Rethinking arbitrariness of language and its implication in language use

Fatchul Muin, Rusma Noortyani & Eka Puteri Elyani |

Published online: 01 Feb 2021.

Submit your article to this journal ↗

Article views: 746

View related articles ↗

View Crossmark data ↗

cogent
arts &
humanities

CULTURE, MEDIA & FILM | REVIEW ARTICLE

Rethinking arbitrariness of language and its implication in language use

Fatchul Muin[1]*, Rusma Noortyani[1] and Eka Puteri Elyani[1]

Abstract: Language is said to be the arbitrary vocal symbol. This implies that language consists of speech sounds (e.g., sounds produced by using speech organs) based on the social agreement or convention. A certain word has a meaning because of the language users have given it. A word and its meaning are the results of social agreement or convention. This article is an attempt to develop the coverage of arbitrariness of a language relating to the concept provided by Ferdinand de Saussure, namely: the relationship between the *signifiant* and the *signifie*. The arbitrariness (1) might extend to linguistic features belonging to the particular language, (2) might be examined in the naming of a thing, an animal, or any object and what it symbolizes, (3) lies in the use of the same thing with different words to refer to, (4) might extend to the creation of terms to refer to the same thing, (5) is associated with the grammatical features of languages, (6) is related to creating a "new language' based on the existing language. This arbitrariness of a language has implications on the language use that relies on relationships of word denotations based on socio-cultural agreements. A language-use is controlled by linguistic etiquette. Linguistic etiquette is something like guidance for language use in

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Fatchul Muin is a Lecturer in Literature/Linguistics at Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarmasin. He earned his *Sarjana's* degree of Linguistics from Universitas Diponegoro, Semarang (1987), Master's degree of Humanities from Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, and Doctoral degree from Universitas Negeri Malang, East Java, Indonesia.

Rusma Noortyani is a lecturer in Literature/Linguistics at Universitas Lambung Mangkurat since 2005. She earned her *Sarjana's* degree of Indonesian Language Education from Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarmasin, Indonesia (2001). Master's degree of Indonesia Language Education from Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarmasin, Indonesia (2004), and Doctoral degree from Universitas Negeri Malang, East Java, Indonesia (2015).

Eka Puteri Elyani is a Lecturer in English Language Education at Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarmasin. She earned her *Sarjana's* degree of English Education from Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarmasin (2013), and Master's degree of English Education from UNS, Surakarta (2016).

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

A language has been created and developed based on the convention among its users. Therefore, a language is said to be arbitrary thing. The language is made under a given culture, and at the same time, it represents the aspects of culture. By a language, the users can express their own culture. This condition enables them to use a single language.

Being monolinguals is not enough; they attempt to master and use another language. A transfer can occur in the process of mastering and using a second language. There are two types of transfers, namely: positive and negative transfers.

Meanwhile, a negative transfer occurs when the transfer leads to error or interference in using a second language as the learners' target language. Code-switching is referred to as the intra-sentential insertion of material from one of their languages into the other, leading ultimately to borrowing. Language users must be aware of the language's arbitrariness in each language they use to communicate and interact.

a socio-cultural setting. Linguistic principles cover politeness principles and euphemism. These are meant to make the utterances used in social communication and interaction socially polite and acceptable.

Subjects: Cultural Studies; Arts & Humanities; Humanities; Language & Literature; Language & Linguistics; Language Teaching & Learning

Keywords: arbitrary. "new" language; signifiant; signifie; socio-cultural implication

1. Introduction

Humans are social creatures who always need the help of other humans in their lives. One may not imagine how hard and difficult it would be if he had lived alone without anyone accompanying him. In reality, humans always live in groups, and they mutually need help or assistance and cooperate. Thus, we can confirm that humans are social creatures because they must live in society. To meet all the necessities of life, humans must cooperate; that can only be done in a community. For example, when someone needs rice, he does not need to plant rice alone in the rice fields. It is enough for the farmers to grow it; he can get rice by buying from them. A person may have a special knack for making agricultural implements such as hoes or plowing tools to sell to farmers working on their rice fields. From this example, we can get a clear picture that society members need help from one another. Because there is interdependence, they need to cooperate to fulfill their own needs (Ramelan, 1984). Collaboration between them can work well if there is a means of communication called language. With language, a human can express his ideas and desires to other humans and cooperate with other community members (Carol, 1975).

When we discuss language, we first need to define the term of language. When asked the question "What is a language?", Or "What do you know about a language?", Or "What do you mean by a language?" generally, students majoring in language give the various but similar responses." Their answers included: "A language is a tool for communication,"; "A language is an instrument for human communication and interaction,"; "A language is a means of communication," and the like.

