THE URGENCY OF LINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE IN SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

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ABSTRAK

Makalah ini bertujuan menggali urgensi komunikasi linguistik dalam interaksi sosial terkait dengan teori model komunikasi linguistik. Linguistik sebagai kajian ilmiah bahasa dapat ditinjau secara teoretis dan secara praktis. Secara teoretis, linguistik dipandang sebagai kajian ilmiah bahasa, dan secara praktis, linguistik merupakan suatu cara membicarakan bahasa. Dengan demikian, pemilihan diksi yang tepat dibutuhkan sehingga para pihak yang terlibat dalam interaksi dapat berkomunikasi dengan akurat. Komunikasi merupakan keharusan yang dibutuhkan dalam komunikasi lisan dan verbal. Memadukan keahlian berbahasa merupakan satu-satunya pendekatan dalam komunikasi yang interaktif. Komunikasi dan bahasa adalah ibarat koin dua sisi. Artinya, di mana ada komunikasi, di situ ada bahasa, dan sebaliknya di mana ada bahasa di situ pula ditemukan komunikasi. Urgensi komunikasi linguistik bahkan lebih penting dalam banyak aspek kehidupan sosial. Komunikasi linguistik bukanlah sekedar menyampaikan dan menerima pesan, tetapi juga melibatkan sensitifitas terhadap faktor-faktor emosional dan dinamika yang kompleks dan substansif yang beroperasi di kalangan komunikan. Dalam interaksi sosial, manusia selalu menggunakan bahasa dalam komunikasi baik secara verbal atau non verbal. Komunikasi verbal diistilahkan dengan sebutan komunikasi linguistik. Dalam komunikasi linguistik, secara umum ujaran yang diucapkan dapat dipahami langsung oleh pihak komunikan lainnya karena komunikasi yang digunakan adalah bahasa lisan. Artinya, mana kala ada ujaran yang tidak dipahami penerima pesan, dia bisa langsung mengklarifikasinya kepada pemberi pesan. Ada banyak hal yang terlibat dalam komunikasi linguistik, yaitu identitas pribadi, struktur sosial, budaya, dan interaksi sosial.

Kata kunci: *Komunikasi linguistik, interaksi sosial*

ABSTRACT

This paper aims at exploring the urgency of linguistic communication in social interactions in relation with the theory of model of linguistic communication. Linguistics as the scientific study of language can be viewed theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it is considered as scientific study of language, and practically, linguistics is largely a way of talking about language, and, therefore, a precise vocabulary is required so that specialists in the field can communicate accurately with each other. Communication is a must which is required in verbal and written communication. Integrating language skills is the only approach to be done in interactive communication. Communication and language seem to be a two-side coin. That is to say, where there is communication, there is, at least, one language, and vice versa, where there is a language, there is communication as well. The urgency of linguistic communication is even more important in many other aspects of social life. Linguistic communication is not simply a matter of sending and receiving messages, but also involves sensitivity to emotional factors and the complex and subtle dynamics that operate between people. In social interaction, human beings always use language in communication, either verbally or non verbally. Verbal communication is called linguistic communication. In linguistic communication, universally the speech can be directly understood by other communicator because communication is done using oral language. It means, in case the message reciever does not understand the massage vonveyed, he directly can clarify it to the sender of the message. There are a lot of things involved when linguistic communication is done, such as, individual identity, social structure, culture, context, and social interaction.

Key words: Linguistic communication, social interacation

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims at exploring and explaining the urgency of linguistic communication in social interactions and some of the complexities of linguistic communication. The writer will begin by examining the sense of the term *linguistics*, *language*, and *communication* and look at how they operate at a variety of levels. The writer then move on to look at model of linguistic communication in which a range of theories have tried to explain the complexities of communicative patterns, processes, and interactions. Before ending this paper, the writer then look at the urgency of linguistic communication and the things arise dealing with the topic on hand.

Most people will probably accept that everything is being communicated in each of our activities in our life. However, the nature of the communication is different in each role. It is equally clear that the extent to which language is being used varies from one scenario to another. Some people mistakenly think that communication is just another word for language, or vice versa. Some think that it is impossible to communicate without somehow involves language, whilst others argue that language involvement is not always necessary. In this paper the writer argue that, although there are non-language based means of communication, language is rather special and that the context within which language is used can affect or even determine the ways in which it is used.

