



## Visual Sovereignty over Poetics: Deconstructing the Resistance to Metaphor in the Linguistic Cognition of Boang Speakers

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### ABSTRACT

This research explores the cognitive structure of the Boang language in Aceh Singkil, a mother tongue which is now facing the threat of extinction due to language shift and lack of scientific documentation. In the midst of the dominance of conceptual metaphor theory which considers abstraction to be universal, Boang language actually presents an anomaly in the form of extreme attachment to physical reality. The main aim of this research is to deconstruct lexical mechanisms that indicate the speaker's empirical honesty through three main domains: vertical kinematics, control thermodynamics, and scale-based taxonomy. This study employed a qualitative ethnosemantic approach supported by the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) framework. Data were collected from native Boang speakers through observation and in-

depth lexical elicitation. The analysis focused on several key lexical items, including *Leneng*, *Milas*, *Hangat*, and *Kedek*, to examine how meanings are structured and categorized within the Boang cognitive system. The findings indicate that these lexical items tend to prioritize concrete physical parameters, such as direction of movement, source of energy, and physical size, rather than subjective intentions or abstract conceptual associations. Based on these patterns, this study proposes the analytical concept of Semantic Monolithism, referring to a semantic tendency in which lexical categorization is predominantly organized around stable and directly observable physical features. Rather than suggesting a complete absence of metaphorical thinking, the findings highlight an alternative semantic orientation that emphasizes empirical categorization within the examined lexical domains. The study contributes to cognitive linguistics by providing evidence of semantic variation in an under-documented language and highlights the importance of documenting local linguistic knowledge before it is affected by ongoing language assimilation.

**Keywords:** Boang language; Vertical Kinematics; Control Thermodynamics; Ethnosemantics; Metaphor Resistanc

## Introduction

The relationship between language, thought, and reality has long been a central concern in cognitive linguistics. One of the most influential frameworks in this field is Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), which argues that abstract concepts are commonly understood through mappings from concrete bodily and physical experiences. Subsequent studies have demonstrated the widespread occurrence of metaphorical structures across different languages and cultures, supporting the view that metaphor plays an important role in human conceptualization (Kövecses, 2010; 2017). Nevertheless, the assumption that metaphorical mapping constitutes a universal cognitive strategy continues to be debated, particularly in studies involving minority and under-documented languages whose semantic systems may not conform to patterns observed in major world languages.

In this study, attention is directed to the Boang language, also known as Singkil or Pakpak Boang, spoken in Aceh Singkil and surrounding areas of western Indonesia. The present research investigates a semantic tendency that is referred to as empirical honesty, a term used here to describe the tendency of lexical items to maintain direct and observable references to physical phenomena rather than extending systematically into abstract or figurative domains. Operationally, this tendency is identified through three indicators: (1) lexical meanings that primarily refer to observable physical events or entities, (2) limited evidence of metaphorical extension into abstract conceptual domains, and (3) semantic categorization based on measurable parameters such as movement, energy source, and physical scale. Rather than being treated as a universal property of the language, empirical honesty is examined in relation to specific lexical domains documented in this study.

The Boang language represents an important component of the linguistic diversity of Aceh Singkil. However, like many minority languages in Indonesia, it faces increasing pressure from language shift and changing patterns of intergenerational transmission. Studies on language vitality in Indonesia have shown that local languages frequently experience declining use among younger speakers due to the growing dominance of Indonesian in education, administration, media, and public communication (Arka, 2013; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). Similar concerns have been reported in broader language vitality surveys, which identify reduced intergenerational transmission as one of the principal indicators of language endangerment (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2024). Despite its cultural significance, scholarly documentation of Boang remains limited, particularly with regard to its semantic organization and conceptual categorization.