These definitions of a language are inadequate when viewed from language study due to the lack of disclosure of the language's characteristics. Understanding the concept of a language, we need to consider the characteristics of a language. The following are characteristics of a language: (a) A language must be systematic, (b) It is arbitrary; (c) It is social, (d) It is basically spoken, (e) It is creative or productive; and (f) It is closely related to a particular culture.

In this relation, we may use Finocchiaro's concept as follows. "A language is a system of arbitrary, vocal symbols that permit all people in a given culture or other people who have learned the system of that culture, to communicate or to interact" (Finocchiaro, 1964).

Language is an essential element for culture; it is a means of interaction that allows the creation of culture (Wardhaugh, 1986, p. 10). Speakers use language to convey and represent all aspects of culture. In contrast, in certain matters, culture is used by language speakers as a behavior guide, including linguistic behavior (Trudgill, 1983). The language used from the socio-cultural perspectives should be related to the socio-cultural aspects (Coulmas, 1998; Holmes, 2001; Troike & Blackwel, 1986). Language and culture are two things that cannot be separated from each other. The relationship between language and culture is that language is humane, language is behavior, and language is related to attitudes.

2. Objective

This article is an attempt (a) to develop the coverage of arbitrariness of a language relating to the concept provided by Ferdinand de Saussure, namely: the relationship between the *signifiant* and the *signifie*. And (b) to formulize implications of language's arbitrariness in the language use.

3. Methodology/materials and methods

3.1. Materials

One of the characteristics of language is that a language is said to be arbitrary. Many students majoring in languages have difficulty understanding the term "arbitrary." Some students understand it based on its linguistic meaning, e.g., "arbitrary" = authoritarian; others can understand it due to social agreement convention. In general, the students cannot explain the arbitrariness of a language comprehensively.

A language is said to be arbitrary (Carol, 1953; De Saussure, 1966; Hockett, 1958; Finocchiaro, 1964; Monaghan et al., 2014; Mu'in, Arini & Amrina, 2018; Mariani, Mu'in & Al Arief, 2019; Ramelan, 1984; Wardhaugh, 1986).

What is meant by the term "arbitrary" is the absence of a mandatory relationship between the language symbol (which is in the form of a sound) and the concept or meaning referred to by the symbol. Language is said to be the arbitrary vocal symbol. This implies that language consists of speech sounds (e.g., sounds produced by using speech organs) based on the social agreement or convention. A certain word has a meaning because of the language users have given it. A word and its meaning are the results of social agreement or convention. The arbitrariness of language is based on the concept of signifiant-signifie suggested by De Saussure (1966, p. 67), in which he distinguishes between signifiant (signifier) and signifie (signified).

The arbitrariness of a language can be developed as follows.

(1) The arbitrariness might extend to linguistic features belonging to the particular language.
(2) The arbitrariness on the relationship of the word to the thing it represents.
(3) The arbitrariness lies in the use of the same object with different words to refer to. The arbitrariness might extend to the creation of terms to refer to the same object.
(4) The arbitrariness is associated with the grammatical features of languages.
(5) The arbitrariness is related to creating a "new language' based on the existing language.
(6) A particular language relies on relationships of word denotations based on socio-cultural agreements.
(7) A particular language relies on relationships of word denotations based on socio-cultural agreements.

Implications of the arbitrariness of a language cover: Linguistic implications, and Socio-cultural implications.

3.2. Methods

This article is written based on library research. The authors utilize the qualitative approach supported by descriptive methods. The qualitative data are identified, classified, and discussed/interpreted.

4. Results and discussions

(1) *The arbitrariness of language is based on the concept of signifiant-signifie suggested by* De Saussure (1966, p. 67), *in which he distinguishes between signifiant (signifier) and signifie (signified).*

Signifiant is a symbol of sound, while *signifie* is a concept contained by the signifiant. The relationship between the *signifiant* and the *signifie* is arbitrary. The symbol in the form of sounds does not give any "suggestion" or "clue" to recognize the concept it represents. If there is a mandatory relationship between the symbol and what it symbolizes, of course, the symbol which reads [hôrs], will also be called "horse" by Indonesian people, not "kuda."

The relationship between the sounds of words and their meaning cannot be stated absolutely and logically. It is indicated that speech is arbitrary and segmentable. Some words seem to contradict the principle that the relationship between sounds and meanings has no logical or necessary relationship (arbitrary).

(2) *The arbitrariness might extend to linguistic features belonging to the particular language.*

Most languages in the world utilize Latin alphabets to form words. Today the Latin is widely used for writing words in the various languages in the world. Some countries adopted and modified the Latin alphabets according to their phonology because Latin alphabets can denote not all phonemes (https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfabet_Latin).

