



## SEMANTIC ROLES OF VERBS IN TOBA BATAK LANGUAGE

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### Abstract:

This research intends to reveal semantic roles of verbs in Toba Batak language. The comprehension method is used in data collection. In doing data research, the method of matching and distribution is used. The distribution method is used with basic techniques like techniques for immediate constituents and advanced techniques like deletion, insertion, inversion, expansion, substitution, and transformation. These roles very much depend on semantic classification of verbs. It is concluded that an action verb has actor roles as agent, and effector and undergoer roles as locative, theme, and patient. A process verb only has a role of undergoer acting as patient. A state verb has an actor role as locative, and undergoer roles as theme and effector. However, a perception verb deliberately has an actor role as agent and the undergoer one as theme.

**Keywords:** semantic role, action verb, process verb, state verb, Toba Batak language

### 1. Introduction

Toba Batak language is rich in verb forms (verbs) that are very interesting to study especially in terms of discussing the role of semantic verbs. Moreover, as far as the authors observe, very rarely do linguists discuss this topic. The interesting thing for the authors themselves in this language is that there are synonymous words with different uses, especially when ending with the sounds *a* and *i* such as are found in the words '*manaba*' and '*manabi*' which have the same

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meaning 'cut'. Besides these reasons, this theory is still new in Indonesian linguistics learning. Based on the description above, the authors are interested in conducting research on the semantic roles of verbs in Toba Batak language, so that it is known how the various semantic roles of action verbs, process verbs and state verbs are formed in Toba Batak language. The research is entitled *Semantic Roles of Verbs in Toba Batak language*. There have been many studies of verb semantic roles by linguists. For example, a research conducted by Mulyadi (1998) entitled *Semantic Structure of Indonesian Verbs* investigates Indonesian verbs. He classified Indonesian verbs into state, process, and action verbs. These three categories have separate subordinate classes. The semantic relation of state verbs is locative-theme, but that of perception verbs is deliberately agent-theme. The participant in process verb acts as undergoer, and this role is derivated into patient and theme. In action verbs the actor plays the agent role, while the undergoer is derived into locative, theme and patient. Defri Yenni (1999), in her thesis *Semantic Roles of Verbs in Minangkabau language*, says that the semantic structure of Minangkabau verbs is classified into three parts, namely state verbs, process verbs and action verbs. She also describes semantic relations in Minangkabau verbs. In addition, Sutjiati Beratha (2000) examines Balinese utterance verbs, and Sudipa (2005) examines Balinese verbs in a semantic role study. In this study the authors discuss the semantic roles of Toba Batak verbs. The purposes of this study are to find and explain the semantic role forms of Toba Batak verbs.

### **1.1 The Problem of the Research**

The problem of the research is formulated to find and explain the semantic role forms found in Toba Batak simple sentences written in the collection of folktales 'Torsatorsa Hombung'.

### **1.2 The Objective of the Research**

This study aims to find and explain the semantic role forms found in Toba Batak simple sentences written in the collection of folktales 'Torsatorsa Hombung'.

