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# A Comparative Analysis on Idioms of Human Body Parts in Indonesian and Thai Languages

Robertus Pujo Leksono, Thanatta Jantem

Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities, Naresuan University, Tahpoo, Muang, Phitsanulok 65000

\*Corresponding author's email: [Robertusl@nu.ac.th](mailto:Robertusl@nu.ac.th) (Leksono) ; [thanatthaj@nu.ac.th](mailto:thanatthaj@nu.ac.th) (Jantem)

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## ABSTRACT

Idioms are items of figurative language that are often used in daily communication. Two different languages may have similar idioms that could have similar or different meanings. Idioms from different languages may refer to similar things but in different ways. Sometimes the meanings may be similar while in other languages they may differ. The Thai languages and Indonesian languages are often studied as a second language by Thai and Indonesian people. Thai and Indonesian speakers found some problems in understanding the idioms used in both languages. Therefore, this study aims to compare the meanings of idioms that refer to human body parts. It may be difficult for people from Indonesia and Thailand to understand idiomatic language even if the expressions are similar. The idiomatic data used in this study collected from Thai idioms collection books and an Indonesian Dictionary. The findings revealed three categories of idiomatic expressions. A list of the first 15 idioms have the same literal and figurative meanings. The second 20 idioms differ in real meanings but are similar in literal meanings, and 10 idioms that differ in literal meanings but are similar in real meaning. In each category there are idioms with similar and different forms. The idioms are used to express human action, thinking, and character.

**Keywords:** Idiom, Human body parts, Indonesian language, Thai Language

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## 1. Introduction

In most general terms, an idiom may be defined as a phrase, the meaning of which cannot be predicted from individual meanings of the morphemes it comprises [1]. Idioms may be characterized by several features; but they may be summarized under two main headings: ambiguity, and syntactic peculiarities. Since most idioms are constructed from morphemes that are also used non-idiomatically, they may have either a literal or an idiomatic meaning.)

Idioms or idiomatic expressions are often defined as “set phrases” or “fixed phrases” [2]. Idioms are constructed to have different meanings with each structure, for example, *kambing hitam* [3]. The word *kambing hitam* does not refer to the meaning the deer who has a black skin but the people who got the blame.

Idioms are expressions which have a meaning that is not obvious from the individual words. For example, the idiom ‘to drive somebody round the bend’ means make somebody angry or frustrated, but we this is not

obvious by looking at the words. The best way to understand an idiom is to see it in a context. If someone says: this tin opener's driving me round the bend! I think I'll throw it away and get a new one next time I am in town then the context and common sense tells us that drive someone round the bend means something different from driving a car round a curve in the road. The context tells us the tin opener is not working properly and that it's having an effect on the person using it [4]. Like other linguistic items or units, idioms perform a variety of functions, including **ideational** (offering information and evaluation), **interpersonal** (serving to facilitate and maintain meaningful and effective interaction), and **textual** (providing cohesion in discourse) function [5].

Most lexical items have meanings that are literal. For example, land is the place where people mostly live. Others can only be interpreted idiomatically: Land of smiles = Thailand. One might assume that the literal meaning would usually be the most frequently used, but research in formulaic language has shown that it is often the idiomatic meaning that is far more frequent (e.g Coklin and Schmitt, 2008) this is to make sure that idiomatic meanings will more often be used in society [6]. Table 1 shows the forms and examples of idioms adapted from English Idioms in Use Intermediate Book with Answers 2nd Edition Cambridge University Press.

Table 1. Idioms: Forms and Examples

No.	Form	Example	Meaning
1	Verb+object/complement (and/or adverbial)	Kill two birds with one stone	Produce two results by doing just one action
2	Prepositional phrase	In the blink of an eye	In an extremely short time
3	Compound	A bone of contention	Something which people argue and disagree over
4	Simile (as+adjective+as, or like+noun)	As dry as a bone	Very dry indeed
5	Binomial (word +and+word)	Rough and ready	Crude and lacking sophistication
6	Trinomial (word+word+and+ and)	Cool, calm and collected	Relaxed, in control, not nervous
7	Whole clause or sentence	To cut a long story short	To tell the main points, but not all the fine details

The context of situation, however, is only the immediate environment. There is also a broader background against which the text has to be interpreted, that is, CONTEXT CULTURE. Any actual context of situation, the particular configuration of field, tenor, and mode that has brought a text into being, is not just a random jumble of features but a totality- a package, so to speak, of things that typically go together in the culture [7].