Previous studies on the language are relatively scarce. Suharyanto (2013), for example, documented ecological lexicons in the Singkil language and demonstrated the close relationship between language and local environmental knowledge. While this contribution is valuable for lexical documentation, it does not investigate how lexical

categories reflect broader semantic or conceptual structures. More generally, ethnosemantic studies in Indonesia have examined cultural categorization systems in various local languages, while cognitive linguistic research has predominantly focused on identifying metaphorical patterns and conceptual mappings. Consequently, relatively little attention has been paid to the possibility that some linguistic systems may organize meaning primarily through concrete physical parameters rather than extensive metaphorical extension.

Several lexical patterns observed in Boang suggest the relevance of this issue. The lexical item *Leneng*, for instance, appears to encode downward movement across different contexts while maintaining a consistent reference to physical motion. Similarly, the distinction between *Milas* and *Hangat* reflects a categorization of thermal experience associated with different sources of energy, whereas the lexical item *Kedek* appears to classify entities according to physical scale rather than biological category. These observations do not constitute direct evidence of cognitive processes; rather, they indicate recurring semantic patterns that warrant systematic investigation through linguistic analysis.

The present study therefore seeks to examine how selected Boang lexical items are organized and interpreted within their cultural and semantic context. By employing an ethnosemantic approach supported by the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) framework, this research aims to analyze how meanings are structured in the lexical domains of movement, thermal categorization, and scale-based classification. In doing so, the study contributes to ongoing discussions in cognitive linguistics concerning the diversity of semantic organization across languages and provides additional documentation of an underrepresented language of Aceh Singkil.

Beyond its theoretical contribution, the study also contributes to the documentation of local linguistic knowledge that has received limited scholarly attention. Understanding how meaning is categorized within the Boang language may offer valuable insights into the interaction between language, culture, and human experience, while supporting broader efforts to document and preserve Indonesia's linguistic diversity.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Landasan teoretis dalam penelitian ini dibangun melalui integrasi beberapa disiplin utama, yakni linguistik kognitif, etnosemantik, dan ontologi bahasa. Untuk membedah fenomena kejujuran empiris dalam Bahasa Boang, diperlukan sebuah kerangka yang mampu melampaui sekadar deskripsi leksikal, melainkan menyentuh mekanisme mental di balik pemilihan kata. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini menempatkan *Conceptual Metaphor Theory* (CMT) sebagai titik tolak kritis, yang kemudian dibenturkan dengan pendekatan *Natural Semantic Metalanguage* (NSM) serta teori relativitas linguistik.

### **1. Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Cognitive Categorization**

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), argues that human cognition fundamentally relies on metaphorical mappings from concrete source domains to abstract target domains. This perspective has become one of the dominant paradigms in cognitive linguistics and has been supported by numerous studies across languages and cultures (Kövecses, 2010; 2017). According to this framework, abstract concepts such as time, emotion, and social status are commonly understood through bodily and sensory experiences. Consequently, metaphor is often regarded as a universal cognitive mechanism rooted in embodied experience.

However, the universality claim of CMT has been questioned by several scholars. Haser (2005) argues that many linguistic expressions interpreted as metaphors may actually emerge from conventional semantic structures rather than conceptual mappings. Such critiques suggest that not all languages necessarily organize meaning through metaphorical abstraction. Despite these debates, empirical investigations have largely focused on major languages, leaving minority languages underrepresented in cognitive linguistic research.

### **2. Ethnosemantics and Natural Semantic Metalanguage**

To address this limitation, researchers have increasingly turned to ethnosemantics and the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) framework. NSM, developed by Wierzbicka (1996) and further elaborated by Goddard (2008; 2018), seeks to explain meaning through universal semantic primes while preserving language-specific conceptual structures. Unlike CMT, which emphasizes metaphorical mapping, NSM enables researchers to analyze lexical meanings at a finer semantic level and reveal culturally grounded conceptualizations.

Ethnosemantic studies have similarly demonstrated that language reflects how speech communities categorize and interpret reality (Palmer, 1996; Danesi, 2019). Sharifian (2017) further argues that cultural conceptualizations shape linguistic categories and semantic organization. These perspectives suggest that cognitive systems may vary significantly across communities and cannot always be explained through universal metaphorical principles.

