Dimensions of Relationships and Meaningfulness of Philosophy in Language Studies

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Abstract

There is a close interdependence between language and philosophy. Language is essential to philosophy, both as a medium for transmitting ideas and as an object of philosophical research. Language needs philosophy to systematically evaluate language problems and find solutions. Philosophy is the attempt to understand and explain reality, values, knowledge, and meaning using logic and reason. However, language is a set of symbols used for informational and mental communication. Without language, philosophy cannot grow and multiply and without philosophy, language cannot reflect or criticize the human mind. Precisely, two basic concepts map the dimensions of philosophy's meaningfulness in language studies: philosophy as a formal object, and as a material object. First, as a formal object; it critically examines the nature, history, and purposes of language. Secondly, as a material object, it is a product of human thought and expression, shaped by the historical, cultural and social context of its society.

Keywords: *Relationships and Meaningfulness; Philosophy; Formal Object and Material Object; Language Studies*

Introduction

The link between philosophy and language is undoubted. Language and philosophy are inseparable (Bunnin, N., & Yu, 2009:355; McQueen, 2010:69). They can also be thought of as two sides of a coin that determine each other's existence. As is known, philosophy can be interpreted as a system of deep thinking about anything (Shand, 2003:2; Pfeiffer, 2017:29), including the language system of course, so that humans can produce knowledge about the nature of anything that is meaningful to their lives.

In a similar sense, philosophy can also be defined as an ongoing way or process of seeking ultimate truth, understanding ideas, analysing concepts and so on by asking questions that then lead to a willingness to examine and attempt to find answers (Pojman, L. P., & Vaughn, 2006; Tater, 2010). Meanwhile, language is a code representation or conventional system, which is socially agreed upon as a means to convey various ideas (Sturrock, 2008:87; Fogle, 2022:5). Philosophy helps develop and expand

the language of understanding about anything, while language becomes a means of communication in conveying ideas about the truth born by philosophy.

Therefore, it is not surprising that philosophy's interest in the study of language is not new throughout the history of philosophy in particular and human civilisation in general (Hidayat, 2006; Sadowski, 2009; Mark, D.M. & Frank, 2012).Since the time of the Greeks and Romans in the 4th-2nd centuries BC, until this Postmodern era, language is one of the most central and main themes of philosophical study (Vatakis, A., Esposito, A., Giagkou, M., Cummins, F., & Papadelis, 2011:47; Robins, 2013). In fact, this trend of great interest in the philosophical world towards language studies has found its monumental momentum since the 20th century (Propp, 2007; Canfield, 2013; Rudrum, 2019:255), with a very varied development of language studies, which manifests through a series of schools, including Phenomenology, Existentialism, Analytic Philosophy, Neopositivism, Hermeneutics, Semiotics, and so on.

To give an idea of how important the existence of language studies is, and even a very dominant variable in cultural consciousness, finally the 20th century until now is termed the century of logocentrism (Kearney, 2003; Rorty, 2010). The term "logos" means language, text, content of thought, word, kalam, or speech (Hidayat, 2006; Burmeister, J. & Sentesy, 2007). The century of logocentrism is a period in the history of Western thought that places logos or reason at the centre of everything (Dunshirn, 2021;Miller, 2023). In this century, language is seen as a tool capable of representing reality objectively and rationally (Schwandt, 2014; Mendie, J. G., & Udofia, 2020).

The study of language in the age of logocentrism focuses on the structure, rules, and meanings of language that are considered fixed and universal. However, the age of logocentrism also faced criticism from various directions, especially from poststructuralist thinkers who challenged the basic assumptions about language and reality (Çalkıvik, 2017). They propose that language is not a mirror of reality, but rather a social construction that is relative and contextualised (Damico, J. S., Simmons-Mackie, N., & Hawley, 2005). Thus, the study of language must pay attention to aspects such as history, culture, ideology, and power that influence the use and meaning of language (Fairclough, 2013).

