

# EMOTIONS AND BODILY SENSATIONS IN JAVANESE

Sri Wahyuni (Universitas Gajayana Malang)

## Abstract

This study investigates emotions – cognitively-based feelings – and body in Javanese. It focuses on whether speakers of Javanese can refer to their body – bodily sensations – to talk about emotions. It is a qualitative study whose corpora were Javanese sentences containing emotions and body part terms in some published works. The results of data analysis show that in Javanese, emotions can be described via bodily sensations.

**Key terms:** emotions, bodily sensations

## INTRODUCTION

Several studies of emotions referring to body have been undertaken in languages of Asia. First of all, Hasada (2001) states that, in Japanese, emotions are thought to be located in a part of one's body, namely *mune* 'chest' because this is where *kokoro* – the seat of emotions – is located. She also mentions that *hara* – located in the *hara* 'belly' – is viewed as an organ of thinking, whereas *ki*, in addition to being used as a reference to some emotions, is also frequently used as a reference to mental activities. Meanwhile, *mushi* – located in the *hara* – is referred to when one experiences emotions similar to *angry* and *unpleased*.

Among her studies of emotions in Chinese, Ye (2001) examines different ways that body is codified in the language of emotions. She points out that Wierzbicka's (1999) assumption that in all languages, cognitively based feelings can be described via observable bodily events and processes, bodily sensations, and figurative bodily images are supported in Chinese. Furthermore, she shows that the interpretation of the link between the bodily events and processes and the emotions they describe is culture-specific. Similarly, different cultures also link the message behind the bodily image to different feelings.

Enfield (2001) investigates facial expressions referring to emotions in Lao. Although the study focuses only on facial expressions, it suggests that speakers of Lao can refer to the body to talk about cognitively-based feelings. Similarly, Goddard (2001) investigates cognitively-based feelings with reference to the use of *hati* 'liver' in Malay. He shows that the speaker of Malay can also talk about emotions referring to his/her body.

Priestly (2001) investigates the use of internal organs referring to emotions in Koromu, a language of Papua New Guinea. She shows that *oru* ‘insides’ in various constructions can be understood as referring to feelings, such as the thought: “something bad happened to me” and “something good happened to me”. *Oru* ‘insides’ can also be imagined to move up, and this image is understood as referring to cognitively-based feelings.

Among these studies, none has been undertaken for Javanese, a language spoken in Indonesia. For this reason, a study on the same area – how the speakers of Javanese refer to their body when they talk about emotions – is important. It becomes important because the study will be a ‘folk description’ that can be added to some other ‘folk descriptions’ of other languages. According to Enfield and Wierzbicka (2001), to understand the complex relations between thoughts, feelings, and bodily processes, people have to understand, compare, and contrast as many ‘folk descriptions’ as possible’.

This study will also be very useful in providing a description of Javanese emotion terms. These emotion terms are described from the point of view of the Javanese people’s usual interpretation of their meaning. Such description is important because it is claimed that the use of emotion terms does not match between languages. For example, the use of the English *angry* does not exactly match the French *colere*, and the English *furios* does not match the French *furieux* (Harkins and Wierzbicka, 2001). Therefore, a detailed explanation would have to be given about how English speakers interpret and understand *angry* and *furios*, as well as how the French speakers interpret and understand *colere* and *furieux*.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study is a qualitative one focussing on the question of how speakers of Javanese refer to the body when they talk about cognitively-based feelings. The corpora used in this study consist of sentences that contain body part terms used as referring to emotions. Since the study focuses more specifically on Wierzbicka’s assumption (1999) that in all languages, emotions can be described via bodily sensations, the corpora are those containing body part terms in which a bodily sensation that can appear either because of or concurrently with thought-based feelings are understood as referring to inner feelings instead of physical events. The use of the sensations referring to emotions in this way implies ‘folk models’ that can be interpreted as follows:

- (a) [when I saw/heard X] I thought something (Y)

because of this, I felt something

like a person feels when this person thinks something like this

because of this, I felt something in my body

like a person feels when something (Z) happens to this person's body

(b) [when I saw/heard X] I thought something (Y)

because of this, I felt something

like a person feels when this person thinks something like this

when I felt this, I felt something in my body

like a person feels when something (Z) happens to this person's body

(Wierzbicka, 1999, p. 296).

