

# Semantic Structure of the Indonesian 'Die' Verbs

**Yohana Ari Wardani**

Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia

correspondence: yohanaari.2022@student.uny.ac.id

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## ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the analysis of the semantic structure of the Indonesian 'die' verbs. The lexicon variations for the Indonesian 'die' verbs depend on to whom and in what way it is perceived when it happens. The Indonesian 'die' verbs have their meaning which can be expressed through the study of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) theoretical framework developed by Goddard and Wierzbicka (2013). The method used is a descriptive method with a qualitative research form. The data analysis technique used four steps including determining the semantic prime, looking for the derivation of meaning, determining polysemy based on the object, and paraphrasing meaning. To analyze the meaning of 'die' in Indonesian, the data used in this article were collected from the entry word '*mati*' obtained from the dictionary <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/mati>. The results showed that there were 17 lexicons (*meninggal dunia, tutup usia, wafat, berpulang, gugur, mangkat, berlalu, berkalang tanah, berputih tulang, dipanggil Tuhan, mati, mampus, tewas, binasa, koit, modar, and jangkang*) referring to the 'die' concept, which were then grouped into two categories based on the entity and the result of which the 'die' concept was implemented.

**Keywords:** Indonesian die verb, Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM), semantic structure

## INTRODUCTION

There are many different ways people may think about the concept of "die." Some people may view death as a natural part of life and the cycle of living things. They may see it as a way for the body to rest and the soul to move on to another plane of existence. Others may see death as a tragic and unfortunate event, especially when it occurs unexpectedly or at a young age. They may grieve for the person who has died and feel a sense of loss and sadness. Some people may see death as a release from suffering, especially if the person who has died was experiencing chronic pain or other forms of hardship. Some other people may have spiritual or religious beliefs about death and what happens to the soul after the body dies. These beliefs can shape their thoughts and feelings about death. Overall, people's thoughts and feelings about death can be influenced by many factors, including their personal beliefs and values, cultural and social backgrounds, and experiences with loss and grief.

As with any culture, the way that people in Indonesia think about death may vary widely depending on their personal beliefs and experiences. However, some generalizations can be made about how death is viewed in Indonesian culture.

In Indonesia, death is often seen as a natural part of life and the cycle of living things. Many Indonesians follow traditional religious or spiritual beliefs about the afterlife and the soul's journey after death. These beliefs may influence their thoughts and feelings about death, as well as their customs and rituals surrounding it. Funerals in Indonesia are often elaborate affairs, with traditional prayers, music, and food offerings made to honor the deceased. It is common for friends and family members to visit the home of the deceased to offer their



condolences and support to the bereaved. Adib (2021) discussed how the use of the death vocabulary in an obituary as a notice of someone's death gives a certain sense to society's impression of his or her life. Overall, it is important to remember that every person's thoughts and feelings about death are unique and personal and that they may be influenced by many different factors.

This article focuses on the analysis of the semantic structure of the Indonesian 'die' verbs. The lexicon variations for the Indonesian 'die' verbs depend on to whom and in what situation it happens. The Indonesian 'die' verbs have their meaning which can be expressed through the study of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) theoretical framework developed by Goddard and Wierzbicka (2013). It is based on the idea that the meaning of a word or sentence can be understood by analyzing the concepts and relationships it conveys, rather than by looking at its form or structure (Dewi & Pujiono, 2019; Kridalaksana, 2013; Utami, Nasution, & Mulyadi, 2022). The concepts in MSA theory include semantic primes (the original meaning), non-compositional polysemy, and universal syntax of meaning (Chaer, 2013; Wierzbicka, 1996).

Table 1. Semantic primes (English exponents), grouped into related categories

<b>substantives</b>	<b>saya</b> I-ME,	<b>kamu</b> YOU,	<b>seseorang</b> SOMEONE/PERSON,	<b>orang</b> PEOPLE,	<b>sesuatu</b> SOMETHING/THING,	<b>badan</b> BODY	
<b>relational substantives</b>	<b>jenis</b> KIND,	<b>bagian</b> PARTS					
<b>determiners</b>	<b>ini</b> THIS,	<b>yang sama</b> THE SAME,	<b>lain</b> OTHER/ELSE				
<b>quantifiers</b>	<b>satu</b> ONE,	<b>dua</b> TWO,	<b>beberapa</b> SOME,	<b>semua</b> ALL,	<b>banyak</b> MUCH/MANY,	<b>sedikit</b> LITTLE/FEW	
<b>evaluators</b>	<b>baik</b> GOOD,	<b>buruk</b> BAD					
<b>descriptors</b>	<b>besar</b> BIG,	<b>kecil</b> SMALL					
<b>mental predicates</b>	<b>fikir</b> KNOW,	<b>tahu</b> THINK,	<b>mau</b> WANT,	<b>tidak mau</b> DON'T WANT,	<b>rasa</b> FEEL,	<b>lihat</b> SEE,	<b>dengar</b> HEAR
<b>speech</b>	<b>kata</b> SAY,	<b>perkataan</b> WORDS,	<b>benar</b> TRUE				
<b>actions, events, movement, contact</b>	<b>melakukan</b> DO,	<b>terjadi</b> HAPPEN,	<b>bergerak</b> MOVE,	<b>menyentuh</b> TOUCH			
<b>location, existence, possession, specification</b>	<b>ada (dimana)</b> BE (SOMEWHERE),	<b>ada</b> THERE IS,	<b>ada milik (seseorang)</b> BE (SOMEONE)'S,				
<b>life and death</b>	<b>hidup</b> LIVE,	<b>mati</b> DIE					
<b>time</b>	<b>bila/waktu,</b> WHEN/TIME,	<b>sekarang</b> NOW,	<b>sebelum</b> BEFORE,	<b>setelah</b> AFTER,	<b>lama</b> A LONG TIME,	<b>singkat</b> A SHORT TIME,	

