

Head and Face Parts Naming in Kurdish: Lexical Diversity and Productivity

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Abstract

This work tries to study head and face parts naming in Kurdish. We figured out that linguistically, Kurdish sometimes tends to segment some of face and head parts more precisely. That is, there are sometimes several different words to refer to a single part. The opposite is rarely true; a word is used to refer to two parts. It should be noted that, this diversity is the result of context differentiation in Kurdish, because some words are used to show dysphemism and the others euphemism. On the other hand, some languages do not make this distinction so precisely. This is why, some of Kurdish equivalents can not be found in English. These differences will be highlighted through linguistic relativity. Another facet of this article is devoted to analyze the fact that some of these Kurdish words are more productive in the process of word-formation. Namely a simple noun is combined with other morphemes to form a new word of the same or different category and meaning. Some of these items are considered as idiomatic expressions.

Keywords: Head and face parts naming, Kurdish, Sapir-whorf hypothesis, Euphemism, Dysphemism

1. Introduction

One of the areas of language that best reflects the interaction between cognition, culture, and language is the use of terms that refer to a body organ, such as the heart (e.g. Maalej 2004; Yu2001, 2002) (Sharifian, 2011). Head and especially face has some important parts by which we can communicate both verbally and non-verbally. Thus far we have recognized that, there is a kind of sensitivity to name these parts in Kurdish. It is worth remembering ,words related to head and face organs, are very productive in Kurdish .For example a word like dənən(Tooth) is combined with many other words to form adjectives like dənən zəngən(A person who has rusty teeth).

Another point that should be discussed here is the co-existence of several items, referring to the same organ. We should know that although these names hint to the same part, they are used in specific contexts. For instance, the context that a word like qəz (elflock) is used in is different from mŭ' (hair) and zəlf (chignon). Indeed, Kurdish speakers use some of these words as euphemisms to show politeness and respect to others and many as dysphemisms to express their personal feelings like anger, humor, humiliation, etc.

Linguistic relativity helps us justifying this claim that, cultural boundaries and our perspective toward the world are two determinant factors that make linguistic differences across languages, like Kurdish and English. It should be noted that in this article some examples from Kurdish with their English literal translations are given for more understanding. Then we try to give their English equivalents as far as possible .When appropriate English counterpart is not available *NO Equivalent* is used.

1.1 An introduction to Kurdish

Kurdish is a new western Iranian language spoken in Kurdistan; it ranks as the third largest Iranian language group, after Persian and Pashto, and has numerous dialects. There are two main dialect groups. The northern group—spoken from Mosul, Iraq, into the Caucasus—is called Kurmānji; in Turkey, Hawar (Turkized Latin) characters are used in the written form. It is spoken within a broad region that stretches roughly from Orūmīyeh, Iran, to the lower reaches of traditional Kurdistan in Iraq. In Iraq, Kurdī is the official form of Kurdish. Subdialects of Kurdish include Kermanshahī, Lekī, Guranī, and Zaza.

Ilami (sometimes is called Feyli) is another variety under this umbrella, Kurdish. In this article Ilami , one of the southern dialects of Kurdish, will be studied. This dialect is widely spoken in Ilam.

Ilam is a city at the west of Iran. The city is rural in appearance and is located near the Iraq-Iran border. A number of roads emanate from Ilam, linking it with the border towns of Mehrān and Dehlorān. The city's population consists mostly of Kurds. Local industries produce bricks, woven cloth, coarse carpets, and sack cloth.

1.2 Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

Because of the arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified, and because signs take their meaning from their relationship to other signs, there is no single way for languages to describe reality. We can call this linguistic diversity, and it is the first part of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Mooney et al 2011). In order to emphasize the inseparability of language and culture, linguistic anthropologist Michael Agar (1994) refers to them collectively by single term, languaculture (Fasold 2006). Due to the interconnection between language and culture, people of the different cultures and language segment the world differently.

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis emphasizes on the differences across languages and it claims that these diversities result in unintelligibility from one language to another. This theory has been discussed by many scholars, for instance (Mooney et al 2011, Holmes 2008, Fasold 2006, Mandelbaum 1961, Whorf 1956, and Kay 1984). In its strongest version, this hypothesis states that language determines our mind. It also has a weaker version that states, linguistic categories have an impact on our thought and behavior. A theory of the relationship between language and thought also known as the theory of linguistic relativity, the hypothesis states that 'we dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages ... by the linguistic systems in our mind.' (Crystal, 2003). If we elaborate this theory more deeply, we can discover languages are different from each other and their similarities are rare.