### **3. Linguistic Relativity and Alternative Cognitive Systems**

The notion that language influences patterns of thought can also be traced to linguistic relativity. Contemporary discussions of linguistic relativity emphasize that linguistic structures may affect how speakers perceive, classify, and interact with the world (Evans & Green, 2018; Underhill, 2012). This perspective opens the possibility that certain languages prioritize empirical and perceptual dimensions of experience rather than abstract conceptualization.

Several studies have documented language-specific cognitive categorizations; however, little attention has been given to how endangered minority languages construct meaning through observable physical parameters such as movement, energy, and scale. As a result, alternative cognitive models that challenge dominant metaphor-based explanations remain insufficiently explored.

#### **4. Research Gap and Position of the Present Study**

Although previous studies have extensively examined metaphorical cognition and cultural conceptualization, research on endangered local languages remains limited. More specifically, no study has systematically investigated whether a language may organize meaning primarily through empirical physical parameters rather than metaphorical abstraction. Furthermore, the cognitive structure of the Boang language has not been documented within cognitive linguistic scholarship.

Therefore, this study addresses this gap by examining the lexical system of the Boang language through an ethnosemantic approach supported by the Natural Semantic Metalanguage framework. By analyzing lexical items related to movement, energy, and scale, this research seeks to demonstrate how Boang speakers construct meaning through direct physical experience and to evaluate the extent to which this cognitive system challenges dominant assumptions within Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

### **Methods**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design within an ethnosemantic framework. The ethnosemantic approach was selected because it enables researchers to examine how members of a speech community categorize and interpret reality through language (Danesi, 2019). The primary objective of this study was not to measure lexical frequency but to investigate the semantic organization and cultural logic underlying selected lexical items in the Boang language.

#### **1. Data Sources and Participants**

The data were obtained from native speakers of the Boang language residing in Aceh Singkil. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on three criteria: (1) being born and raised in the Boang-speaking area, (2) actively using Boang as a first language, and (3) possessing knowledge of local lexical variations. A total of 12 native speakers participated in the study, consisting of four speakers aged 18–30 years, four speakers aged 31–50 years, and four speakers over 50 years old. The inclusion of different age groups was intended to identify lexical consistency across generations and to support data triangulation.

In addition to primary data obtained from speakers, secondary data were collected from field notes documenting naturally occurring language use and from

previous studies related to the Boang language, including Suharyanto's (2013) study on ecological lexicons.

## 2. Researcher's Role and Reflexivity

The researcher served as the primary research instrument. As a native speaker of Boang and a member of the local community, the researcher possessed linguistic and cultural knowledge that facilitated access to naturally occurring language data. However, this dual role also carried the potential risk of interpretive bias.

To minimize subjectivity, several validation procedures were implemented. First, **member checking** was conducted by presenting preliminary interpretations to selected informants and asking them to verify whether the explanations accurately reflected their language use. Second, **peer debriefing** was undertaken with two linguistics researchers who reviewed the coding categories and semantic interpretations. Third, an **inter-rater validation procedure** was conducted on a subset of lexical data, and discrepancies in interpretation were discussed until agreement was reached. These procedures were intended to improve the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

## 3. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through four complementary techniques:

1. **Participant Observation:** The researcher observed everyday interactions among Boang speakers in natural social settings. Particular attention was given to the use of the lexical items *Leneng*, *Milas*, *Hangat*, and *Kedek* in spontaneous communication.
2. **In-depth Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore speakers' interpretations of lexical meanings and their reasons for selecting particular lexical forms in specific contexts.
3. **Lexical Elicitation:** Lexical elicitation was used to examine semantic consistency. Informants were presented with visual stimuli and situational scenarios representing movement, thermal conditions, and entity classification. They were then asked to identify the lexical items they considered appropriate for describing each situation.
4. **Metaphorical Acceptability Test:** Because metaphorical resistance constituted an important aspect of the study, a metaphorical acceptability test was administered to all participants. Informants were presented with a series of metaphorical expressions adapted from Indonesian and asked to evaluate their acceptability in Boang.

