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The Semantic Extension of Body Parts in Afan Oromo Idiomatic Expression

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Abstract

This study was conducted with the intent of describing the semantic extension of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression. The parts of the body that were highly used by the society, the purposes and the effects of using the expression, and also parts of the communities that are affected in the use of the expressions have been assessed. A qualitative approach, with a descriptive survey research design, was employed. To collect data, interviews with guided questions were used. Accordingly, among the total number of 33 participants, 21 Afan Oromo instructors from Madda Walabu, Bule Hora, and Arsi Universities were selected by the snowball sampling method. In addition, 3 administrators and 9 experts from the Culture and Tourism Offices of Arsi, Bale, and Guji Zone were selected by purposive sampling technique. Besides, relevant data of this study was obtained from and is collected through document review. The findings show that the parts of the body that the society is highly used, the functions and effects of the communication expression, parts of the communities that are affected when the expression is used. Finally, the study came up with the role of these expressions in language use. Therefore, studying idioms and motivating the researchers for further work on these areas to help the language to develop, and to use it in a very natural and attractive way. It is also used to reduce the problem of misunderstanding in utterances and language learning.



Introduction

Language is the system or the way that a given societies express themselves and communicate with each other by keeping their culture. It is the mirror to reflect the society or individual's norms, values, and identity. Regarding this (Simpson, 2011) suggested that language and culture have not been seen by everyone as inseparable; the matters of culture and identity are intertwined with language use, and with language knowledge. In addition (W.Fasold, 2006) expressed that, the human capacity for self-awareness and abstract thought is facilitated by language.

On the other hand, language plays a great role in human life. It helps people to breathe out what they feel. It has the power to visualize abstract and concrete things all over the world; therefore, it reflects and gives sense to the world. Regarding this (Adejimola, 2009) suggested that through language and communication we can see the heart of a people. This implies that language is used to express feelings, emotions, views, ideas, opinions, perceptions, and judgments about people, objects, places, things, information, and situations.

In addition, a language is a tool that helps people to express their ideas, problems, and discuss their conflicts and agreed on the solutions. As Adejimola (2009) indicated, what defines human's humanity is language; it is the vehicle of communication, information about conflict and conflict situations can be expressed in language.

On the other hand, meaning is a very important part of the language. It is impossible to talk about the language without meaning because meaning is the core component that gives a soul to a language. Regarding this (W.Fasold, 2006) expressed that, the ability to transfer complex information, to discuss the meaning of events and possible outcomes of alternative actions, to share feelings and

ideas, all are impossible without language. In addition (Riemer, 2010) suggested that it is easy to agree that meaning is the heart of language we might say that meaning is what language is for: to have a language without meaning would be like having lungs without air.

Besides, semantics which is the micro branch of linguistics deals with the meaning in language. In this regard (Riemer, 2010) indicated that semantics is the study of meaning in language; it is one of the richest and most fascinating parts of linguistics. In semantics, there is the case that the meaning is widening or narrowing as well as holds another meaning which the word that doesn't have originally. In this vein (Olbasa & Adola, 2017) suggested that "The word *gurra* is an Oromo term for the ear which is often semantically extended to denote dignity."

Concerning this, it is worth mentioning the fact that studying the semantic extensions of words in idiomatic expressions helps to move further and playing a very important role in the use of language. As (Kitessa, 2016) stated "Idiom is used to transform abstract information to more concrete one; and, found in any area of human communication to ease the difficulty of spontaneous speech." This implies as, idioms are distributed in language; and also, understanding and knowing idioms competence is one of the key circumstances in the process of communication. In addition (Olbasa & Adola, 2017) showed that idioms are central to human language and cognition and since they exhibit patterns just like other areas of language.

On the other hand, idiomatic expressions are playing a significant role in the process of learning a given language. Knowing idioms can also enhance language competence in different aspects: it increases the knowledge of the language and motivates to master and

understand the written and verbal communication to the language learners. As (Gulay, 2018) stated idiomatic expressions are a very important element of learning a foreign language.

In addition, using idioms in communication makes people use the language properly and fluently. It helps people to promote and develop natural language production. Regarding this (Liontas, 1999) and (Prodromou, 2003) suggested that using idioms can enable fluent and natural language production, and hence, the teaching of idioms can help to produce language more fluently and naturally which can in turn increase motivation.