Linguistic relativism, the weaker version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that does seem plausible, is much less confining than linguistic determinism. It suggests that language, as in the case of 'empty' in Whorf's example, does influence the way we think (Mooney, 2011). The strong form of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is generally labeled Linguistic determinism. This holds that people from different cultures think differently because of differences in their languages. Few sociolinguists would accept such strong claim, but most accept the weaker claim of linguistic relativity, that language influences perceptions, thought, and, at least potentially, behavior (Holmes, 2008).

This Theory has been a disputable topic from its birth until now. It has been defined, adjusted and even rejected during the time (Zouhair Maalej 2011; Hollenbach 1995; Sweetser 1990; Lyons 1990; Paul 1984). Colors and body organs are among the topics which have been tested repeatedly, to support or reject this theory. Many works have been done to show how different languages deal with colors and body organs. (Ensenberger 1997; Madden 2000; Peterson 2000; Roberson 2000; Emre 2002; Winawer 2003; Enfield 2006; Anderson 1978; Majid 2006; Enfield 2006; Seeger 1975; Yu 2004; Zahedi 2011).

2. Data Analysis

We discussed that words related to head and face parts are diverse and productive in Kurdish. This claim will be proven through examples given below. In this part Kurdish head and face parts and related words are columned. To compare Kurdish words with English, literal and exact translations (where possible) are given for each word.

Table 1. Words which are related to tooth

Kurdish	English Literal Translation	English
dənən(N)	Tooth	Tooth
dənən ʒən(N)	Tooth ache	Toothache
dənən rukənæ(N)	Tooth grower	A kind of soup made for babies when they teethe
dənən hari dajən(Gerund)	Tooth rabidness growing	To become wild like a dog biting
dənən kərməʒən(Adj)	Tooth decayed	A person with decayed teeth
dənən bæl(Adj)	Tooth tusk	A person whose teeth are tusk/notched
xær dənən(Adj)	Donkey tooth	A person who has teeth like those of donkey
dənən qəj(Adj)	Tooth big	A person who has big teeth
dənən ʒəngən(Adj)	Tooth rusty	A person with carious teeth
be dənən(Adj)	without tooth	Toothless
ʃəŋ dənən(Adj)	Cartridge tooth	A person who has buckteeth
dənən bəʃuwæ nāmə sære(Idiom)	Tooth go into his/her head	It is a curse To wish someone's death

As it can be seen, tooth (dənən in Kurdish) can be combined with many morphemes to form compound nouns, adjectives and idioms. It seems that most of adjectives made of dənən are used to describe physical appearance of someone's teeth. It should be noted that these descriptions are accompanied by insulting, ridiculing or humiliating. Thus a compound adjective like xær dənən is regarded as a dysphemism and impolite form not to be used in more formal situations.

Table 2. Words which are related to mouth

Kurdish	English Literal Translation	English
dām(N)	Mouth	Mouth
dām-tæqæ(N)	Mouth-clack	Chat
dāmæ kawæki(Gerund)	Mouth open-closing	Yawning
tʃæqu-dām(Adj)	Knife-mouth	Shrew
dām-wəʃa(Adj)	Mouth loose	Bell-mouthed
dām-dəriʒ (Adj)	Mouth long	Shrew
dām-u-læwəs naʃərin (Adj)	Mouth and gum not-sweet	to have a face as long as a fiddle
naṃə dām sijæ(Adj)	Inside mouth black	Shrew, Inauspicious(person)
naṃə dām pæti(Adj)	Inside mouth empty	Toothless
dām gæniʒag(Adj)	Mouth fetid	A person who has fetid mouth
sæg dām(Adj)	Dog mouth	A person who has a deformed and ugly mouth(lips)
ruwi dām(Adj)	Fox mouth	A person with narrow lips
ʃəwəlæg-dām(Adj)	Tripe_ mouth	Bell-mouthed
kif-dām(Adj)	Bag mouth	Bell-mouthed
hæfi-dām(Adj)	viper mouth	Foul-mouthed
dām-dəriʒag (Adj)	Mouth torn	Foul-mouthed , shrew
bu dām hatæg (Adj)	smell mouth come	A person with a fetid mouth
pusə gwən dām(Adj)	Testicle's skin mouth	A person with loose lip skin
dām datʃæqijag(Adj)	Mouth wide _open	Open mouthed
dæs wæ dām kərden(Idiom)	Hand into mouth entering	It is a curse. If a dead takes his hand into mouth, the addressee will die.

The adjectives made by mouth (dām) are of two categories: adjectives related to physical appearance and adjectives describing personal traits. The latter are used mostly for women rather than men. For example, dām-dəriʒag is seldom used to refer to a man (unless for

joking). It is worth noting that dām in Kurdish refers to mouth and lips likewise. For instance, the dām used in fəwāləg-dām is equal to (lətʃ) lip rather than mouth.

