



Lexemic Conversion in Indonesian

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ABSTRACT

This paper is intended to describe various possibilities of Indonesian lexemic conversion to other lexemes that belongs to other word classes but they are still semantically included in the same sememes. By observing data gathered intuitively as an Indonesian native speaker, and their possibilities of becoming members of other word classes, it is found that there are many Indonesian vocabularies have potentials to be transposed to other word classes through conversion processes. Indonesian verbs and nouns tend to have greater possibilities to convert to other categories than the other parts of speech. All of these phenomena suggests that conversion processes are essentially constituting the unlimited human thinking and the limited language as the expression medium.

Keyword: lexeme; sememe; conversion

LEXEME AND SEMEME

Long time ago, approximately more than forty years, I had read an article placed on a compilation article book published by Voice American Forum Lectures. This article discusses at length about the differences between "Syntactic lexemic" and "Syntactic Sememic" (Lamb, 1969, 45-57). According to the writer, well formed sentences should be constructed obeying or fulfilling both lexemic and sememic rule. Sentences like chomsky's example, that is widely known as anomalous sentence, are regarded as sememic disobeying rule sentence. The sentence *Colorless green ideas sleep furiously* is an anomalous sentence because, eventhough the categorial fillers of its functional slots are completely correct, the semantic entities expressed by them are not compatible (See Kridalaksana, 1993, 14, Fromkin & Rodman 1983, 177; Wijana 1996, 34-40). In other words this sentence is obeying lexemic rule but disobeying the sememic one. So, term of sememic relates with sense or matter, while lexemic does with forms. Meanwhile, Dardjowidjojo (2003, 22) exemplifies sentences *Kuda hijau kami merokok selusin jeruk* 'Our green horse smokes a dozen of orange'. From this starting point, I will describe the difference between "lexeme" and "sememe". Lexeme is the minimal distinctive unit in the semantic system of a language (Crystal, 1980, 208). It is an abstract unit which is underlying such sets of grammatical variants, as *walk, walked, walking, walks, or big, bigger, biggest*, etc. However, the problem is not always easy because any lexemic unit should belong to the same category. *Walk* and *big* in these examples all belong to the same parts of speech verb and adjective respectively. Now, how about *able, unable, enable, enables* and *ability*. Allan (1986, 62-64) states that these constituents belong to different lexeme they are yielded from derivative morphological processes regardless they are in fact consisting of semantically related bases 'able'. *Able* and *unable* are adjective, *enable* and *enables* are verbs, *ability* and *inability* are nouns. There are a lot of similar cases exist in the word languages. Indonesian words *jalan* 'road' and *jalan-jalan* 'roads, and *jalan-jalan* 'take a walk', and *perjalanan* 'journey' are derived from different lexemes, eventhough, no one can deny that all of them consist of semantically related bases *jalan*. The other example, the Javanese word *weruh* 'know', *ngeweruhi* 'let someone see', *weruh-weruhan* 'to address or greet each other', *kaweruh* 'knowledge', etc. are also derived from different lexemes. The first three words are verb, while the last one is a noun. Based on this matter, it seems important to use term sememe as the equivalent of lexeme. So, word bases resulted from inflective morphological process are called lexeme, while ones done either from inflective as well as derivative processes are called sememe. This article will concerns with lexemic conversion in Indonesian, i.e. Lexemic units that have identical form but belong to different syntactic category resulted from conversion, i.e. morphological process which is not involving formal

changes. For example, the word *lalu* 'to pass' and *lalu* 'and then' which respectively occur in *la lalu begitu saja* 'He just passed like that' and *la pulang lalu tidur* 'He went home and then slept'.

