

LANGUAGE AND PERSONALITY

Harmawan Wardani
Universitas Merdeka Madiun
harmawanwardani@gmail.com

Abstract

Language is inseparable to human live and become part of human progress and development. Beyond set of words and grammatical order, language is a medium to share human thought, knowledge, custom, values and other human experiences. It is also becomes medium for us, human being, to interact with reality and our environment. Indeed, language is very important part and inseparable to human life. Thus this essay tries to explore about language and personality.

Personality determines how people interpret their environment and their interaction with others, their world. Different personality will interpret and see things differently. But how language influences our personality? Or it doesn't? Then, if we learn new language our personality will be affected? Or it will not be? Experts in psychological field such as Wittgenstein and Whorf set a stepping stone for research in language and personality by their theories. There are three experts that research about language and personality; they are Susan Ervin who used Thematic Apperception Test to French who lived in U.S and she used various verbal tasks to Japanese woman who lived in U.S and quite isolated from other Japanese. Second, Lera Boriditsky who proved that language influence human personality by comparing many languages and decided to teach her subject new language. She observed her subjects whether that new language influences their perception. Last researcher that mention in this essay is Ronald Crosby, he asked seven questions to his participant. He concluded that language has a significant influence on thought and personality.

From the elaboration about language and personality above, it can be concluded that language do influence personality of its user. Various experimentations above show us people will think differently depend on the language that they used. People who learn new language tend to follow that language perception and possibly change how they interpret the world and environment around them. Those experimentations results are can be benefit to our education process. Since Indonesian government emphasizes on building student character as one of education's goals. There is a possibility we can build our students' character to be better through language learning.

Keywords: Language, Personality

LANGUAGE'S ROLE ON HUMAN LIFE

As human being we are aware that language is very important part in our life. Language mean to communicate, without language, it will be unimaginable how human communicate. But is language consist only words and grammatical order? Locke stated that language is the conduit through which people share their thoughts and intentions and thereby acquire the knowledge, customs, and values of those around them'; it 'allows know how to be shared at low cost' (Locke in Proudfoot 2009). Language seen as "conduit" to share human thought, knowledge and so on. Whorf stated that humans interact with their reality through language. Language is now seen as a determiner of cognitive and social interaction between an individual and the world (Whorf in Seargeant 2009). In conclusion, language beyond set of words and grammatical order is a medium to share human thought, knowledge, custom, values and other human experiences. Language also becomes medium for us, human being, to interact with reality and our environment.

Since long ago, experts realize that language is inseparable to human live and become part of human progress and development. They conducted many research in attempt to explore language and its user, human. One of the most interesting aspects is language and personality. Indeed, language is very important part and inseparable to human life. But is it also influence human personality?

LANGUAGE AND ITS RELATION TO PERSONALITY

Personality is the process by which an individual's beliefs and attitudes are projected upon how that individual feels, acts and thinks towards its inward and outward environment and its relationship with others (Stedman's', 2000). Personality determines how people interpret their

environment and their interaction with others, their world. Different personality will interpret and see things differently. But how language influences our personality? Or it doesn't? Then, if we learn new language our personality will be affected? Or it will not be?

The possibilities of relationship between language and personality were firstly explored by experts in psychological field such as Wittgenstein and Whorf whom stated their theories about relation between language and thought/personality. Whorf believed that language determines thinking, language influences perception, and language influences memory only (Whorf in Crosby, 2010). While Wittgenstein noted that limitation in one's language also results in a similar limitation in how one related to the world (Wittgenstein in Crosby, 2010). Such hypotheses encourage many experts to try confirming or exploring further about language and human psychology aspects. Here are results of experimentation on language and personality that were conducted by three experts;

In 1964, Susan Ervin, a sociolinguist at the University of California, Berkeley, conducted research in how bilinguals represent the same stories in different languages. Her research involved 64 French adults who lived in the U.S. and were fluent in both French and English. The average of subject had already spent 12 years living in U.S. For six weeks, on two different occasions gave them the “Thematic Apperception Test”, a series of illustrations and asked them to make up a three-minute story to accompany each scene. In one occasion she asked them to make up story in English and in another occasion she asked them to make up story in French. Based on her analysis by comparing two stories (one in English and the other in French), Ervin concluded that The English stories more often featured female achievement, physical aggression, verbal aggression toward parents, and attempts to escape blame, while the French stories were more likely to include domination by elders, guilt, and verbal aggression toward peers (Ervin, 1964).