Table 3. Words which are related to nose

Kurdish	English Literal Translation	English
pət(N)	Nose	Nose
lūt(N)	Nose	Nose
dəfnəq(N)	Nostril	Nostril
qəbuz(N)	Upper part of nose	No equivalent
wæræn-pət(Adj)	Goat nose	A person with a big nose like that of goat
pət- qəj(Adj)	Nose big	A person with a big nose
təs[æ- pət(Adj)	Dung nose	A person with a very small nose
dəfnəq-ə[təlɪfijəg(Adj)	Nostril torn	To have a loose nostril
pət-fisijəg(Adj)	Nose shrinkaged	To have a small nose
pət-kəwəl(Adj)	Nose short	To have a short nose
qəbuz bəriyəg (Adj)	Nose cut	To have an ugly and short nose
pətə mələ sər gərtən(Idiom)	Nose on head getting	To get angry and sulky

It is obvious that the words referring to nose are not semantically alike. Although pət is a orthophemism (as a simple word), words like dəfnəq and lūt can be considered as dysphemisms. In other words, they connote specific images of nose. When these words are joined to other words, the negative connotation will be stronger.

Table 4. Words which are related to Jaw and Chin

Kurdish	English Literal Translation	English
tʃənəwkə (N)	Jaw	Jaw
zəndʒ (N)	Chin	chin
tʃənəwkə dəriʒ(Adj)	jaw long	A person with a long jaw
zəndʒ bərik(Adj)	Chin narrow	To have a long and narrow chin

Morphologically, these parts are not very productive. Few compounds constructed by tʃənəwkə and zəndʒ are used to describe the appearance of these parts negatively.

Table 5. Words which are related to eye

Kurdish	English Literal Translation	English
tʃæm (N)	Eye	Eye
xærguʃ- tʃæm (N)	Rabbit eye	To have a yellow and nasty eyes like those of rabbit
tʃæm-pes(N)	Eye dirty	Peeper
tʃæm pərtəkənən (Gerund)	Eye to cause to fly	To have a tic in eye
tʃæm nûqənən(Gerund)	Eye wink	To wink(the eyes)
tʃæm-pænæmijag(Adj)	Eye puffy	A person with puffy eyes
tʃæm xər dəjən(Idiom)	Eye gyrating	To search to find someone or something
tʃæma dəjən (Idiom)	Eye giving(casting)	To influence by an evil eye

Some of adjectives, idioms and verbs made of tʃæm are semantically neutral and the others are dysphemism.

Table 6. Words which are related to head

Kurdish	English Literal Translation	English
Sær(N)	Head	Head
so[ʔanə-sær(N)	King of head	The upper part of head(Crown)
tawqə sær(N)	Ring of head	The back part of head
sær ʒan (N)	Head ache	Headache
qatər-sær(Adj)	Mule head	A person with a big pate like that of mule
sær-qəj(Adj)	Head big	To have a big head
sær-pænæmijag(Adj)	Head puffy	To have a big head
særə kæpu(Adj)	Head pate	To have an ugly and big head
sær-dəriʒ(Adj)	Head narrow	To have a narrow head
warəg-sær(Adj)	Chuck head	To have a small head like that of chuck

sær-naʃərin(Adj)	Head not sweet	To have an ugly head
sær pæti(Adj)	Head naked	Without Hejab
tæwær sær(Adj)	Axe head	To have a sharp crown like an axe
gərdækən sær(Adj)	Walnut head	A person with a small head
sær-sisəkijag(Adj)	Head- withered	No equivalent
særæ xwær(Adj)	Head eater	No equivalent
sær də nɑmə sær bijən(Idiom)	Head into head being	This applause is used when someone has done a task successfully
sær buwæ ʒerə mələ(Idiom)	Head go below his/her neck	No equivalent A curse wishing someone's death
særəm əʃkijagæ tʃænə dʒərməmæ(Idiom)	My head is broken, how much my penalty is?	When a person not only sustains a loss but also is likely be known as guilty
sær də əjəm ʃəwɑnən (Idiom)	Head to human riling	To confuse someone
sær wæ xər kəsə bijən (Idiom)	Head to around someone being	Bless: To dance attendance upon someone
sær-u- særwæn(collocation)	Head and headband	A kind of local scarf worn by women

As it can be seen, sær in Kurdish is a very productive word by which remarkable number of compound words is formed. It is predictable that most of these words are adjectives used to describe different shapes of head, negatively though. An interesting example is "særə kəpu]" a word made of head+pate. Two synonymous words are combined to form a compound word with a humiliating meaning.

