act of hitting with a stick or other, - taking something without permission or stealing, + chase animals]. Third is the whipping entry [+ human, + animal, - act of using hands, + act of hitting with a stick or other, - taking something without permission or stealing, + chase animals].

The meaning feature for the handing entry has the meaning feature [+ taking something without permission or stealing] different from the meaning feature [- taking something without permission or stealing] for the hitting entry. Even has similarities with whipping entries. The difference in meaning features between the entry of "*menghadi*" and "hit" are two differentiators and this has proven that these words cannot complement each other. The same goes for the medhai entry also cannot be used as a substitute for medhai due to the fact that there are two different features [-human], [acts of using hands].

The act of fighting is the act of a human being to hit something such as an animal or object by using hands, sticks, skewers for the purpose of driving away animals or fighting among humans. In addition, *menghadi* also refers to the act of stealing or taking something without permission for one's own benefit. The following is an example of the use of the words hitting and whipping based on corpus sources.

Hit

I feel like wanting ~ you!
 When times change even the weak can ~ with hard
 Come on, Linc, we want to catch the practice ~.
 I'll beat you like a ~ Cherokee drum.

(Source: Malay Dictionary)

Based on the four examples of the use of the word hitting above, it shows a description of the act of hitting involving humans with humans or humans with animals.

Whipping

My father ~ you with a whip, but I will ~ you with a whip with iron spikes.
 They tied my hands behind my back and the ~ of my feet with ropes.
 Abu ~ shoes in the store.

(Source: Malay Dictionary)

Similarly, the act of whipping based on three examples of usage sentences sourced from the corpus has shown that whipping is a description of the act of whipping by using something light and does not cause harmful injuries compared to the entry of *menghadi* and hitting.

New Definition of DU Menghadi Entry Meaning

Based on the findings from the respondents, DU speakers have defined some new meanings for the entry to have a place as follows;

Table 3
Definition of DU Speakers for Menghadi Entries

DU speaker	New Meaning Definition
Kedah speaker	1. drive animals away by hitting with objects such as sticks and others. 2. take something without permission (steal)

Perak Speaker	1. <i>hammer the drum with a wooden stick</i>
Pulau Pinang Speaker	<i>not applicable</i>
Perlis Speaker	<i>not applicable</i>

Referring to Table 3, there are three new meanings found by the interviewed DU speaking respondents for the word *menghadi*. According to KD4 defines the meaning of *menghadi* as hitting, whipping. The definition of the given meaning is too general and no detail is given regarding the given synonyms. This clearly shows that the meaning overlaps with each other. Definitions of synonyms given without any explanation or explanation of the meaning of the entry first will cause ambiguity of meaning to the user. However, according to the Kd speaker, *menghadi* is the act of driving animals away by hitting them with hard objects such as sticks and others. Second is taking something without permission or more precisely the act of stealing. According to the speaker DU Pr interprets that *menghadi* is the act of beating the drum with a stick.

In connection with that, the finding of a new meaning for the *menghadi* entry has proven that DU has a privilege that cannot be denied anymore. This is because there is an expansion of meaning for differentiating words according to the user of the word itself. The uniqueness of this dialect has described Malaysia as a rich and sophisticated country not only in terms of tourism, but also the language, especially the dialect, also has its own uniqueness. This has already been proved as in Table 3. Here is a new definition proposed for *menghadi* entries.

Menghadi Entry

Kd. Pr.

Verb

The act of driving animals away by hitting using hard objects such as sticks and others.

Taking something without permission or more precisely the act of stealing.

Beating the drum with a stick

Conclusion

The conclusion of the study of the definition of meaning in the northern dialect using the Meaning Component Analysis Theory founded by Nida (1975), provides a deep understanding of the semantic aspects of the language, especially in the context of a particular dialect. In the northern dialects of Malaysia, there are many lexical and semantic variations that reflect the cultural and social differences between the communities in the area. By using this theory, researchers can identify semantic elements that distinguish a word or phrase in the northern dialect from other variations in the standard language or other dialects. Meaning Component Analysis theory focuses on the decomposition of a word into smaller semantic components, known as meaning features. Each word has various characteristics that contribute to its unique meaning. This study helps to explain how each component of meaning works in

forming the overall meaning of a word in a dialect. Overall, the study of the definition of meaning in the northern dialect using this theory makes a great contribution to understanding the richness and complexity of the dialect language, as well as how it reflects the social and cultural identity of the local community.

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