THE MIND AFFECTS THE LANGUAGE OR THE LANGUAGE AFFECTS THE MIND? A LITERATURE REVIEW ON VERBAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract—This article aims at identifying the relationship between language and mind and listing some expressions in Indonesian language which seem illogical based on the the literature review. According to the Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, who are supported by the rationalists such as Rene des Cartes, mind affects and shape the language. This can be proved with the practice in daily comunications, that is, how people use the language to communicate. The expertise and intelectual competence of a person can be seen from the types of sentence patterns he/she chooses to express his/her ideas. The sophistication of his/her sentences reflects his/her level of intelectual competence. On the other hand, according to Sapir and Worf, language shapes and affects the mind. This is supported by the fact that one language can have several words to express the same thing in certain domains. Based on the pros and cons, it is concluded that mind and language affect each other in the sense that the mind shapes the language and at the same time language affects the mind. In daily communication we find illogical sentences because people do not say what they mean to say.

Keywords—language; mind; logics; reasoning; communication

I. BACKGROUND

The question in the above title comes up when we attempt to connect the language and the mind in communication. In everyday life, we come across with people who communicate fluently using well-formed and orderly sentences. The sentences are so structured and logical that they are easy to understand, as seen in the speech of the third President of Indonesia Prof. Habibi. His sentences and phrases in utterance are sometimes long with complicated sentence patterns but easy to understand because the relationship of the subject and predicate is clear and logical. On the contrary, we also encounter people who, in communicating, use incoherent sentences when speaking so that their minds are difficult to follow and difficult to understand. Then there are negative comments such as "*pikir dulu sebelum berbicara* (think first before talking,)" and so on.

Does the above description occur because of the reasoning ability or because of the language competence? This short article will explore various sources to answer the above questions. There are two opinions about the relationship of language and thought. The first view is pioneered by the philosopher Aristotle, Plato and other philosophers of rationalism such as Rene Descartes. On the other hand, the second view pioneered by Sapir & Whorf is the opposite. These two opinions will be discussed further below based on literature review.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Before discussing the relationship between language and mind, it is better to first explain the terms language, mind, soul, and. body from a philosophical point of view. When humans are defined as homo sapiens or animale rationale, then language is a tool or means for humans to communicate their thoughts to others (Jujun Suriasumantri, 1984: 171-174). Two English

terms used to refer to the same thing are the mind and thought. These two words are used alternately with the same meaning. John Lyons (1981) uses the term language and mind when discussing the relationship between language and thought. On the other hand, Clark and Clark in his *Psychology and Language* (1977) use the term language and thought. According to Lyons (1981: 240), the word "mind" in the everyday sense includes "intellect, reason, understanding and judgment." Helena Gao in *Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics* (2005) defines the word mind and thought differently. According to Gao, mind is "a computational device" that works according to strict rules. In contrast, the word "thought" or thinking refers to a mental process.

In philosophy, the word "mind" is contrasted with the word "body". This concept is, by Plato and Des Cartes, called dualism (the human being consists of body and soul). Plato also does not make a firm distinction between mind and soul and the term "psyche" is used to encompass both mind and soul: "For Plato, there is no clear distinction between soul and mind". In the religious tradition, the mind is regarded as the faculty of the mind (Lyons, 1984: 241). Thus, in this discussion, the word mind and thought are used interchangeably to refer to the same thing.

III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. The First View: Mind Affects the Language

The first view that mind or thought affects the language was pioneered by the philosopher Aristotle and later confirmed by Rene Des Cartes who is known in the school of philosophy of rationalism (Lyons 1981: 244). These rationalists extol the rational, logic and reasoning so much as seen Des Cartes' statement 'I think, therefore, I am ' (Cogito, ergo sum). The human mind is expressed through language. The philosophers also question how knowledge is acquired (acquisition of knowledge). The rationalists argue that knowledge is acquired through 'process by the mind or reasoning'. The mind is not an empty thing (tabula rasa) and is filled with experience as empirically embraced by John Locke and Hume (see also Bertens in the *History of Philosophy*, 1976), but the mind is analogous to a marble

stone beam that can be shaped into several different models, depending on the creativity of the sculptor..John Lyons insists that the mind is something innate.Lyons says that Chomsky, a transformative-generative linguist, follows the rationalists as seen in the following quotation:

> Chomsky sides with rationalists. Furthermore, he takes the view that the principles whereby the mind acquires knowledge are innate. The mind is not simply a blank slate (tabula rasa) upon which experience leaves its imprint". (Lyons, 1981: 244)

It seems that Chomsky's 'innateness' concept is derived from the thinking of the rationalists. According to Chomsky, what we call 'mind' can be described with a set of abstract structures whose physical base is unknown but the mind resembles organs such as the heart or liver whose development of maturity has been programmed in interaction with the environment. Furthermore, Chomsky agrees that language is a tool for expressing the mind, "Like his predecessors in the rationalist tradition, Chomsky takes the view that the language serves for the expressions of thought" (Lyons 1981: 245). This is in line with the definition of mind made by Helena Gao (2005) that the mind is a computational tool that operates with strict rules. Its output can be seen or manifested in language form. The workings of the mind can only be seen in the language.

Chomsky, when discussing the relationship between language and thought in his *Language and Mind (*1968: 1), states that in the past, language was seen as a reflection of human mental processes, "language mirrors human mental processes or shapes the flow and the character of thought." That thought influenced language can be proven also in research conducted by Asim Gunarwan.Asim Gunarwan (1997) conducted research on STA's novel *Layar Terkembang* from stylistic perspectives with focus on STA's sentence pattern to express his idea. From the complexity and sophistication of the sentences used by the author in the novel, Asim came to the conclusion that STA's mind is as complex as realized in his writings. That finding is one

proof that the mind affects language. Language is a manifestation of the mind. In conclusion, the mind shapes the language and language is a tool to express all the ideas in the mind.

B. The Second View: Language Affects the Mind

In contrast to the classical view, the view pioneered by Sapir and Whorf state that it is not the thought that affects the language but the language that affects the mind. According to Clark & Clark (1977: 554), this view is of interest and needs to be responded because we have seen language and thought from only one direction, that is, is how the mind affects the language. According to the Sapir & Whorf hypothesis, every language forces its speakers to a particular world view. They give examples of the worldview given by the American Indian language which is different from the worldview given by the European language. Therefore Trendelenburg as quoted by Lyons (1981: 239) states that if Aristotle could speak Chinese or Dakota, then the category of logic made by him would be very different. The statement was made to reinforce the influence of language structure on the categorization of thought and experience. Some of the evidence given by Whorf, among others, is that one language has several words for a particular domain. The Eskimos have a few words for snow while the English only knows a single word. Another example, a surgeon will be easier to study the anatomy of the human body when part of the body is named. In brief, language affects the mind. Lyons also concluded that based on this hypothesis, the mastery of two languages would have two world views. By the time he switches the code, he also has to shift his views.

Clark & Clark (1977: 558) concluded that the arguments given by Whorf contain weakness as well. One weak point of the Whorf hypothesis cited by Lyons is that Whorf says that some languages in Australia that do not have a score higher than four and this is an evidence of the inability of the language user to handle the number / number concept. This is, in fact, not true because the speakers of those languages have no difficulties in learning English which has a number / number system more than four.

C. Illogical Utterances in Communication: Why?

In the perspectives of structural linguistics, the utterances produced in the communication must also contain the subject and predicate as the basic pattern. The subject is the actor and the predicate indicates the activities to be performed by the subject. But the data in reality show that many people use illogical utterances which violate the pattern of relationships between the subject and the predicate (who does and what to do) in communicating, especially in the informal interaction. Therefore, we find the following utterances in a particular setting as seen below:

1) "Saya mau foto" (someone entering the photo stu seseorang yang memasuki sebuah foto studio dion, in response to the staff: " Bisa kami bantu?")