Studying language discourse is actually a study of one important form of substance for the phenomenon of human culture, which is related to its communication system. Only through an intensive and effective communication process can a human culture be built and maintained. In the words of Eco (1978:22), "Culture is signification and communication and that humanity and society exist only when communicative and significative relationships are established".

To build an effective communication system, humans need a symbolic medium / means, namely in the form of language. This is because, in principle, the existence of culture owned by humans themselves, also consists of ideas, values, and works that are manifested in the form of symbols. A.L. Kroeber and C. Kluckhon in *Culture, A Critical Review of Concepts and Definition* (Senft, G., Östman, J.O, &, Verschueren, 2009:84) in relation to one of the substance of the meaning of culture which is always closely related to symbols/language argues, "Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts".

In line with this view, by adapting Geertz's anthropological concept, Foley (2001:16) also emphasises the role of symbols/language in relation to human culture, as follows.

Understanding and practices are realized for humans through symbols. One view of culture, then, is really as a system of symbols by which a human being enacts his/her embodied understanding. This is the view propounded by the influential school of symbolic anthropology the best known representative of this view probably being Geertz. He views culture as a system of public meanings encoded in symbols and articulated in behaviour seen as symbolic action.

Reinforcing how important the role of symbols/language is in human life and culture as intended, humans have a culture mainly because they can communicate with and understand symbols. Symbols allow people to develop complex thoughts and exchange thoughts with others. Language and other forms of symbolic communication, such as art, allow people to create, explain, and record new ideas and information (Chesebro, J. W., & Bertelsen, 1998; Kellogg, 1999; Yoshida, 2014).

In line with this view, Inglis, Bone, & Wilkie (2005), revealed that the ability to use symbols is one of the basic human traits. This ability some may call a necessity, to convert raw data from sensory experience into symbols (language), we can also use language to point to other notions (such as conceptions, goals, values, love) and to pass on knowledge and insights from generation to generation. In short, the symbolising power of language is responsible for and even guarantees the survival of humanity manusia (Huffman, A. & Davis, 2011; Salzmann, S., Stanlaw, J., & Adachi, 2014).

In this regard, Wiseman (2014) also Jackson (2014:79) argues, that symbolism is the key to a uniquely human mental life and exceeds mere animal levels. He believes that the basic need for symbolisation, which no other creature may have, is clearly present in humans, functions continuously, and is a fundamental process of the human mind. Dillistone (2002:15)also asserts that symbols/language have had and still have a very important meaning in human life. The existence of a community, along with all its cultural values, cannot be expressed without and through symbols/language. Symbols are at once a particular centre of attention, a means of communication, and a foundation of shared understanding. Every communication utilises a set of symbols/language. Society can hardly exist without symbols.

Because the phenomenon of human culture is so close to the symbol system, in an anthropological perspective, human beings are termed by Ernst Cassirer (1944) as "animal symbolicum" (Allan, K., Capone, A. & Kecskes, 2017). In this perspective, it is affirmed that humans never see, discover and recognise their world directly, except through various symbols/language. Parallel to this view, it is also stated by Sutrisno (1999), namely that human culture is understood as a jagad (Javanese term: world) of meanings and values communicated through symbols or symbols, which places human actors as "symbolizing, conceptualizing and meaning seeking animals" which are expressed through symbols/ language).

The existence of the symbolic system of human culture "exists" in the form of a language system in a broad sense, which is used as a medium of communication. It is known that communication variables are the basis that determines the existence and structure of a society (Tedeschi, 2007; Leo Wayne Jeffres, L.W. Jian, G. & Yoon, 2013). With communication using language systems and symbols, humans eventually influence each other, so that the same collective experience is formed in one society. With language, humans develop communication systems and mechanisms, for the sake of conveying messages of feelings and knowledge that are meaningful to life (Edwards, A. & Shepherd, 2004; Trenholm, 2020).