On the other hand, an idiom makes the utterances smarter and helps someone to use the given language attractively. In this regard, (Porto, 1998) suggested that “Avoiding the use of idioms gives the language a bookish, stilted, unimaginative tone”. Besides (Gulay, 2018) also showed that idiomatic expressions are unique and peculiar to a particular language; they are colorful and lively expressions that are usually an inalienable part of each language and a prominent part of our everyday life.

Idioms represent the culture and use to express ideas by the use of formal language. It also uses to know and aware the living system of a given society or ethnic group as well as let the speakers use the language as it will be expected to use within that community. It solves the problems of misunderstanding and helps the people to understand the ideas that flow within the communication. In this vein (Gulay, 2018) expressed that, idioms share cultural and historical information and enlarge people's outlook, understanding, and manipulation of a language.

As different authors suggested that idioms are mostly used in utterances at every time

and take the half part while communicating. In line with this (Erman, 2000) revealed that idioms are used to explain as much as 50% of the language. In addition (Pollio, 1998) discovered that almost four idioms are employed each minute in a conversation. Furthermore, (Cooper, 1998) estimated that the speakers and writers use about 1.08 novel figures of speech and 4.08 idioms per minute and suggesting that over a lifetime of 60 years, a person would use about 20 million idioms.

On the other hand, idiomatic expressions are adding difficulty to the communication system. Whenever the individuals can't understand idioms and may face problems in using the language. The idiomatic expression causes failure in communication and meaning lost in the use of language. In a similar vein, (Bromley, 1984) also remarks that “idioms add confusion and difficulty on learning of language and so they occupy a special place in the teaching of language and reading”. In addition (Baratz, 1969) suggested that, if a person does not understand idioms which are frequently used in reading materials and in utterances, they have language problems. Thus, in order to increase linguistic competence and avoid such kinds of hindrances' in a communication system, having knowledge of idioms is very interesting. As (Gulay, 2018) indicated using idioms appropriately requires an excellent command of the source language.

Accordingly, in using idioms the meanings of words are interpreted in many ways out of their semantic meanings and used in utterances and written forms so that it gives different meanings. In the use of semantic extension words, an idiomatic expression, the words may lose their literal meaning. This may create problems while communicating.

On the other hand, idiomatic expression helps to learn and use the given language in an appropriate manner.

Even though idioms are adding difficulty to communication, they are also used for better understanding. Therefore delivering attention towards the semantic extension of words in idiomatic expression in a given language can help to move further and understand the source language in detail. It also helps to learn the language in a very natural way and know the culture and norms of that people. Besides, it is the fact that all human language is needed to survive, develop and grow. The development of a given language goes with the development of those people. Therefore, studying, respecting, developing, motivating, recording the history, the cultures, languages, religions, and other things that relate with nation and nationalities of the country dictates them to be active in different aspects. In the same way, studying the language of a given society is used to develop their language and assists them to engage in political, social, and economic activities. So, this can help society to participate, grow and compete in all dimensions. Furthermore, like that of the other languages Afan Oromo is spoken largely by the Oromo society and other societies in the country; so studying this language enhances the society to be a participant and grow in all regards and develop the language. Accordingly, the researcher is interested to study the semantic extension of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression due to the reason that idioms are a proper, formal, and natural way of using language. In addition, the idiomatic expressions took a great part and played an indispensable role in given language development. Therefore, in this paper, the researcher opens up this by drawing attention to the semantics extension of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression. The general objective of this paper is to

describe the semantic extensions of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expressions and the following are the specific objectives.

1. To assess the purposes of using the semantics extension of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression
2. To describe the parts of the body that the society mostly uses in idiomatic expressions
3. To describe the effects of the semantic extension of the body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression on communication and parts of the communities can be affected

Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive survey research design. In the study, an interview scheduled designed by the researcher was used. As (Kothari, 2004) concluded, an interview is suitable for a descriptive study for two reasons. First, an interview can be employed for securing relevant data. Second, the respondents with whom the interview is conducted are few in which case the interview was appropriate. Thus, a semi-structured interview, which was prepared based on the objectives of the study and the review of the related literature was used to collect relevant data from the respondents. Accordingly, Afan Oromo instructors from Madda Walabu, Bule Hora, and Arsi Universities were taken as a sample. Among the total number of 21 instructors, 7 from each university were taken by using the snowball sampling method. In addition, 3 head office administrators and 9 experts from Oromia regional Cultural and Tourism offices of Bale Zone, Guji Zone, and Arsi Zone were used. From the total sample of 12 respondents: 1 head office administrators and 3 experts from each Zone were employed using the purposive sampling technique. In gen-

eral, 33 subjects were assigned on the occasion they could be available and interviewed individually by using an in-depth interview technique. To test the validity and reliability of the instruments, a pilot test was conducted in one university which was not selected as a sample for this study by the researcher. Accordingly, Afan Oromo instructors from Salale University and head office administrators and experts from the Oromia regional Cultural and Tourism office of North Shoa Zone were used as a pilot area for this research. The data gathering procedure took place accordingly. To do so, first, the prepared tools were administered and piloted. Then, the researcher directly went to Universities; and conducted the interview. After that, interviews were narrated, organized, and analyzed thematically. Besides, some written documents, researches, articles, and books were analyzed. Finally, conclusions and recommendations were made.

Results and Discussion

Assessing the semantic extension of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression is essential to identify the body parts that are highly used in the expression, purposes of using the semantics extension of these body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression, the effects of the semantic extension of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression on communication and the parts of the society that are affected while expressions are used. As interviewed, Afan Oromo instructors, Oromia region Cultural and Tourism head office administrators, and experts were reacted to the point.

Regarding the body parts that are highly used in an idiomatic expression, most of the instructors, participants from Cultural and Tourism offices, and experts responded that the semantics extension of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression is known and

used in the communication. In addition to this, they expressed as the society use the semantic extension of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression in their daily communication. As they have indicated, most of the body parts are used within this expression for the different expressions; because using the semantic extension of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression is selected very well and taken as the appropriate use of language in Oromo society. Regarding the body parts that are highly used in this expression, they suggested that all the body parts are used in this expression but there are the body parts that are mostly used and highly used in the expression.

The body parts that are used in this expression are head, face, forehead, eye, eyebrow, nose, ear, cheek, mouth, lip, teeth, tongue, shoulder, hand, finger, palm, armpits, navel, back, abdomen, leg, thigh, knee, foot, fibula, fingernail or nail, heart, kidney, lung, brain, intestine, chest, arch, arm, belly, chin, waist, stomach, elbow, eyebrow, earlobe, jaw, liver, lung, bone, and skin. Among these body parts, some of them are the most widely used in oral utterances and written materials; the most widely used ones are head, face, eye, nose, mouth, tongue, hand, abdomen, leg, knee, nail, liver, lung, brain, intestine, chest, ear, bone, back, armpits, stomach, elbow, navel, eyebrow, lip, and skin. The body parts that are highly used in the idiomatic expression are the eye, ear, hand, mouth, head, back, shoulder, navel, liver, and belly. The reason is that the semantic extension of these body parts is widely distributed in idiomatic expressions.

In addition, some of the body parts are taken because they are culturally more important to represent and express many things than the other parts of the body. In addition, the respondents stated that bone, blood vessels,

and blood are highly used in daily communication; especially for expressing love or for representing having an approach for someone. Besides, these body parts were classified study purpose into three as body parts that are found above the neck, body parts that are found below the neck, and body parts that are found at internal parts of the body and interviewed the respondents; and some of the expressions are observed accordingly.

Some of the body parts found above the neck and their semantic extensions in idiomatic expression are given as follows:

1. The semantic extensions of *Mataa* for head in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression

kutaa qaamaa: mataa (Afan Oromo)

Body part: Head (English)

mataa dha (Afan Oromo): It is the head (English)

hangafa (Afan Oromo): elder (English)

2. The semantic extensions of *ija* for eye in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression

kutaa qaamaa: ija (Afan Oromo)

Body part: eye (English)

ija kooti (Afan Oromo): It is my eye (English)

barabaachisaa / nama barbaachisaa dha (Afan Oromo): Important or Important person (English)

From these expressions, the researcher observed that the semantic extension of *mataa* for head and *ija* for eye in Afan Oromo idiomatic expressions are stands for the other thing and has different explanations. As a result, these body parts are extended and delivered unexpected meanings within the communication. In general, within these expressions head and eyes are changed from the part of the body to the other things; these are the age of the person and important person. Therefore the semantic extension of

head and eye in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression represents other things that are completely different from their literal meaning and expressed things in different directions.

