THE ROLE OF SEMANTICS IN LANGUAGE UNDERSTANDING: A CASE STUDY OF SERANG JAVANESE IN CIRUAS DISTRICT, SERANG REGENCY

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Abstract

This study will discuss the role of semantics in language comprehension with the object of study being Serang Javanese. In this study, the researcher used a qualitative research method, with the type of field research. And the source of information in this study was obtained by the researcher through observation and interviews as primary data sources. In this study, the researcher used an ethnographic approach which is indeed appropriate for what the researcher did. In this study, the Serang Javanese language (BJS), which is a local language whose speakers are spread across areas such as Cilegon, Serang Regency, and Serang City, has several unique features and deep meanings. The role of semantics and pragmatics can support the understanding of researchers and readers how phrases (BJS) have deep meanings and are not limited to phrases that have literal meanings alone, but must see the contexts in which they occur.

Keywords: Serang Javanese language, semantics, pragmatics

INTRODUCTION

Language is a sound produced by the human vocal tract. It is also a symbol or sign that has three main dimensions: the past, the present, and the future (Keraf 1989). Gorys Keraf states that language is the starting point for communication. Language is a means of communication between individuals or from one group to another. Language plays a vital role and function in the formation of human civilization. The technological advances we experience today, such as the ease of communication between people, often hampered by distance, are now accessible and facilitated through electronic messaging. All of these advances are the result and fruit of a civilization heavily influenced by language. The civilization of a human group or tribe can be seen from its language. Through language, one can easily determine which civilization it belongs to and where the speaker originates. A person can be identified as Javanese simply by listening to the speaker's vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Thus, only through language can we determine which tribe or country a person comes from.

The Javanese are the majority ethnic group inhabiting the Indonesian island of Java. This ethnic group has a very long history. The island of Java is not solely inhabited by the Javanese. The Sundanese, who also inhabit Java, also have a long history on the island. Salakanegara, which occupies the western part of Java, was the first Sundanese kingdom, first existing in the 2nd century AD and is the oldest kingdom in the Indonesian archipelago (Prasetyo, 2009). In addition to Salakanegara, the Sundanese experienced successive reigns, from Tarumanegara to the Pakuan Padjajaran kingdom. The Javanese people with the Kalingga kingdom were first recorded as being present in Central Java in the 6th century AD. After the collapse of the Kalingga kingdom, many Javanese kingdoms emerged and replaced it, from the Mataram kingdom to the famous Majapahit kingdom, which had power extending beyond the archipelago (Made Alit et al., 2022). The Majapahit kingdom, which had a relatively broad scope of power extending beyond the archipelago, played a significant role in the current civilization of the archipelago. The Palapa Oath, recorded in the Pararaton manuscript, was initiated by the prime minister, Gajah Mada. This oath contained a promise from a prime minister or patih to refrain from enjoying the luxuries he possessed. by the Majapahit kingdom to be able to unite the Nusantara region. The civilizations mentioned above, particularly those of the Javanese people,

demonstrate that the Javanese civilization was a very long and extensive one. This civilization was heavily influenced by the language used by historical figures. For example, the Palapa Oath, which was written in Javanese, was heard outside the archipelago and can be enjoyed today. The Javanese people spread to various regions, even beyond the Indonesian archipelago, due to trade and colonial influences (Usmaedi, 2023). The Javanese people eventually developed distinct subgroups, both culturally and linguistically. This can be seen in the language structure, which tends to be similar to Javanese. For example, the Javanese languages of Cirebon, Indramayu, and Serang, formerly known as the Banten dialect of Javanese, are known. The Bantenese dialect of Javanese has a long history. This language can be said to be a child of the Cirebon Javanese language region. Cirebon had a vital influence on the development of the Bantenese dialect of Javanese. This is evident in the presence of the Banten Sultanate, a subsidiary of the Cirebon Sultanate. Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin was the son of Prince Cakrabuana or Syarif Hiduayatullah (Luktiandi et al., 2022). With the aim of Islamization, the Cirebon kingdom invaded the Banten region, which was then occupied by the Sundanese people. This language is now known as Serang Javanese. However, it was previously known as the Banten dialect of Javanese (Iskandarwasid, Yoyo Mulyana, Agus Hudari, 1985). After West Java underwent administrative expansion and Banten became an autonomous region, the pronunciation of this language changed. It is most commonly used in Serang Regency, Serang City, and Cilegon City.