Communication through the symbolic system of language is thus the basis for human relations and culture (Mowlana, 2018; Shaules, 2019). Through communication, in a sociological perspective, the simplest society will be formed, namely the society that Ferdinand Toennies called *gemeinschaft* (Christensen, K.S. & Levinson, 2003; Andersen, 2021), which Emile Durkheim (2013) called a "mechanical solidarity" society with its characteristics having a primitive form of social cohesion bonds. Then in line with the development of the existing society, with an increasingly effective communication system, a society called *gesellschaft* was formed (Christensen, K.S. & Levinson, 2003) or known as a society with "organic solidarity" (Durkheim, 2013). In the context of the meaning of this gesellschaft society, communication eventually plays an increasingly vital and strategic role for humans and their civilization (Anheier, H.K. & Toepler, 2010).

Based on these background thoughts, this article will put forward a study with a focus on two things, namely: first, the relationship between philosophy and language; and second, the dimensions of the meaningfulness of philosophy to the existence of language studies.

The Relationship Between Philosophy and Language

Before starting to examine the relationship between language and philosophy, it is important to discuss the nature of philosophy and language. Etymologically, the term philosophy comes from the Arabic "falsafa" which means the realm of thought or thinking (McGinnis, J. & Reisman, 2007). The word philosophy is also derived from the Greek "philosophia", which consists of two roots "philein" meaning love and "shophia" meaning wisdom (Gill, M.L. & Pellegrin, 2009). Thus, etymologically, philosophy can be defined as the love of wisdom. So people who study philosophy can be interpreted as people who have a great love for wisdom (Hidayat, 2006:6).

Based on these points of thought, philosophy can be interpreted as a system of thought, or more precisely a way of thinking, which is open: meaning that it is open to question and questioning (Keraf, A.S. & Dua, 2001:14; Shaker, 2020). Love (*phylo*) in phylosophia, therefore, is not understood first of all as a static, given noun, but rather as a verb, a process. In that sense, therefore, in the performance of philosophy, it has more to do with an attitude that is lived, that is lived in search, in "quest", in constant questioning, not even knowing the term stop (Keraf, A.S. & Dua, 2001:14).

Based on the understanding of the meaning of philosophy as mentioned above, there are at least two substantial things that are important to note. First, philosophy is understood as an effort, process, method, way, desire, to continue to seek the truth (Quine, 1990; Hassan, N. R., Mingers, J., & Stahl, 2018). This desire appears in a critical attitude to always question anything, to arrive at the truth of knowledge that can be said to be the deepest or even the ultimate. Although in reality, what is called the essence of the truth of the deepest or even the ultimate knowledge is a mere utopia (Popper, 2014). Therefore, the terminology of the deepest and or ultimate truth, in the consciousness of philosophy, is always interpreted in the context of the tension between space and time, which is tentative, not the other way round as an absolute or final truth (Fieser, 2000; Ankersmit, 2012). In the corridors of philosophy, the truth of knowledge is always in tension between relativism and absolutism (Blackburn, 2005; Blezaby, 2011; Romero, 2018). This means that at a certain moment of time and space, the belief in the truth of knowledge that is considered the most correct is always obtained by humans, as a guide to their lives in their time or era (Polanyi, 2012; Habermas, 2015). However, simultaneously or simultaneously, humans also always try to continue to question the truth obtained, so that a better and or more correct possibility is sought in the following period (Dreyfus, H. L., & Rabinow, 2014).

Secondly, related to the problem of philosophy which is always in the tension of tentativity between the relative and the absolute, the process of searching for the truth of knowledge carried out through the submission of "questions" in order to find answers or "statements", takes place without ever knowing the word stop (Outhwaite, 1987; Callender, 2011). This is because every answer as knowledge found to a question will always be a new question that requires a new answer. Even in that philosophical performance, the "question" is more important than the answer or "statement" (Meyer, M., & Barsky, 2000:273; Irwin, 2018:128). Therefore, philosophy is essentially "thinking about thinking" (Peperzak, 2012; Read, 2021).