Another experiment conducted by Ervin to further explore her hypothesis whether the content of bilinguals' speech would change along with the language. The participants were Japanese women living in San Francisco; most of them married to American and they were isolated from other Japanese in America. They spoke Japanese only while visiting Japan or talking to their bilingual friends. Ervin had a bilingual interviewer give the women various verbal tasks in both Japanese and in English and as expected, there were important differences depend on language that used. For example, one of subject asked a question “when my wishes conflict with my family ...” then subject answered depend on language that she used. When she responded in English, the answer was “I do what I want”. While subject responded the same question in Japanese, she answered “It is a time of great unhappiness” (Ervin, 1964).

According to Boroditsky, language does have influence on human personality. She argued that people who speak different languages do indeed think differently and that even flukes of grammar can profoundly affect how we see the world (cited). She proved her argument with data that she acquired from her experimentations. She did her experimentations and researches in several languages by comparing English with the Kuuk Thaayorre an aboriginal language that used in western edge of Cape York, northern Australia, Spanish, Greek, Mandarin Chinese, Indonesia and Russia. She explained that English compare to aboriginal language (Kuuk Thaayorre) language has very essential difference in space concept. For example, aboriginal language don't have words such as; right, left, forward and back instead they use cardinal-direction term such as; north, south, east and west to define space. Meanwhile, Mandarin differs from English in ideas of time. Mandarin use vertical metaphor instead of horizontal metaphor that commonly used in English (e.g. Mandarin says down month instead of next month and up month for last month as the same meaning in English). English also differs about basic aspect of time perception from Greek. Greek tends to talk about of time in term of amount but English tends to talk about of time in term of duration (e.g. Greek will say that was a little talk instead of

that was a short talk). From her data, it can be inferred that languages have differences in many aspects (e.g. time, space concept).

She did further research to answer question whether differences among languages caused by language per se or by some other aspect of culture. She did experimentation on subjects, who have English as their native language, by teaching subjects new target language. Thus, she taught Greek to subjects (she compared English to Greek in this case). In one such study, subjects also taught to use size metaphor (as in Greek) to describe duration. Once the subjects had learned to talk about time in these new ways, their cognitive performance began to resemble Greek speakers. This result proved that language plays a causal role in how we think

Another researcher, Crosby, researched on the influence of language on human thought and personality by asking seven questions to his multi-lingual participants. Thirty participants were randomly selected, regardless of sex, creed, disability, occupation, socio-economic status, age or sexual orientation. Those seven questions are participants' communicability in languages (English, Japanese or other language), how communicate in participants' second language affected their personality, participants' ability to communicate certain emotions whilst communicating in their second language; these emotions included: shyness, politeness, honesty, and sociability, participants describe themselves in their native language using certain adjectives (friendly, shy, outgoing, funny, intelligent, silly, boring, witty, lengthy, popular, and positive). Participants describe themselves in their second language using same adjectives as the previous questions, how well participants' feel to communicate on various topics with others in their native language (the topics were: sports, entertainment, hobbies, politics in home culture, politics in second language's culture, politics in third area, work, culture in home country and culture in second language's country) and how well participants' feel to communicate on various topics with others in their second language (the topics were same as the previous questions).