## 4. Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis followed the stages proposed by Mahsun (2014): data collection, data reduction, data analysis, and presentation of findings. The analysis was primarily informed by the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) framework and involved the following steps:

1. Data reduction and selection of relevant lexical items.
2. Identification of semantic components and semantic primes.
3. Classification of lexical items according to semantic domains.
4. Comparison of lexical meanings across speakers and contexts.
5. Interpretation of recurring semantic patterns.

The analysis focused on three semantic domains identified in the data: vertical movement (*Leneng*), thermal categorization (*Milas* and *Hangat*), and scale-based classification (*Kedek*).

### 5. Data Validation and Triangulation

Triangulation was conducted through source, method, and age-group comparison:

1. **Source Triangulation:** Lexical interpretations obtained from one informant were compared with responses from other informants. Only interpretations consistently confirmed by multiple speakers were retained as analytical findings.
2. **Method Triangulation:** Data obtained from observation, interviews, lexical elicitation, and metaphorical acceptability tests were compared to determine whether similar semantic patterns emerged across different methods.
3. **Age-Based Triangulation:** Responses from younger, middle-aged, and older speakers were compared to identify potential generational variation. A lexical pattern was considered valid when it appeared consistently across all age groups.

The findings were accepted as reliable only when evidence from multiple participants and multiple collection methods demonstrated comparable semantic interpretations.

## Discussion

### *Vertical Kinematics and Morphophonemic Reduplication: Analysis of the Lexicon Leneng*

A closer examination of the collected data reveals a consistent semantic pattern in the use of the lexical item *Leneng*. Based on the linguistic evidence gathered from native Boang speakers, this lexicon appears to function as a general marker of downward movement across different contexts. Rather than suggesting underlying cognitive mechanisms directly, the present analysis focuses on observable semantic regularities reflected in lexical usage.

In Indonesian, several lexical items are commonly used to distinguish different forms of downward movement, such as *tenggelam* (to sink), *terbenam* (to set or become submerged), and *menyelam* (to dive). These lexical distinctions often involve additional semantic features related to agency, intentionality, or the nature of the moving entity. For

example, *menyelam* generally implies intentional action performed by a human agent, whereas *tenggelam* is often associated with loss of control or accidental submersion. In contrast, the linguistic data collected in this study suggest that Boang frequently employs a single lexical form, *Leneng*, across a wider range of downward-motion events.

This pattern can be observed in several naturally occurring utterances collected during fieldwork. One example appears in the expression:

*"Ulang ko mi laut, nahan leneng"*  
 ("Do not go to the sea, or you may sink.")

In this context, *Leneng* refers to the physical event of a person moving below the water surface. Similar lexical usage was also found in references to other entities undergoing downward movement, including non-human and inanimate objects. The data indicate that the lexical choice remains relatively stable despite variation in the type of entity involved.

From an ethnosemantic perspective, these findings suggest that the semantic domain encoded by *Leneng* is organized primarily around the observable direction of movement rather than distinctions related to agency, intention, or social status. However, this interpretation should be understood as a description of linguistic patterns found in the collected data rather than as direct evidence of speakers' cognitive processes. Additional psycholinguistic research would be required to establish whether these semantic patterns correspond to broader cognitive mechanisms among Boang speakers.

Second, in the context of "**setting**" as a natural cyclical phenomenon, Boang speakers use the expression "*Matawakhi enggo leneng*" ("The sun has already set"). Although the referent is a celestial body beyond direct human control, the same lexical item is employed. In this case, the sun is conceptualized as moving below the visible horizon. From a semantic perspective, both the horizon and the water surface function as visual boundaries that mark the transition of an entity from visible to non-visible space. Consequently, the use of *Leneng* in both contexts suggests that the lexical categorization is organized around the observable direction of movement rather than the ontological status of the moving entity.