As with the concept of philosophy, the understanding of language is no less diverse. The oldest interpretation of language, among others, was conveyed by two Western scientists, Bloch and Trager 1942, who defined language, namely as a system of arbitrary sound symbols used by a social group or community as a means of communication. This is as stated by Robins (2014:12), namely that "Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by which a social group cooperates". A similar definition of the importance of language in the social system of human life is also put forward by Wardhaugh (1977:3) in

Introduction to Lingistics, namely that language is, "A system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication".

From these two definitions, it can be interpreted that language is basically a symbol system, which is used by humans as a very important and even determinant means of communication in culture and life (Fairclough, 2013). Language is one of the most efficient communication equipment for delivering ideas and goals to other parties (Leonard, M., Graham, S., & Bonacum, 2004; Kukulska-Hulme, A., & Shield, 2008). Not only as a communication equipment, the existence of language is even a formulation channel to convey various feelings based on emotions or psychology (Beattie, G., & Ellis, 2017; Wilce, 2009).

Talking about the relationship between language and philosophy would be an interesting discussion. By understanding the nature of language, namely as a medium of communication between humans, and linking it with the basic understanding of philosophy, it seems very clear that these two things are very closely related (Chomsky, 1995). A philosopher or expert in the field of philosophy must need language to convey his ideas to other parties. In addition, language can also be one of the objects of study in philosophy. Conversely, in an effort to master a language, a linguist must have a basic provision in the form of philosophy, which is used as a means to frame curiosity and enthusiasm to seek the truth in order to understand the nature of the language used (Gibbs, 2007; Allan, 2014).

Therefore, linguists need philosophy to gain a thorough understanding of the texts they encounter. Linguists can use philosophical methods to answer all their curiosities about the texts they encounter, whether the existence of texts related to human relations, or anything related to the universe (Bazerman, 2003). From this description, how clearly can be seen and understood the significance of the existence of the relationship between philosophy and language, which is in the construction of a reciprocal relational format (Phillips, 2015; Wiercinski, 2020).

The Meaningfulness Dimension of Philosophy in Language Studies

1. Philosophy as a Formal Object of Language Study

In a philosophical perspective, a formal object can be understood as a point of view used to know or recognise the nature of knowledge (Brown, 2006; Pestana, 2012). Or it can be expressed in another expression, the formal object is the perspective used to understand something (Stainton, 2000; Östling, J., Heidenblad, D.L., & Hammar, 2020). As stated in the previous presentation above, namely that one of the significance of the existence of philosophy in relation to language studies, is as a tool or means of instrumentation to understand the existence of language itself. Or in another expression, the position and role of philosophy in the scientific tradition is termed a "formal object", namely a function that is more related to its construction as a perspective or paradigm (van Merriënboer, J.J.G. & de Bruin, 2014). In the context of research treasures, the existence of formal objects is important to understand philosophically, because it will determine the way we see and interpret the existing reality (Jonassen, 1991; Sferrazza Papa, 2018).

The function of philosophy as a system of thought, or more precisely a way of thinking (Appiah, 2003; Harman, 2015), which is open, meaning that it is open to questioning and questioning brings logical consequences to the main task of philosophy, which is to answer or find answers to the questions that are asked (Heidegger, 1994; Harrah, 2002). This question includes all the realities that exist in nature: the universe, humans, science, politics, art, language, and so on

In the field of language, the benefits of philosophy cannot be doubted. The basic function of philosophy in language is as a tool to answer or solve linguistic problems that require philosophical analysis or work in finding solutions (Lycan, 2018). Here are some examples of language problems that require philosophical analysis in understanding and finding solutions. The most basic language problem is

the question of what the nature of language is, why language must exist in humans, how the relationship between language and humans is (O'Sullivan, 2017). The second problem is about the question of what are the similarities and differences between human and non-human languages. The next issue is about the notions of meaningful and correct language and the criteria on which they are based. Equally important is the fourth issue, which questions the relationship between language and reason, language and the heart, intuition and other inner human phenomena (John R Searle, 2002; Anderson, 2004). This includes, for example, the question of the possibility of human contact with other languages and how humans learn these languages.