## **2. Theoretical Review**

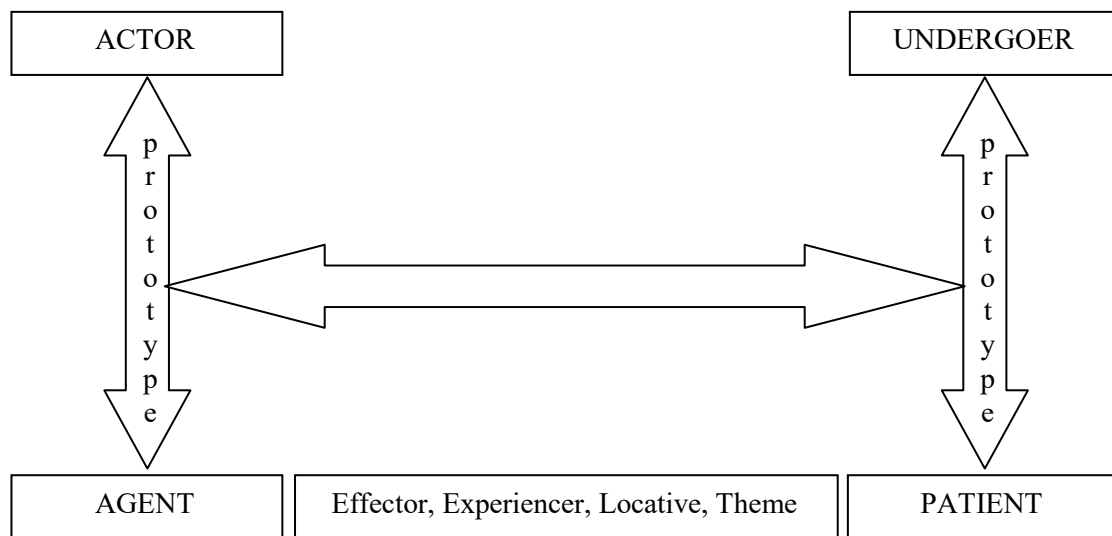
### **2.1 Verb Classification**

Tampubolon, et al (1979 in Mulyadi, 1998: 2) state that a verb has three main classes, namely state verb (stable), process verb (less stable), and action verb (unstable). The difference between the three verbs can be determined by using time as a parameter in which the reference has dynamic verb motion. State verbs have the most stable time, meaning that they have no change in time, for example 'know' and 'believe'. The time in process verbs is less stable because it moves from one condition to another, for example, 'rise' and 'break'. Action verbs are unstable in time, such as 'throw' and 'go'.

### **2.2 Verb Semantic Roles**

A verb semantic role is a role given to a predicate argument which typically belongs to verb. The concept of semantic roles in this study follows the ideas of Foley and Van Valin (1984, in Mulyadi, 1998: 29) who propose the labels of actor and undergoer to explain semantic relations

between predicate and argument. An actor is argument that expresses the participant who does, affects, and controls the situation stated by the predicate, while an undergoer is an argument that expresses the participant who does not do, initiate, or control the situation, but it is influenced by the actor in many ways (Foley and Van Valin, 1984: 29, in Mulyadi, 1998). The actor and undergoer are actually general roles (macro roles) in which special roles are involved, such as agent, patient, theme, locative, and effector. A thematic hierarchy stated by Foley and Van Valin clarifies all the roles that might be involved in argument mapping. The hierarchy is as follows.



**Figure 1:** Hierarchy of Actor and Undergoer

Van Valin and La Polla (1999: 143) stated that actors and undergoers generalized semantic roles were prototypes of the thematic relations of agent and patient respectively.

## 2.3 Forms of Verb Semantic Roles

### 2.3.1 Actor and Undergoer

Foley and Van Valin 1984 (in Mulyadi 1998: 68) states that one of actor's and undergoer's important criteria is that both do not have a constant semantic content. It is said so because the actor can be an agent, effector, locative, while the undergoer can be a patient, theme, and locative. The determination of the semantic role depends on the semantic features of the corresponding verb. State verbs and action verbs can take the role of actor since in those verbs the actor influences its argument, while the process verb only takes a role of undergoer because it is influenced by the actor instead of influencing it.

### 2.3.2 Agent

The role in the first rank in the actor hierarchy is the agent. Here the agent is the actor and executor of an action. The unique thing about the agent role is that it never acts as an undergoer, except as an actor.

### 2.3.3 Effector

The effector is a level below the agent. Foley and Van Valin 1984: 81 (in Yenni 1999: 32) say that the effector is all entities that have the same characteristics as the agent. The difference is that the agent involves the undergoer directly, while the effector does not. Besides that, the effector is also inanimate.

### 2.3.4 Theme

Foley and Van Valin 1984: 51-52 (in Yenni 1999: 35) suggest that themes are all entities that can be placed and experience changes in location. The changes that occur in the themes are not under their own will. Themes can be also called the essence or point of a discussed topic.

### 2.3.5 Locative

A locative is an entity that indicates the place or location where an event takes place.

### 2.3.6 Patient

Patient has the opposite meaning of agent; the patient is the target concerned by the agent as an actor. This entity does not initiate or control events; in contrast, it is influenced by an actor in various ways.

## 3. The Method of The Research

The methods used in this study are data collection and data analysis methods. This research starts from the process of capturing, collecting, identifying, and classifying data. Next, classified data are then analyzed with steps in accordance with the objectives of this study.

### 3.1 Data Source

The data source of this research is a written source in the form of fictional work obtained from a collection of folk tales "Torsatorsa Hombung" or abbreviated as TTH.

