PRAGMATICS
AND CHARACTER LANGUAGE BUILDING[1]

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Abstract

This opinion paper is about how to build a character language through pragmatics. The main aspects of pragmatics are briefly introduced and then elaborated as building-blocks for building a character language. The building blocks are: (1) elaboration of meaning and form strategies, (2) distant language and close language strategies, (3) politeness and camaraderie strategies, (4) object language and metalanguage strategies. The character language building through pragmatics is a verbal social project carried out in 6 phases: (1) interaction phase, (2) teaching-and-learning process phase, (3) evaluation phase, (4) re-evaluation phase, (5) verification phase, (6) selection phase. Upon the completion of a character language building, a competent speaker is well-equipped for using language in a particular situation that may call.

Key Words: *pragmatics*, *meaning, verbal interaction*, *social distance*, *politeness*,
            object language, *metalanguage*, *character language*

INTRODUCTION
CHARACTER LANGUAGE AND DIGLOSSIC SITUATION

A character language is a language with a character. The word character refers to three contents: (1) ability, (2) qualities, (3) validity (CALD, 2008). A character language thus is able to function as a means of communication, has qualities with which the language is different from the others, and is effective in a correct formality.

A character language should function as a means of communication, i.e. human communication, interpersonal and social. In an interpersonal communication, a character language should consider the speakers, the values and idiosyncrasies they believe in and hold, and their background knowledge as well. This is an interpersonal context. A character language should also involve the social values and norms, and other social aspects the speakers may elaborate in their verbal interactions. This is a social context. Thus, to be able able to function as a means of communication, a character language should consider the interpersonal context and the social context of the speakers involved in verbal interactions. This is the first content: ability.

The second content of a character language is qualities. Qualities in this case may refer to everything special which distinguishes a particular language from the others. Thus, a language with a character is then a language distinguishable from the other languages. In this sense, a character language is unique despite some universal aspects of languages in the world. Here, we can say that a character language has an identity.

The third content of a character language is validity. Validity in this case

may refer to effectivity in the correct formality (OALD, 2006). Formality refers to high or strict attention to rules, forms, and convention. Informality then does the reverse. In this light, a character language should have formal forms and informal forms. Formal forms are high forms (or of high variety) and informal forms are low forms (or of low variety).

High and low varieties of language usually exist in every speech society, as they meet the demands of verbal interactions of the members. Here, we are speaking of a diglossic situation. A diglossic situation in a speech society is a situation where people usually speak two varieties or variants of their language, i.e. high language and low language, or for more ease to say, formal language and informal language.

From the accounts above, we can finally sum up here that a character language is a language which can function as a means of communication in a diglossic situation, i.e. either in formal situations or in informal situations.

Is English a character language? Is Indonesian a character language? What is a character language to do with pragmatics? What is pragmatics to do with a character language? How do we build a character language through pragmatics? These are questions to deal with in this paper.

DISCUSSIONS
1. PRAGMATICS
Pragmatics as interaction of meanings

Pragmatic linguistics or linguistic pragmatics or, for short, pragmatics is not merely talking about locution, illocution, or perlocution. It inevitably is. A speech is an act with the three

meanings, i.e. locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary meanings. In pragmatics, this each meaning can be a force, an illocutionary or a pragmatic force. We are speaking and doing something at the same time, or to be more pragmatically specific: we do the act of *saying something*, *implying something*, and *affecting someone* at the same time. In the context that a speaker is talking to a cold wall or even a beautiful statue, or is speaking alone (*soliloquy*), we miss the perlocution. This is what Austin has elaborated in his grand theory of speech acts *How to Do Things with Words* (1957). Austin's elaboration of speech acts theory is, in the writer's opinion, in line with Malinowski's argument that language is *a mode of action* (1923).

Pragmatics is of human interactions every day (*pragmeme* = a human act; Mey, 2001). Pragmatics is about interaction of meanings (Thomas, 1996; Jumanto, 2011). Though the search of meaning has long been done since de Saussure and Peirce in the early 1900, Bühler (1918), Malinowski (1923), and Morris (1933), it has been interrupted by the search of form since Bloomfield (1930), Fries (1940), and Chomsky (1950). The search of meaning was then revived by Austin (1957) with his speech acts theory and then advocated by Searle (1965).