RESEARCH METHODS

The object of this study was the Serang Javanese language, with informants from Ciruas District, Serang Regency. In this study, the researcher used a qualitative research method, which focuses on the natural conditions of the object without manipulation, with the researcher as a key instrument (Sugiyono, 2020). The approach used in this study was ethnographic, based on observations of a group of people in a natural environment (Sugianto, 2023). To obtain data that meets the researcher's expectations, the techniques used include observation, interviews, literature review, and internet searches. In direct observation, the researcher uses the eyes as the primary instrument for data collection, assisted by the mouth as a means of interaction, and the ears as a means of listening for information.

In-depth interviews were conducted by researchers to obtain the desired data for the research. This study is based on the concept of technologies of the self (Martin, H. Luther, Gutman, Huck, Hutton, 1988), which states that every human being is able to reflect on their experiences, describe them individually, and communicate opinions about themselves and the world around them, creating new subjectivities worthy of communication. Based on this concept, this study appropriately gathers information from informants using in-depth interviews. In order to support the data that will be collected through observation and in-depth interviews by going directly into the field, and in order to obtain data that can support what is obtained in the field, the researcher conducted field research so that the data obtained by the researcher in this study can be said to be complete data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. **Analysis of Meaning in Serang Javanese**: A discussion of the lexical characteristics and unique meanings of phrases in Serang Javanese. For example, the use of distinctive words or idioms that have specific meanings in local culture.

    1) Distinctive Lexicon with Local Cultural Connotations
    In Serang Javanese, many words have specific nuances and meanings that don't always match standard Javanese vocabulary. For example:
    "I'm fed up"This word has the same meaning in Serang Javanese as in other Javanese languages. However, in Serang Javanese, it has a deeper emotional intensity, depending on the context. This word would mean "don't want to meet again" if the context involves inviting someone to meet. "Adoh" in Javanese other than the Serang dialect (JS) has the word "jauh." However, in Serang Javanese, the stress and alphabetic affixes form "uadoh," which means "very far" and adapts to the context. The sentence "uadoh" would mean "don't want to be invited/want to" in the context of an invitation.
    "Grudug"In Javanese, as well as in JS, it means "approach." However, in JS, it means "coming in large numbers." In JS, the word is used with negative connotations, such as "being caught doing something negative."

    2) Idiomatic Phrases Containing Local Symbols
    Some idioms in Serang Javanese reflect everyday life or local beliefs. For example:

"Ngantosi ning ayun lawang"Literally, this phrase means "waiting until you're at the door." This phrase is used by Javanese speakers in Serang to offer advice or life lessons from an older person to a younger one. In context, this phrase can mean waiting patiently or faithfully to obtain what is desired, perhaps influenced by the values of mutual cooperation and togetherness.

"Napik like a goat"Literally, this phrase means "don't be like a goat." In practice, this phrase is often used by older people or even young people. This phrase has the meaning "when given advice or given knowledge or counsel, don't be like someone with an ear infection who discharges fluid mixed with pus." This phrase is also sometimes used—especially in peer groups—to convey a message of impudence.

The use of animals or nature in idioms shows the attachment of the Serang people to the surrounding nature, and this is reflected in the way they express a person's character or attitude.

3) Specific Meanings of Words Related to Social Relations

In Serang Javanese, some words have meanings that are heavily influenced by social relations and an individual's position in society. For example:

"Wandering"refers to someone who likes to hang out or doesn't want to go home. This word carries a negative contogue. Besides "hanging out," this word is also often used by JS speakers to satirize someone's irresponsible behavior, as seen by society.

"Njaluk Ridone"Literally, it means "ask for his approval." However, for JS speakers, this phrase is more often used to ask for approval from someone who is usually more respected in position or knowledge and who has an emotional connection to the speaker.