	<b>sebentar</b> FOR SOME TIME,	<b>saat</b> MOMENT
<b>space</b>	<b>dimana/tempat (di) sini (di) atas (di) bawah</b>	<b>jauh dekat sisi (di) dalam</b> WHERE/PLACE, HERE, ABOVE, BELOW, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE
<b>logical concepts</b>	<b>tidak mungkin dapat karena jika</b> NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF	
<b>Intensifier, Augmentor</b>	<b>sangat lebih</b> VERY, MORE	
<b>similarity</b>	<b>seperti</b> LIKE/WAY/AS	

Source: Goddard (2018, p. 318); Mulyadi (2010, p. 6); Goddard & Wierzbicka (2014, p. 12)

Table 1 shows the set of words that seem to appear in all languages and which therefore are very likely part of our mental equipment as a species. They are given in 12 categories. These 65 words are like ‘atoms’ or ‘elements’ of meaning (Goddard, 2018, p. 172).

The semantic prime is used as part of the scenario to explain the meaning of the word. Words with boundaries such as feel, want, do, something, bad, good, I, and someone are words that are hypothesized as semantic primitive candidates as shown in Table 1. This semantic primitive is universal.

NSM theory has two advantages for practical application. First, NSM can be accepted by all native speakers because the paraphrasing of its meaning is framed in a metalanguage that originates from natural language. Second, NSM is always open to adjustments and modifications to its representation of meaning (Goddard, 2008, 2012; Mulyadi, 2006, p. 69; Thompson, Ahenkorah, & Amoako, 2022).

Some examples of how NSM has been used in research in Indonesia include: analyzing the meanings of words and phrases in Indonesian and understanding how these meanings are expressed in the language, comparing Indonesian to other languages, and examining cultural differences in language use.

Table 2. Previous research in the natural semantic metalanguage

Mulyadi (2000)	Indonesian ‘Seeing’ verbs		
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Indonesian seeing verb is a combination of elements MELIHAT, MERASAKAN, MENGETAHUI, and MEMIKIRKAN.</td> <td>The polysemy which is formed is MELIHAT/MERASAKAN, MELIHAT/MENGETAHUI, MELIHAT/ MENGATAKAN, and MELIHAT/MEMIKIRKAN.</td> </tr> </table>	Indonesian seeing verb is a combination of elements MELIHAT, MERASAKAN, MENGETAHUI, and MEMIKIRKAN.	The polysemy which is formed is MELIHAT/MERASAKAN, MELIHAT/MENGETAHUI, MELIHAT/ MENGATAKAN, and MELIHAT/MEMIKIRKAN.
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Cliff Goddard and Anna Wierzbicka (2007)	‘Sweet, Hot, Hard, Heavy, Rough, Sharp’ in Cross-linguistic Perspective		
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>All languages have words, such as English <i>hot and cold, hard and soft, rough and smooth, and heavy and light</i>, - touching something with a part of the body, - feeling something in that part, - knowing something about that</td> <td>Conceptual prime universals in this respect: ‘KIND’ ‘PART’, and ‘THING’</td> </tr> </table>	All languages have words, such as English <i>hot and cold, hard and soft, rough and smooth, and heavy and light</i> , - touching something with a part of the body, - feeling something in that part, - knowing something about that	Conceptual prime universals in this respect: ‘KIND’ ‘PART’, and ‘THING’
All languages have words, such as English <i>hot and cold, hard and soft, rough and smooth, and heavy and light</i> , - touching something with a part of the body, - feeling something in that part, - knowing something about that	Conceptual prime universals in this respect: ‘KIND’ ‘PART’, and ‘THING’		

thing because of it, and  
- thinking about that thing in a  
certain way because of it.

