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LANGUAGE VARIETIES MAINTAINED IN SEVERAL SOCIAL CONTEXTS IN SEMARANG CITY

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Abstract

Language varies not only according to the social characteristics of the speaker (such as his social class, ethnic group, age ,and sex) but also according to the social context in which he finds himself. The same speaker uses different linguistic varieties in different situations and for different purposes. This study is aimed at describing the language varieties maintained in several social contexts in Semarang city such as market, police office, university, etc. The data were collected by using observation and note taking on some conversations occurred on those contexts, then, they were analyzed based on the theories of language varieties proposed by Trudgill (1984). The result showed that the social contexts or social situations that can come into play in controlling language varieties in Semarang city are: relationship between participants such as the degree of intimacy, the degree of social status, and power and solidarity; occupational situation, and degree of formality. In the degree of intimacy and the degree of social status, the lower the degree the higher style the language used. Power is a relationship between at least two persons, and it is nonreciprocal in the sense that both cannot have power in the same area of behaviour. Occupational situation was usually characterized solely by vocabulary differences and was simply a rather special case of a particular kind of language being produced by social situation. Degree of formality was usually characterized by the situation in which the conversation took place.

Keywords: Language varieties, power, solidarity, social context, social status.

1. Introduction

Language, like other forms of social activity, has to be appropriate to the speaker using it. This is why, in many communities men and women's speech is different. In certain societies, as we have seen, a man might be laughed to scorn if he used language inappropriate to his sex—just as he would if, in our society, he wore a skirt. (Trudgill,1974:103).

Language does not only have to be appropriate to the individual, it also needs to be suitable for particular occasions and situations. Language, in other words, varies not only according to the social characteristics of the speaker (such as his social class, ethnic group, age and sex) but also according to the social context in which he finds himself. The same speaker uses different linguistic varieties in different situations and for different purposes. It is called verbal repertoire. We often hear and notice someone uses or speaks an utterance in one occasion and says the similar utterance with other variety or style or diction in another occasion. For example, a Javanese person may say "Where are you going?" in four varieties:

- 1. Neng endi?
- 2. Sampeyan arep neng endi?
- 3. Badhe tindak pundi?
- 4. Nuwun sewu, panjenengan badhe tindak dhateng pundi?

This paper will suggest an attempt to study that phenomenon why does someone say utterance 1 in one occasion, choose discourse 2 in another conversation, and have discourse 3 and 4 in other particular ones.

The speech utterances like in examples 1-4 above often occur in our speech community. Language, as the behaviorists stated, is a form of social behavior. In other words, society is constrained by language since it is language that makes socialization process in society; language exists in society since language is social behavior. Pit Coder explained that:

We can communicate with people only because they share with us a set of agreed ways of behaving. Language in this sense is the possession of a social group, and indispensable set of rules which permits its members to relate to each other, to interact with each other, to cooperate with each other; it is a social institution.

Therefore, language has to be appropriate to the speaker. In order to interact with each other, the same speaker may use different situation and for different purposes. Language also varies according to the context in which the speaker find himself. With context here means "all factors within communication processes which are not the part of the discourse. "Such contexts are cultural context, linguistic context, syntactic context, and social context. Even , J.R. Firth has developed the so-called 'context of situation theory' in which the meaning is a complex relation between linguistic feature of speech and social situation feature.

Nonetheless, the writer will not step too far but limit this issue on social context only. Social context here can be roughly described by a question "Who speaks what language to whom and on what occasion? In other words, this paper will try to describe how and when to speak is socially determined.