Third, in the context of "**diving**", which involves intentional human action, speakers use the expression "*Leleneng bak laut meneng kakhang*" ("Diving repeatedly in the sea to observe coral reefs"). This example reveals an important morphophonemic pattern within the Boang language. The form *Leleneng* (or *Lelenang* in some dialectal variants) appears to be derived through reduplication involving the prefix *Le-*. Field data indicate that the morpheme *Le-* consistently functions as a marker of repeated, continuous, or iterative activity.

This pattern is observed across a range of physical activities, suggesting a productive morphological process within the language. Examples include:

**Table 1.** Reduplicative Morphological Patterns in Boang

No	Base Form	Meaning	Reduplicated Form	Meaning
1	Langi	To swim	Lelangi	to swim repeatedly / continuous swimming
2	Lestun	To run	Lelestun	to run repeatedly / jogging
3	Lompat	To jump	Lelompat	to jump repeatedly
4	Leneng	downward movement	Leleneng	repeated or continuous downward movement (diving)

The recurring appearance of the morpheme *Le-* indicates a systematic grammatical strategy for encoding repetition or continuity of action. Importantly, the distinction between *Lelangi* (“swimming”) and *Leleneng* (“diving”) is not primarily based on the actor’s motivation or purpose, but rather on the direction of movement involved. While both activities occur in the same medium (water), *Lelangi* emphasizes horizontal movement, whereas *Leleneng* refers to repeated downward movement beneath the surface.

The data therefore suggest that Boang lexical categorization gives greater prominence to observable physical characteristics of an event, particularly movement orientation, than to factors such as intention or purpose. Whether a diver enters the water to catch fish, explore coral reefs, or perform another activity does not alter the lexical choice. Instead, the classification remains anchored to the physical trajectory of movement itself.

Taken together, these findings indicate a semantic tendency in which movement events are categorized according to directly observable physical parameters. Within the framework proposed in this study, this tendency is associated with what is termed *empirical honesty*, namely the preservation of a close relationship between lexical meaning and perceptible physical reality. Rather than extending meanings into broader metaphorical domains, the lexical patterns examined here demonstrate a preference for categorization based on visible and measurable aspects of experience.

The implications of this movement-oriented lexical pattern become particularly evident when examined in relation to metaphorical expressions. In many languages, including Indonesian and English, physical-motion verbs are frequently extended into abstract domains to describe emotions, memories, or psychological states. Such metaphorical extensions have been widely discussed within Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). To investigate whether similar patterns occur in Boang,

the present study incorporated a metaphorical acceptability test involving 12 native speakers representing three age groups.

Participants were presented with several metaphorical expressions adapted from Indonesian, including *"tenggelam dalam rindu"* ("sinking in longing"), *"tenggelam dalam kenangan"* ("sinking in memories"), and *"tenggelam dalam kesedihan"* ("sinking in sadness"). They were then asked to evaluate whether equivalent constructions using *Leneng* would be acceptable in Boang.

The results indicate a relatively consistent pattern. Of the 12 participants, 10 classified the expressions as unacceptable, while 2 considered them understandable but unusual. None of the participants reported using such expressions in everyday communication. Several speakers explained that *Leneng* is typically associated with observable downward movement and therefore sounded inappropriate when applied to abstract entities such as longing or memories. One participant stated:

*"Leneng harus ada yang turun. Rindu tidak bisa turun karena tidak terlihat."*  
 ("For something to be *Leneng*, it must physically move downward. Longing cannot move downward because it cannot be seen.")

Another participant commented:

*"Kalau pakai Leneng untuk kenangan, terdengar aneh karena kenangan bukan benda."*  
 ("Using *Leneng* for memories sounds strange because memories are not objects.")

These responses suggest that the lexical meaning of *Leneng* remains closely associated with physical movement in the linguistic intuitions of many speakers. However, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence that Boang completely rejects metaphorical thinking. Rather, they indicate that metaphorical extensions involving the specific semantic domain represented by *Leneng* appear to be relatively restricted compared with those commonly found in Indonesian.