1) I Putu Ariana; 2) I Komang Sulatra (2019)	‘Throwing’ verbs in Balinese	
	Ada 8 buah verba bermakna ‘melempar’ dalam bahasa Bali. Dibedakan menjadi dua kelompok, yaitu berdasarkan ada sasaran lempar ( <i>nyabat, nyampar, nylampar, nylémpang, nimpug, dan medut</i> ), dan tanpa sasaran lempar ( <i>nguerang dan ngentungang</i> ),	Polisemi takkomposisi antara MELAKUKAN dan TERJADI
Made Henra Dwikarmawan Sudipa <sup>1</sup> , (2018)	Verba ‘naik’ dalam bahasa Jepang	
	Terdapat tiga verba yang menyatakan ‘naik’, yaitu <i>noru, noboru</i> , dan <i>agaru</i> .	Prototipe action, event, and movement yang terdiri dari makna asali ( <i>semantic primes</i> ) DO ‘MELAKUKAN’, HAPPEN ‘TERJADI’, dan MOVE ‘BERGERAK’
Fikry Prastya Syahputra (2018)	Verbs ‘touch’ in Indonesian	
	Indonesian seeing verb is a combination of elements: [MERASAKAN], [MEMUKUL], [MENEKAN] dan [MENGOSOK]	Makna asali ( <i>semantic primes</i> ) yang memegang andil dalam pembentukan verba sentuh, yaitu: SOMEONE, SOMETHING
Rizal D Syifa, Agus Subiyanto (2022)	Javanese Verb ‘to cut’	
	There are 12 lexicons ‘to cut’ in Javanese which have close meanings, i.e., <i>nyukur, nyunati, mbeleh, nguliti, nugel, nggraji, negor, mbabat, ngrajang, nyacah, nyuwek and ngguntung</i> , which are then grouped into 6 categories based on the object. The categories are (1) human objects, <i>nyukur and nyunat</i> , (2) animal objects, <i>mbeleh and nguliti</i> , (3) wooden objects, <i>nugel and nggraji</i> (4) Plant objects, <i>negor and mbabat</i> (5) Vegetable objects and meat, <i>ngrajang and nyacah</i> (6) Objects of cloth, plastic & paper, <i>nyuwek and ngguntung</i> .	Conceptual prime universals: DOING/HAPPENING SOMEONE/SOMETHING

## METHOD

The method used is a descriptive method with a qualitative research form. The data analysis technique used four steps including determining the semantic prime, looking for the derivation of meaning, determining polysemy based on the object, and paraphrasing meaning. To analyze the meaning of ‘die’ in Indonesian, the data used in this article were collected from

the entry word 'mati' obtained from the dictionary <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/mati>. To capture what people want to say when they use the English word 'die', the dictionary definitions examination from Die definition and meaning | Collins English Dictionary were used based on the object. Such a comparative approach helps to highlight the cultural particularities of how the word 'die' is used and understood in a different language and how they are used in this data text analysis.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To analyze the meaning of 'die' in Indonesian, the data used in this article were collected from the entry word 'mati' obtained from the dictionary <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/mati>. The Indonesian word "mati" is defined in the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), the official Indonesian language dictionary, as "keadaan tidak hidup atau tidak berfungsi; tidak bernyawa". This can be translated as "the state of being not alive or not functioning; not having a life".

The word "mati" is a verb that is used to describe the state of being deceased or no longer alive. It is often used concerning living things, such as humans, animals, and plants, but it can also be used to describe inanimate objects that have stopped functioning or have lost their vitality, such as a broken machine or a wilted flower.

To capture what people want to say when they use the English word 'die', here is the dictionary definitions examination from Death definition and meaning Collins English Dictionary <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/die>. According to Collins English Dictionary, the word "death" has several definitions. Here are some of the most common ones: the state of being dead, the end of life, the cause of someone's death, the end of something, the fact of something being destroyed or no longer in use, a strong dislike or hatred for something, a serious loss or reduction, as a noun, "death" can also refer to the process of dying or the time when someone or something dies. For example: "Death is a natural part of life.", "The company faced financial death after the recession." "Death" can also be used as a verb, in which case it means to kill or cause the death of someone or something. For example: "The soldier was ordered to death the enemy spy."

To carry out the semantic analysis, first, it should be understood that the basic meaning of the word "dead," is, "is no longer alive." Then, how the word is used in different sentences, and determine how the word can be interpreted in a wider context. It might seem that the potential scenario evoked by 'death' can be stated simply as 'it can be like this: someone dies'.