Pragmatics is the study of language use within context. Language use or spoken/written communication is a discourse (Richards, 1985; Mey, 2001; CoBuild, 2003; Jumanto, 2011). Utterances are the concrete forms of language use which we analyze as text. The analysis of pragmatics is then basically a discourse analysis on text within context (cf. Schiffrin, 1994; Mey, 2001; Jumanto, 2011). Pragmatics is thus the study of meaning on using language in communication between the speaker and the hearer, within context, i.e. linguistic context and context of situation, in a particular speech society (Jumanto, 2011).

Pragmatics regards communication as interaction of meanings, not interaction of forms. However, form or text is important as the vehicle of meaning. Without the form or text, language use or communication or discourse never happens, as there is nothing to be perceived or there is no text (cf. Jumanto, 2011).

The meaning (explicature or implicature) interacted in pragmatics is later developing or is open to probable elaboration by the speaker into the so-called *ideology* and then the *myth*. Here, the vehicles of meaning are not only an utterance or a speech act (or an *idio*text), but also an *ideo*text (a text bearing an ideology of a particular societal group or a political party) and a *socio*text (a text bearing an ideology of a particular society) (cf. Jumanto, 2010; 2011).

How does pragmatics deal with form to find out meaning, as the form is the vehicle of meaning? To come to this answer, let us observe the account below.

A. Form in Pragmatics

Forms of utterance in pragmatics can be observed in three dichotomy types: (1) formal-informal, (2) direct-indirect, and (3) literal-non literal (Jumanto, 2011). Formal utterances have more complete, longer forms, and are in a good order. Informal utterances have incomplete, shorter forms, and are not in a good order, and sometimes *cut-down*, *reversed-up*, and *changed* in favor of the speaker.

Direct utterances are the utterances whose meanings can be soon interpreted directly from parts of the utterances, i.e. the meanings based on linguistic context (*cohesive meanings*). This meaning is called *explicature* in pragmatics. The opposite of this is called *implicature*. Implicatures are the meanings of indirect utterances, i.e. the meanings based on context of situation (*coherent meanings*). To come to an implicature of an indirect utterance, a hearer usually thinks a bit longer than he does to an explicature of a direct utterance.

Similar to direct and indirect utterances are literal and non-literal utterances. Literal utterances are the utterances in their usual and obvious sense. The opposite is non-literal or figurative utterances. Non-literal utterances use allegories and metaphors. Allegories are stories, paintings, or descriptions of ideas such as anger, patience, purity, and truth by symbols of persons with those characters. Metaphors are imaginative ways to describe something by referring to something else with the similar characteristics or qualities. A metaphoric language is thus the language with no usual or literal meaning but the language which describes something by images or symbols. Direct and literal utterances include *banter*, while indirect and non-literal utterances involve *irony* and *hedges* (cf. Leech, 1983; Jumanto, 2011).

How do forms of utterance affect the meanings in pragmatics? Let us talk about distant language and close language in the next account.

Distant Language and Close Language

Distant language and close language here refer to and derive from the notion *social distance*. Social distance is the physical as well as psychological distance between the speaker and the hearer. Social distance is not *distant* nor *close*. It is a flexible concept of relative relationship between the speakers. Social distance is assumed to be *zero* when the speaker is talking to themselves.

From this context, pragmatics regards a diglossic situation of a speech society as having two variants of language, i.e. *distant* language and *close* language. Distant language refers to formal, indirect, and non-literal utterances, while close language refers to informal, direct, and literal utterances. As referring to formal, indirect, and non-literal utterances, distant language is usually carefully elaborated and uses safe and common topics. Meanwhile, as referring to informal, direct, and literal utterances, close language usually involves contractions, slangs, reverse-ups, changes, taboos, swearings, f-words, and uses any topics, personal and private. The speaker tends to use distant language to the hearers with *power* factor (superiors); on the other hand, the speaker tends to use close language to the hearers with *solidarity* factor (close hearers).[3]

What are distant language and close language to do with politeness? Please watch our manners and read the following account carefully.

Politeness and Camaraderie

Apart from various theories of politeness (Leech, 1983; Brown and

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[3]Types of hearer can be further seen in Brown and Gilman (1968) or Brown and Gilman in Jumanto (2011).