A similar pattern emerged when participants were asked to evaluate constructions corresponding to expressions such as "lost in daydreams." When forms such as *Leleneng dalam lamunen* were proposed, most participants interpreted the expression literally as repeated downward movement rather than as a metaphorical description of deep reflection. This finding is particularly noteworthy because the reduplicative form *Leleneng* retains its association with continuous physical movement even when placed in a potentially abstract context.

From an ethnosemantic perspective, these findings suggest that the semantic domain encoded by *Leneng* is strongly anchored to observable movement events. The consistency of this interpretation across speakers may explain why metaphorical extensions involving emotional or psychological states are relatively uncommon.

Nevertheless, alternative explanations should also be considered. The observed resistance may reflect lexical conventions specific to *Leneng* rather than a broader characteristic of the Boang language as a whole. Additional studies examining other lexical domains would be necessary before making more general claims about metaphor use in Boang.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that the lexical item *Leneng* exhibits limited semantic extension beyond its primary physical meaning. This observation contributes to ongoing discussions in cognitive linguistics by illustrating that metaphorical mappings may vary across languages and lexical domains. Rather than challenging Conceptual Metaphor Theory in its entirety, the present findings suggest that the scope and productivity of metaphorical extensions can differ according to the semantic organization of particular speech communities.

### ***Thermodynamic Categorization and Energy Boundaries: A Contrastive Analysis of Milas and Hangat***

Following the analysis of movement-related lexicons, the study identified another noteworthy semantic distinction in the domain of temperature and heat perception. The collected data suggest that Boang does not categorize thermal experiences solely according to degrees of temperature. Instead, speakers appear to distinguish between different sources and contexts of heat through two principal lexical items: *Milas* and *Hangat*. Analysis using the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) framework indicates that the distinction between these terms is associated not only with perceived temperature but also with the origin of the heat source and the extent to which it is subject to human control.

The lexical item *Hangat* is predominantly used in contexts involving heat generated or managed by human activity. Elicitation data showed that speakers consistently used *Hangat* to describe heated water, cooking activities, and other forms of controlled heat. Examples include "*Lae hangat*" ("warm/hot water") and expressions referring to heat produced by a cooking fire. Across the collected data, these contexts share a common characteristic: the heat source is directly influenced by human action. Consequently, the semantic profile of *Hangat* appears to be associated with controllable and domesticated forms of thermal energy.

In contrast, *Milas* is typically used to describe heat originating from natural environmental sources, particularly sunlight. Native speakers consistently employed expressions such as "*Milas matawakhi*" ("the heat of the sun") when referring to strong solar radiation. Unlike *Hangat*, *Milas* is associated with thermal conditions that exist independently of direct human intervention. The distinction observed in the data therefore suggests that Boang speakers differentiate between controlled and uncontrolled sources of heat when categorizing thermal experiences.

This lexical contrast is significant because it reflects a semantic categorization that extends beyond temperature intensity alone. While Indonesian commonly uses a single lexical category (*panas*) for both hot water and hot weather, the Boang data indicate a more differentiated classification system. The distinction appears to be based on the relationship between the experiencer and the source of heat rather than on thermal intensity itself.

The consistency of this distinction was also evident in acceptability judgments. During elicitation sessions, participants were asked to evaluate alternative lexical choices. Most speakers considered the use of *Hangat* for intense sunlight unusual or inappropriate, while the use of *Milas* for heated water was similarly judged to be inconsistent with ordinary language use. These responses suggest that the semantic boundaries between the two lexicons are relatively stable within the speech community.

A further aspect of the analysis concerns the potential metaphorical extension of these thermal terms. In Indonesian, expressions such as “*suasana yang hangat*” (“a warm atmosphere”) commonly refer to friendliness or social intimacy rather than physical temperature. Similarly, thermal vocabulary is frequently used metaphorically to describe emotions or interpersonal relations. To examine whether similar patterns occur in Boang, participants were presented with several metaphorical expressions involving *Hangat* and *Milas*.

The results indicate that many speakers preferred literal interpretations of these expressions. For example, when asked to evaluate a phrase equivalent to “a warm atmosphere,” most participants associated *Hangat* with physical warmth rather than social closeness. Likewise, attempts to use *Milas* as a metaphor for anger or emotional intensity were generally considered unfamiliar or inappropriate. Participants often interpreted such expressions as references to actual thermal conditions rather than emotional states.