1.1 What is Linguistics?

Theoretically, linguistics is the scientific study of language because the empirical methods of the sciences are employed as much as possible in order to bring the precision and control of scientific investigation to the study of language (Dinneen, 1966: 1). Practically, like traditional grammar, linguistics is largely a way of talking about language, and, therefore, a precise vocabulary is required so that specialists in the field can communicate accurately with each other (Dinnen, 1966: 17). In relation to the latter, Hartmann (1973: 131) states that linguistic communication is the ability of language user to speak well.

Linguistics includes Morphology, Phonology, Phonetics, Syntax, Semantics, Psycholinguistics, Pragmatics, and so on. Practically, language users are hoped to have linguistic competencies in communication. To achieve linguistic communication, one must combine the findings of linguistic research for practical purpose. Speaking ability is a must required in verbal

and written communication. Integrating language skills is the only approach to be done in interactive communication (Brown, 1994: 54).

1.2 What is language?

The term *language* can be used in a very broad metaphorical sense to refer to any system of communication. For example, many people refer to the language of mathematics or the language of music. Similarly, computer programming systems are generally referred to as languages. However, it is important to be clear right from the start that the focus here is on human language - that is, the use of linguistic forms as the basis of interpersonal and social communication. Language can have not only interpersonal meaning specifically between individuals or groups of individuals but also social meaning across whole societies and cultures or significant proportions of them.

Montgomery (1995: xxv) proposes definition of language as the best understood as a set of interlocking relationships in which a linguistic form takes on the meaning it does by virtue of its place within the total system of signs.

Language, then, refers to the use of a system of units which, in combination, provide meaningful communication. The context of language use will influence or even determine the way how the language is used (Bloomer, 2005: 15). The language used in research, for example, gives direct implication not only to communicate the objective of the research but also determines the relevant design of the research (White, 2009: 66). Speech ethnography that uses language analysis in certain context also relates to culture to help understanding the speech under discussion (Fasold, 1990: 308). Such units may be words, sentences or whole texts. We should also note that we are referring to not simply using these words and so on for the sake of it, but rather as part of a system of human communication.

1.3 What is Communication?

Communication is one of those human activities that everyone recognizes but few can define satisfactorily. Indeed, it can be seen that communication is such a well-integrated part of our day-to-day existence that we tend to take it for granted, rarely pausing to consider what it involves or just how important it is to us. In this regard, Fiske (1994: viii) makes apt comment

when he states that communication is too often taken for granted when it should be taken to pieces.

Perhaps the first point that we need to recognize is that communication is a very broad term indeed. Crystal and Varley (1993: 4) state that communication is the sending and receiving of messages. It refers to any message, not just the highly structured symbolic messages of language. For them, communication is a broader concept than language, and language is included within what is meant by communication.

Jakobson's model of linguistic communication (Figure 1) is widely known and represents six major components of verbal communication. In his model, which is sometimes known as a *code model*, a message giver or addresser transmits a message to a receiver or addressee. The message must be such that it can be put into words (the code). Message is whatever communicated by addresser to addressee (Lucas, 1992: 16). There must be a point of contact linking the addresser and the addressee: there will be a psychological link between them as well as a physical contact.

Figure 1: Linguistic Communication

Model of linguistic communication in Figure 1 helps our understanding, however, that model does not describe information circularity; in the same communication, communicators involved can be both as addresser and addressee. That kind of role circularity is more clearly shown in communication model in Figure 2. The model shows how communicators play their roles in communication processes. The same participants in the model can be as different message encoder and decoder.

Figure 2: Communication Model

2. DISCUSSION

If we are to make the most of linguistic communication, then we must not only manage the systems of linguistic communication, but also manage ourselves in terms of ensuring that our personal effectiveness is at an optimal level as far as possible. Systems of linguistic communication will only work if the people using them are sufficiently well organized to ensure that the necessary processes actually take place. Consider how many examples of linguistic communication breakdown are not due to a lack of linguistic communication skills on the part of a particular individual but, rather, owe much more to that individual's inability to manage his or her time effectively.