Previous studies by Jantem (2018) shows that idioms relate to the cultural context. Thai idioms reflect the importance of the family context, religion, and belief. Thai idioms also show the domination of men (father, oldest brother) in the family, Thai idioms that show the importance of the beliefs of the Thai people relate to the temple and monk. Thai people majority 96% is Budhist. Indonesian Idiom interest to the sport and the traditional play context. Indonesian Idioms relate to sports and games: boxing, martial arts, etc, some idioms are related to the war and the hero in literature [8].

## 2. Methods

This paper has two objectives: the first is to compare the meaning of the idioms that refer to human body parts. The second to compare form and structure of idioms, the third is to examine the cultural aspects, purposes and situations in which the idiomatic expressions are used by the speakers of the respective languages.

To reach these goals, the study used descriptive analysis as the methodology. The literal versus actual meaning are identified in this study. All idioms selected from the word on parts of the human body as used in this data collection. [9] The data collected from Thai idiom collection books and an Indonesian Dictionary; Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia. Selection of the idioms is based on the type of idioms according to McCharthy.

The analysis procedure is first to observe the literal meaning and actual meaning in both languages. Literal meaning is taken of the meaning of each word. The actual meaning is the meaning of the idiom. After the collection and the comparison of these idioms, the categories were calculated. The last step is comparing the idiom based on the context of the culture.

Based on previous studies about comparative analyses by Hyun (2015) [10]. As shown at Table 2, for the comparative analyses, the idioms are classified into three categories. (1) **Idioms with same literal and actual**

**meaning.** (2) **Idioms with different literal meaning but same actual meaning** (3) **Idioms with same literal meaning but different actual meaning.** Dictionaries and collected idioms books as a resource to get the meaning. After the table data is complete then the type of form is discussed.

Table 2. Classification of Idioms for the comparative analysis

Category	Type/form	
	Same	Different
Same literal and actual meaning	Thai and Indonesian IDIOM	
Different literal meaning but same actual meaning		
Same literal meaning but different actual meaning		

### 3. Results

In this study 6 tables of Thai and Indonesian Idioms were collected. Each category will be divided into two forms: same and different. There is an abbreviation for the forms of idioms: (B) initial for Body of word, Class of word (N) Noun, (A) Adjective, (Nu) Number, (V) Verb.

#### 3.1 Idioms with same literal, actual meaning and form

Table 3 clearly state, the category of the same literal, actual and form. There 8 idioms that were matched. There are three idioms that use the word *mouth* (mulut ปาก), *tutup mulut* ปิดปาก, *mulut manis* ปากหวาน, *mulut bocor* ปากรั่ว. There are two forms as shown on the table V+B *tutup mulut* ปิดปาก and form B+A *mulut manis* ปากหวาน. Most of types of idioms found are phrases or consist of two words. Only one type of clause for example *Masuk telinga kiri keluar telinga kanan* เข้าหูซ้ายทะลุหูขวา.

Table 3. Idioms with same literal, actual meaning and form

No	Idioms		Meaning and Form of words		Actual Meaning
	Thai	Indonesian	Thai	Indonesian	Indonesian
1	ปากหวาน	Mulut manis	หวาน : sweet B+A	Manis: sweet B+A	just talk the talk, like to give a promise, good talk
2	งูจมูก	Dicucuk hidungnya	Leading nose V+B	Put the tail in the nose V+B	Stupid people just follow the leader without thinking
3	เข้าหูซ้ายทะลุหูขวา	Masuk telinga kiri keluar telinga kanan	เข้า: Come to left ear and out from right ear V+B-V+B	Masuk: Come to left ear and out from right ear V+B-V+B	Quickly forget, when we get information, we cannot keep it in mind.
4	น้ำตาจระเข้	Air mata buaya	จระเข้: crocodile N+B+N	Buaya: crocodile N+B+N	Fake crying, Pretending cry
5	ปากรั่ว	Mulut bocor	รั่ว: leak B+V	bocor: Leak B+V	talk about secrets to others in public
6	ปิดปาก	Tutup mulut	ปิด: close V+B	Tutup: Close V+B	Keep silent, don't want to talk
7	ลิ้นสองแฉก	Lidah bercabang	ลิ้น: tongue B+N	Lidah : tongue B+N	What he says cannot be trusted
8	เล่นตา	Main mata	เล่น: play	Main: play	Make a contact with

	V+B	V+B	others to get some benefit
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### 3.2 Idioms with same literal, actual meaning and different form

Table 4 clearly state there is 7 idioms matched with the following first category but different forms of idioms. There is 4 idioms used most in this category used the word hand: *Tangan dingin* มือเย็น, *Tangan kanan* มือขวา, *Tangan tak sampai* มือไม่ถึง, *Tangan gatal* คันไม้คันมือ each idiom has same literal and actual meaning but different form. For example, the form in the Thai idiom B+A ใจดี and Indonesian Idiom A+B *Baik hati*. For the first category there are 15 idioms matched.