These findings suggest that metaphorical extensions involving *Milas* and *Hangat* may be less conventionalized than those found in Indonesian. However, this observation should not be interpreted as evidence that Boang lacks metaphorical language altogether. Rather, the data indicate that the specific lexical items examined in this study remain strongly associated with their primary physical meanings. Additional research involving a broader range of semantic domains would be necessary to determine the extent to which metaphorical mappings operate in Boang more generally.

Taken together, the contrast between *Milas* and *Hangat* demonstrates how thermal experiences are linguistically categorized according to both physical perception and contextual factors related to the source of energy. The findings contribute to ethnosemantic research by illustrating how different speech communities may organize

thermal concepts through distinct semantic distinctions that are not fully captured by broader temperature scales alone.

The implications of these findings suggest that the lexical items *Milas* and *Hangat* exhibit relatively restricted metaphorical extensions within the data examined in this study. Rather than functioning as broadly productive metaphors, both lexicons appear to remain closely associated with their primary physical meanings and the contexts in which they are conventionally used. In particular, the acceptability judgments indicate that speakers tend to associate these terms with observable sources of thermal energy rather than with abstract emotional or social experiences.

This pattern may reflect a semantic organization in which thermal vocabulary is strongly anchored to physical experience. However, it should not be interpreted as evidence that Boang speakers reject symbolic or metaphorical thinking altogether. Instead, the findings suggest that metaphorical mappings involving *Milas* and *Hangat* are more constrained than those commonly found in Indonesian. The observed restrictions may be related to established lexical conventions within the speech community, although further research would be necessary to determine the broader scope of this phenomenon.

The contrast between *Milas* and *Hangat* also contributes to discussions in cognitive linguistics regarding how different languages categorize concepts of control, agency, and environmental experience. The data indicate that Boang speakers systematically distinguish between thermal energy associated with human intervention and thermal energy originating from natural environmental sources. This distinction demonstrates how cultural and ecological experiences can influence lexical categorization and semantic organization.

Ultimately, the analysis of *Milas* and *Hangat* highlights the importance of examining local semantic systems on their own terms rather than assuming universal patterns of lexical extension. The findings suggest that these thermal lexicons retain strong associations with physical domains, providing insight into how Boang speakers linguistically organize and interpret experiences related to heat, energy, and environmental interaction.

### ***Scale-Based Taxonomy and Cross-Domain Dimensional Parameters: An Analysis of Kedek as a Marker of Physical Size in Boang***

In many linguistic traditions, lexical classification tends to follow ontological distinctions that separate humans from non-human entities. Such distinctions are often treated as natural categories, although they are largely shaped by cultural and linguistic conventions. The Boang language presents a different pattern through the use of the lexical item *Kedek*. Rather than functioning solely as an adjective meaning “small,” *Kedek* operates as a productive lexical marker that categorizes entities according to observable physical size across multiple semantic domains. The data suggest that Boang speakers

frequently employ size-based categorization regardless of whether the referent is a human, animal, plant, or inanimate object. Compared with languages that possess numerous specialized terms for juvenile animals or small-sized entities, Boang often relies on a more generalized size descriptor.

The productivity of *Kedek* can be observed in references to humans. Expressions such as *mekhanak kedek* are commonly used to refer to someone who has recently given birth or has a young child, while *bekas mekhilo anak-anak kedek* denotes a place where small children play. In these examples, the lexical distinction is primarily based on physical size and developmental stage rather than on a highly specialized age-specific vocabulary. This pattern differs from lexical systems that employ distinct terms for the young of different species. Within the Boang data examined in this study, entities belonging to different biological categories may be described using the same size-based marker when they share similar perceptual characteristics.