Table 7. Words which are related to lip(s)

Kurdish	English Literal Translation	English
lætʃ(N)	Lip	Lip
lætʃ qərtənən(Gerund)	Lip stinging	To sting your lip as a habit or while worried about something
lætʃən (Adj)	Blobber-lipped	Blobber-lipped
lætʃ kəl (Adj)	Lip short	Hare lip
lætʃ sijæ (Adj)	Lip black	A person with black lips like additives
tʃuwar lætʃ (Adj)	Four lip	No equivalent
pəpəg lætʃ (Adj)	Rotund lip	No equivalent

All of these adjectives are used to describe different shapes of lips. We can see tʃuwar lætʃ and pəpəg lætʃ do not have any exact equivalent in English. This is a cultural matter, discussed in sapir-whorf hypothesis.

Table 8. Words which are related to forehead

Kurdish	English Literal Translation	English
tewəl(N)	Forehead	Forehead
təf də tewəle (Idiom)	Spit in forehead	Curse: When someone's behavior is not tolerable
gū də tewəl warin(Idiom)	Excrement(ump) from forehead raining	To be angry
tewəl dəftən (Idiom)	Forehead having	To be lucky

Words made by tewəl are all idioms. Unlike above parts adjectives are not the output of word formation, additionally the idioms mentioned in other parts were almost cursing, here we can see tewəl is used in blessings too.

Table 9. Words which are related to hair

Kurdish	English Literal Translation	English
mŭ(sær)(N)	Hair	Hair
qəʒ(N)	Elf-knot	Elf-knot
gis(N)	Chignon	Chignon
qəʒə kəsə rənin(Gerund)	Elflock someone rending	To quarrel and beat someone
Wæ gis dā əg qəsəm xwərdən(Gerund)	To chington of mother oathing	Oath: When you want to prove that you are telling the truth
gəʒ-gəwəni(Adj)	Elflock sprig	Elflock

Based on different contexts, one of the above terms can be used to refer to hair(style) in Kurdish. mŭ is a neutral term but qəʒ is mostly used for dirty and tousle hair, on the other hand gis is a very polite form used in a positive and elegant sense.

Table 10. Words related to ear(s)

Kurdish	English Literal Translation	English
guʃ (N)	Ear	ear
guʃ dajən (Gerund)	ear giving	To listen/ to obey
guʃ zil kərdən (Gerund)	ear sharp doing	To prick up ears
guʃ təkənən (Gerund)	ear shaking	To be all ears
guʃ bəl (Adj)	ear tusk	To have tusk ears
guʃ xəræ	ear-ring	Ear-ring

guʃ is not very productive, because the compound words made of guʃ were few in number. It should be mentioned that compound verbs made of guʃ in Kurdish are simply related to listening. Naturally again it is context determining, which form should be picked up. guʃ zil kərdən is not as polite and euphemistic as guʃ təkənən is.

Table 11. Words which are related to cheek

Kurdish	English Literal Translation	English
gɔp(N)	Cheek	Cheek
gɔp-ʃur(Adj)	Cheek –hung	To have a face as long as a fiddle
gɔp-qɔj(Adj)	Cheek big	Beefy
gɔpə-qəŋg(Adj)	Cheek of ass	Lob
gɔpə zəl qɔj(Adj)	Cheek big	Chubby faced
gɔpe mənəgæ gərəge kərəzan(Simile)	His/her Cheek like Karazan cantaloupe	To be rotund and chubby faced

Since fatness is a popular style among Ilami people “bigness of cheek”, unlike other parts does convey a positive meaning and gɔpe mənəgæ gərəge kərəzan can be inferred as a euphemistic expression, as an example. Even the taboo word “gɔpə-qəŋg” has positive connotation simultaneously.

3. Conclusion

It can be concluded that face and head parts are well-organized in Kurdish. Head and face parts (always nouns) are combined to make new words with different connotations and grammatical categories. It is worth noting that simple nouns are neutral as far as meaning is concerned, but when combined with other morphemes, new compound forms (often adjective) can be socially polite or impolite. It is natural that some words are more productive than the others. For example, mouth and head are the most productive nouns that make new adjectives and idioms which are metaphorical in nature and cannot be inferred literally. But cheek and ear are remarkably less productive. We saw that Kurdish has many words for head and face organs, often as dysphemisms, which have no exact equivalents in English. Therefore, it is true that one to one lexical correspondence does not exist among languages. Cultural factors play an important role in this field, because many of these differences are the result of cultural differences. It was shown that sometimes there are several words referring to a single part, nevertheless, non-native speakers can understand these concepts perhaps with difficulty. Defining, describing and some other strategies widely used in language can help speakers of different cultures achieve this goal. The more the languages differ, the less the understanding will be.

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