For example, many problems arise because someone fails to make an important linguistic communication because they did not get round to it or they were distracted from doing so, rather than because they did not have the skills to do so. There is little point in being highly skilled linguistic communicators if we are so badly organized and so out of control in terms of our workload that we fail to take the opportunity to use those skills when they are needed.

The sayings *Actions speak louder than words* and *Easier said than done* are clearly explore the differences between speaking and doing (Peccei, 1999: 43). Different ways in terms of using language deals with real human life experiences in all aspects of human life (Thompson, 2003: 57). The other example the writer takes from Bahasa Indonesia is *Mulutmu adalah*

harimaumu literally translated as ‘Your mouth is your tiger’. In one aspect, the expression can mean that our organs of speech can put us into troubles if we speak as we like. Another relevant expression is *Think before you leap*.

Almost anything communicated can become a sign (Chandler 2002: 1); what colour clothes you wear or how you speak, what food you eat or how fast you walk. Each of these behaviours can be interpreted as transmitting messages, whether intentionally or unintentionally. In communication, signs are organized into systems within which each sign has a conventional meaning. In other words, each sign has become associated with a meaning (a ‘conventional meaning’) which can be transferred or re-used from one context to another.

Traffic lights represent a very simple symbolic system. Each light has an agreed meaning within the system; so much so that the traffic light system; or aspects of it, can be used as a metaphor in other contexts (for example, ‘She gave me the green light on the company merger’). There are different relationships between the sign (sometimes called the signifier) and the referent (sometimes called the signified). Traffic lights are symbolic signs in that there is no intrinsic reason why the colour green should mean *go* and the colour red *stop*.

One way of understanding why these systems are considered to be linguistic is to ask yourself whether a message on any topic could be conveyed using each of them. To accomplish the relationship between linguistic aspects we must be able to set parameter accurately (Romaine, 2000: 67). Language-based manifestations have special characteristics: they are capable of conveying highly complex and detailed messages, providing the language (or code) used is known by all communicating parties. It might take a long time to send a given message using some of the linguistic manifestations, such as semaphore or Morse code, but it is quite possible to communicate in detail about past and future as well as about here and not-here through these manifestations.

The non-linguistic manifestations are not normally able to be used to send complex messages. There is communication when the listener responds other communicator (Munn, 1961: 609). The remaining manifestations within the diagram are not usually considered to be linguistic or language-based, though they do represent ways in which other types of message can be communicated. So it would seem that the term *body language*, so often used in everyday conversation, is a misnomer. Facial expression, bodily gesture, patterns of touch or embrace and the communicative use of body odour are not strictly language.

A term much preferred by communication specialists is *non-verbal communication*. It is used especially of kinesic and proxemic behaviour. Note that the term *verbal* as used in this paper, must mean 'language' or 'linguistic' and not 'spoken' or 'oral' as is often thought. It is not difficult to encounter why someone thread conversation in pragmatic phenomena; clearly conversation is a prototype of language use, that is the way we are introduced to language (Levinson, 1985: 284).

Some gestures and facial expressions are designed to fill a role which could be occupied by speech or language. For example, police directing traffic will use a combination of gesture, posture, and bodily orientation, possibly combined with facial expression. This could be replaced by language, but the officer's gestures being conveyed and received by the visual mode, are more efficient in communicating simple messages to drivers in enclosed vehicles in a noisy environment than sound-based verbal instructions might be.

Morris (1978: 43) demonstrates how non-verbal behaviour can be very deeply embedded. In Japanese culture, how deeply one bows to one's interlocutor during face-to-face interaction is very significant and there are recordings of Japanese people bowing when speaking on the telephone, when there is usually no expectation of sending any visual message, though the development of videophones might make this behaviour less remarkable. Most interaction done by human beings includes language that can be defined in simple term as gesture communication not only oral but also written (Munn, 1961: 609). Some non-verbal behaviour is intentionally communicative whilst other non-verbal communication is unintentionally communicative. Lyons (1977: 33) uses the term when he says that 'a signal is informative if it makes the receiver aware of something of which he was not previously aware'.