[Death]

a. something

b. people can say what this something is with the word death

c. someone can say something about something with this word when someone thinks like this:

d. "it can be like this:

e. someone lives for some time, after this, this someone dies"

(Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2013, p. 223)

The explications proposed by Goddard, present the mental referent of uncountable abstract nouns like 'death' as 'something', rather than 'something of one kind'. Abstract noun explications point is that even what appear to be simply "nominalized" versions of a verb or adjective often include additional semantic content, above and beyond the "abstract noun" framing components (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2013, p. 222)

These primitives are thought to be found in all-natural languages and are used to express a wide range of concepts. They are often used in combination with each other and with other words to convey more complex ideas and thoughts. For example, the NSM primitive "motion" might be combined with the primitive "time" to express the concept of "change" or "evolution."

In general, the concept of "die" can refer to the end of life or the end of something. Finding the 17 lexicons in Indonesian official dictionary (*meninggal dunia*, *tutup usia*, *wafat*, *berpulang*, *gugur*, *mangkat*, *berlalu*, *berkalang tanah*, *berputih tulang*, *dipanggil Tuhan*, *mati*, *mampus*, *tewas*, *binasa*, *koit*, *modar*, and *jangkang*) referring to the 'die' concept, yet cannot make the reader decide which word to use in expressing death related to a specific context and circumstances. Instead, it may lead to the idea of whether this is perceived as good or bad which may vary depending on the circumstances.

As a native speaker of Indonesian, perceiving the death of someone as good only because someone did something good in life before it happened to that someone. Based on that intention the 17 lexicons can be classified into two groups; namely data 1 - 10 lexicons (*meninggal dunia*, *tutup usia*, *wafat*, *berpulang*, *gugur*, *mangkat*, *berlalu*, *berkalang tanah*, *berputih tulang*, *dipanggil Tuhan*) and data 2 - 7 lexicons (*mati*, *mampus*, *tewas*, *binasa*, *koit*, *modar*, and *jangkang*) where the semantic analyzes would be presented from.

The natural semantic metalanguage consists not just of a lexicon, but also of semantic primes having universal combinatorial properties. (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2013, p. 13) 'Death' as a semantic prime can give a very brief indication of the kinds of properties involved, it can be mentioned that they include: 1) basic combinatorial possibilities: that is substantives can combine with specifiers. For the lexicon 'death': someone/a person/people. 2) basic and extended valencies of predicates and quantifiers, that 'do' have patient and instrument valencies. For this 'die'; concept: 'happened to someone', and 3) the complement options of the mental primes and evaluator as 'say something about death', and 'good'.

Explication for Data 1 (*meninggal dunia*, *tutup usia*, *wafat*, *berpulang*, *gugur*, *mangkat*, *berlalu*, *berkalang tanah*, *berputih tulang*, *dipanggil Tuhan*)

- a. I/someone/people want to say something about death
  - death happened to someone
  - I/someone/people know that someone
  - that someone did something good for people/someone/something
  - this was good for people/someone/something
- b. I/someone/people say something like this

Explication for Data 2 (*mati*, *mampus*, *tewas*, *binasa*, *koit*, *modar*, and *jangkang*)

- a. I/someone/people want to say something about death
  - death happened to someone
  - I/someone/people know that someone
  - that someone did not do something good for people/someone/something
  - this was not good for people/someone/something
- b. I/someone/people say something like this

For Indonesian, it is common to use the phrase "*meninggal dunia*" or "*wafat*" to describe the deceased. These phrases both mean "to pass away" or "to die," and are often used in formal or respectful contexts, such as in an obituary or a news report. The phrase "*meninggal dunia*" is made up of two words: "*meninggal*," which means "to pass away," and "*dunia*," which means "world" or "life." It is used to describe the act of dying or the state of being deceased. This applies interchangeably for groups in data 2 sequentially.

In Bahasa Indonesia, the words '*mati*', '*mampus*', '*tewas*', and '*binasa*' are all used to refer to death or the act of dying. '*Mati*' is the most common and neutral way to refer to death, while '*mampus*' and '*tewas*' are more colloquial and may be considered slang. '*Binasa*' means to be destroyed or annihilated, so it is often used to refer to death violently or suddenly. '*Koit*' and '*modar*' are less commonly used words for death, and may be more regional or archaic. '*Koit*' means to expire or pass away, while '*modar*' means to wither or fade away. '*Jangkang*' is not a

word that is commonly used to refer to death in Bahasa Indonesia. It means to stand or rise, so it would not be appropriate to use it in this context.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the kinds of properties involved in the semantic analyses of the Indonesian 'die' verb are 'death' someone/a person/people' 'happen' 'to someone' 'say', and 'good'. Out of 17 'die' lexicons, 10 were grouped into data 1 (*meninggal dunia, tutup usia, wafat, berpulang, gugur, mangkat, berlalu, berkalang tanah, berputih tulang, dipanggil Tuhan*) and the rest 7 were grouped into data 2 (*mati, mampus, tewas, binasa, koit, modar, and jangkang*) based on the substansives, events, mental predicates, and evaluator in the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) approach.

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