Therefore, the Javanese sentence '*Panas kupingku, dipisuhi anakku wedok*' (I felt my ears burn when I heard my daughter swear at me), for example, implies that a bad thing said by a person can be thought of as being able to burn other person's ears, and the burning sensation is understood as referring to inner feelings. Since the Javanese always interpret a burning feeling felt in any part of the body as referring to *nesu*, the above-mentioned sentence is understood as: 'the experiencer was *nesu*' (comparable to *angry*).

In the situation referred to in the sentence above, a father was *nesu* with his daughter because she swore at him. Swearing at another person is a bad thing. Because he had a higher social rank than her, he could think about her in this way: 'this person did something bad to me; I do not want this person to do things like this; I want to do something because of this; I can do this because this person is not someone above me'.

The analysis of the data involves three steps. Firstly is discussed how the Javanese view the sensations related to the body parts mentioned in the corpus. For example, the burning sensation is interpreted as caused by 'something bad' directed to that person. This interpretation then links the bodily sensation to the emotions to which emotion it refers. Next to be presented is an analysis of what emotions are talked about in terms of a given body part. The reference is justified by means of linguistic evidence, namely by presenting sentences containing the emotion term in question. Thirdly, the emotion is analysed using the Natural Semantic Metalanguage approach.

## DATA ANALYSIS RESULTS

The data analysis results show that, in Javanese, cognitively-based feelings can be described via bodily sensations. The emotions and body parts presented in this section are only few of many believed to be representative. The details of the emotions are as follows:

Datum 1

Emotion: *judheg* (comparable to ...)

Body part: head

Sensation: *puyeng* (comparable to *dizzy*)

Corpus: *Bian Biau krasa puyeng siraha* (Bian Biau's head felt dizzy) (Esmiet, 1977, p. 37).

Explanation:

*Puyeng* (dizzy) is a bodily sensation associated with an activity of thinking, namely thinking about many things that come one after another for a long time until the activity of thinking cannot be done anymore – ‘before now, this person has thought about many things for some time; now this person cannot think anymore’. Since this sensation is associated with the activity of thinking, and the Javanese instinctively know that the process of thinking takes place inside the head, the sensation also occurs in the head.

The logic behind the occurrence of *puyeng* feeling and the Javanese people's interpretation of this feeling link this bodily sensation to the emotion it refers to. The Javanese interpret *puyeng* as always referring to *judheg*, which can arise after someone thinks about and does many things, but each thing always comes to a bad ending. After this happens many times, this person feels he/she cannot think anything anymore. This is in line with the definition of *judheg* given by Poewadarminta (1939, p. 95), namely *kentekan akal, wis ora bisa mikir* (run out of thoughts, cannot think anymore). Thus, someone can feel *judheg* when he/she, at a certain stage, does not have any more thoughts or cannot think anymore.

As an illustration, the situation referred to in the above-mentioned corpus, *Bian Biau* felt *judheg* after all his attempts ended up in failure. At that time, he attempted to solve his problem – the government had threatened to cancel his lease on their plantation. He thought seriously about what he could do. The first idea was to delegate one of his trusted colleagues who had a good position in the government to persuade the one in charge of the matter. However, that person failed to help him. *Bian Biau* thought seriously for the second time about what he could do. As a result, he asked his eldest daughter, who used to be the

girlfriend of the one in charge of his lease cancellation to promise a marriage to him in return for his help. The girl refused to do it, and even left the house as a response to the offence. The second attempt failed. Then, he thought again about what to do. A similar idea came up. He asked his other daughter, who was not less pretty than the eldest one, to persuade the government official in charge of that matter. However, the girl did not do it successfully. After all his efforts resulted in failure, and that he could not think anymore about what to do, he felt *judheg*.