4) Subtle Emotive and Affective Expressions

Serang Javanese has special words used to convey feelings or affection indirectly, often in a more subtle way. For example:

"Wow, you're rich"Literally means "rich." Typically used by JS speakers to praise someone not only for their material wealth, but also for their richness or sincerity in doing good deeds. However, sometimes in peer interactions, "Wih Sugih" is used to mock someone who is very stingy with material things. This word must be understood from the emotional perspective of the speakers when it is used.

"Mene Gah"Literally meaning "here" with the prefix "wih." This prefix emphasizes the speaker's address to the person being invited. This word is typically used to establish friendship, invite, or invite. It also conveys a deeper level of friendliness between speaker and listener.

This expression shows that the Serang people prefer to use an indirect approach in communicating and expressing feelings or social invitations.

5) The Role of Context in Interpretation of Meaning

Serang Javanese, like many other regional languages, relies on context to determine the meaning of a word or phrase. The same word can have different meanings depending on the context in which it's used, and this often carries additional connotations. For example:

"Neggeneni"literally means "to wait." However, context plays a crucial role in the word's use. Context can alter the meaning of this word. However, its use is more common, indicating someone who has been waiting for something with great anticipation for a long time.

"Slowly"Literally, this word means "slowly." However, in its use, this phrase has a profound philosophical value. Contextually, when used by an older speaker to a younger speaker, it conveys a message that aims to provide advice on how to navigate and resolve life's challenges. However, this phrase also depends on its placement, and sometimes it can be difficult for fellow speakers to understand it clearly when used by an older speaker to a younger speaker. This diversity of meanings reflects the importance of understanding context in Serang Javanese, as context not only influences literal meaning but also carries cultural values and local perceptions.

6) Shifts in Word Meanings Due to the Influence of Other Languages

The interaction between Serang Javanese and Indonesian has resulted in changes in meaning or expansion of some words. For example:

"Smart"In Indonesian, this word simply means "intelligent," referring to brain power alone. However, in Serang Javanese, it can have additional connotations, such as being clever at speaking or being clever in

dealing with life's challenges. This demonstrates an adaptation of meaning rooted in the influence of foreign languages and cultures. "Ngantos"which usually means "waiting" in Sundanese. In Serang Javanese, this word has a more complex meaning than its Sundanese meaning. In Serang Javanese, this word means "waiting with hope."

2. The Role of Context in Understanding Meaning: Demonstrates how cultural context, such as traditions or social norms, influences the understanding of meaning. Serang Javanese may contain terms that can only be fully understood within a cultural context. Cultural context plays a crucial role in understanding the meaning of Serang Javanese terms, as a full understanding of the meaning is only possible if we also understand local values, traditions, or social norms. Here are some examples of how the cultural context unique to Serang contributes to the understanding of meaning:

1) The Influence of Tradition on the Meaning of Words and Phrases

Some words in Serang Javanese have meanings closely linked to traditional practices or distinctive cultural rituals. For example:

"Ngerujaki"This word is used for celebrations of pregnancy at 4 months or 7 months.

"Ngariung""Gathering" doesn't simply mean "gathering," but in the context of Javanese Serang culture, it encompasses aspects of mutual cooperation and togetherness in carrying out social or religious activities. This activity often involves many families or relatives gathering to help one another, demonstrating strong social ties within the community. However, the word is also often used in the context of Islamic religious traditions. It is usually held to welcome certain Islamic holidays, such as the month of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr.

These terms can only be fully understood if we recognize the context of the tradition, which is different from the literal understanding of the words in everyday language.

2) Social Norms in Language and Politeness Levels

Serang Javanese, like other Javanese dialects, is heavily influenced by social norms, particularly in the use of language levels that indicate politeness. A particularly relevant example:

"Father"and "Mame" in everyday language may both refer to 'father', but in Serang, the short form "Mame" is used more informally or in conversations with family or closer people, while "Bapak" shows a higher level of respect, especially in formal contexts or when speaking to respected people.

"Traveling"In Serang Javanese, "Ngalancong" doesn't just mean "to visit," but usually carries the connotation of respect when visiting someone older or influential, such as a community leader or elder. This illustrates the importance of respect in local culture, where "Ngalancong" is not just a visit, but a visit that carries respect.

The context of these social norms greatly influences word choice and meaning, so that someone who does not understand local norms may find it difficult to interpret the true meaning of that level of language.