LEXEMIC CONVERSION

Bauer (1988: 19-41) states that there are at least 9 types of word formation. Those are affixation, reduplication, base modification, zero modification, base shortening, lexemic combination, alphabet-based formation, unique morphs, and suppletion. It seems there is still one other process which has not been included by Bauer, i.e. conversion. This process refers to one whereby an item comes to belong to new word class without an addition of an affix, such as verbs/nouns: *taste/hit/walk/bottle/brake*; adjectives/verbs: *dirty/empty/lower*. Meanwhile, Katamba (1993, 54-55) exemplifies *head* such as used in *The head of the village school has arrived* and *She will head the village school* as the examples. He further states that the categorial differences could be identified through the morphological structures and syntactic position. With regard to the syntactic position, this phenomenon is often called "transposition". According to Marchand as quoted by Bauer (2004, 104), transposition is the use of a word in a function which it does not normally have, such as the English verb *fail* used as a modifier to an adjective in *fail safe* (see also, Kridalaksana, 1993, 220).

Other terms used to refer of this phenomenon are "zero derivation" and "functional shift" (Quirk et al. 1972). For more clearly consider (1) to (5) below between noun and verb, and (6) to (8) between adjective and verb :

- (1) I want to taste the food <> The taste is very delicious.
- (2) My parent never used to hit me <> The duo were a real hit in the last year's show.
- (3) I always walk to school <> Lets go for walk.
- (4) It is the time of her bottle <> Try not to bottle up your emotion.
- (5) High interest rates are a brake on economy <> She had to brake hard.
- (6) Try not to get too dirty <> They always dirty the room.
- (7) The room is empty <> To quench the thirst, I empty the glass.
- (8) My salary is lower than him <> I lower my body to enter the room.

This paper will discuss the possibility of conversion phenomena occurs in Indonesian lexeme which up till now have not got any serious or profound attention from Indonesian grammarians. With regard to this matter, Kridalaksana (2014, 9) only asserts that most of Indonesian lexemes, except ones like *juang* 'struggle', *temu* 'meet', *kembara* 'adventure', *kendara* 'vehicle', etc which number more or less, 1200, can be changed directly into words. Ramlan (1985, 77) in the final chapter of his book, following Allerton (1979, 146) sees this phenomenon as multiple class membership. The Indonesian word *sedang* 'medium' can be an adjective (9) as well as an auxiliary 'in progress' (10), and the word *dalam* 'deep' in spite of an adjective (11) can also be a preposition 'in' (12) as well as a conjunction 'while' (13).

- (9) Nilainya sedang 'His mark is average'
- (10) Ibu sedang pergi 'Mother is going'.
- (11) Lubang itu dalam 'The hole is deep'
- (12) Kemelut ini tentulah hanya dapat diselesaikan dalam kongres 'This crisis certainly can only be resolved in a congress'
- (13) Ibu pergi, sedang anak-anaknya tidur 'Mother is going, while the children are sleeping'

Both Ramlan and Kridalaksana do not try any further to search various possibilities of lexemic conversion in Indonesian. This is the main reason which motivates my intention to study this issue more deeply.

INDONESIAN WORD CLASSES

Before discussing the lexemic conversion possibilities in more detail, it had better to discuss word classes in Indonesian because Indonesian linguists have different classification in considering this

matter. However, to make this problem simple, principally there are similarities shared by them. Commonly there are word classes of noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, number, unit, preposition, and conjunction. There are several distributional and syntactic characteristics that can be used to classify categorical membership of lexeme in Indonesian, as shown in the following description.