Table 4. Idioms with same literal, actual meaning and different form

No	Thai Idioms	Indonesian Idioms	Form and	Meaning of words	Actual Meaning
			Thai	Indonesian	
1	หัวแข็ง	Keras kepala	แข็ง:hard B+A	keras:hard A+B	Will never follow the suggestions of others
2	มือเย็น	Tangan dingin	เย็น: cold B+A	Dingin: cold A+B	Good in gardening skills, good in growing plants.
3	มือขวา	Tangan kanan	ขวา: right B+A	Kanan: right A+B	A trustworthy person
4	มือไม่ถึง	Tangan tak sampai	ไม่ถึง:cannot reach B+A	Tak sampai : cannot reach A+B	Someone has no ability to do something
5	สองหน้า	Muka dua	สอง:two Nu+B	Dua: two B+Nu	The person who lies and cannot be trusted. To be insincere, dishonest
6	ใจดี	Baik hati	ดี:good B+A	Baik: good A+B	kind person
7	คันไม้คันมือ	Tangan gatal	คัน:Itchy hand V+B	gatal:Itchy B+V	Want to do something soon

### 3.3 Idioms with different literal meaning but same actual meaning and same form

As shown in Table 5, there are 10 idioms matched with the following second category, the most body part used in this category is hand: *Tangan terbuka* อ้าแขนต้อนรับ, *Panjang tangan* มือโง่, *Lipat tangan dan kaki* งอมืองอตัว, *Tangan kanan memberi tangan kiri sembunyi* ปิดทองหลังพระ. The same form for example B+N ปากหมา = *mulut harimau*. Most of idioms on this category are phrases.

Table 5. Idioms with different literal meaning but same actual meaning and same form

No	Thai Idioms	Indonesian Idioms	Meaning and Form of words		Actual Meaning
			Thai	Indonesian	
1	คนเดียวหัวหาย สองคนเพื่อนตาย	Dua kepala lebih baik daripada satu kepala	คนเดียว:one person Nu+B	Dua kepala: two head Nu+B	Two people who think is better than one person (Two heads are better than one)
2	อ้าแขนต้อนรับ	Tangan terbuka	แขน: arm B+A	Tangan : Hand B+A	To be very pleased to see something new
3	ปากไว	Mulut cerewet	ไว: Quick B+A	Cerewet: noise B+A	Complains all the time
4	ปากหมา	Mulut harimau	Dog mouth B+N	Tiger mouth B+N	Likes to say bad words or dirty words (swearing)
5	ปากดี	Lidah berbisa	ดี:Good ปาก:mouth B+A	Berbisa: Poison Lidah: tongue B+A	Just talk the talk, show off with a talk but they may not be honest
6	ตาถึง	Mata baik	ถึง Reaching eye B+A	Good eye B+A	a good eye in choosing things have good taste
7	งอมืองอตีน	Lipat tangan dan kaki	งอมืองอตีน: Bending hand and foot V+B	Bending hand and foot V+B (Binomial)	Lazy, don't do anything Just want to get help from others
8	ตาบอดคลำช้าง	Buta mata	Blind eye touch elephant A+B	Blind eye A+B	Just see or believe in the one side
9	ปากหวานก้นเปรี้ยว	Mulut manis berbisa	Sweet mouth, sour bottom B+A	Sweet mouth and poison B+A	Good speech but bad mind
10	หัวไว	Otak Encer	หัว: Head ไว: Quick B+A	Otak: Brain Encer: liquid B+A	Intelligent, quick learner

### 3.4 Idioms with different literal meaning but same actual meaning and different form

As shown in Table 6, there are 10 idioms matched with the following second category. The most body part used in this category is hand: *Angkat tangan ใจปลาชิว, Tangan dingin มือทอง*. Most of the idioms in this category are phrases.