There are also the semantic extensions of body parts below the neck in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression. Some of the expressions are suggested as follows:

1. The semantic extensions of *gateettii* for shoulder in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression

kutaa qaamaa: gateettii (Afan Oromo)

Body part: shoulder (English)

gateettii qaba (Afan Oromo): Have a shoulder (English)

kabajamaadha ykn nama ulfaataa dha (Afan Oromo): Respected person (English)

1. 2. The semantic extensions of *harka* for hand in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression

kutaa qaamaa: harka (Afan Oromo)

Body part: hand (English)

harka qaba (Afan Oromo): have a hand (English)

olmaa qaba/ nama gargaara (Afan Oromo): A person who helped the other (English)

From the above expressions, the researcher observed that how the semantic extensions of the shoulder and hand are used in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression. The semantic extensions of *gateettii* for shoulder and *harka* for hand in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression represented different things; like that of a respectable person and a person who helped the others. Therefore from these, the researcher understood that the semantic extensions of these body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expressions transmit different messages out of their literal meaning.

There are also the semantic extensions of internal parts of the body in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression. These are the lung, stomach, liver, brain, and intestine.

Among these some are suggested as follows:

1. The Semantic extension of *tiruu* for liver in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression

kutaa qaamaa: tiruu (Afan Oromo)

Body part: liver (English)

tiruu tokko (Afan Oromo): They are one liver (English)

obboleewwani(Afan Oromo): They are siblings (English)

2. The Semantic extension of *mar'imaan* for intestine in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression

Kutaa qaamaa: mar'imaan (Afan Oromo) Body part: intestine (English)

mar'imaan itti jige (Afan Oromo): The intestine is failed towards it (English)

ilmoo deechief (Afan Oromo): Giving birth for someone (English)

From the expressions, the researcher observed the semantic extension of *mar'imaan* for intestine and *tiruu* for the liver in the idiomatic expression used to express siblings and giving birth for someone. Within expressions, these body parts are represented other things and gave unexpected meanings.

From the above analysis, the researcher understood that the semantic extension of *ija* for eye, *harka* for hand, *mar'imaan* for intestine, *tiruu* for liver, and *mataa* for head and *gateettii* for shoulder in idiomatic expression are given different interpretations that are far from their literal meaning. In addition, society used almost all parts of the body; but there are the body parts that are used most widely with high frequency in the expression.

Regarding the purposes of using the semantics extension of the body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression, most of the respondents were given detailed explanations;

especially, Oromia region Cultural and Tourism head office administrators responded to the point. The response of one of the interviewees is stated as follows:

The semantic extension of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression is used in daily communication; there are the semantic extensions of other words which are used in an idiomatic expression; among these, names of the place and animals are used in the expression. Even though those terms are used, the semantic extensions of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expressions are highly acceptable and selective to express many things in many aspects. As a result, society used it in their daily communication; especially, whenever they want to express things figuratively. On the other hand, hence the semantic extensions of body parts in idiomatic expression are known and highly used in the Oromo society, the people loved to use it to express things in these expressions for keeping their social and cultural values. In addition, they used these expressions for strengthening their ideas and whenever they wanted to be got attention from others.

From the above interview, the researcher concluded that the semantic extensions of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression have multiple purposes. The Oromo society used these expressions to keep their cultural and social values. They also used the expression because the expressions are selected and acceptable to express things. Besides, they used these expressions when they wanted to give power to their ideas and get focus from others.

Regarding the effects of the semantic extension of body parts in Afan Oromo in the idiomatic expression on communication and parts of the societies can be affected, among respondents, Afan Oromo language instructors suggested that: The semantic extension of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression has a great function in facilitating communication and plays the great role for transmitting ideas in the proper use of language; despite, these the expressions have its impact on communication. Within the uses of these expressions, it is known that the words are extended and loses the literal meaning that they have in the expression.