### 3.2 Data Analysis

To get written data, comprehension method is used (Sudaryanto, 1993: 133-136), meaning that researchers comprehend and pay attention to the use of the Toba Batak language. This method is supported by note-taking techniques, which are carried out by recording written data. Relevant data are noted to be sorted later so as to make identification and analysis easy. In addition, the researchers as Toba Batakese native speakers also use intuitive data, coming from their own knowledge. At the stage of data comprehension, matching and distribution methods are used. The matching method used is based on the reference of the language, especially in terms of determining the verb classification in the Toba Batak language. For example, action verb *manampathon*, 'throw', process verb *maropuk*, 'break', state verb *muruk*, 'be angry' are classified into different classes because their expressions refer to different events. Next, the distribution method is used to analyze data by dividing and grouping the words into lingual units. This method uses basic techniques like techniques for immediate constituents,

and insertion, expansion, transformation, deletion, substitution, as well as inversion as the advanced techniques.

#### 4. Research Result

##### 4.1 Forms of Verb Semantic Roles in Toba Batak Language

###### 4.1.1 Action verb

###### 4.1.1.1 Motion Verb

The semantic characteristics of this motion verb are that the entity controls an event occurrence and that there is intention in it. In this verb the movement requires an animate entity.

Example:

- (1) *mardalan ahu di dalan na boloni.* (THH:49)  
V Act:ag Und:loc

'Walked I on that big road.'

I walked on that big road.

- (2) *Borhat nasida.* (THH: 36)  
V Act:ag

'Depart they.'

They depart.

- (3) *Marlange ibana di topi ni ambar i.* (THH: 44)  
V Act:ag Und:loc

'Swam he by the pool.'

He swam by the pool.

- (4) *Ibana mamboan sipanganon.* (THH: 34)  
Act:ag V Und:theme

'He brings food.'

He brings food.

The verb *mardalan*, 'walk' in the sentence above states the movement that someone intentionally carried out to achieve a goal. The moving person acts as an agent, while the other information acts as a location or locative. Likewise, the verbs *marlange*, 'swim' and *borhat*, 'depart' state changes made by someone intentionally. On the contrary, the verb *mamboan*, 'bring' expresses someone's movement and it acts as an agent. In that sentence it requires the presence of an undergoer object which acts as a theme.

###### 4.1.1.2 Utterance Verb

This verb has semantic characteristics related to human speech. Someone says something to another person.

Example:

- (5) Ahu mamodai hamu. (TTH: 195)  
Act:ag V Und:loc

'I advise you.'

I advise you.

- (6) Babiat manggora raja i. (TTH: 189)  
Act:ag V Und:loc

'Tiger called the king.'

Tiger called the king.

The verbs *mamodai*, 'advise' and *manggora*, 'call' express something to another person. The person who says something is an agent, while the object being affected acts as locative.

#### 4.1.1.3 Doing Verb

The semantic characteristic of this verb is that someone does an action with a shift in its entity.

Example:

- (7) manuhor horbo nasida. (TTH: 3)  
V Und:theme Act:ag

'Bought buffalo they.'

They bought buffalo.'

- (8) Manghaol patna ibana. (TTH: 130)  
V Und:loc Act:ag

'Hugged his leg he.'

He hugged his leg.

- (9) Nasida mamunu si Aji Tuluk. (TTH: 70)  
Act:ag V Und:ps

'They killed Aji Tuluk.'

They killed the Aji Tuluk.

- (10) Babiat i pasudahon binatang i. (TTH: 220)  
Act:Eff V Und:PS

'The tiger finished the beast.'

The tiger finished the beast.

The verbs above state an action taken by a participant towards another person or object directly. The verb *manuhor* or 'bought', in the sentence above explains that there is a move of an object done by someone, so that the person who moves the object acts as an agent, while the thing he receives acts as a theme. Likewise, in the verb *manghaol*, 'hugged', there is an action taken by someone towards someone or something else, and someone or something that is subjected to that person acts as locative. In contrast, the verb *mamunu*, 'killed', explains

someone's intentional action to something so that the thing subject to the action suffers and it causes death. The one who does the action plays a role as an agent, while the one affected acts as a patient. It is different from sentence (10) in which the verb explains that the entity does something to another entity indirectly. This doer participant has indirectly done something to someone. It plays a role as an effector because it does affect the whole, while the one affected suffers and plays a role as a patient.

#### 4.1.2 Process verb

##### 4.1.2.1 Event Verb

This verb is a description of an event that occurs because it undergoes a change of circumstance and does not control the action.