2. Language and Social Context

If we study the definitions of language, there are numerous ones. For instance Greene defined language as the set of all possible sentences; and the grammar of a language as the rules which distinguish between sentences and non-sentences.(1972:25). Jack. C. Richards, John Platt and Heidi Platt also said that language is the system of human communication which consists of the structural arrangement of sounds (on their written representation) into larger units, e.g. morphemes, words, sentences, utterances. In common usage it can also refer to non-human system of communication such as the language of bees, or the language of dolphins. Another definition said that language is a systemic means of communicating ideas or feeling by the use of conventionalized signs, gestures, sounds, or marks having understood meanings. (1981:641). Edward Sapir also defined it more specifically. He said that:

Speech is a human activity that varies without assignable limit as we pass from social group, because it is purely historical heritage of the group, the product of long- continued social usage. It varies as all creative efforts vary – not as consciously perhaps, but nonetheless as truly as do the religion, the beliefs, the customs, and the arts of different people. Walking is organic and instinctive function; speech is a non- instinctive, acquired, cultural function.

Our accent and our speech generally show what part of the city we come from, and what sort of background we have. We may even give some indication of certain of our ideas and attitudes, and all of this information can be used by the people we are speaking with to help them formulate an opinion about us. There are two aspects of language behaviour that are very important from a social point of view: first, the function of language in establishing social relationships; and, second, the role played by language in conveying information about the speaker. We shall concentrate for the moment on the second role, but it is clear that both these aspects of linguistic behaviour are reflections of the fact that there is a close interrelationship between language and society.

From some definition above – of course, there are a lot more definitions – we can draw that language has a close relationship with society. As Sapir stated above, speech is a human activity that varies without assignable limit. One of the important factors that influences the varieties of language used by the speaker is its social context.

Many social factors can come into play in controlling which variety from this verbal repertoire is actually to be used on a particular occasion. For example, if a speaker is talking to the people he works with about their work, his language is likely to be rather different from that he will use, say, at home with his family. The occupational situation will produce a distinct linguistic variety. Occupational linguistic varieties of this sort have been termed registers, and are likely to occur in any situation involving members of a particular profession or occupation. The language of law, for example, is different from the

language of medicine, which in turn is different from the language of engineering-and so on. Registers are usually characterized solely by vocabulary differences: either by the use of particular words, or by the use of words in a particular sense. (Trudgill, 1984:104)

A further important feature of the social context is the context of the person spoken to, and in particular the role relationships and relative statuses of the participants in a discourse. For example, speech between individuals of unequal rank (due to status in an organization, social class, age, or some other factors) is likely to be les relaxed and more formal than that between equals, and in certain languages definite rule may exist as to which linguistic forms may or may not be used. A good example of this is the different forms of address that are pronounced by different degrees of status difference or intimacy. Different degrees of politeness and deference may be required, and these are signaled linguistically.

Many aspects of the social situation, then, can contribute to deciding which linguistic variety is to be employed on a particular occasion. Linguistic varieties of this type can be referred to as different styles. The styles which make up the verbal repertoire of a particular speaker, there, are the particular versions of his dialect which he uses in particular contexts. Very often, as has already been illustrated, these styles can be sited along a scale ranging from informal to formal.

"Formality" is not, in fact, something which is easy to define with any degree of precision, largely because it subsumes very many factors including familiarity, kinship-relationship, politeness, seriousness, and so on, but most people have a good idea of the relative formality and informality of particular linguistic variants in their own language. Styles in English are characterized not only by vocabulary differences (Such as tired as opposed to fatigued; trip as opposed to journey), but also by syntactic differences-the passive voice is much more frequent in formal styles in English.

3. Research Method

In discussing the problem, the writer has attempted to collect data by observation and notation on some conversations taking place in several social contexts in Semarang city and then the data were analyzed. In addition to this, the writer also did literary study to check the theories and to compare the data (practical situation) with the theories.

4. Discussion

After conducting observations and note taking in several places in Semarang city such as university, police station, market, etc., the writer finds out that there are several social contexts that influence the language varieties used by the speakers. Those contexts can be seen below:

4.1 Relationship between participants.

Relationship between participants can be classified into:

The degree of intimacy

Let us back to the Javanese language example 1-4 above. There are several varieties of asking "Where are you going" depending on the degree of intimacy among the speakers and addressees.

- (1) Neng endi?
- (2) Sampeyan arep neng endi?
- (3) Badhe tindak pundi?
- (4) Nuwun sewu, panjenengan badhe tindak pundi?