Indonesia, for instance, adopted most Latin alphabets to be its phonemes (vowels and consonants). These Latin alphabets: a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, x, y, and z are adopted and modified to be the phonemes of Indonesian language. Thus, Indonesian language has phonemes:/a/,/b/,/c/,/d/,/e/,/f/,/g/,/h/,/i/,/j/,/k/,/l/,/m/,/n/,/o/,/p/,/q/,/r/,/s/,/t/,/u/,/v/,/x/,/y/, and/z/. A word *keterangan* (information) consists of the letters: k, e, t, e, r, a, n, g, a, n. Phonologically, it reads/keteraŋan/and phonetically it is realized as [kətərʌŋʌn]. In this case, letters: k, t, r, and n are fully adopted as phonemes:/k,/t/,/r/,/n/and as phones: [k], [t], [r], and [n]; n + g are modified into/ŋ/; whereas, letters e and a is adopted as a phoneme/e/, and/a/and are realized as [ə] and [ʌ].

(3) *We are quite hard to elaborate on the relationship of the word (a combination of speech sounds) or a unit of sounds to the thing it represents*

Arbitrariness might be examined in the naming of "a kind of animal with four legs used to ride" as *horse* [hôrs] and what it symbolizes. We cannot explain why the animal is represented by the word *horse*, sounding [hôrs]. Why, for example, not *dog* [dôɡ] or *lion* [ˈlīən] or other symbols. Likewise, we cannot explain the relationship between the sound symbol *water* [ˈwôdər] and the object it symbolizes, namely "a liquid used for drinking, bathing, or cooking," with the chemical formula H_2O. It cannot be explained because of its arbitrary nature.

(4) *The arbitrariness lies in the use of the same object with different words to refer to. The arbitrariness might extend to the creation of terms to refer to the same object.*

Differences in the words used by different languages for the same things show the unreasonableness of all the words chosen. The facts show that one language is different from other languages. Of course, the process of creating a particular language (e.g., *word*) is different from that of others. The arbitrariness of producing a given *word* could be examined as follows. The English language speech community agreed to call or name a certain four-footed barking animal as "dog," on which the other speech communities call it as "asu" in Javanese, "anjing" in Indonesian, or "الكلب" in Arabic. There is no logical explanation of why the animal is called "dog," "asu," "anjing," or "الكلب." The word "dog" does not follow the shape of the four-footed barking animal. The different vocal symbols, e.g., "dog," "asu," "anjing," and "الكلب" 'utilized to refer to the four-footed barking animal have been based on the social agreements or conventions among the users of each language.

The creation of words and giving their meanings are based on social agreements between speakers of the language. For example, the creation and naming of water transportation in the

Banjarese language in South Kalimantan, Indonesia, with the name kelotok, is based on a social agreement among the language speakers. The relationship is something purely arbitrary and does not have a logical explanation. According to Nordquist (2020), all the wording could be regarded as arbitrary, especially concerning the word's linguistic denotation. The linguistic rules are not universal and uniform.

(5) *The arbitrariness is also associated with the grammatical features of languages.*

A grammar is defined as a tool for producing the sentences of the language under analysis. The term producing could also be replaced by generating. Therefore term generative grammar is employed. Thus term generative grammar is used. Speakers' language knowledge (=grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation) enables them to supply a grammatical sentence and transform it into some new sentences. By grammar, a speaker is ready to generate all the well-formed syntactic structures (e.g., phrases or sentences). This grammar will have a finite (or limited) number of rules but will be ready to generate an infinite number of well-formed structures. Each adult speaker of a language has some variety of "mental grammar," a sort of internal linguistic knowledge that operates within the production and recognition of appropriately structures expressions therein language. The second concept of grammar refers to linguistic etiquette; that's the identification of the correct or best structures to be employed in a language. The third concept of grammar involves the study and analysis of the structures found during a speech, usually to create an outline of the grammar of a given language as distinct from the grammar of the other language.

The following is the arbitrariness relating to the grammatical features of languages. We have identified and examined the grammatical arbitrariness in word-order, plurality, subject-verb agreement, and blending as far as we are concerned.

(a) Word-order

Words in English have to be arranged in a particular word-order to form a grammatical and acceptable sentence. The words are arranged according to English rules resulting from the social agreement. The native English speakers did not arrange a sentence using *Went Ali to campus because it is not constructed based on their social agreement in the grammatical system. It should be "Ali went to campus." However, the construction *"Pergi Ali ke Kampus"* is agreed as an acceptable construction in the Indonesian language, although the standard one is *"Ali pergi ke Kampus."*

(a) Plurality

Grammar could be a set of rules that mixes words into phrases, clauses, and sentences. As mentioned by Greenbaum and Nelson, "A grammar provides the set of rules that allow us to arrange words in our language into larger units." However, every language has different grammar rules. For example, English grammar is different from Indonesian grammar, like in tenses, word formation, etc. For instance, in terms of plurality, the English plural is made by adding "–s/es" at the noun's tip like "flowers." In Indonesian grammar, the plurality is produced by reduplicating the word like "Bunga-Bunga." or by adding the plural markers like "beberapa" (several), "banyak" (many), and the like, in front of the noun such as in "beberapa buku" (several books), and "banyak siswa" (many students).