A similar tendency appears in the animal domain. The expression *ikan kedek-kedek* can refer either to juvenile fish or to fish species that are characteristically small in size. The categorization therefore focuses on observable dimensions rather than on biological taxonomy alone. This pattern indicates that physical magnitude functions as an important semantic parameter in lexical classification. Instead of assigning different lexical labels to each developmental stage or species type, Boang speakers often employ a common descriptive framework based on relative size.

The same principle extends to references involving objects and elements of the physical environment. In several cases, Boang uses modifiers such as *kedek* or *anak* to indicate a smaller entity in relation to a larger one. For example, the expression *anak kunci* refers to a key in relation to its lock, while *anak-anak klip* denotes staples in relation to the stapling device. Although comparable constructions can also be found in Indonesian, field data suggest that such size-based relational categorization is widely applied across different semantic domains in Boang. The pattern is not restricted to living entities but is also used for objects whose relationship can be interpreted in terms of relative scale.

Examples such as *dukut kedek* ("small grass"), *dalan kedek* ("small path"), and references to small animals or children demonstrate the recurring role of dimensional size in lexical categorization. These findings suggest that Boang speakers frequently organize lexical distinctions according to perceptually observable characteristics, particularly size. From an ethnosemantic perspective, this pattern highlights the importance of physical dimensions as a cognitive reference point in the categorization of everyday experience.

The findings also contribute to broader discussions in cognitive linguistics concerning the relationship between lexical categorization and conceptual structure.

While Conceptual Metaphor Theory emphasizes the role of metaphorical mappings in organizing knowledge, the Boang data examined here indicate that some lexical domains rely heavily on direct perceptual parameters such as size. Rather than demonstrating a rejection of metaphorical cognition, the evidence suggests that physical magnitude constitutes a salient organizing principle in specific areas of the Boang lexicon. Consequently, the use of *Kedek* illustrates how linguistic categorization may be grounded in observable physical attributes while remaining sensitive to the communicative needs of the speech community.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Boang language represents a distinctive cognitive-linguistic system in which lexical categorization is strongly grounded in observable physical reality. Through the analysis of the lexicons *Leneng*, *Milas*, *Warm*, and *Kedek*, the findings reveal a consistent tendency to prioritize measurable physical parameters over subjective, intentional, or metaphorical interpretations. The data indicate that Boang speakers organize meaning through concrete dimensions such as movement direction, energy source, and physical scale, rather than through abstract conceptual extensions.

Three major findings emerged from this study. First, the lexicon *Leneng* encodes various forms of downward movement through a single semantic category, emphasizing observable motion rather than distinctions of agency or intention. Second, the lexical contrast between *Milas* and *Warm* shows that thermal experiences are categorized according to the source of energy rather than the degree of temperature. Third, the lexicon *Kedek* reflects a scale-based classificatory system in which entities are grouped according to physical size rather than biological or ontological status. Collectively, these patterns suggest that the semantic organization of Boang is closely associated with empirically verifiable features of the physical environment.

The findings also contribute to discussions in cognitive linguistics by challenging the assumption of universality in Conceptual Metaphor Theory. While many studies have shown that abstract concepts are frequently understood through metaphorical mappings from physical experience, the Boang data suggest that some linguistic communities may preserve lexical systems that remain strongly tied to concrete physical reference. Rather than rejecting metaphorical cognition altogether, these findings indicate the possibility of alternative semantic strategies that prioritize direct physical categorization.

From an ethnosemantic perspective, this study highlights the importance of documenting minority languages as sources of diverse cognitive and cultural knowledge. The Boang language provides evidence that linguistic systems may encode unique ways of organizing reality, reflecting local patterns of perception and classification that are not always represented in dominant languages.

Future research is encouraged to investigate additional lexical domains in Boang, including color perception, spatial orientation, and environmental classification, to determine whether similar semantic patterns occur across other areas of the lexicon. Furthermore, psycholinguistic studies may help examine the relationship between linguistic categorization and cognitive processing among native Boang speakers. Such investigations would contribute to a broader understanding of the interaction between language, culture, and cognition while supporting efforts to document and preserve the linguistic heritage of the Singkil community.

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