Levinson, 1987; Fraser, 1990; Spencer-Oatey, 1992; Lakoff, 1990; Fraser and Nolen, 1981; Yueguo Gu. 1990; Ide 1989; Blum-Kulka, 1992; Arndt and Janney, 1985a; Watts, 1989a; Thomas, 1996: Hipotesis Pollyanna), Jumanto (2011) is trying to define what politeness is. Jumanto (2011) proposed a theory of politeness among Javanese speakers, advocating the theory of Gunarwan (2001). Many of the politeness theories above are the results of violating Grice's *Cooperative Principles* (1967, 1975), though some proposed a new atmosphere. However, none has proposed a working definition of politeness. Jumanto (2011) covered this gap with a definition that *politeness* is *everything good that has been uttered as well as acted by the speaker to the hearer within a particular context, to maintain their interpersonal face as well as their social face* (2011: 134).

The notion of *face* in politeness has come into high attention and importance since it was borrowed by Brown and Levinson (1987) from Goffman (1959, 1967). In Goffman's grand theory, everyone in interaction has two faces, *positive face* and *negative face*. *Face* refers to the will, intention, and other associations of ideas and values in the self of the speaker. In short, *positive face* refers to *appreciation* of the speaker's self and negative face refers to no depreciation of the speaker's self. The elaboration of face by Brown and Levinson has resulted in *face management* for two major politeness strategies, positive politeness strategies (which refer to positive face) and negative politeness strategies (which refer to negative face).

Under the light of this face management theory, Jumanto (2011) argues that the politeness theories in verbal interactions fall into or lead to two major poles, i.e. one is directed to *distancing* politeness and the other is directed to *closeness* politeness. *Distancing* politeness refers to Goffman's *negative* face (1959), Brown and Levinson's *negative* politeness strategies (1987), Renkema's *respect* politeness (1993), and Jumanto's *politeness* (2008; 2011). *Closeness* politeness, on the other hand, refers to Goffman's *positive* face (1959), Brown and Levinson's *positive* politeness strategies (1987), Renkema's *solidarity* politeness (1993), and Jumanto's *friendship* or *camaraderie* (2008; 2011). This tendency has been well-strengthened and highlighted by the results of Jumanto's research on *phatic communication among English native speakers* (2006).

From the accounts above, with high gratitude to the former theorists and researchers, we can see clearly that distancing politeness and closeness politeness are in line with distant language and close language the writer has just proposed above. Here, *so far so good*, we can sum up that distant language brings politeness, and close language brings friendship or camaraderie. Distant language and close language to show politeness and camaraderie finally meet the demand of language as a means of communication, i.e. a real-life everyday use of language in all situations or pragmatic use of language in a diglossic situation.

A BIG QUESTION is rising here: HOW DOES PRAGMATICS BUILD A CHARACTER LANGUAGE? Please wait a minute and be patient. We still have to deal with object language and metalanguage below.

Object Language and Metalanguage

The subtitle above of the two levels of language has long been advocated by de Saussurians and Peircians since early 1900. Indeed, as grand theorists of the states of the linguistic arts, their influences have persisted in linguistic areas to date. The first level of language function is called *object language*. This level is also noted as *denotative* level, which is the usual and obvious sense of language, based on some convention, which is objective. In this level, language is seen as an object (*object language*). The word RAT in this level, for example, refers to an animal, i.e. a four-footed mammal of the rodent family.

The second level of language is called *metalanguage*. This level is also noted as *connotative* level, which is the level of additional meaning to give an image or imagination based on some convention, which is subjective. This metalanguage level is metaphorical. A metaphor, as mentioned above, is an imaginative way to describe something by referring to something else with the similar characteristics or qualities. The word RAT in this level, for example, may be used to describe a person who breaks or deserts the duty. In this similar context, for another example, the word HEART as object language is the center of blood circulation in the human body, but the word HEART as metalanguage may refer to somebody the speaker is in love with.

Object language and metalanguage, the writer argues, exist in every living language in this world, the two levels of which serve human language as a means of communication, within interpersonal or social context.

Now we are coming to the discussions of *pragmatics and character language building* below.

2. PRAGMATICS AND CHARACTER LANGUAGE BUILDING

The building of a character language through pragmatics means applying the aspects of pragmatics discussed above in verbal interactions so that distant language and close language are learned, internalized, personalized, and socialized or practised in everyday life, in a diglossic situation. Many parties are involved in this verbal social project: parents, teachers, communities, societies, and the authorities: the school managers, the local government, and the national government. Pragmatics is applied in this character language building in a context as if a native speaker is trying to acquire their language.

