

Article

Received: 08-07-2018; Accepted: 22-10-2018; Published: 01-09-2018

Embodied Experiences Represented in Fishermen's Children's Writing across Ages in
Pekalongan, Indonesia:
A Cognitive Linguistic Perspective

Deli Nirmala*

*Diponegoro University, Prof. Soedarto, SH Street, Tembalang, Semarang 50275,
Indonesia*

Abstract

Language represents the speaker's identity due to the experiences stored in the mind that become mental lexicon used as expressions for communication. Fisherman children observing their fathers' activities in fishing daily perceive what their parents do for their family. This article is aimed to describe the children's feeling, experiences, and thought about fishermen through their words or expressions in their writing. To uncover the problems, I used observation method for collecting data; referential and inferential methods for analyzing data. I used elicitation technique to collect the data. The data were the words or expressions written by thirty seven fisherman children of SDN 01 API-API (elementary) SMP Fatkhul Qowim (junior secondary school), and MA Fatkhul Qowim (senior high school) in Wonokerto, Pekalongan, Indonesia. The results indicate that they use emotive vocabulary items which may result in their mental lexicon stored in the mind and fisherman vocabulary item preservation. Besides, they indicate fisherman habits, fishing trip duration, and natural challenges. The most prominent expressions are those referring to the main duties of fishing, natural challenges and hardship on the sea during fishing. Even the children have no direct experiences, they can perceive fisherman jobs quite well due to everyday observation.

Keywords: embodied; fisherman; Pekalongan; Indonesia; experiences

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +62248440853; fax: +622476480619.

E-mail address: deliundip@gmail.com.

1. Introduction

That language represents embodied experiences has been studied by many writers like Nirmala (2013) and Chernela (2018). Nirmala (2013) investigated Javanese local wisdom represented in Javanese proverbs. The proverbs indicate the values owned by the speakers' values in the proverbs such as Javanese views on social and cultural identity, self-control and management in every individual, social, and spiritual life. From the finding, she can see the implication that Javanese proverbs can maintain the experiences and habits of Javanese speakers that may lose in the future because of the changes of the society and nature.

However, language can be acquired well if it is used by parents or caretakers when they speak to their children. As a result, children will learn the language they are exposed to. The importance of exposure has become an interest by those who agree with behaviorists stating that children will learn a language if they are exposed to the language they are supposed to learn.

If we look at fisherman children living in fisherman housing, they notice, observe, feel, and know how their parents do in using boats for fishing or using fishing cords to get fish, for instance. Fishermen's children live in fisherman housing, in the coastal area where fishermen and their families earn their living by fishing, selling fish, preparing goods for fishing and other necessities, storing fish, salting, smoking fish, and working on the sea. They can see what their parents do, and maybe they help their parents do fishing and following them on the sea.

The experiences gradually may be stored in their mind constructing a fishing script. The script conveys lexical items dealing with kinds of fish, kinds of tools for fishing, the way of selling fish to get money, efforts for getting much fish. The script is based on the activities regularly done. This is a cognitive process that happens in the mind, based on the experiences happening bodily.

Another writer, Chernela (2018) studying Tokanoans, the language of Northwest Amazon of Colombia and Brazil. The study indicated that language can signal identity that they are *patrilect*. Those studies are different from this current study in terms of the language studied, sources of data, and focus of the study. The current study aims at figuring out the fisherman children perceiving fisherman life.

1. Theoretical Framework

To uncover what people experience that is represented in language, we can use several theories such as cognitive linguistics (Evans & Green), principles of blending by Fauconnier (1997), and embodiment theory by Lakoff & Johnson (1999). In Evans & Green (2006), it is explained that language represents what people think, do, and feel. From this idea, it can be inferred that language represents what people think when it is used to convey for example ideas, thought, values, knowledge, understanding, perception, and evaluation. It represents what people do when it is used to convey activities, action, or behavior, for instance. It represents what people feel when it conveys disappointment, happiness, anger,

emotion, etc. The representation is based on the experience people have in life in the world. This idea is supported by Lakoff & Johnson (1999) dealing with the container schema. From the theory, it can be explained that the world is the space where humans move to make a living. The experiences in moving in the world space characterize the verbs humans have. For example, the verbs “go”, “come”, “across”, “go down”, “go up”, “drop”, “fall”, represent what humans do in moving. The verbs imply that people are in a container called the world. In the world, people live together for fulfilling needs. They need procedures, tradition, habit, values, ethics, moral values that may affect people’s life.

Different places may result in different forms of procedures, tradition, habit etc. People in mountaineering areas will have different habits in making their life from those living in coastal regions. They have different environment in terms of both natural and social environment. Consequently, they have different experiences that are stored in the mind. The stored experiences are preserved in the expressions they have. When they utter they produce utterances representing their different experiences which may imply different perception and belief.