Some people maintain that almost every conscious human activity involves language at some stage because language is inextricably bound to human thought processes. If it is true, then an artist will think through the process of painting using words and a musician will work out his/her composition using words. However, many would fiercely deny or play down the involvement of language in artistic expression; for them, artistic media such as dance, music, sculpture, fine art or photography express messages which sometimes cannot be conveyed in words.

The central role of linguistic communication in so many aspects of social life is something that cannot be doubted. When we look many aspects narrowly at the context of

working with people and their problems across a range of settings, we can see that the urgency of linguistic communication is even more important than in many other aspects of social life. When people are ill, distressed, vulnerable, grieving, under threat or in difficulties of some other kind, connection with other people can become even more important, if not crucial. And, of course, it is through linguistic communication that such connection is achieved.

When people have problems and are in need of help of some kind, emotional issues are often to the fore and understandably so. Our ability to communicate in ways which recognize, and respond sensitively to the emotional dimension of our interactions with others is, therefore, a very important component of our skills repertoire if we are to be effective in working with people and their problems. Linguistic communication, then, is not simply a matter of sending and receiving messages, but also involves sensitivity to emotional factors and the complex and subtle dynamics that operate between people as part and parcel of our linguistic communicative encounters.

Of course we should not forget that linguistic communication is also important in its written forms. What becomes a written record can be very influential in shaping future developments. For example, reports written for specific purposes can play a major role in decision making. A well-written, high-quality report can provide important information, careful analysis and a balanced view of the situation, all of which can be vital in ensuring a fair and appropriate outcome of a decision-making process. By contrast, a poor-quality report can stand in the way of effective decision making, distorting the situation, misleading people, creating ill-feeling and contributing to problems and unfairness rather than tackling them.

Clearly, so much of people work not only involves linguistic communication, but actually relies on it. Linguistic communication indeed informs a large proportion of the work undertaken in so many different settings. High-quality work without high-quality linguistic communication is not really the order of the day. Any serious commitment to achieving high standards of practice must certainly include a commitment to high standards of linguistic communication.

One very important aspect of the relationship between linguistic communication and the individual is that of identity. It has been argued that identity is best thought of not so much as a fixed essence, but rather as a fluid process strongly influenced by social factors and our interaction with other people and the social world more broadly. Processes of linguistic communication can, therefore, be seen as fundamental parts of the development and maintenance

of identity. That is our sense of who we are owes a great deal to the messages we receive about ourselves from others. And, of course, the messages we receive from others about ourselves in turn owe a great deal to the messages we give others about ourselves. There is a dialectical interplay based on linguistic communication, and it is largely through this that we are able to sustain our sense of who we are.

Besides, culture has an important role in linguistic communication. In other words, the importance of culture as a factor underpinning linguistic communication is not doubted. Culture involves signs, symbols, and meaning. According to Berger (1991: 5) culture is the realm of symbols and meanings. It is for this reason that we can experience what is known as ‘culture shock’ when we find ourselves in a cultural setting that we are not familiar with. That is, the differences in taken-for-granted assumptions can make us feel very uneasy and unsure of ourselves.

When we enter into communication with others, intentionally or otherwise, we are likely to be influenced by the many taken-for-granted assumptions that form the habitus. The point was made earlier that communication is not simply a matter of transmitting information but also involves transmitting a relationship. Certain people, depending on their position of power and status within the social hierarchy, will have greater cultural resources to draw upon in terms of influencing others.

3. CONCLUSIONS

It is not only individual identity that is linked to linguistic communication. It can also be seen that society hinges on linguistic communication in the sense that social structures, formations, patterns, and institutions are created and daily recreated in and through social interactions. When we communicate together, we are interacting with one another and, in so doing, we are reproducing the social and cultural patterns on which society depends for its existence. In other words, no social interaction, no society. In this way we can see that linguistic communication ‘feed into’ the social order but we also have to recognize that this is a two-way or dialectical relationship, in so far as the social order also ‘feed into’ our patterns of linguistic communication.

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