Hidayat (2006:37-38) argues that the functional relationship between language and philosophy is mainly when philosophy is positioned as a methodological perspective used in solving various problems in the space and domain of language. In this context, the existence of philosophy, therefore, is more placed in an optical framework to view and interpret phenomena or realities constructed through language. Philosophy, thus, will more clearly orientate the direction so that the linguistic theory that has been developed is relevant to the reality of life (Devitt, M., & Sterelny, 1999).

Therefore, the existence of philosophy as a formal object of language study is a branch of science that studies the nature, origin, and function of language in depth and critically (Devitt, M., & Sterelny, 1999; Yule, 2022). Philosophy of language aims to uncover the meaning, logic, and values contained in language, as well as its relationship with mind, knowledge, and reality (Medina, 2010; Martinich, 2012). Philosophy of language also addresses issues such as truth, error, clarity, beauty, and power related to language use (Fiumara, 2013). An example of philosophy of language is Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of signs, which distinguishes between sign, signifier, and signified in language. This theory explains that language is an arbitrary sign system, i.e. there is no natural relationship between the form of sound or writing and the meaning it represents (Armstrong, 2002; Kravchenko, 2007). In this case, the meaning of language is determined by social conventions that apply among its users (Bucholtz, 2003; Fowler, R., & Kress, 2018). This theory provides the basis for the development of structural linguistics and semiotics.

2. Philosophy as Material Object of Language Study

A material object is anything that exists in the real world that can be observed, touched, or measured with tools (Baudrillard, 2005). Material objects are different from ideal objects, which only exist in the human mind, such as concepts, ideas, or values (Mervis, C. B., & Rosch, 1981; Nagel, 2012). Material objects are an important part of research in all disciplines, such as archaeology, anthropology, history, art, and design, including language of course (Hicks, D., & Beaudry, 2010; Woodward, 2016). They can provide valuable insights into the cultures, beliefs, practices and aesthetics of different groups of people across time and space (Hamling, T., & Richardson, 2010; Walker, 2021). Material objects can also reveal the processes of production, consumption and exchange that shape society and human interaction (Dant, 1999; Berger, 2016; Lewis, 2018). By studying material objects, researchers can explore the meanings, values and emotions attached to them, as well as the ways in which they communicate, express and negotiate their identities and relationships (Hecht, M. L., Warren, J., Jung, E., & Krieger, 2005).

Material objects can also challenge or complement other sources of evidence, such as texts, images or oral histories, and offer new perspectives or interpretations of the past and present (Lubar, S., & Kingery, 1995; Engelke, 2008). One way to understand material objects philosophically is by using an ontological approach. Ontology is a branch of philosophy that discusses the nature or fundamental properties of things that exist (Arp, R., Smith, B., & Spear, 2015). Ontology helps us answer questions such as: What is a material object? How do material objects relate to ideal objects? Are material objects fixed or changing? Do material objects have meaning or value in their own right? An example of the application of ontology in language research is when we examine the meaning of words or expressions. Words or expressions are ideal objects created by humans to convey messages or information. However,

the word or expression also has a relationship with the material object to which it refers (Prown, 1982; Dimbleby, R., & Burton, 2020).

