ON VERBAL COMMUNICATION THAT DEVELOPS COUNTRY BORDER AREAS

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"Bahasa adalah penemuan manusia yang paling menakjubkan: manusia sungguh-sungguh s*apiens* (bijaksana, berbudi) hanya karena ia *loquens* (bertutur)." Paul Chauchard dalam *La Langage et La Pensee, translated by A. Wydyamartaya, Bahasa dan Pikiran, 1983.*

ABSTRACT

In this article we argue that constructing a positive verbal communication is important to both prevent and overcome a domestic/political chaos within a nation, including its border areas. This is why we encourage those involved in a conversation obey Grice's (1975) cooperative principle classified into four categories, namely, "quantity," "quality," "relation," and "manner." The maxims of quantity are saying "as much as is required" and not making one's "contribution [in a conversation] more informative than is required;" the maxims of quality, not saying "what you believe to be false" and "that for which you lack evidence; the maxims of relation, being "relevant"; and, the maxims of manner, being "perspicuous," that is, avaoiding "obscurity of expression," avoiding "ambiguity," being " brief " and "orderly." In this context, responsible adults like parents and teachers as well as public leaders in general should, therefore, show young generations how to practice those maxims in their lives and train them, formally and/or informally, how to positively react to negative verbal communications in their daily lives. By doing this, hate speech like racist remarks can be both prevented and overcome by all citizens of a nation, including those living at or across its border areas so that chaos, which is always naturally destructive, can be avoided.

Key Words: Verbal communication, Development, Border Areas, Positive Reactions,
and Non-violance

This article is inspired by recent "domestic chaos" that has happened in Indonesia in general, in Papua in particular. As we have seen, many people have burned many buildings and, even, killed many people. *Liputan 6.com*, for example, reported that there were 31 people killed and 1,010 houses, including people's "kioses" and "rukos," as well as governmental buidings in addition to lots of cars that were burned in Wamena on 23 September, 2019 (6 October, 2019, downloaded on 9 October, 2019). Rifa'i reporting for *Detiknews* added that the violant mass protests/demonstrations that happened in Jayapura on 29 August, 2019 and in Wamena on 23 September, 2019 were the results of a very impolite, racist remarks in Surabaya. Quoting Taufiq, a vendor of TV remote devices in Waena, Jayapura, *Detiknews* wrote, "The mass protests were initially caused by a racist remark in Surabaya. The Papuans did not like it," (Detiknews.com 6 October, 2019 downloaded on 9 October, 2019; writers' translation). This is upported by Purba and Suwandi reporting for

Kompas.com who said that it all started in Surabaya although they found out that it [the reacist remark] was a hoax, fake news (in Kompas. Com, 23 September, 2019, downloaded on October, 2019).

Since the racist remark has gone viral or public – Be it a true or a fake one – and hurt many people in general, the (West) Papuans in particular, as well as created domestic, political chaos, it is, therefore, important that we try our best to ensure that it will not happen again in this mixed race land of *Pancasila,* Indonesian ideology. It is also acknowledged, however, that as human beings full of moral weaknesses we do realize that there is no guarantee that such a racist remark could not happen again, that is, it could happen again in the future, it is, therefore, necessary that we do our best too to overcome it peacefully when it reappears in Indonesia in general, at or across border areas as our seminar topic has suggested.

The question is how such a racist remark can be prevented so that it will not happen again and/or how it can be cured when it has happened now and then. This article is to answer the question using Grice's theory, that is, conversational principle and its maxims (1975).

Answering this question in relation to border areas development is profoundly important because of three major reasons: 1) people living in border areas are prone to racist remarks as they live side by side with people from generally different colors of their skin; 2) Indonesians living in the border areas reflect Indonesians as a whole so it is important that they are really competent to show the real face of Indonesia which is, we believe, a non-racist and very tolerant one; and, 3) creating peace at and across the border areas is necessary not only in terms of international relationship what has to be made peaceful but also in terms of Indonesian development itself, that is, when there is a problem at the border area there could also be a problem for Indonesia as a whole. In this sense, peace at the border areas

means peace for Indonesia as nation or the other way around: a chaos at border areas is a chaos for Indonesia that can be very destructable for the people themselves and anything they have developed at or across their border areas.