2) "Saya mau cuci mobil" (someone entering a car wash service reports to the administrative staff greeting him/her)

3) "Permisi..Saya mau potong rambut" (someone entering the beautiy saloon, reports to the staff greeting him/her)

In the first utterance, the speaker (saya) will do the work of taking pictures if the word "foto" serves as a verb. In fact, the speaker's point is not that. So is the second utterance. The speaker (saya) does not intend to do the work of washing. Instead, the speaker wants his car to be washed. In the third utterance, the speaker (saya) intends to state that he wants his hair to be cut; not he who will cut his/her hair by himself/herself.

How can this be explained? When referring to the first view (Aristotle supported Rene Des Cartes), it can be said that there is a wrong reasoning in the mindset so that the above mentioned utterances emerge as a manifestation of his mind. According to the first view, these three utterances are illogical:

1) "Saya mau foto" (How could someone go to a photo studio just to **take his/her own** picture by himself/herself ?)

2) "Saya mau cuci mobil" (How could someone go to the car wash service to wash

3) his/her own car?)
4) "Saya mau potong rambut" (How could someone go to the beauty salon just to cut His/her own hair?)

For the three utterances above, the English people will say this way which is more logical.

Table 1. Indonesian vs English utterances

Indoneisan utterance	English utterance
Saya mau foto	*"I would like to have my picture taken",* (Saya ingin gambar saya diambil)
Saya mau cuci mobil	*"I would like to have my car washed",* (Saya ingin mobil saya dicuci)
Saya mau potong rambut	*I would like to have my hair cut* (*Saya ingin rambut saya dipotong*)

Thus, from the above translation, the "who does what" relationship is very clear and logical. When put into written forms, it is clear that the subject is not the agent because of the construction of passive- causative sentences. Unlike the equivalent in Indonesian, the above English patterns are very logical.

However, the above phenomena can be justified from the standpoint of pragmatics. The pragmatic view confirms that "in daily communication, people do not say what they mean to say; they say one thing and mean another "(Grice, 1973; Mely, 1993). In communicating, people do not always say what they want to say. Sometimes people say A but they mean B. This principle can also be reinforced with the theory of deep structure and surface structure of Chomsky who says that what is in the deep the structure does not have to be equal to what is issued in the form of speech (surface structure).Deep structure is the meaning of surface structure. For example, the utterance " Coffee" said by someone sitting in a coffee shop is a manifestation of "I want to drink coffee/ I would like to have coffee" as a deep structure. Thus, the utterance "Coffee " when placed in a certain context, is logical because in oral communication, people tend to be

more efficient by eliminating certain parts that are considered to be understood between the speaker and the listener. Therefore, in a coffee shop, one does not have to say, "I want to drink coffee" but just say "Coffee" or "Coffee please" but not - but not "I am coffee".

Therefore, the three utterances above can be reconstructed as follows. What we hear in daily communication is the surface structure, not the deep structure. Although it is not logical, it is considered understood. In communication, it is the job of the listener to get the intended meaning or speaker meaning.

Table 2. Reconstruction of deep structure and surface structure

Utterance as the surface structure	Intended meaning /deep structure
Saya mau foto	Saya mau diri saya dipotret (oleh Anda)
Saya mau cuci mobil	Saya mau mobil saya ini dicuci(oleh Anda)
Saya mau potong rambut	Saya mau rambut saya dipotong (oleh Anda)

IV. CONCLUSION

Finally, since the evidence given to support the first and second hypotheses has not been more convincing or superior, the experts conclude that there is an interdependent relationship between language and thought. Clark and Clark (1977: 558) came to the conclusion that thoughts and languages influence each other, "thought, therefore, both affects the language and is affected by it." Lyons concluded with the term "interdependence of language and thought". Linguists, psychologists and philosophers accept that language has influence over memory, perception and thought, but they are somewhat skeptical of accepting that language determines categories or mindsets. Furthermore, illogical utterances heard in everyday communication can be explained and justified by Grice's approach of pragmatics and the concept of deep structure and surface structure proposed by Noam Chomsky.

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