Noun is any word that can fill functional slot of subject, predicate and object. This lexical category can be negated with *bukan* 'not'. Accordingly, Indonesian word *rumah* 'house', *hantu* 'ghost', *almari* 'cupboard' are nouns. Pronoun is a word which function to substitute noun, such as *aku* 'I', *dia* '(s)he', *itu* 'that', *ini* 'this', etc. Verb is any linguistic unit which can fill syntactic slot of predicate and object which can be negated with *tidak* 'do(es) not'. Therefore *datang* 'come' and *pergi* 'go' are verbs. They are commonly negated by *tidak* to construct *tidak datang* and *tidak pergi* instead of **bukan datang* and **bukan pergi*. Adjective is any word that can fill predicate, and can be preceded and followed by degree qualifier, such as *lebih* 'more', *sekali* 'very', *kurang* 'less', etc. So, *manis* 'sweet', *pahit* 'bitter', and *cantik* 'beautiful' are adjective because of the existence of *lebih manis* 'sweeter', *pahit sekali* 'very bitter', and *kurang cantik* 'less beautiful'. Adverb is any category which function to qualify the action or state expressed by the verbs within the sentence, such as *lama* 'long time', *cepat-cepat* 'quickly', *secepatnya* 'quickly', etc. For example, *saya sudah menunggu lama* 'I have been waiting for a long time', *Datang cepat-cepat ke sini* 'Come here quick', *Saya akan membayar secepatnya* 'I will pay it as soon as possible'. Number is any word that can be followed by unit classifier in constructing numeral phrase, such as *lima buah* 'five pieces', *enam ekor* '5 (untranslatable)', *tujuh liter* 'seven litters' etc. Therefore, *lima* 'five', *enam* 'six', and *seven* 'tujuh' are number, while *ekor* 'literally means 'tail', *buah* literally means 'fruit', and *liter* means 'litter' are units. Preposition is any class of word which function as director in exocentric phrase construction, such as *di* in *di rumah* 'at home', *ke* in *ke toko* 'to the shop' are prepositions. Finally, conjunction is any word category which function to mark the connection between word and word, phrase and phrase, or clause and clause. So, *dan* 'and', *serta* 'and', and *lalu* 'and then' which exist respectively in *buku dan pensil* 'book and pencil', *ayah serta adik saya* 'father and my sibling', *la masuk lalu keluar lagi* 'He is in and then out again' are conjunction. Based on this word classes, this paper will try to formulate the lexemic conversion patterning in Indonesia.

LEXEMIC CONVERSION PATTERNING

After having observed all data collected intuitively through native speaker's intuition, it is found that nearly all word classes can be converted to certain another or more other word classes. The following sections will consecutively discuss the possibilities of lexemic conversion in Indonesian. As a synchronic study, some time this paper will certainly impossible to determine which word classes exist before or after another. So, the word *and* is often used, except the transposition is already clear.

NOUN AND VERB

In English there are many examples can be given about the conversion possibilities on noun and verb. In English phrase *a good looking young man*, the word *man* refers to 'an adult male human being'. So, it is a noun. In sentence *He should man up and tell his boss what he really thinks*, it is a verb that means 'to start being brave or strong in order to deal with difficult situations' (Hornby, 2015, 917). The Indonesian word *sikat* 'brush' can be nouns as well as verbs. In (14) and (15) they are nouns, but in (16) and (17) are verbs.

(14) Ayah mengambil sikat 'Father took a brush'

(15) Ia membeli sikat dan odol 'He bought a brush and a tooth paste'

(16) Semua makanan saya sikat sampai habis 'I finished all food until nothing left'

(17) Sikat kamar mandinya kotor sekali 'Brush the bath room, it is very dirty'

the possibility *sikat* to be preceded by number *dua* 'two' and indefinite number *beberapa* 'some' proves that *sikat* in these sentences are nouns, while the possibility of *saya sikat* to be substituted by *disikat* 'to be brushed' and to be preceded by *tolong* 'please help' as an imperative marker, indicate that *sikat* in (16) and (17) are verbs. See (18) to (21) below:

(18) Ayah mengambil dua sikat 'Father took two brushes'

(19) Ayah membeli beberapa sikat dan odol 'Father bought several brushes and tooth pastes'

(20) Semua makanan disikat sampai habis 'He finished all food;

(21) Tolong sikat kamar mandinya, kotor sekali 'Please, help to brush the bath room, It is very dirty'

In normal pattern of structure *merokok* 'to smoke', *berenang* 'to swim', *membaca* 'to read' are used as verb. Consider (22), (23), and (24) below:

(22) Ia sering merokok di kamar 'He often smokes in the room'

(23) Ali berenang setiap Senin 'Ali swims every Monday'

(24) Ia sudah membaca novel itu 'He has read that novel'

However, *merokok* 'smoking', *berenang* 'swimming', and *membaca* 'reading' in (25), (26), and (27) are nouns.