The sentence containing the word *judheg* below provides a clearer illustration of the emotion term:

*Sustiya judheg. Mikirake dalaning urip sing wis dipecaki. Nganti umure sing wis meh ngancik angka 60, dheweke durung mangerti apa sejatine urip iki* (Pangastuti, 1997, p. 38) (Sustiya felt *judheg* thinking about the life he had had. He was nearly 60 years old, but he still had not understood the essence of life).

The above-mentioned sentence implies that Sustiya had thought about the essence of life for a long time. It is implicitly mentioned in the context of the sentence that since his younger days, he had thought about life. He tried to do so by analysing people's behaviour, including his own. However, he found out that people's behaviour could not help him understand life. He, then, thought that religion or belief would enable him to understand it. He failed. Finally, he traced back what had happened in his life with the assumption that he would understand the essence of life, but as mentioned in the sentence, he still did not understand it, even when he was nearly 60 years old. At that moment, he found himself not to be able to think about it anymore.

The similar sentence containing the word *judheg* below also provide insight into the meaning of the emotion word:

*...esuk iki mau (bayiku) jan gawe judheg temenan* (Prawoto, 1987, p. 16) (...this morning, (my baby) made me feel very *judheg*).

In the situation referred to in this sentence, a mother found her baby crying hysterically. She thought that the baby would stop crying if she patted and stroked its chest. She did this, but the baby kept crying. She then decided to swing it gently. She did this, but she failed to stop it crying. She thought that breastfeeding would stop the crying, so she breastfed it. It still did

not stop crying. At this stage, she could not think anymore. She did not know what else she could do to make her baby calm down. She felt *judheg*.

From the explanation about *judheg*, an explication of this emotion term can be proposed as follows:

*Judheg* (X *judheg*)

- a. X felt something because X thought something
- b. sometimes a person thinks:
- c. “some time before now, I thought:
- d. If I did things like these, something good would happen
- e. because of this, I did these things
- f. now I see something good does not happen
- g. I do not want this to happen
- h. I want to do something if I can
- i. I cannot think: I want to do other things”
- j. when this person thinks this, this person feels something very bad
- k. X felt something like this
- l. because X thought something like this.

Component (c) shows that X has thought for a long time. The thoughts, namely planning with the assumption that something good would result, are shown in component (d). Component (f) indicates the fact that the good thing that X thought would happen as the outcome of the thing he/she did, never happens. X does not want that to happen – component (g) – therefore, X wants to think about other thing he/she can do – component (h) – but X knows he/she cannot think anymore – component (i).

Datum 2

Emotions: *kaget* (comparable to *surprised* and *shocked*)

Body part: eyes

Sensation: darken

Corpus: ...*panonipun ngraos sumrepet, ...kabar sedhih* (Suharti, 1975, p. 169) (her eyes/eyesight felt darken, ...(when she read) the sad news’.

Explanation: in this situation, a girl felt her eyesight darken when she read sad news from her ex-boyfriend. He wrote that his wife – the girl's close friend – had just passed away immediately after giving birth to their baby son. To the girl, the news was something very bad because it meant a terrible loss. She loved her very much. She treated her – when alive – as if she had been her own elder sister. Because of that, she did not mind making sacrifice for her, including her love. She gave up her love and let her marry the man whom she loved. She expected them to live happily ever after. That was why, when she suddenly discovered the bad news, she felt something very bad, and she felt her eyes getting dark.