In the example (1) the speaker asked somebody who has intimate relationship. Example (2) occurred when the degree of intimacy between the participants is lower than that of example (1). The degree of intimacy in discourse (3) and (4) is lower than that of (2) and much lower than that of example (1). The lower the degree the higher style the language used.

The social statuses.

Social statuses of participants can determine which variety is to be employed.

- (1) Bapak, panjenengan ngunjuk teh punapa mboten?
- (2) Adik mau mimik teh ndak?
- (3) Kowe meh ngombe teh rak?

The speaker on discourse (1) is much lower on social status in conversation with the person she spoke to. It happened between a servant and her employer at home. Speaker on discourse (2) the speaker is also much lower on social status but she is much older than the hearer . But the latter (3) occur2 between labours who have the same social status.

Power and solidarity

These two terms were introduced first by R. Brown and A. Gilman. They found that the social relationship between speaker and addressee, which they named power and solidarity, may play a part in controlling the variety the speaker used.

Power is a relationship between at least two persons, and it is non-reciprocal in the sense that both cannot have power in the same area of behaviour. The bases of power are physical strength, wealth, age, sex, institutionalized role in the array, family, etc. The superior says the so-called T and receives V (T and V are symbols of generic designators for a familiar and a polite pronoun in any language). Solidarity is a name given to the general relationship and solidarity is symmetrical, for instance, attended the same school, or have the same parents, or practice the same profession.

The example below is a conversation between a lecture and a student in a certain university in Semarang.

Student : Selamat pagi, Pak X. Lecturer : ----- (silent)

Student : Pak, Saya mau bimbingan skripsi.

Lecturer : ----- (*silent*)

Student : *Maaf, Doctor X, saya bisa bimbingan sekarang apa tidak?*

Lecturer : Coba lihat dulu skripsinya.

In this conversation, the lecturer had a 'new power', manifested by pronoun 'doctor'. He would not answer the conversation if the student didn't place himself in the 'new' power relationship.

4.2 Occupational situation.

Occupational situation is usually characterized solely by vocabulary differences and is simply a rather special case of a particular kind of language being produced by social situation.

We can see, for another example, what a captain in military corps used short, rigid sentences when at office :

(1). The captain : Siapkan laporan!

The soldier : *Siap*.

The captain : Kerjakan segera!

The soldier : *Siap*, pak.

But he used casual varieties when at home:

(2). The captain : Ayo, ayo, semuanya sudah siap. Sudah hampir terlambat

nih!

The children : ya pak, beres.

4.3 The formality of the situation

The formality of the situation can also influence the varieties used by the speaker. The language varieties that are linked in that way to the formality of the situation can be termed styles which may be divided into formal and informal style. We can go further on more complex division such as:

- a. Frozen style, the most formal style, used in formal ceremonies or situation.
- b. Formal style, used in formal speech, formal meeting.
- c. *Consultative style*, which conforms to ordinary conversation in schools, business meeting, and so on.
- d. Casual style, used in conversation with friends, in recreation, sports, etc.
- e. *Intimate style*, used in family members or close friends.

Look at the example below:

- (1). * Wah payah kamu, keliru.
- (2) * Menurut pendapat kami, argumentasi saudara kurang relevan dengan masalah yang sedang kita bicarakan.

The speaker on the second discourse (2) was at formal discussion in class so he used style (c). Compare with the first one (1) when he joined the conversation outside, he used style (d).

5. Conclusion

Language, as a form of social activity, has many linguistic varieties. These variety usage can be influenced by the context. The social context or social situation that can come into play in controlling linguistic varieties are: Relationship between participants which includes the degree of intimacy, the degree of social status and power and solidarity; occupational situation; and the degree of formality.

In the degree of intimacy and the degree of social status, the lower the degree the higher style the language used. Power is a relationship between at least two persons, and it is non- reciprocal in the sense that both cannot have power in the same area of behaviour. Occupational situation was usually characterized solely by vocabulary differences and was simply a rather special case of a particular kind of language being produced by social situation. Degree of formality was usually characterized by the situation in which the conversation took place.

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