(a) Subject-verb agreement

Concerning the sentence in the simple present with the third singular subject, English has a sentence pattern: S + V-1 + -s/-es such as Tom + like + s + Susan, combined with Tom likes Susan. On the other side, words are not arranged based on the grammatical pattern. The verbs

following all the subjects do not need the suffix to agree with the subjects of sentences. The sentence pattern is: S + V + 0, such as Ali + cinta + Aminah, combined with "Ali cinta Aminah". The pattern is "when a sentence is in the simple present with the subject of the third person singular, and the verb must be marked by the suffix—s or—es. Suppose the English sentence is constructed using the Indonesian sentence pattern. In that case, it will be " Ali love Aminah.". This type of error can be categorized as a morphological interference when viewed from the process of affixation and as a syntactic/grammatical interference when identified through mixing words into a sentence.

(6) *The arbitrariness is also related to creating a "new language' based on the existing language.*

In Malang Regency, East Java, Indonesia, there has been what is called *Bòsò Walikan, referring to a term utilized by a particular speech community of the Javanese language to reverse words in their speech acts.* The word *bòsò* means "language," *walikan* denotes "to be reversed." In this relation, using the word *bòsò* referring to "a language" does not mean that Walikan is separated from the Javanese language; it is still a part of the original language. The Walikan is intended to read/pronounce some words or terms in reverse. Its grammatical patterns are the same as the original Javanese, the localized variety of Javanese spoken in the area.

(7) *A particular language relies on relationships of word denotations based on socio-cultural agreements.*

In principle, linguistic etiquette regulates language speakers' (verbal) interactions regarding whether something is done by each speaker when verbal interaction occurs. That etiquette limits what speakers should do to their interlocutors and what speakers do not otherwise. Speakers (1) should have a polite attitude and use bodily movements that are also polite when speaking according to prevailing socio-cultural norms, such as body position when speaking, (2) should utilize polite speech acts, and (3) should avoid anything taboo regarding asking about age, occupation, income, marital status, and socio-cultural norms.

5. Implications of arbitrariness in language use

5.1. Linguistic implications
The use of certain languages must be based on the arbitrarily constructed patterns of the language. The use of Indonesian, for example, must be based on the Indonesian language patterns. The arbitrariness in phonology can have implications for the pronunciation of a given language.

5.1.1. Implications in phonology
The arbitrariness of a language in phonology can have implications for the pronunciation of a given language. The use of certain languages must be based on the arbitrarily constructed patterns of the language. The orally using the Indonesian language, for example, must be based on the phonological patterns of the Indonesian language. Likewise, the orally using the English language must be based on the English phonological patterns. In this case, as a foreign language, English learners should be aware that the language is arbitrary. Thus, they should learn and speak it according to the rules agreed upon by native English speakers. The use of language that deviates from the English language's phonological principles will result in phonological interference.

Phonological interference is related to the influence of one language (e.g.mother tongue) when the learners or the speakers want to use the target language (e.g., English). The problem is that the speaker must learn to make the foreign or target language, which is English, with his own organs of speech (Jones, 1960, p. 2). At the phonological level, interference concerns how a speaker perceives and reproduces one language's sounds in those of another language. The interference will occur in bilinguals' speech when there are great different phonetics/phonology elements

between one and another language or, in this case, mother tongue and second or foreign language. In Indonesia, English is considered a foreign language. The researchers then assumed that there would be an interference phenomenon when the native speakers of the Banjarese language are attempting to acquire the English language.

The Indonesian language does not have the vowel/i:/. A phoneme/i:/refers to an unrounded, close, and front vowel./i:/differs from/I/in that it is higher in the tongue position. In contrast,/I/is an unrounded, half-close to close, and front vowel (Ramelan, 2003). The former is realized as a tense vowel, e.g., [i:], and the latter is pronounced as a lax vowel, e.g.[I]. This condition can be determined as a factor of interference in using a phoneme/i/(in the Banjarese sound system) or/I/(in the English sound system) when pronouncing a word *key* as [ki] or [kI] to replace the correct pronunciation, e.g., [ki:]. Similarly, the Banjarese language phonological system may be applied when pronouncing/æ/as [e]; a word *bad* was pronounced as [bet]. The absence of vowel/i:/in the Indonesian language caused the students to replace vowel/i:/with/i/. A phoneme/i/in the Banjarese language is defined as a short vowel as in [asin]. According to Roach, a phoneme/i:/in the English language is categorized as a long vowel (1985). Ramelan defines/i:/as an unrounded front vowel. A vowel occurring in the open syllable is pronounced relatively longer.than when it takes place in the closed syllable (2003). Interference of the sound systems of Banjarese Language occurred when the students produce the English language phoneme/i:/. Instead of pronouncing *he, feet, deep*, and *see* as [hi:], [fi:t], [di:p], and [si:], they pronouncing as [hi], [fit], [dip], and [si] respectively.