The Javanese interpret this bodily sensation as always referring to *kaget* (comparable to surprised and shocked). That is, when they hear someone describe himself/herself as feeling his/her eyes getting dark, they automatically understand that the person feels *kaget*. They interpret this bodily sensation in this way because they view this sensation as an involuntary reaction towards a sudden realization that “something very bad has happened”. The suddenness is thought as being able to cause the experiencer to experience a moment when: “for a short time, I cannot think”, and concurrently “cannot say anything”. Another possible concurrent event is: “I cannot see anything”, and this is applicable for the situation referred to in the above-mentioned corpus. Because of this logic, as well as the fact that the only emotion term involving suddenness – “I know now” – and “something very bad happened to me” is *kaget*, the bodily sensation of eyes feel getting dark is always interpreted as referring to *kaget*.

As an illustration, the situation referred to in the above-mentioned sentence, the girl felt her eyes getting dark because, at that moment, she thought: “something very bad happened to me”. The death of the woman was viewed as something that happened to her because she thought of the woman as someone who was like “a part of” her. Thus, something that happened to a “part of” her was understood to have happened to her too. Furthermore, the sudden discovery – “I know now” – that “something very bad happened” to her, caused her to experience a moment when “she could not think about anything”, and concurrently she “could not see anything”. She felt *kaget*.

The sentence containing the word *kaget* below, provides a clearer illustration of this emotion term:

*Sawise make Dani dikandhani bapake, sakala...kaget* (Sunardi, 1997, p. 38) (After Dani's mother was told by his father, she was instantly kaget)

In this situation, Dani's mother was *kaget* after suddenly discovering a very bad thing that she did not think would happen had happened to her. The suddenness can be seen from the fact that she did not feel *kaget* until her husband told her the very bad thing – Dani's request to marry a girl who was pregnant to his baby. The request, as well as the news about the pregnancy, was viewed as a very bad thing for Dani's parents because they knew that the girl was actually Dani's own biological younger sister who was adopted by another person when both were still babies. Since the use of *kaget* in the sentence enables the sentence to imply all the semantic components of the word, the sentence is semantically acceptable.

However, the following sentence is semantically unacceptable because the use of the word *kaget* is inconsistent with the cognitive scenario mentioned earlier”

*\*Sawise dikandhani makaping-kaping yen bojone laku sedheng, dheweke kaget.*

(After being told repeatedly that his/her spouse had a love affair, he/she was kaget).

This sentence does not imply that the experiencer felt *kaget* immediately after discovering the very bad thing that happened to him/her. The phrase *makaping-kaping* (repeatedly) indicates that the very bad thing that happened to the experiencer had been known earlier. This is why the semantic component “I did not know this would happen” does not exist.

It is worth noting that *kaget* (*kaget* 1) is a term used to describe a specific emotion. This word should not be misinterpreted because there is another *kaget* (*kaget* 2) which overlaps with it. Both words imply a discovery of an unexpected thing, but they differ from each other in a two ways. Firstly, *kaget* 1 appears as a result of a thought, whereas *kaget* 2 does not have any relation to a thought. That is why *kaget* 2 is not used to describe emotion. It is comparable to *startled*, as well as the Malay *terkejut*, which is the reaction to a sudden stimulus (Goddard, 1997, p. 163). Secondly, the unexpected thing related to *kaget* 1 is always something very bad, and this happens to the experiencer, included someone who is like “a part of” the experiencer. However, the unexpected thing related to *kaget* 2 does not necessarily have to have happened to the experiencer. To give a better illustration to *kaget* 2, the sentence below can give insight into what *kaget* 2 is:

*Regemeng-regemeng loro mau sajake kaget...mbengok...* (Sugito, 1987, p. 47) (The two shadows seemed to be kaget...screamed...)

In this situation, two people – thieves trying to escape from the crowd of people running after them – were *kaget* when all a sudden, right in front of them in the darkness, a policeman commanded them to stop and put their hands up. They were *kaget* because what the policeman did was unexpected.