This is why developing those border areas sustainably is ultimately crucial in every single aspect of lives of people living in the areas, including their language development or verbal communication as suggested in this paper.

GRICE'S CONVERSATIONAL PRINCIPLE AND ITS MAXIMS

Verbal communication or oral language used in communicating at the border areas or across those border areas is, basically, about talks between/among individuals and/or groups of people making a living at or across the border areas, e.g. Indonesia and East Timor, PNG, and Malaysia as well as Singapore, Australia, and the Philippines when sea borders are also taken into account. In other words, verbal communication is about conversation in those contexts.

To ensure that a conversation is successful, that is, there is not only a mutual understanding but also a good feeling between/among the parties inovolved so that no problem is created or when a problem is created, those inovled in the conversation(s) can resolve it, Grice (1975) suggests that those involved obey what she calls as a conversational principle that sounds as follows: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are enganged" (1975: 45).

Grice (1975: 45) classifies her conversational principle into four categories and each category has its specific maxims, namely:

- Quantity: (1) Say as much as required; (2) do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

- Quality: (1) Do not say what you believe to be false; (2) do not say that for which you lack evidence.

- Relation: Be relevant.

- Manner: Be perspicuous. (1) Avaoid obscurity of expression. (2) Avoid ambiguity. (3) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity). (4) Be orderly

It is, of course, undebatable to say that when people involve in a conversation and they all obey the princple and its maxims, the conversation is great meaning that there will be no negative effects to those involved and those around them. Its effects will always be positive. In other words, such positive effects have been created by what people call "lingual sanctity" (Subagyo, 2008) based on politeness principle of using a language (Leech, 1983) or, in Indonesian, *prinsip belas kasih (love-based principle) of using a language in daily communication as stipilated by Subagyo (2012)* and, in global context, by Rosenberg (2003) through his book entitled *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life* (in Subgayo, 2012: 23).

However, when people talking to each other disobey this principle and its maxims, problems occurs as mentioned in the introduction of this article. In other words, it is possible that those taking part in a conversation break those maxims and they, therefore, create poblems among them as Taylor and Taylor (1990: 30) say that a person participating in "a conversation may fail to fulfill a maxim in various ways: by violating it, by opting out from both the maxim and the cooperative principle, by experiencing a clash between two maxims, and by flouting a maxim. Of these, flouting, or deliberately and blatantly failing to fulfill, a maxim is the most interesting case."

It is the most interesting because of its impacts that create problems not only among those who are involved in a conversation but also among those who are related to the people conversing. It even goes beyond that as the Papuan case has shown us: environmental disaster, political turbulance, nationally and internationally. Those negative impacts lead us,

of course, to thinking how a verbal abuse can be prevented and/or how we face it when it has already happened. This is discussed below.

FACING A VERBAL ABUSE, FAKE OR REAL

It is, indeed, a dream of every single individual and of every single nation that racist remarks would never exist. Yet, human lives throughout human histories have shown that racist remarks and/or intolerant attutudes among individuals and nations are not uncommon. Does it mean then that we cannot prevent racist remarks? We believe that the answer to the question is a big "NO." We can, for sure, prevent any racist remarks if we want to. The question is how we can do it. We propose some major ideas as follows.

First, preventing violent, racist communication, hoax or fake news/conversations can be done by following Grice's principle/categories/maxims as stated above. In other words, it is important that when people want to say something, they have to make sure that they follow the pinciple/categories/maxims as stipulated above. In this sense, teachers in schools and parents at home as well as formal and informal leaders in our societies should give some genuine examples of how such a good way of conversing can be applied.   This is to say that responsible adults be the first to show young generations how such conversational principle, categories, and maxims as stipulated by Grice can be applied so that harmony among speakers and among peoples of different races within a nation, that is, right from its center to its border areas can be well-developed, nicely constructed, and postively built-up.

Second, it is also a good idea that any speakers of a language think of the effects of their utterances to other people. That is, when they think that what they say or about to utter can create bad effects to their listeners, then do not say it. In other words, we are supposed to say things that will not lead people in general, particularly those who would listen to us, into trouble/chaos; we are supposed to say things that will make them happy, peaceful, hopeful, and united .