The orthographical system of one language is not adequate to be used to compare that of another. Many languages such as Indonesian and English languages use the Roman alphabets (A until Z); however, their phonological systems differ. In most cases, Indonesian alphabets (often called "letters") are similar to the language's phonemes. For instance, the letters "l-a-p-a-k" combined as word lapak refer to similar phonemes, e.g.,/b, a, p, a, k/. This word is pronounced as [lapak]. If the letters or alphabets are constructed to be words, their actual phonetic representations of vowels, consonants, and diphthongs are different in numbers. The phonetic representations of the phonemes are greater in numbers than the alphabets. Both Indonesian and English have similar phonemes and similar phonetic representations. For instance, both have/b/. In one case, it is pronounced in the same way. When it occurs in the initial position of words biru and bee, the Indonesian phonetic system suggests pronouncing the word biru as [biru]; whereas, English one suggests pronouncing the word bee as [bi:]. Therefore, an Indonesian speaker who is speaking English does not find difficulty pronouncing the phoneme/b/when it occurs in the word's initial position, such as in bee.

5.1.2. Implications in morphology

Plurality is related to the nouns. There is a formal marker for a plural noun in English, namely: an inflectional suffix—s/-es (e.g., a suffix—s in "pens" or—es in "boxes". Plural nouns must be used after certain function words such as many (e.g., many books), some (e.g., e.g., some students), two/three (e.g., two pencils), most (e.g., most respondents). Besides regular countable nouns, there are some irregular countable nouns. The irregular countable nouns are formed in plurality without adding the suffix—s or—es. These plural nouns are arbitrarily determined by the native speakers of English, such as child (singular)—children (plural), (singular)—teeth (plural). Plurality in Indonesian is different from that of the English language. Plurality can be indicated by (a) some words as empat/Tiga/dua, e.g., in "empat kursi" (four chairs), banyak, e.g., in "banyak siswa" (many pupils), "beberapa guru" (some teachers), (b) full reduplication of a word, e.g., buku-buku (books), and (c) partial reduplication, e.g., pepohonan (many trees). There are two types of reduplication, namely: (1) a full reduplication (such as Buku-buku), and (2) a partial reduplication such as buah-buahan. The stem "buah" is reduplicated and followed by a suffix—an) and pepohonan (the stem pohon is irregularly or arbitrarily reduplicated to make a plural form pepohonan). There is no suffix to drive or show plurality in the Indonesian

language. This pattern may influence interference, as can be seen in "many student"*, "several friend"*, etc.

The plurality concept will also be represented lexically with the word "para," "kaum," and "ummat." The words will be employed to state the collective meaning of groups of individuals. Nouns (e.g., nomina) preceded by para are limited to the nouns referring to some persons with particular characteristics. The examples are like "para dosen" (some lecturers), "para hakim" (some judges), or "para Menteri" (some ministers), or statuses such as "para pelajar" (several students), "para Pemuda" (some young people), or "para pejuang" (some combatants). The word "kaum" is used to refer to a big group of people providing a similar social status and role, idealism, profession or occupation, or fate, like "kaum bangsawan" (a group of noblemen), "kaum Perempuan" (a group of ladies, "kaum duafa" (a group of poor individuals), and "kaum tertindas" (the oppressed individuals).

5.1.3. Implications in syntax

Grammatical interference refers to the use of grammatical features of a particular language while speaking or writing another. The example is Subject-verb agreement (in English and Indonesian Language). Concerning the sentence in the simple present with the third singular subject, English has a sentence pattern: S + V-1 + -s/-es such as Tom + like + s + Susan, combined with being Tom likes Susan. On the other side, the Indonesian linguistic system does not follow the pattern. The verbs following all the subjects do not need the suffix to agree with the subject of sentences. The sentence pattern is S + V + 0, such as Ali + Cinta + Aminah, combined with being Ali Cinta Aminah. Suppose this sentence is transformed into the subject, such as into *"Baik Ali maupun Umar Cinta Aminah."*

5.1.4. Implications in semantics

Semantic interference occurs when a speaker introduces new semantic structures. Some students had semantic interference when translating "mimpi buruk" or "impian buruk". Instead of using "nightmare", they used "bad dream". It is actually a correct phrase from translating the Indonesian words into English. However, "bad dream" is less commonly used than a "nightmare" in English. The English language has a common term, namely " nightmare". "Nightmare" is a very unpleasant dream

5.2. Socio-cultural implications

The language use is generally related to the linguistic etiquette, indicating the following strategies of communication. There are five strategies adopted and adapted from Fishman's idea, "Who speaks What language to Whom and When" (Fishman, 1965). These are that (1) the speaker has to know what she will say and with whom she will communicate and interact, (2) the speaker has to determine language or varieties of language suitable with the socio-cultural order in which communication or interaction occurs, (3) the speaker has to know "when and how she uses his/ her turn to speak, interrupt when the other speakers," (4) the speaker has to know "when she keeps silent," and (5) the speaker has to decide" voice quality and attitude "in the acts of speaking. All the strategies are meant to produce utterances, followed by respectful and polite attitudes. The utterances produced are expected to be culturally acceptable for the participants involved in interpersonal communication.