3) Phrases Related to Local Religious and Belief Systems

Many phrases in Serang Javanese have connotations related to local religious systems and beliefs. For example:

"ngelalar/ ngederes"is a phrase that literally means "reciting the Koran." However, in the context of Serang Javanese, this phrase is advice indicating the importance of guidance in deepening knowledge, especially in religion, to avoid misunderstandings or deviations. This phrase refers to local social norms and values that value proper learning and supervision from those with more experience.

"Tirakat""Tirakat" is a term meaning undergoing a ritual or spiritual practice, typically involving certain abstinence or fasting. For the Javanese people of Serang, "tirakat" is not simply an act but is often seen as a way to gain spiritual strength or achieve inner peace. This meaning cannot be understood simply from the word "tirakat" literally, but rather from the strong religious traditions and local beliefs.

Understanding these terms requires knowledge of the beliefs and values of the Serang Javanese people, because without this context, the meaning of the phrases may lose depth or relevance.

4) Kinship Terms and Respect in the Kinship System

In Serang Javanese culture, terms used in the context of kinship have a broader meaning than their literal meaning. For example:

"Mom""Nong" not only refers to an older brother or sister, but also reflects respect in Javanese Serang culture.

The use of this term in Javanese Serang society carries a deeper meaning. Even in social contexts, this term is more often used to convey higher levels of respect, even if the two individuals are strangers. "Nong," meaning younger sister, is often used to refer to a younger person within or outside the immediate family, but still within the circle of relatives. This indicates a close social bond where social status and age are treated with great respect.

These family terms can only be fully understood if one knows the values of togetherness and respect between relatives that are highly respected in Serang society.

5) Context in Local Expressions

Serang Javanese contains expressions closely related to everyday life, which cannot be understood without understanding the local social context. For example:

"Napik Megegeg"Literally meaning "don't be silent and daydream." This expression implies that one should always be active and think clearly. However, in Serang culture, this expression is often delivered with a wise tone, but is usually used informally as advice, encouraging people to always act and think.

6) The Importance of Social Context in Interpreting Meaning

In Serang Javanese, a full understanding of meaning often requires knowledge of social status, age, or even specific cultural moments. For example, when someone says "Mangan Kih" (let's eat), this phrase is more than just an invitation or invitation to eat. In Serang Javanese society, this invitation to eat is often a sign of familiarity and respect, especially when speaking to guests. Ignoring this invitation can be considered impolite, demonstrating the deep social values embedded in everyday expressions.

3. Semantic Variation in Serang Javanese: Explaining the variations in meaning of the same word or expression, depending on who is speaking or to whom the sentence is addressed (social and pragmatic aspects).

Semantic variation in Serang Javanese is evident in how the same word or phrase can change meaning depending on social factors (such as status, age, and relationships) and pragmatic factors (such as the context of communication and the purpose of the conversation). This use of language demonstrates a flexibility and social sensitivity that is very characteristic of Serang culture, where word and phrase choices are carefully tailored to suit the context and social status.

The following are some examples of semantic variations in Serang Javanese which are influenced by social and pragmatic aspects:

1) Language Levels to Show Familiarity

Serang Javanese, like other Javanese dialects, uses language levels (ngoko, krama, and krama inggil) to adapt to social status or the relationship between the speaker and the person being spoken to. These levels alter the meaning of words to indicate respect or familiarity.

"Eat"and "Dhahar" means 'to eat', but "Mangan" is used in informal situations or when talking to peers or younger ones, while "Dhahar" shows more respect and is used when talking to older or more respected people.

"Squat"and "Linggih" both mean 'sit', but "Linggih" is a more polite form and is used for older or respected people, while "Dodok" is more relaxed and is used in informal settings.

This level of language shows not only the literal meaning, but also the feeling of respect or familiarity that the speaker wants to convey.

2) Word Choice Depends on Relationship and Social Status

In Serang Javanese, the words used to refer to family members, friends, or acquaintances indicate a level of familiarity or formality.

"Bro"and "Mang" are both used to address older brothers, but they have different nuances. "Kang" tends to be more casual or familiar, while "Mang" is more formal or polite, typically used in situations requiring respect or when addressing people in formal settings.