Different places result in different experiences. According to Lakoff & Johnson (1999:22), “...human concepts are not just reflections of an external reality, but that they are crucially shaped by our bodies and brains, especially by our sensorimotor system.” For example, dealing with color concepts, basic-level concepts, and spatial-relations concepts, there is interaction between what is in the objects and what is in the brain. Like in writing, the writer tries to interact the objects s/he refers to with what has been in the mind. This is stated by Sweetser & Fauconnier (1996:2)

2. Methods

Since this research was qualitative, the data taken were also qualitative data namely utterances or expressions conveying embodied experiences. Elicitation technique was used to collect the data dealing with the fishermen’s children’s perception about fishermen. It was used by asking them to write a paragraph on fishermen. In order to find the words or expressions used for perceiving what and how the fishermen do for a living, observation was used. The observation was applied by reading and getting the referents of the expressions. Then, the words or expressions were classified based on the embodied experiences represented. The analysis was conducted after all the data were classified. There are eleven students of SDN 01 API-API (elementary) whose parents are fishermen, SMP Fatkhul Qowim (junior secondary school), and MA Fatkhul Qowim (senior high school) in Wonokerto, Pekalongan, Indonesia. In taking sample, availability principle was applied. This was taken purposively to see how the fishermen’s children perceive their parents in making their living as fishermen while they were on land or at

home or on the sea fishing. Then, the analysis was conducted by using referential methods, meaning that the expressions suspected convey experiences embodied, were seen from the referential point of view. The experiences may refer to feelings, thinking, behavior. This was done to locate which body part was referred to.

3. Results

1.1 Emotive expressions in fishermen's children's writing

From the fishermen's children's writing across ages, I can infer that the most expressions used can be grouped as emotive expressions. Not all the words can be proven that they are embodied. Only a few of them can be classified as embodied experiences like *menerjang*, the following are the examples.

(1) Pride: *bangga*

The word *bangga* like in the sentence “*Aku bangga punya ayah nelayan*” (I am proud of having a fisherman daddy) is used for expressing their feeling due to their experiences in looking at their parents in working for their family. To be fishermen is not easy. They have to work hard with strong challenges from the nature like storm, heavy rains especially for those using small boats. Natural hindrances may be faced by the fishermen using *sopek* or small boat. With little fuel, they can only reach a short distance from home. Otherwise, they have to store the fuel in their boats but they cannot bring a lot of fuel due to limited burden.

(2) Perception: *sulit, berat, susah*

The words indicating perception can be obtained from the samples like *sulit* (difficult), *berat* (hard / heavy), *susah* (difficult / hard). The word *sulit* is used when they saw not only the success but also the failure of the parents in getting fish. Not rarely they fail to get fish. Even they have gone far away from home, they do not get much fish, even nothing. They have bought fuel, food and drinks for going fishing, but they do not get even a single fish. The failure here may mean difficulty to get fish.

The word *berat* meaning “heavy, hard” is used to express the situation when they saw how their parents work on the sea due to natural conditions like storm.

The word *susah* is used to indicate difficulty in getting fish. They have to go fishing for their family but sometimes the weather hinders them to go to the sea. Since, if they do not get fish, they will not get money. As a result, they cannot fulfill their family needs.

(3) Dignity: *mulia*

The word *mulia* (noble, glorious) is to show their feeling of honor to their parents who work hard in earning money from fishing. Working for family

life is a good deed. This kind of effort is considered *mulia*. They respect their parents who work hard for their family. They have to strive for their life. This can show their parents' dignity as the breadwinner of the family.

- (4) Endurance: *Tidak kenal lelah / tidak pernah letih (SMP)* (never feeling exhausted)

These expressions are used to show that fishermen are strong because of natural challenges. They have to strive for life for their family. They have to be on the sea for fishing. If they use a small boat containing only one person, the fishermen should work on themselves. They have to drive the boat while fishing.

- (5) Natural challenges: *menerjang ombak* (crashing the storm)

The expression is used to show what their parents do when they are fishing when it is stormy. They have to attack or crash into the wave in order to get into the land. The following is the picture of *menerjang ombak*.

- (6) Bread Winner : *mencari ikan untuk keluarga* (fishing for family), *mencari nafkah* (earning money)

Fishing is the source of income. In order to get money for their family, they have to go fishing. Only for male, fishing is possible. Therefore, since fishing is for getting income, fishing is done only by male or husband or father as the bread winner.

- (7) Responsibility: *bertanggung jawab* (responsible)

Working as fishermen can show that they are responsible for their family. They work hard alone if they use a small boat. However, using a big boat forces them to be away from home for months.

- (8) Longing: *rindu, lama tak jumpa* (longing, long not to see)

Due to a long period that they leave home, they miss their families. When they come home, they feel happy.

- (9) Love: *kasih saying* (affection)

The word expressing love can be seen from the sample "*Ayah penuh kasih saying*" (Father loves his family very much).

- (10) Sympathy: *kasihan* (pity)

Looking at how the parents work, the children say "*Kasih, ayah*" (take a pity on Dad). The word *kasihan* showing feeling of sympathy.