Language use is controlled by linguistic etiquette. Linguistic etiquette is a practice in each speech community in organizing linguistic actions in such a way that the speech acts they produce according to the correct speech events (Kasper, 2008). The linguistic etiquette in *Bahasa Jawa* (Javanese language) can be seen from "who speaks (speaker), "to whom" (listener) dan "what language" (the use of speech levels). There are three main speech levels in the Javanese language (e.g. ngoko (lowest level), *krama* (middle level), and *krama inggil*. On one side, someone may change the speech levels. Change of using a certain level of speech is influenced by his/her social status and listeners. His/her social status itself can be controlled by age, position, property

ownership, and also expertise.//she uses the ngoko level when//she talks with his/her children, friends of the same age, pupils, or other people of the lower social status. On the other hand, his/her audiences are expected to use krama madya or krama Inggil when responding to his/her speech acts (Geertz, 1960). For example:

Speaker   *"Kowe arep lungo menyang endi?"*
              (where are you going?)
Listener   *"Ajeng sekolah"*
              ((I am) going to school)

The utterance *"kowe arep lungo menyang endi?"* refers to a standard utterance. Nowadays, it is rarely used by a Javanese speaker. We often find the various utterances derived from the utterance, such as *'arep nyangdi, kowe? "kowe arep nyangdi?"* and *"nyangdi?".* These three varieties of questions asking "where someone will go" are not grammatically ordered; these are constructed without using a verb (*lungo*, e.g., go in English). Also, the questions use a blending word (nyangdi); it should be "menyang endi" (to where or where).

The Utterances in the Javanese language such as (a) *"Kowe arep (lungo) menyang endi?"* (*ngoko* level), (b) *"Dateng pundi, (c) 'Ajeng dateng pundi,'* (d) *Ajeng kesah dateng pundi?",* € *"Sampeyan ajeng (kesah) dateng pundi"* (*krama madya* level), and *"Panjenengan bade tindak pundi?"* (*krama inggil* level) linguistically have the same meaning, e.g., "Where are you going?". In the Javanese language, those utterances can be made more concise. Thus, we may have the utterances: *"Dateng pundi?* or just *"Teng pundi*?" "Those are used in different socio-cultural contexts. In the language use, the Javanese language speakers will consider *"Who speaks What language* to Whom and When," as suggested by Fishman (1972). "Who speaks" refers to a speaker of a language; "What language" may refer to a given language or its varieties (e.g. dialects, styles, registers, speech levels, etc.); "to Whom" refers to a listener (audience); and "When" refers the to time of delivering the speech acts. A senior (a person who speaks) may use *"Kowe arep (lungo) menyang endi?"* (ngoko level) when speaking to his/her junior.

The suggested manner of using the Indonesian language is *"Gunakan Bahasa Indonesia secara baik dan benar"* (Use Bahasa Indonesia in the appropriate and right ways). A proper way of using Bahasa Indonesia refers to using the language based on the socio-cultural context (especially, participants and domains). In this relation, the theories of Fishman *"Who speaks What language to Whom, and When"* (Fishman, 1972), and of Hymes "SPEAKING' (S = Setting and Scene, P = Participants, E = Ends, A = Act Sequence, K = Key, I = Instrumentalist, N = Norms, and G = Genres) can be implemented in using a language. The right way of using the Indonesian language is to use the language under the standardized language patterns, as prescribed in Prescriptive Grammar. Politeness in Bahasa Indonesia.

The use of right Indonesian language itself is the use of Indonesian language use appropriate with the linguistic system of the language, the pronunciation, spelling, punctuation, terminology, and grammar of which must be based on Bahasa Indonesia as have been standardized by Badan Bahasa of Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia.

5.2.1. Politeness in language use
In the English language, the norms in language use are shown in honorific devices. Politeness is a form of communicative behavior be found in speeches and among cultures; indeed, it is a universal phenomenon in human society. Being polite is speaking or behaving in such ways as to give value or benefit not only to oneself but also to others, especially the person or people he is conversing with.