"Ding"and "Dek" both mean 'younger sibling', but "Ding" is more formal and can be used to show social distance or respect, while "Dek" is more intimate and is used in family circles or with close friends. This variation shows how flexible the meaning of words is depending on the relationship and social status between the speaker and the interlocutor.

3) Different Meanings Based on Pragmatic Context

Serang Javanese also shows different variations in meaning depending on the situation and purpose of the

conversation.

"Hampurane"means (to apologize), but its meaning can vary depending on the context. In formal situations, this phrase indicates a sincere and respectful apology. However, in informal contexts or between friends, it can be used as a small talk or a lighter expression of apology.

"Arep"In the context of place, this phrase means (in front). However, in the context of hope or desire, this phrase means (want). This phrase in its context will have different meanings in different situations. When this phrase is used with the meaning (want) but used in a familiar and close setting, this phrase is a mocking phrase that has the meaning (always want).

This variation shows how the meaning of an expression can change depending on the purpose or need of the conversation, where the pragmatic aspect shapes the message to be conveyed.

4) Using Different Expressions to Express Emotion or Closeness

In Serang Javanese, certain expressions are used to indicate closeness or emotional connection.

"Lara"and "Boten Kuwawe" means not feeling well, but "Lara" is used more in informal settings to indicate tiredness and is also usually used to refer to the heart in a romantic context, while "Boten Kuwawe" has a more formal meaning and indicates more serious physical discomfort.

This variation shows that the choice of expression indicates the level of familiarity or formality in the relationship between the speaker and the person being spoken to.

5) Satire and Humor that Change in Meaning Based on Social Relationships Serang Javanese has many sarcasm and humor whose meaning can change depending on the social context.

"Pintere!"(very clever) can be a compliment when said in a serious tone, but in a joking or sarcastic situation, it can mean the opposite, namely highlighting a mistake or ignorance. In a friendly environment, this phrase can be an insult that highlights

"Are you sleepy?""Always sleepy," which means "always sleepy," can be used in a casual context between friends as a joke about someone who often looks tired. However, in more formal situations, this sarcasm can express dissatisfaction with someone's attitude or performance.

These examples show how pragmatic and social aspects can give satire a variety of meanings, from mere jokes to deeper criticism.

CONCLUSION

In essence, language is the identity of an individual and a nation. It reveals one's origins and the history of their civilization. Majapahit, with its power extending beyond the archipelago, was the reason for the Palapa Oath sworn by its prime minister, Gajah Mada, which ultimately led to the vast expanse of Majapahit's territory, as we know it. This civilization is inextricably linked to the role of the Javanese language, which played a significant role in the creation of both Majapahit and other civilizations. Similarly, Serang Javanese played a significant role in the development of Bantenese civilization. Although this language, derived from Cirebon, has historical ties to the spread of Islam by Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin, who established the Banten Sultanate. Bantenese civilization and its language possess unique characteristics and differences from Cirebonese, the ancestral language of Serang Javanese. This uniqueness, in terms of phonology, morphology, and semantics, is influenced by Banten's geographic location and its role as an international trading area at the time. This uniqueness of the language is heavily influenced by the Sundanese language, the language of the early settlers of the Banten region, with the Baduy people ruling Banten at that time. In Javanese, which generally recognizes language levels that also reflect hierarchy, there are several levels such as: Ngko, Madya, Krama, and Krama Inggil. These levels in Javanese are different from Serang Javanese. Serang Javanese only recognizes two levels, namely polite Serang Javanese (Bebasan) and rude language (Jaseng). The terms "mbak" and "mas" which are terms derived from Javanese in general, are different from Serang Javanese using the terms "nong" and "kang" which are actually identical to Sundanese. Serang Javanese has historical ties with Cirebon, but linguistically, Serang Javanese has several differences from Cirebon. This can be seen in its very strong phonology, where Serang Javanese has a coarser phonology, while Cirebon has a more refined phonology. In terms of meaning, Cirebon Javanese and Serang Javanese have differences, although their phrases have similarities. This can be seen in phrases such as the phrase "ora usah" in Serang Javanese, which means "no need." However, in Cirebon, the phrase would mean "don't," with an emphasis on the imperative tone.

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