The result of showed that, in first question all participants answered that they are able to communicate in English, 83% in Japanese and the rest are able to communicate in unspecified language. In second question, participants dominantly agreed that their personality did change. In third question, participants tended to agree on being more outgoing, shy, polite and direct. In fourth question, most of participants choose friendly (80%) and only minority of participants choose boring (10%). In fifth question, dominantly, participants also choose friendly (80%), however less participants choose witty (10%). In sixth question, most of participants felt that they were comfortable with these topics. In last question, most of participants felt comfortable except politics in a third area (neutral), sports (neutral) and politics in your second language's culture (uncomfortable).

In his conclusion, his research showed language has a significant influence on thought and personality. It is proved by assessing existing views of daily life on multi-lingual people through those seven questions. In his conclusion Crosby also stated that his paper set out to prove that language has a significant influence on thought and personality by assessing existing views of daily life on multi-lingual people (Crosby, 2010). He proved that language does have influence on personality.

POSSIBILITIES OF PERSONALITY-LANGUAGE RELATION BENEFIT TO EDUCATION PROCESS

From the elaboration about language and personality above, it can be concluded that language do influence personality of its user. Various experimentations above show us people will think differently depend on the language that they used. People who learn new language tend to follow that language perception and possibly change how they interpret the world and environment around them. Then how those experimentations results are benefit to our education?

It is fact that government had been trying to include character building on education process. As we can see this past decade, Indonesian government through education policies and regulations, emphasizes on building student character. Act no 20 2003 stated that:

Pendidikan nasional berfungsi mengembangkan kemampuan dan membentuk watak serta peradaban bangsa yang bermartabat dalam rangka mencerdaskan kehidupan bangsa, bertujuan untuk berkembangnya potensi peserta didik agar menjadi manusia yang beriman dan bertakwa kepada Tuhan Yang Maha Esa, berakhlak mulia, sehat, berilmu, cakap, kreatif, mandiri, dan menjadi warga negara yang demokratis serta bertanggung jawab. Pendidikan nasional berfungsi mengembangkan kemampuan dan membentuk watak serta peradaban bangsa yang bermartabat dalam rangka mencerdaskan kehidupan bangsa, bertujuan untuk berkembangnya potensi peserta didik agar menjadi manusia yang beriman dan bertakwa kepada Tuhan Yang Maha Esa, berakhlak mulia, sehat, berilmu, cakap, kreatif, mandiri, dan menjadi warga negara yang demokratis serta bertanggung jawab.

In 2010, President also issued a regulation in education field to strengthen previous act (President Instruction No 1 2010).

Membentuk daya saing dan Bidang Pendidikan: Penguatan metodologi dan Kurikulum

1. *Penyempurnaan kurikulum dan metode pembelajaran aktif berdasarkan nilai nilai budaya bangsa untuk membentuk daya saing dan karakter bangsa.*
2. *Terimplementasinya uji coba kurikulum dan metode pembelajaran aktif berdasarkan nilai nilai budaya bangsa untuk karakter bangsa*

Even recently, in 2015, government also issued a regulation to explain about character building implementation on education.

Penumbuhan Budi Pekerti yang selanjutnya disingkat PBP adalah kegiatan pembiasaan sikap dan perilaku positif di sekolah yang dimulai sejak dari hari pertama sekolah, masa orientasi peserta didik baru untuk jenjang sekolah menengah pertama, sekolah menengah atas dan sekolah menengah kejuruan, sampai dengan kelulusan sekolah (education ministry decree verse 1 no 2, 2015)

It shows the government consistency in building character or personality of students as part of education process. Language can be one of the media to build personality of students. Based on results of experimentations above we can influence our students' personality through language learning. For example, there is a possibility that student who taught English will be more logical or thinking coherently in accordance with English trait. Or student who is taught Javanese will be more polite to elder and respectful toward others. Though there are several questions that didn't explain yet, like; how deep of language understanding that is needed to influence someone personality or how much time that needed by language to influence someone personality. Still it is a hope that through language learning us, teacher, can be part of our students' personality building to be better.

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