Third, it is also crucial that our students in schools and/or children at home be trained to use just polite words when they interact with one another. In that sense using such words like *sorry*, *please*, *no worries*, and that is ok, should be common words/phrases that they use when they have done something wrong, ask for some favor, and/or when they have been mistreated. In this sense, adults should give good examples for younger generations to follow.

Living in a world without racist remarks is, of course, something which is ideal. In parctice, however, verbal abuse, as stated above, often happens in our daily lives: in interpersonal relationship in a family, a school, an organization, an institution; in intergroup relationship; and in international relation (Subagyo, 2012: 40). So, what should be done when this happens? There are many things that can definitely be done, some of which are suggested below.

First, it is always a good idea that we take no revenge to those imorally unacceptable remarks of racism/intolerance. In other words, when someone smacks your left chick, give him/her your right chick too. Or, a stone thrown to us be responded by a cotton throw. The question is whether we can practice it. Can we do it in our real lives? Some people like Mahatma Gandhi (1975) can. When a hate speech or racist remark happens, all we need to do is to be patient and to take no revenge. This "trick" would ultimately discourage verbal abusers to waithdraw, to be silent, and, therefore, to feel and say sorry of what they have said.

Second, there is a need to check and recheck whether what we hear is true or someone somewhere has fabricated it. In other words, what we hear or read may not be a true one or people just make it up to create chaos. In this context, critical thinking is necessary and giving no response to a fake news or hoax is, of course, a wise thing to do. By doing that, we create peace within ourselves and in relation wth others, whoever they are.

Third, it is also urgent that our children at home and in schools be trained not only how they should prevent verbal abuse as stated above, but also how they should handle any kind of verbal abuse they face. That is, when verbal abuse happens, our children should have learned how to correctly respond to it. Such a correct response can, of course, be done if they are well-trained to face any racist issue confidently. It is, therefore, important that our children at home or our students in schools be treated in such a way that they can be able to face any racists remarks in schools and/or in their lives after school.

Fourth, elders should show young people through their exemplary lives how verbal abuse can be correctly faced, that is, when it has already occured so that harmony among people, groups, religions, and nations can be created. Learning from people like Mahatma Gandhi is, of course, always necessary for us and for our young generations to successfully practice non-violent movement (*Desai,1990).* In this context, Subhan (2018:2) says:

> *Kata-kata itu tajam seperti pedang. Ada istilah "mulutmu harimaumu." Sayangnya, sekarang ini banyak orang tak mau dan tak mampu mengendalikan kata-katanya, tak peduli apakah menyinggung atau menghina orang lain. Media sosial yang merupakan produk akal budi generasi moderen justru diisi dengan watak primitf yang saling memakan dan saling menghancurkan. Ujaran kebencian seperti menu rutin yang terus dikonsumsi ... Padahal, cara bertutur (berbahasa) menunjukkan tingkat keadaban.*

CONCLUSION

No one wants to hear utterances which are negative in terms of their effects to fellow human beings. Yet, it happens that human beings always face those negative words/sentences/discourses in their daily lives, including those living at or across country border areas.

In this article we argue that those racist remarks can be prevented by applying Grice's conversational principle, categories, and maxims. They can also be prevented by encouraging any speakers to think of the effect of what they want to say. When its effects are

poor, then it is a good idea no to say it. Tarining our children at home and in schools about bad effects of racism is also believed to be effective in preventing future racist attitudes.

To prevent those racists remarks is one case, to face them when they happen is another. So, it is also important to understand that when those negative uttarances do appear, we have to face them correctly. One good way of responding to them is that we do not take them seriously. Giving no revenge to those negative remarks, checking and recheking them whether they are correct or not, applying critical thinking in analyzing them, and training our children at home and/or in schools to correctly respond to those poor kinds of poor behaviors and to always use nice words/sentences to other fellow humans are, therefore, necessary to have a better world for all so that chaos like one that has just happened in Papua will no happen again in our lovely country, Indonesia, or elsewhere. That is, we believe, the true essence of using verbal communication that really develops a nation, including its country border areas.

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