Example:

(11) *Lam magodang*            *ma*       *pamatang ni anak na i.* (TTH: 33)  
      V    Und:Ps

'Grows bigger the body of his child's.'  
His child's body grows bigger.

(12) *Mahiang*            *ramba*    *i.* (TTH: 99)  
      V    Und:Ps

'Dries up the grass.'  
The grass dries up.

The verb *lam magodang*, 'grows bigger', states a change from being small once into being big now. It is caused by another element that leads to growth so that the verb plays a role as an undergoer and a patient. So is the case with the verb *mahiang*, 'dries up', which expresses a change in the undergoer *ramba*, 'grass'. Previously, it was wet, but now it is dry due to an outer influence from the sun that makes it dry.

##### 4.1.2.2 Behavior Process Verb

This verb states an event that happens to someone, and the person feels something in a physiological or psychological way when acting or behaving so as to play role as a patient.

Example:

(13) *Marhosa*            *amana*    *i* (TTH: 229)  
      V    Und:Ps

'Breathed his father.'  
His father breathed.

(14) *Mengkel*            *suping ma*    *nasida.* (TTH: 30)  
      V    Und:Ps

'Smiled he.'  
He smiled.

The verb *marhosa*, 'breathed', expresses an action happening to someone. He experiences the breathing because of something else, namely the movement of oxygen from the outside into his body, leading to his breathing. Similarly, the verb *mengkel*, 'smile', is something felt, happening to someone to show his happiness, affection, and joy. His feeling is caused by another person, so he encounters it, and his role is a patient.

#### 4.1.2.3 Motion Verb

Of the process verbs, the motion verb is the presence of unintentional movement. In this verb there are two participants who experience the movement; they are animate and inanimate entities.

Example:

- (15) *tardarat*                 *si Languanipege*. (TTH: 175)  
           V                           Und:theme

'Crashed ashore Languanipege.'  
Languanipege crashed ashore.

- (16) *Nungga*                   *mampar*               *nasida*. (TTH: 135)  
   V                           Pend:tema

'Have scattered they.'  
They have scattered.

The verb *tardarat*, 'crashed ashore', states a movement that is neither intentional, nor controlled by someone, possibly undergoing change or displacement. Someone who experiences change acts as a theme. Likewise, the verb *mampar*, 'scattered', expresses a movement that causes a change in the entity. Possibly the position of the moving thing is different than it was before.

#### 4.1.3 State Verb

##### 4.1.3.1 Cognition verb

The cognition verb is a subordinate class of state verb that has semantic characteristics related to thinking. In general, this verb has two participants, namely actor as a locative and undergoer as a theme, but if this verb only has one participant, there is only the actor's relation as a locative.

Example:

- (17) *marpingkir*           *ibana*. (TTH: 8)  
           V                           Act:Loc

'Thought he.'  
He thought.

- (18) *Tulang*           *mamboto*   *namasa i*.(TTH: 29)  
           Act:Loc           V                   Und:Theme

'Uncle knows about the incident.'



Uncle knows about the incident.

The verb *marpingkir*, 'thought', states that someone is thinking about something. Maybe he is having a problem, so he uses his mind to find a way out. The mind of the thinking person is the location or place of his thought. Likewise, the verb *mamboto*, 'knows', states that someone knows something that happened. He can know it because he has strong proof so that the person boldly states it. The person who knows it is a location, while something he knows is a theme.

#### 4.1.3.2 Knowledge Verb

This verb is related to knowledge very much. In general, this verb presents two participants who have the relation of actor as locative and undergoer as theme.

Example:

- (19) *Si Anggian mangantusi manortor.* (TTH: 31)  
Act:loc V Und:theme

'The youngest understands dancing.'

The youngest understands dancing.

- (20) *Nasida mangetong hau siparadeanon.* (TTH: 54)  
Act:loc V Und:theme

'They count the wood that will be provided.'

They count the wood that will be provided.

The verb *mangantusi*, 'understands', declares someone who knows something. He may know it after learning it so that he understands. For Toba Batakese the word *manortor*, 'dancing' in the sentence above means doing traditional dance which only few people can do. The person that understands is the locative, while something that is understood is a theme. The verb *mangetong*, 'count', states that someone knows something, so that he is able to do it. The one who knows something acts as a locative, while something he does is a theme.