Therefore, those expressions can't represent what they formerly stand for; they have their impact on communication. Regarding the societies that are affected while these expressions are used, they suggested that even though the language is their native language, children at the primary schools don't understand these kinds of expressions until they grow up; because, the expressions are move out from their literal meaning. So, they are highly affected until they identified the expressions. In addition, they also indicated as, the people, who learn Afan Oromo as a second language are highly affected while the expressions are used; consequently, when they were learning the language, most of the time they have learned the literal meaning of the expressions.

From this assessments, the researcher concluded that, within the use of the semantic extensions of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression, the parts of the body do not deliver the formal meanings that they hold before; therefore, the expression does not give the literal meanings like that of semantic meanings that they had within the expressions or sentences; as a result, unless the people understand and know them, they faced the problem while the expressions are

used. On the other hand, as the respondents suggested that, in the uses of the semantic extension of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression body parts gave different interpretations out of their literal meanings; in case, some parts of the communities are affected. They suggested that, even though the language is their mother tang, the children at primary school are affected when they grew up until identified the expression. In addition, those who have learned Afan Oromo as a second language are also affected due to the reason that they have learned the literal meaning of the expression.

From some document analysis, the researcher has assessed the core points that related to the interview. As (Kitessa, 2016) suggested that, idioms are used to transform abstract information into more concrete ones; they are found in any area of human communication to ease the difficulty of spontaneous speech. This material was focused on Oromo Oral Pun (*miliqqee*): Confusion with Oromo Idiom (*jechama*) Focusing on Yadate's *miliqqee* Part of 'Qorii Qorsaa' and identified the confusion between Oromo pun and Oromo idiom. He investigated factors for Yadate's confusion based on *miliqqee* part of Yadate's "*qorii qorsaa*". In addition (Olbasa & Adola, 2017) have collected 678 Oromo and 805 Amharic body part idioms from native speakers and expressed as idioms are central to human language and cognition and since they exhibit patterns just like other areas of language like phonology, morphology, and syntax. This study was on A Conceptual Comparative Approach to Teach Oromo and Amharic (Major Languages of Ethiopia) Idioms and explored how Oromo and Amharic idioms of body parts can be taught. Therefore the researcher has got the important points about idioms that are supported and used as footing steps for the current study.

Accordingly, within this study, the researcher is aimed to describe the semantic extension of body parts in Afan Oromo in idiomatic expression. The body parts that are highly used in the expression, its purposes, its effects on communication, and the parts of the communities that are affected when the expressions are used are identified and assessed. In addition, some of the semantic extensions of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expression are stated with their explanation.

Generally, to gather relevant data, the important points under the issues are gathered from the people. In addition, the necessary texts, articles, and researches were collected and document analysis was carried out. Lastly, the necessary points were obtained and presented as well as analyzed thematically. From the study the following findings are gotten: the semantic extensions of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expressions are known and useful in the Oromo society. The people have used it for keeping their social and cultural values and when they wanted to give power to their utterances. As the findings showed, all most all body parts are used in the expression; however, eye, ear, hand, mouth, head, back, shoulder, navel, liver, belly, and bone are the body parts that are highly used in the expression. The study also indicated that in the semantic extensions of body parts in Afan Oromo idiomatic expressions, the expressions were not stands by their semantic meanings; they gave different interpretations out of their literal meanings; in case, some parts of the communities are affected; these are children at primary school whose their native language is Afan Oromo and those who have been learning Afan Oromo as a second language were affected.

Conclusion

To sum up, this study has clearly described the semantic extensions of body parts in Afan

Oromo idiomatic expression; and stated all almost all the body parts are used in the expression; however, there are the body parts that are highly used in these expressions. In addition, the expressions have their purposes and effects on communication. The parts of the communities that are affected by these expressions are children at the primary schools whose Afan Oromo is their native language and those who have been learning Afan Oromo as a second language. Therefore, studying, recording, and teaching idioms, motivating the researchers and professionals in these areas helps for further work on the language development; and helps to use the language in a very natural and attractive manner. It also reduces the problem of misunderstanding in the use of language. Similarly, since language plays an indispensable role within human life, the development of a given language is highly related to the development of that society; therefore, giving attention to it and studying the language helps the society to be proactive in all dimensions and pave the way for the others to learn and use the language properly.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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