**Table 6. Idioms with different literal meaning but same actual meaning and different form**

No	Thai Idioms	Indonesian Idioms	Meaning and Form of words		Actual Meaning
			Thai	Indonesian	
1	ใจกว้าง	Murah hati	กว้าง: broadly B+A	Murah: Cheap A+B	The people like to share and give to others
2	หน้ามืดตาบวม	Gelap mata	Dark face and blur eye B+A	Gelap: Dark mata: eye A+B	(Negative Meaning) Unconscious, lose temper
3	หน้าค้ำ	Tebal Muka	Thick face B+N	Wall face/ Tick face N+B	Not shy Shameless (Negative meaning)
4	ใจจิตใจดำ	Buruk Hati	ใจดำ: Black heart B+A	Buruk: Bad Buruk Hati A+B	mean
5	ใจปลาชิว	Angkat tangan	Hearth of fish B+N	Angkat tangan: Hands up V+B	Easy to give up
6	มีท้อง	Berbadan dua	Have stomach V+B	Two body B+Nu	pregnant
7	ตัวเป็นเกลียว หัวเป็นน๊อค	Banting tulang	Use head as head screw use body as body screw B+N	Slam the bone V+B	Working hard
8	มือทอง	Tangan dingin	ทอง: gold B+N	dingin: cold B+A	Character who is always successful
9	มือไว	Panjang tangan	Hand quick B + A	Panjang: Long hand A+B	Thief
10	หน้าต่างมีหู ประตุมิดา	Dinding bertelinga	หน้าต่าง: window ประตู : Door N+ Verb + B	Dinding: wall N+B	Be Careful when we talk because somebody will hear and gossip

### 3.5 Idioms with same literal meaning but different actual meaning and form

As shown in Table 7, there are 7 idioms matched with the following second category as shown in table. The most body part use in this category is hand: Berat hati หน้าใจ, Besar hati ใจใหญ่. Most of type of idioms in this category is phrase or consist of two words Body + Adjective. The second category there are 20 matched idioms.

**Table 7. Idioms with same literal meaning and form but different actual meaning**

No	Thai Idioms	Indonesian Idioms	Actual Meaning	
			Thai	Indonesian
1	หน้าใจ A+B	Berat hati: A+B	To feel responsible and worry about something	To refuse to do something

2	ล้างตา A+B	Cuci mata A+B	Retry to get success.	Happy to see something beautiful
3	มือขึ้น B+N	Tangan tengadah B+N	Get a lot of profit	Pray
4	ตาเขียว B+A	Mata hijau B+A	So angry	Like to get money
5	ใจใหญ่ B+A	Besar hati B+A	Happy, generous	Admit the mistake
6	กระดูกสันหลังของชาติ	Tulang Punggung B+B	Farmer; back bone of country	The person who give money or responsible for family
7	มือใครยาวสาวได้สาวเอา B+N	Tangan panjang B+A	who have long hand, that person will get most benefit	Thief, the character of people like to steal

### 3.6 Idioms with same literal meaning but different actual meaning and form

As shown in Table 8, there are 3 idioms matched with the following third category. For the third category there is 10 idioms matched. Most of type idioms in this category is phrase. There is total found 45 idioms matched with the three categories.

Table 8. Idioms with same literal meaning but different actual meaning and form

No	Thai Idioms	Indonesian Idioms	Actual Meaning	
			Thai	Indonesian
1	ใจใหญ่ B+A	Besar hati A+B	The person who support others to show up	Happy or proud
2	มือเปล่า B+V	Lepas tangan V+B	don't put the money to get benefit (invest)	No responsibility, don't want responsible.
3	หัวโต B+A	Besar kepala A+B	“starving” or “no food and is in the no enough food situation” such as in the jail until big head (because no food and cannot get full)	Arrogant

## 4. Discussion

Thai and Indonesian, idioms can have the same literal and actual meanings. The idiom; มือเย็น = *tangan dingin* literally means ‘cold hand’ while the idiom actually refers to being skillful in growing plants. The literal meaning could be expressed in the same and different forms. The idioms with a different form (body + adjective) หัวแข็ง x (Adjective + body) *keras kepala* or in Thai (adjective+body) ใจดี in Indonesia (Adjective + body); baik hati. There is also a type of form (verb + body) ปิดปาก = *tutup mulut*, เล่นตา = *main mata*. This category also has The form (body +verb) ปากรั่ว = *mulut bocor*.

This category has the actual meaning that is exactly the same and may be used to describe human characteristics. Thai and Indonesian idioms have the same way to express context specific aspects of human

nature. For example, ใจดี *baik hati* refers to a kind person. The word heart is related to the character of being human. ใจ = *hati* (hearth) is seen as a metonym of person in Thai and Indonesian languages, different modes of thinking, feeling and relationships that are attributed to the people in the relationship. Idiom ใจดี *baik hati* has shown the same expression and thinking in Thai and Indonesian languages. Another example on human action is ปิดปาก = *tutup mulut* that means the person does not want to talk or cannot talk. For example, “เอาเงินปิดปากมันไว้ อย่าให้ความลับแพร่กระจาย” means “use the money close his/her mouth, keep secret!” in Indonesia *meskipun diperiksa siang malam, tertuduh tetap tutup mulut* which means that even though he has been interrogated for a very long time, the defendant still does not want to talk.