(25) Merokok mengurangi umur 'smoking reduces your age'

(26) Berenang di laut selatan berbahaya 'Swimming in south sea is dangerous'

(27) Membaca membutuhkan kesabaran 'reading needs patience'

NOUN AND ADJECTIVE

Adjective in any language can be used to express various kinds of referents, i.e. Emotional state such as *angry*, *happy*, *sad*, etc., size such as *long*, *short*, *big*, *small*, etc., shape such as *round*, *oval*, *chubby*, etc., color such as *red*, *white*, *black*, etc. It is a matter of fact that several food names are derived from their dominant color, such as Indonesian word *coklat* 'brown' can also be used to refer to food *coklat* 'chocolate'. Consider (28) and (29) below in which *coklat* is used as a noun and an adjective respectively:

(28) Ia memakai baju coklat 'He puts on a brown shirt'

(29) Ia senang coklat 'He likes chocolate'

As comparison in Javanese *ijo-ijo* can mean 'all green'. This color in the later usage can be used to refer to a kind of drink made of 'green leaf plant' based on its similar hue'.

(30) Klambine ijo-ijo 'The shirts are green'

(31) Ese nganggo ijo-ijo 'The ice contains "ijo-ijo"'

Certain adjectives can also be used metonymically with article *si* 'the'. So, the article together with the adjective will transform adjectives to be nouns. For example *si kaya* 'the rich', *si miskin* 'the poor'. Compare the use of *kaya* and *miskin* in (32) and (33) below:

(32) Orang kaya dan orang miskin tidak beda di hadapan tuhan 'Rich and poor people is the same in front of God'

(33) Jurang pemisah antara si kaya dan si miskin semakin lebar 'The gap between the rich and the poor is getting wider and wider'

Eventhough it is still debatable whether the word *kaya* 'rich' and *miskin* 'poor' in *si kaya* and *si miskin* are adjectives or nouns.

NOUN AND UNIT

As it has been mentioned above, unit is any word that functions as attribute in numeral phrases. For examples Indonesian words *ekor* 'tail', *buah* 'fruit', and *orang* 'person' used in the following (34), (35), and (36) are units for respectively attributing animal, thing, and human', while ones used in (37), (38), and (39) are nouns from which the units are derived.

(34) Ia menyembelih 3 ekor ayam 'He slaughtered 3 chickens'

(35) Ia memiliki 4 buah rumah mewah 'He has 4 luxurious houses'

- (36) Saya melihat 5 orang polisi 'I saw 5 policemen'
 (37) Ayam itu, ekornya panjang 'That chicken, the tail is long'
 (38) Pohon itu banyak buahnya 'The tree bears a lot of fruit'
 (39) Banyak orang mencarinya 'Many people are looking for him'

VERB AND ADJECTIVE

Verb and adjective in Indonesian can not easily be identified. Both categories can fill predicate slot. So, it is very difficult to determine whether *marah* in (40) and its derivation forms in (41) and (42) are verbs or adjectives.

- (40) Ayah marah 'Father is angry'
 (41) Ayah marah kepada saya 'Father is angry to me'
 (42) Ayah marah-marah terus 'Father is continuously angry'

In English predicate must be filled by verb. If other categories want to be function like wise, to be (am, are is was were) as a verbal marker is needed. *Marah* 'angry' in (40) is an adjective, but ones in (41) and (42) tend to be verbs. In English adjectives such as *empty*, *clean*, etc. can also function as verbs. Compare (43) and (44) and (45) and (46) below:

- (43) The room is empty <> (44) We will empty the room.
 (45) The floor is clean <> (46) They always clean the floor.

The zero derivation is impossible to do with monomorphemic adjective. For this purpose, *me(N)-kan* affixing is needed to yield *mengosongkan* 'to empty', *membersihkan* 'to clean'.

- (47) Kami akan mengosongkan rumah 'We will empty the room'
 (48) Kami akan membersihkan lantainya 'we will clean the floor'

In Indonesian the word *mengagumkan* 'wonderful, astonishing' can either be an adjective or a verb. In (49) it is a transitive verb, while in (50) is an adjective.