These material objects have observable physical properties, such as colour, size, material, and so on (Horie, 2013; Fleming, 2014). However, the meaning of the word "table" for example is not only determined by the physical properties of the material object, but also by the context in which it is used. In certain contexts, the word "table" can have other meanings that are not related to its material object. For example, in the expression "green table", the word "table" does not refer to the material object of the table, but to a decision-making process by the authorities. In this case, the word "table" has a symbolic or metaphorical meaning. Thus, research on the meaning of words or expressions must consider the relationship between the ideal object and the material object ontologically (Laycock, 2006). The researcher must know what is the reference of the word or expression under study, how the reference is determined by its physical properties and context of use, and how the reference gives meaning or value to the word or expression.

Philosophy as a material object of language study is a view that considers that language is the result of human thought processes that are rational, logical, and systematic (Soja, N. N., Carey, S., & Spelke, 1991; Devitt, M., & Sterelny, 1999). Philosophy seeks to discover the basic principles underlying everything, including language (Soames, 2010; Laugier, 2013). Philosophy also deals with ethics, aesthetics, epistemology, metaphysics, and ontology as they relate to language. Philosophy can be seen as a material object for the study of language in the sense that it is a product of human thought and expression, shaped by the historical, cultural, and social context of its society masyarakatnya (Devitt, M., & Sterelny, 1999; Coeckelbergh, 2017).

Philosophy is not just a set of abstract ideas, but also a concrete manifestation of how people use language to communicate, reason, argue, and create meaning (Martinich, 2012; Lycan, 2018). Philosophy can be analysed as a material object by examining its form, content, style, genre, purpose, and (Lavery, J. A., & Groarke, 2010). An example of philosophy as the material object of language study is analytic philosophy, which focuses on the logical analysis of language and meaning. Analytic philosophy seeks to clarify philosophical concepts by using tools such as logic, semantics, pragmatics, and grammar bahasa (Searle, 1996; Sbisa, 2011). Analytic philosophy also criticises the use of ambiguous, unclear, or misleading language in various fields of science and everyday life (Glock, 2013; Waldron, 2013). For example, we can study the philosophical texts of Plato, Descartes or Kant as material objects, and explore how they use language to construct their arguments, influence their readers and contribute to the development of knowledge.

Conclusion

Based on this description, it can be concluded that the existence of philosophy and language are two philosophically interrelated fields. Philosophy is an attempt to understand and explain reality, value, knowledge, and meaning using reason and logic. Language is a system of symbols used to communicate, convey thoughts, feelings, and information. Without language, philosophy would not be able to develop and spread. Without philosophy, language would not be able to reflect and criticise human thought.

Philosophy needs language as a tool to construct arguments, test hypotheses, ask questions, and form concepts. Language allows philosophers to dialogue with themselves and others, and produce written works that become sources of philosophical knowledge. Language also helps philosophers to clarify the meaning of words, determine the definition of terms, and avoid ambiguity or misunderstanding.

Language is influenced by philosophy in terms of perspective, methods and goals. Philosophy provides an epistemological, ontological and ethical foundation for language. Philosophy also provides

criteria for rationality, truth and justice for language. Philosophy also provides inspiration for the development of language in the form of styles, genres and paradigms. Philosophy also provides challenges for language in terms of dealing with complex, paradoxical, or controversial philosophical problems.

Meanwhile, the dimensions of the meaningfulness of philosophy in the study of language can at least be mapped in relation to two basic things, namely first, philosophy as a formal object, and second, philosophy as a material object in the study of language. First, the existence of philosophy as a formal object of language study is a branch of science that studies the nature, origins and function of language in depth and critically. Philosophy of language aims to reveal the meaning, logic and values contained in language, as well as its relationship with thought, knowledge and reality. The philosophy of language also addresses issues such as truth, falsity, clarity, beauty, and power related to the use of language.

Then, secondly, the view which assumes that language is the result of a rational, logical and systematic human thought process. Philosophy seeks to discover the basic principles underlying everything, including language. Philosophy is also related to ethics, aesthetics, epistemology, metaphysics, and ontology related to language. Philosophy can be seen as a material object for the study of language in the sense that philosophy is a product of human thought and expression, shaped by the historical, cultural and social context of its society.

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