Thai and Indonesian idioms have the different literal meaning but the same actual meaning. For example, มือไว = *tangan panjang* has literally meaning quick handed or long handed. the expression is used to call someone a thief. The form of idiom could be same and different. The type of form (body+ adjective) is the most found. The same form of the idiom (body + adjective; ใจกว้าง = *besar hati*, มือไว = *tangan panjang*, ตาถึง, ปากดี = *mulut manis*. form adjective + body; ใจดี in Indonesian Adjective + body *Gelap mata, Buruk Hati*. Type of form verb + body *Banting tulang, Angkat tangan, Buta mata*, type of form body+ verb: *Lidah berbisa, Mulut cerewet*. The form of binomial *Lipat tangan dan kaki*.

The actual meaning of the idioms in this paper, in both languages are similar, and describe some form of human action or behaviour. They do however use different ways to express the context and nature of such human behaviour. For the purposes of this discussion, Thai idioms use หัวใจ while Indonesian idioms use *otak encer*. In Thai หัวใจ means *Quick* while หัว means *Head*. Together, they refer to *Intelligence, quick learner*. Indonesian idioms use *Otak* as symbol of *Intelligence*. *Head* is used in a number of idioms that relate to the emotions, for example, *besar kepala* means *arrogant*, especially when referring to someone who is powerful or has authority. *Penguasa itu menjadi besar kepala setelah dilantik* refers to a *leader* who arrogant. According to Sapir there are no two languages that are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached...we see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation. [11]

Sometimes *head* is used in idioms to mean the place where ideas or thoughts are produced. For example, *put ideas into someone's head* means make someone want to do something they had not wanted to do before (usually something stupid). *Get your head (a)round* (usually *can't get (my) head (a)round* something) means come to fully accept or understand something (informal) [12]. In Thai the word for *head* หัว refers to the head or leader of a community. When combined with various words, หัว becomes an idiom. It can also refer to bad situations for example หัวโอด means to live in poverty. In Indonesian *head* “*kepala*” is almost the same meaning as a leader or head of community.

Thai and Indonesian idioms may have similar literal meanings, but different actual meanings. For example,หนักใจ = *Berat hati* have different actual meanings, but similar literal meanings.หนักใจ = *Berat hati* mean, *to feel responsible for, and to worry about something x refuses to do*. Many of the idioms in this study, refer to human body parts such as the heart, hand, eye and head. Idioms use the word ตา: eye/ *mata*. For example,ล้างตา: Cleanล้าง/*cuci*: ตา: eye/ *mata*. There is a different actual meaning. In Thai people use this idiom to refer to success. This idiom has different meanings in Indonesia. In Indonesia, this idiom is used to refer to the getting of happiness or to refer to something beautiful. For example, *Saya suka pergi naik gunung untuk cuci mata* (literally, I want to go to the mountain for sightseeing). The figurative meaning refers to going somewhere to relax and have fun. This idiom reflects the culture of Indonesian people where *cleaning* can refer to the problems in life that need to be solved. Thai culture believes that *clean* is the way to achieve success. *Clean eye* is a symbol of a clean way of life that is free of sin.

Thai and Indonesian idioms are similar in they have idioms that are based on their cultural contexts. Thai and Indonesian people have a similar agricultural background to express about the farmer who very good or skillful in planting rice paddies. The idiom *tangan dingin* = มือเย็น means skillful in growing plants or good in planting as a farmer. For example, *Petani itu bertangan dingin sukses selalu dalam menanam padi*. That farmer has a skill in planting, and is always successful in growing rice paddies. This idiom used in both languages and reflects the same cultural background.

## 5. Conclusion

There are idioms match the three categories and have similar or different forms. The most common form is Phrase. Some idioms show binomial and compound forms. The idioms reflect the expressions of people in Thailand and Indonesia. The Thai people and Indonesian people use idioms that refer to human body parts to express human action, character and thinking. The use of idioms in society means that they are intelligent and polite in their use of language. The use of idioms in different languages should be aware with the context of



the origin of the language and the cultural background of the speakers of that language. The idiom is shown in the similar and different perspectives between Thai and Indonesian culture. This result gives input for learners, teachers, translators and others who work with these languages. There are still many more idioms that could be found for further academic study.

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## Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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