- (11) Happiness: *senang, gembira ketika bertemu, wajahnya tampak gembira* (SD & SMP) (glad, happy when meeting each other, face showing happiness)

The words or expressions showing happiness can be found in the expressions like *senang, gembira ketika bertemu, wajahnya tampak gembira*

- (12) Sacrifice: *Sungguh besar pengorbanan ayah untuk keluarganya, beliau berkorban demi anaknya dan keluarga* (SMP) (Father shows his sacrifice for his family, he sacrifices for their children and family).

Working as fishermen is not an easy job. Fishermen should go sometimes in the early morning then go home in the afternoon. Alternatively, they have to

leave home for three to seven months. When they are on the sea, they have to face a lot of troubles, like a machine which cannot be started or operated. From the list, it can be seen that the emotive words may result from different experiences due to different both natural and social environment influencing their life. The environment may stimulate the senses that can make them perceive what they watch or experience. When they experience or perceive regularly, they can store what they experience or perceive in the mind as the mental lexicon. Then, they use it where necessary.

1.2 Acquiring expressions representing embodied experiences of the fishermen's children

Referring to embodiment theory proposed by Lakoff & Johnson (1999), language represents what human experiences bodily. What human experience is stored that can be used when needed in communication. It can be obtained by engaging in life. The direct and close environment a child has is family. Children who are from fisherman family, they learn fisherman words or expressions directly from their caretakers or mothers. Language exposure starts from family. They acquire language firstly exposed to them as their first language. The factor that can affect first language acquisition is family environment. If we refer back to embodiment theory, we can say that different types of environment will result in different experiences.

From the explanation, it can be stated that fisherman children acquire language based on what they experience directly or observe their father's experience in going fishing is prominent in their life. The experiences are stored in their mind as the mental lexicon which is used sometimes blended with new experiences from new situation represented new words.

From the data, the fisherman children acquire their language from their mother and teacher. From their mother, they do unconsciously learn the language exposed to them.

1.3 Fisherman children's attitudes toward fisherman profession

From the expressions in the paragraphs, it can be inferred that the children's attitude toward their fathers' job can be positive. This can be inferred from their likeness, pride of fathers' job, and support. These attitudes can be categorized as affective aspects. Their attitudes are based on their feeling. This finding may support what Nirmala (2015) found regarding attitudes.

1.4 Embodied experiences in fishermen's children's writing

From the writing, it can be inferred that in perceiving fisherman life, the children can express their fathers' experience in their life. They live in a container called the world that sometimes they have to depart from home to the sea. On the sea, they are fishing. To reach the place to get fish, they use boats equipped with

fishing tools. The sea is their destination for getting their life as income. This implies that the part of the world they explore is specific, namely the sea. In order to explore the content of the specific part, they use certain tools and instrument. The expressions that can be obtained from the writing can be classified as the following.

Habits: *berangkat pagi pulang petang* (leaving in the morning, going home in the afternoon)

Lengths of time leaving home: *4 bulan, 7 bulan* (4 months, 7 months)

Accidence: *ada yang jatuh, ada yang sakit* (there are some were drown, some are sick)

Longingness: *aku merasa kehilangan, aku sedih*

Different ages do not indicate different perception about fisherman. Their perception can be classified into mental, physical, and psychological. The mental perception can be seen from the words like

Younger children perceive differently from the elder or adult children. **The physical experiences like *menerjang ombak, menerjang badai***, can be classified as physical experience. The process of *menerjang* is like crashing while running. The whole part of the body is involved in *menerjang*.

4. Conclusions

Words used in fishermen's children's writing across ages may indicate similar feeling, attitudes, perception, proud, and process of acquiring fisherman experiences. What they write completes each other. The *SMP* group has more various emotive words than the other two groups, the elementary and the *SMA* ones. The emotive words may build a script on fisherman life in terms of habit, spirit, and challenge.

References

- [1] Chernela, J. 2018, Language in an ontological register: Embodied speech in the Northwest Amazon of Colombia and Brazil, *Language & Communication* (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2018.02.006>
- [2] Evans, Vyvyan & Melanie Green. 2006. *Cognitive Linguistic: An Introductions*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- [3] Fauconnier, Gilles & Eve Sweetser. (eds). 1996. *Spaces Worlds and Grammar*. Chicago: The University of Chicago
- [4] Fauconnier, Gilles. 1997. *Mappings in Thought and Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Culturalistics: Journal of Cultural, Literary, and Linguistic Studies, [2] (3),
[2018], [1-8]**

Available online at: <http://ejournal.undip.ac.id/index.php/culturalistics>

- [5] Lakoff, George & Mark Johnson. 1999. *Philosophy in the Flesh*. New York: Basic Books, A Member of the Perseus Books Group
- [6] Sweetser, E & G Fauconnier. 1997. "Cognitive Links and Domains: Basic Aspects of Mental Space Theory" in *Spaces Worlds and Grammar* edited by Gilles Fauconnier and Eve Sweetser in 1997. Chicago: Chicago University Press pp. 1-28.
- ng with 'A', e.g., Figure A1, Figure A2, etc.