#### 4.1.3.3 Emotion Verb

An emotion verb is a verb that expresses feelings like *marlas ni roha*, 'happy', *sonang*, 'glad', or *lungun*, 'sad'. All feelings that we have are in our mind. One who feels good will feel happy, proud and pleased, but someone who experiences something bad will feel sad and disappointed.

Example:

- (21) *marsaksi Boru Sande Bona marnida partanda na sinuanna i.* (TTH: 23)  
V Act:loc because of the signs he planted

'Grieved Boru Sande Bona because of the signs he planted.'

Boru Sande Bona grieved because of the signs he planted.

(22) *Tarsonggot*    *nasida*            *umbege boa-boa i.* (TTH: 14)  
          V                    Act:loc                    Und:Eff

'Shocked they heard the news.'

They were shocked at the news.

The verb *marsak*, 'sad', in the sentence above states a feeling. When experiencing something bad, someone feels sad. The feeling of a sad person is the location and the thing that makes him feel so is an effector to him. Similarly, in sentence (22) above, the verb *tarsonggot*, 'shocked', is an unintentional act and clearly does not control the situation. Someone feels it because there is a cause. The person who feels shocked is the location, while the thing that causes the shock to occur is an effector since it causes someone shocked.

#### 4.1.3.4 Perception Verb

This verb has semantic features that are related to vision. The perception verb has two classes namely intentional perception and accidental perception. The characteristics of this perceptual verb have to do with stimuli and the five senses.

Example:

(23) *Tarbege*            *hata ni raja i* (TTH: 235)  
          V                    Act:loc

'Sounded the king's words.'

The king's words sounded.

(24) *maningkir*        *au.*  
          V                    Act:ag

'Mourned I.'

I mourned.

The verb *tarbege*, 'sounded', in the sentence above explains unintentional action. This verb is related to stimuli and the five senses. On the contrary, the verb *maningkir*, 'mourned', is a deliberate action because someone does something intentionally in response to something happening to another person. The verb 'maningkir' is done to console someone who is grieving due to the death of his beloved one. The verb *maningkir* is an intentional act, therefore the semantic role is different from the verb *tarbege* above. The verb *maningkir* explains that the actor performs an action as an agent, while in sentence (23) the actor is locative.

#### 4.1.3.5 Having Verb

This verb has semantic characteristics related to ownership.

Example:

(25) *marhuaso*        *na*        *balga*        *do*        *ibana.* (TTH:233)  
          V                    Und:theme                    Act:loc

'Has a great power he.'

He has a great power.

The verb *marhuaso*, 'has a great power', states having a great power. The person who has the power is the location, while the amount of his belonging is the theme.

The following table shows the semantic relationships of the three forms of verbs and their subordinate classes in the Toba Batak language.

**Table 1:** Semantic Roles of Toba Batakese Verbs

No	Verb class	Semantic role	
1	Action		
	a. Motion	Act=agent	
		Act=agent	Und=locative
		Act=agent	Und=theme
	b. Utterance	Act=agent	Und=locative
	c. Movement/Doing	Act=agent	Und=theme
		Act=agent	Und=patient
		Act=agent	Und=locative
		Act=effector	Und=patient
2	Process		
	a. Event	Und=patient	
	b. Behavior Process	Und=patient	
	c. Motion	Und=patient	
3	State		
	a. Cognition	Act=locative	Und=theme
	b. Knowledge	Act=locative	Und=theme
	c. Emotion	Act=locative	Und=effector
	d. Perception		
	- Unintentional	Act=locative	Und=theme
	- Intentional	Act=agent	Und=theme
	e. Having	Act=locative	Und=theme

## 5. Conclusion

Based on this research it can be concluded that:

- 1) Verbs in the Toba Batak language can be classified into three parts, namely action verb, process verb, and state verb. The three verbs also have their own subordinate classes. Action verb has subordinate classes such as utterance verb, motion verb (agentive), and movement/doing verb. The members of process verb are event verb, behavior process verb, and motion verb (not agentive). State verb has the subordinate classes of cognition verb, knowledge verb, emotion verb, and perception verb.
- 2) The semantic relations of the verbs are that in the action verb, the actor acts as an agent and effector, whereas the undergoer acts as locative, theme and patient. The process verb acts as undergoer and this role is classified into patient and theme, while the state verb has a role as locative and theme, but intentional perception verb serves as agent and theme.

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