- (49) pertunjukan itu mengagumkan banyak orang 'The performance astonished many people'
 (50) pertunjukan itu sangat mengagumkan 'The performance was very wonderful'

VERB AND PREPOSITION

A lot of prepositions in Indonesian are derived from verbs. For example Indonesian verb *sampai* 'arrive' in inflective morphology can be changed into *menyampaikan* 'to deliver', *disampaikan* 'is delivered', *tersampaikan* 'can be delivered', etc. See the following (51), (52), (53), and (54) below:

- (51) Ia sampai di Gerokgak 'He arrived at Gerokgak'.
 (52) Pastur menyampaikan khotbah 'The preacher delivered sermon'
 (53) Khotbah disampaikan dalam bahasa Jawa 'The sermon is delivered in Javanese'
 (54) Salammu sudah tersampaikan 'Your wishes have been delivered'

Different from (51) to (54), in (55) and (56) *sampai* functions as preposition.

- (55) Ia tidak tahu hal itu sampai sekarang. 'He does not know that matter until now'
 (56) Saya menunggu dia sampai siang 'I have waited for him until noon'

The other examples are *bagi* 'divide' and *buat* 'make'. See in (57) and (62), they are functioned as verbs:

- (57) Hadiah itu saya bagi rata 'I divide the prize fairly'
 (58) Dia membagi-bagi hadiah 'He distributed the presents'
 (59) Hadiah dibagikan kepada mereka 'The present are distributed to them'

(60) Saya buat layang-layang kemarin. 'Yesterday I made a kite'

(61) Saya dibuatkan mainan oleh ayah 'Father made a toy for me'

(62) Hal itu membuat saya bingung 'That matter made me confused'

In (63) and (64) bagi and buat function as preposition.

(63) Bagi mereka, uang sebanyak itu sulit didapat 'For them, that amount of money is hard to get'

(64) Buat apa, uang sebanyak itu 'What for is that amount of money'

VERB AND CONJUNCTION

Indonesian words *lalu* and *mulai* 'begin' can function as verbs. See (65) to (68) below:

(65) Ia lalu di depan rumahku 'He passed in front of my house'.

(66) Kalau ke Solo saya melalui jalan ini 'If goes to Solo, I passes through this road'

(67) Ia mulai bercerita 'He started telling story'

(68) Aku tidak tahu harus dimulai dari mana? 'I do not know where to begin'

When *lalu* functions as a conjunction, the grammatical meaning it expresses is 'sucession'. Meanwhile *mulai* is used to express 'since'. See (69) and (70) below:

(69) Ia datang lalu pergi 'He came and then gone'

(70) Mulai tinggal di kampung ini, aku belum pernah melihat istrinya 'Since living in this village, I have not seen his wife'

The other examples are the transposition possibility of *habis* 'finish' and *sudah* 'finish' becoming conjunction *sehabis* 'after' and *sesudah* 'after'. Compare (71) and (72) with (73)m and (74) below:

(71) Ginting menghabisi perlawanan Antonsen 'Ginting finished Antonsen's struggle'

(72) Ia belum mau menyudahi kebiasaan buruknya 'He did not wish to finish his bad habit'

(73) Sehabis menonton bola, ia tidur 'After finished watching soccer, he slept'

(74) Sesudah membaca koran, ayah berangkat ke kantor 'After finish reading newspaper, father went to office'

VERB AND UNIT

Indonesian words *ikat* 'tie' and *potong* 'cut' are verbal bases. From these bases, it can be derived various verbs such as *mengikat* 'to tie', *diikat* 'is tied', *terikat* 'bounded', *memotongkan* 'to cut for someone', *dipotong* 'to be cut', *terpotong* 'to be cut unintentionally', etc. Such as seen in (75) and (80) below:

(75) Ikat ayam ini di sana 'Tie this chicken there'

(76) Mereka mengikat kaki dan tangan saya 'He tied my hands and feet'

(77) Akhiran -an adalah salah satu morfem terikat. 'Suffix -an is one of bound morphs'