The following are characteristics of politeness: (1) politeness is not obligatory, (2) It has various gradations of politeness, (3) society members recognize it as to how and when they are polite, (4)

it will occur depending on the situation, (5) there will be the reciprocal misalignment in the behavior of mutual respect between two parties, (6) it may reflect itself in the repetitive.behavior, (7) it is central enough on the politeness involving the passing of several transactions of values between the speaker and the listener, and (8) the politeness tends to maintain the balance between participants A and B. A pragmatic account of politeness is proposed as Tact Maxim, a Politeness Principle. Grammar is rule-governed, whereas pragmatics is principle-governed. It is assumed that rules (in grammar) are constitutive in force, whereas principles are regulative. Overall, the Politeness Principle presents postulates that the persons who interact tend to imply or express polite belief than impolite belief. The polite belief which is represented by the speaker (S) is a belief that is favorable to the other one (O); and/or it may be unfavorable to himself, but impolite belief is a belief that is unfavorable to the other (O); and/or it may be favorable to the speaker (S).

5.2.2. Taboo in language use

This discussion will be related to the use of tabooed words. Taboo utterances or tabooed words or taboo language refer to words or utterances, or expressions prohibited from being mentioned in public places. These kinds of expressions are frequently related to (a) human belief towards supernatural power, (b) sexual cases, (c) somebody's organs, (d) death, and (e) many other things that are improper to be mentioned in public places. These verbal taboos can cause embarrassment, shame feeling, shocking sense, and may offend the listener's belief and sensibilities; for the sake of avoiding those verbal taboos, the speaker frequently substitutes them by using what is called euphemistic utterances or expressions. A man uses language as a means of communication in his effort to interact with one another. In reality, he is not free from the rules of using language agreed by the speech community. He lives and interacts with the other community members, following the values and the different cultural aspects. The values of a society, for instance, can affect its language. The most exciting way in which this happens is through the phenomenon known as taboo.

   Using a language, speakers can express their happiness or sadness, love or hatred, surprise, jealousy, curiosity, sensitivity, empathy, sympathy, anger, and the like. Also, they can deliver their ideas, opinions, or other cognitive aspects. When they are in the condition, they frequently use some utterances or expressions that are usually considered insulting, vulgar, or rude. Those utterances or expressions, according to the norms, must be avoided. In line with Wardhaugh's view (1992 at in some cases, a language is used to avoid saying a certain thing and to express them. Certain things are not told, not because they cannot be, but because "people don't talk about those things"; or, if those things are talked about, they are spoken of in very roundabout ways. In some cultural settings, those words, or utterances or expressions are avoided to be mentioned directly; it is believed to be harmful to these using the words or utterances either for supernatural considerations/reasons or because the behavior is conducted to violate a society's moral code (Wardhaugh, 1992). According to Wardhaugh, a verbal taboo is called a linguistic taboo. The following is Wardhauh's elaboration on verbal restrictions. Linguistic taboos are also violated on occasion to draw attention to oneself, to show contempt to be aggressive or provocative, mock authority, or "talking dirty." The penalty for breaking a linguistic taboo can be severe, for blasphemy and obscenity are still crimes in many jurisdictions (Wardhaudh, 1992, p. 239).

5.2.3. Euphemism in language use

A language covers many things, good or bad, proper or improper, moral or immoral things, or the like. This is to say that the use of forbidden words or utterances is ordered or controlled by socio-cultural rules. These taboo words or utterances are not permitted to be used vulgarly in public space.the part of a given language, in certain circumstances, these are still and allowed to be used (e.g., for academic discussion in a classroom or a limited situation). In this respect, Allan and Burridge (2006) state that there are words or utterances tabooed or forbidden to be said (in public spa. Simultaneouslyime, society provides a way out to avoid taboo words through euphemistic

utterances or expressions. Therefore, the tabooed words or utterances and consequent censoring or euphemizing of language use can motivate language changes.

It can be noted that there two linguistic phenomena (taboo and euphemism) promoting the creation of new terms, new words, new expressions, new utterances, and as well as new implied, figurative, or connotative meanings that have been derived from the old words or terms. As a result, these language phenomena have caused existing vocabulary to be abundantly provided. Basically, there are two ways through which new words, utterances, or expressions arise: (a) by changing a form of the tabooed word, utterance, or expression, and (b) by finding out honorific, figurative, or polite meanings of tabooed words, utterances, or expressions based on the language users' conceptions and perceptions about the denotation (about faces, menstrual blood, genitals, death and so on)" (Allan & Burridge, 2016).

5.2.4. Euphemism toward tabooed utterance relating to belief

The religious approach focuses on taboo as derived from belief in spirits and "inspired by awe of the supernatural." Taboo related to religious belief or anything believed as supernatural power is also called taboo of fear. Utterances that cause frightening for having supernatural power are categorized as taboo of fear. Mentioning the name of God and the spirits directly in a given culture is forbidden. For example, Jews are prohibited from calling their Lord's name directly; they use another word similar to the word "master" in English. In English and French, respectively, Lord and Seigneur's words are used instead of the word God.