The aspects of pragmatics to be applied are projected in 4 (four) strategies, i.e. (1) elaboration of meaning and form strategies, (2) distant language and close language strategies, (3) politeness and camaraderie strategies, (4) object language and metalanguage strategies. The 4 (four) strategies are building blocks of a character language building, the developing steps of which are 6 phases of the verbal social project as follows:

(1) Interaction phase

In this early phase, elaboration of meaning is more important than elaboration of form. Close language strategies should also be more emphasized in the daily experience than distant language strategies, and

therefore, camaraderie strategies are more elaborated. As the learning speaker just starts building their character language, object language and metalanguage should be experienced in a 75:25 ratio of probabilities. The parties to help encouraging this phase are parents and close communities.

(2) Teaching-and-learning process phase

This phase is done at school, i.e. the teaching-and-learning phase. In this phase, elaborations of meaning and form strategies, distant language and close language strategies, politeness and camaraderie strategies, and object language and metalanguage strategies are equally experienced by the learning speaker of a character language. The speaker should experience an equal 50:50 ratio of probabilities encouraged by their character language teacher. The parties most responsible for helping encouraging this phase are teachers, and all the authorities, parents, close and distant communities, and societies.

(3) Evaluation phase

This phase is also done at school, i.e. the evaluation phase. The evaluation phase here is of formal and structured evaluation processes: progress, mid-term, and final-term evaluations. The elaborations of meaning and form strategies, distant language and close language strategies, politeness and camaraderie strategies, and object language and metalanguage strategies are equally evaluated by the teacher teaching a character language. The teacher should evaluate an equal 50:50 ratio of probabilities of character language material having learned by the learning speaker. Written reports are given upon the evaluation processes. The

parties most responsible for helping encouraging this phase are teachers, and all the authorities.

(4) Re-evaluation phase

This phase is also done at school, i.e. the re-evaluation phase. The re-evaluation phase here is an informal and unstructured evaluation atmosphere: in fun classrooms, in the school doorways, in sudden encounters between the teacher and the learning speaker, in the school yard, and in other school spaces at relaxed situations. The teacher should verify on the learning speaker's verbal performance on their character language in indirect and relaxed manners: whether the verbal performance is appropriate or not yet. When doing so, the teacher should minimize the threat to the learning speaker. Compliments and discussions are given upon the learning speaker's verbal performance. The parties most responsible for helping encouraging this phase are teachers, and all the authorities.

(5) Verification phase

This phase is done everywhere, i.e. the verification phase. This phase is to strengthen the re-evaluation phase at school. The verification phase should be done everywhere by the character language competent speakers upon the verbal performance of the learning speakers. Thus, every competent speaker is responsible for encouraging the learning speaker to complete their character language building. This phase is also done in an informal and unstructured atmosphere everywhere in the country. The verification should also be done in indirect and relaxed manners. Compliments and discussions should

also be given upon the learning speaker's verbal performance. All the parties are most responsible for encouraging this phase.

(6) Selection phase

This is the final phase of the character language building project, i.e. the selection phase. This phase is for the speaker to apply the character language they have just completed learning, in a particular situation that may call. The speaker are now smart enough in using the language pragmatically, as they have equipped themselves with all the strategies required for using a character language in a diglossic situation. The competent speaker may now select to use either distant language or close language, i.e. either formal utterances, indirect utterances, and non-literal utterances in the formal situations, or informal utterances, direct utterances, and literal utterances in the informal situations. In this final phase, all parties as well as members of the speech society are responsible for encouraging one another in using and maintaining the character language.

CLOSING

Pragmatics and character language building discussed in this paper is a verbal social project. A social project here implies that the whole speech society is invited as well as involved in the project: parents, teachers, communities, societies, and the authorities: the school managers, the local government, and the national government.

This verbal social project is costly but is not impossible to carry out. The four pragmatic strategies elaborated

as the building blocks of character language building are worth applying in the efforts to equip *the state children of tomorrow* with a character language for the future of a character nation.

A character language is inevitably important as part of character nation building. In this light, pragmatics serves to character nation building in the scope of verbal performances of a competent character speaker. A competent character speaker is a good speaker who in time will probably be a good character leader in a particular country.

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