(78) Ia memotongkan saya kue 'He sliced me a cake'

(79) Bambu itu di potong 'The bamboo was cut'

(80) Jari-jari saya terpotong 'I cut my fingers'

These bases can also be exploited to be units which respectively mean 'bunch' and 'slice'. Consider (81) and (82) below:

(81) Dia memberi saya seikat mawar 'He gave me a bunch of rose'

(82) Dia memberi saya sepotong roti 'He gave me a slice of bread'

ADJECTIVE AND ADVERB

In English the word *hard* and *fast* can be used as adjective as well as adverb without any changes. In (83) and (85) they are adjectives, but in (84) and (86) they are adverbs.

(83) The wood is hard. <> (84) They worked hard

(85) The Japanese trains are fast <> (86) They run fast

In Indonesian, it is easy to find, conversions of adjective and adverb. See (87) to (90) below:

(87) Hujannya deras 'The rain is heavy' <> (88) hujan turun deras 'it rains heavily'

(89) Larinya kencang 'His running is fast <> (90) Ia berlari kencang 'He runs fast'

CONJUNCTION AND PREPOSITION

Indonesian has a lot of words whose category are not easy to identify as verb or preposition unless they are used in sentences. For examples, *karena* 'because of' in (91) is a preposition, but *karena* 'because' in (92) is a conjunction. *Sejak* 'since' in (93) is preposition, but *since* in (94) is a conjunction.

(91) Banyak orang mati karena kelaparan 'Many people die because of hunger'

(92) Ali lapar karena ia belum sarapan 'Ali was hungry because he have not had breakfast'

(93) Hujan turun deras sejak kemarin 'The rain continuously falls since yesterday'

(94) Sejak ia tinggal di sini, situasinya aman 'Since he is living here, the situation is secured'

The word *dalam* 'in' and *untuk* 'for' in (95) and (96) are prepositions, but in (97) and (98) they are conjunction:

(95) Dalam tahun ini ia sudah menerbitkan tiga artikel 'Within this year he has published three articles'

(96) Layang-layang itu dibuat untuk adik 'The kite is made for my brother'

(97) Kita harus hati-hati dalam mengambil keputusan 'We must be careful in making decision'

(98) Semua harus tenang untuk menciptakan suasana kondusif 'All parties must be calm for creating a conducive condition'

There is also other conversion possibilities, but very small in number. For example, pronoun *aku* 'I' can be the base forms of Indonesian verbs, such as *mengaku* 'to confess', *mengakui* 'to admit', *diakui* 'to be admitted', etc. Compare (99) to (100), (101) and (102) below:

(99) Aku baru saja sampai 'I have just arrived'

(100) Ia mengaku salah 'He confessed guilty'

(101) Ia mengakui bahwa hal itu sukar 'He admitted that that matter was difficult'

(102) Ijazahnya tidak diakui 'His degree is not recognized'

Number can also become the root of verb, such as found in (103) to (106) below:

(103) Anaknya dua orang 'He has two children'

(104) Saya melihat dua orang mahasiswa 'I saw two students'

(105) Hatinya sekarang mendua 'His heart arouse hesitation'

(106) Mereka pergi bertiga 'They two go'

CLOSING REMARKS

From everything has been described above, it is clear that in one hand, the ability of human beings to think is unlimited, but in the other, the language vocabularies available, are limited. This in turn, speakers compell to use expressions that are readily existing in their language based on the semantic

similarities that hold between the existing vocabularie and the new concept they want to express. Accordingly, a lot of language lexemic units are converted to create new lexemes. And, it is not surprising that a lot of Indonesian lexical units are potential to derive to become new lexemes that belong to other word classes without or only slightly changing their physical forms. The number of possibility of certain word class to be converted to other word classes will certainly depend of how the linguist classifies or describe word classes in their grammar. As far as Indonesian is concerned, words belong to noun and verb are easily derived to become lexical units of belonging to other classes. This phenomena directly cause the existence of multiple class membership. Finally, these facts suggest that syntactic conversion might become an important tool to use for identifying categorical membership of words in a language.

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