The explication of *kaget* is proposed as follows:

*Kaget 1 (X feels kaget)*

- (a) X felt something because X thought something
- (b) sometimes a person thinks:
- (c) “I know now: something very bad happened to me
- (d) I did not know that this would happen”
- (e) When this person thinks this, this person feels something bad
- (f) X felt something like this
- (g) because X thought something like this

Component (c) indicates the sudden realization that a very bad thing has happened. This also indicates that the very bad thing happened to X, including someone who is “like a part of” X with the assumption that “a part of” X is X. Component (d) indicates that the very bad thing was unexpected, meaning that before it took place, X did not know that it would happen.

In comparison, the explication of *kaget 2* is proposed as follows:

*Kaget 2 (X kaget)*

- (a) X knows now: something happened
- (b) X did not know that this would happen
- (c) X felt something because of this
- (d) X’s body moves now not because X wants to

Component (a) indicates a sudden discovery of something that happened, such as an unexpected noise, touch, thing coming into sight (Goddard, 1997, p. 16), and component (b) indicates that before the thing happened, X did not know that it would happen. Component (d) indicates that X’s body moved spontaneously as a reaction to the stimulus.

Datum 3

Emotions: *bungah* (comparable to *delighted*) and *kaget* (comparable to *surprised* and *shocked*)

Body part: throat

Sensation: tighten

Corpus: ...*krungu gunem mangkono*, ...*gulune seret*, ...*soko bungahe* (Koesoemadigda, 1928, p. 58) (...heard that talk, ...his throat was tightened, ...because of his (roughly) delight).

Explanation:

In this situation, a man felt his throat tighten when he suddenly heard a very good news from the maid of the woman whom he was in love with. She said that her mistress had implicitly announced to the household members her intension to choose him and to develop a serious relationship with him. She would agree to marry him in four years' time. When he heard the news, he felt something very good.

The Javanese think of feeling tightened in one's throat as an involuntary reaction to a sudden realization to something very good or bad has happened. Because of the sudden realization, for a short time, a person cannot think, and concurrent with this, he or she cannot say anything. He/she cannot say anything because his/her throat, which is associated with the ability to speak, is tightening. Javanese emotion terms implying a sudden realization that something has happened are *bungah* and *kaget*. *Bungah* implies a sudden realization that something very good has happened, whereas *kaget* implies a sudden realization that something very bad has happened to the experiencer. Thus, feeling of tightened in one's throat can be interpreted as either referring to *bungah* or *kaget*.

In the situation referred to in datum 3, the man thought: "something very good happened". He viewed the girl's intension as something very good because he thought that his dream would come true. He had been holding affection for her since he was a teenager. When he told her about his feelings, she did not give him a definite answer. She said she needed four years before deciding whether she would accept or reject his love. He understood her reason for doing this. He knew that another man – his close friend – was also in love with her, and had already expressed his feeling too. Although she had said the same thing to his close friend, he thought she would later choose his friend instead of him, because at that moment he was not as ready as his friend in terms of financial matters. Hence, he did not really expect her to choose him. However, he suddenly realized that she would choose him.

It is clear that the sensation felt by the man arises because he thought: “I know now: something very good has happened; I did not know that this would happen”. Since this is the cognitive scenario of *bungah*, it suggests that the man felt *bungah*. In line with this scenario, the explication of *bungah* is proposed as follows:

*Bungah (X bungah)*

- (a) X felt something because X thought something
- (b) sometimes a person thinks:
- (c) “I know now: something very good happened
- (d) I did not know that this would happen”
- (e) when this person thinks this, this person feels something very good
- (f) X felt something like this
- (g) because X thought something like this

Component (c) indicates that the very good thing that happened does not necessarily have to have happened to X. It can happen to another person. Moreover, it also indicates suddenness of the realization that something very good has happened. Component (d) indicates that before the very good thing took place, X did not know something very good like that would happen.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the data analysis, it can be concluded that, in Javanese, people can describe cognitively-based feelings via bodily sensations. This finding supports the previous assumptions that in all languages, speakers can refer to their body – including bodily sensations – when they talk about emotions (Wierzbicka, 1999). This study also provides a ‘folk description’ of Javanese that strengthens understanding about Javanese.

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