In certain groups of people, words with religious connotations are judged improperly when used outside of formal religious ceremonies. Christians are forbidden to use God's name in vain. This prohibition also develops into a ban on using a curse, which is believed to have magical powers. The word hell and damn are converted into heck and darn. In English, the foremost potent swear words currently comprises words referencing various body parts and bodily functions. Expletives that refer to faith have become notably less offensive over time unless you're in particularly religious company. In English, the foremost potent swear words currently comprises words referencing various body parts and bodily functions. In Indonesian, we often hear an utterance "*soal jodoh itu urusan Yang di Atas*" daily. The speaker uses "yang di atas" rather than using the word Allah. He/she judges that the use of Allah in daily conversation as improper. Therefore, he/she avoids using it. He/she will mention Allah's name when he/she conduct a prayer or when he/she is in the formal religious ceremonies such as pengajian (spiritual teaching), khutbah (religious speech).

Concerning the belief towards supernatural power, Javanese people believe that there are some places (e.g., beach, old building, water springs), big trees (e.g., banyan tree), traditional guns (e.g., kris, spear, arrow), sacred graves that have supernatural (magic) power; these are believed to be followed by the spirits (supernatural beings). People aren't permitted to talk manners vainly. The local culture has taught them to talk or speak in certain behaviors.

A given old building, big tree, or the like is believed to be inhabited by *hantu or setan* (ghost/satan/spirit). For instance, the word *hantu or setan* is also frequently replaced or changed by the word *penunggu* (Indonesian) or *Ingkang Mbau Rekso* (Javanese), meaning "watchman." When people pass around the place, they have to say a sentence, asking for permission. Javanese people will say: "*Nuwun sewu Mbah Ingkang mbau rekso, nderek langkung*" (excuse me, I will pass around here).

In Javanese culture, as an example, a particular beast animal is taken into account as a tabooed one. People aren't allowed to say the animal's name directly like macan (tiger), gajah (elephant), etc. At least two factors are influencing the condition. Firstly, the beast animals are considered to have a terrible and terrifying power. When looking at a tiger in the forest, people cannot mention the animal using a word *macan*. Instead of using macam, they're suggested to use Simbah

(grandfather in English, kakek in Indonesian). it's meant to cut back the sense of fear once the word tiger is alleged. When seeing a mouse in the rice or plantation field, people cannot mention a word *tikus*. Instead of saying tikus, they must use Den Bagus. The condition is caused by their belief that the animals won't be angry after being addressed using Den Bagus.

Secondly, animals are regarded as sacred ones. Instead of using the word *kebo* (buffalo), Javanese people in Surakarta address by using Kiai Slamet (a name given to the sacred buffalo in SurakartaFollowingith their belief, the animal is "holy," and therefore it must be sacred.

5.2.5. Euphemism of tabooed utterances relating to sex, body organs, and insulting words

These tabooed expressions will be related to the Propriety of Taboo. This deals with sex, certain body parts and functions, and some insulting words that are all inappropriate or impolite to express. Words related to sex, sexual organs, and body functions naturally become a part of taboo words in different cultures. Some languages have many words to express sex, sexual organs, and body functions, and some are forbidden words.

Some words or sentences can have the same linguistic meaning. Some of them may be acceptable, and some others are unacceptable. The word vagina is better and more polite than cunt. Therefore, cunt is tabooed; or the word prick or cock is tabooed, while the word penis is accepted as a male anatomy term and is polite to use. The word vagina is also used in Indonesian to replace a female vital organ; it becomes *bawuk* in Javanese. The word penis is adopted to refer to a male vital organ in Indonesian; it becomes *manuk* in Javanese. Lexically, the word *manuk* means *burung* (in Indonesian) or "bird" (in English).

In any language in the world, certain things have to be avoided talking or mentioning. In English, these are words that deal with what is called as excretions. Except for tears, in fact, all the words related to bodily excretions are believed as taboos.

The utterances move the bowels, and pass water is considered as inelegant ones. Also, defecate and urinate seem to be only used in hospitals. Therefore, these utterances are frequently replaced with answering the call of nature or do one's needs. A similar phenomenon occurs in the Indonesian language. Some people prefer to replace "BAB or *buang air besar)*, with "*memenuhi panggilan alam or buang hajat*". We also frequently ask "restroom" when we are in a hotel, although we do not need to take a rest. Instead of using the "toilet," we use the "restroom".

5.2.6. Euphemism of tabooed utterances relating to women

Everything related to women is subject to taboo, including dress, speech, and behavior. Societies have made some social rules related to taboos that can protect women's interests (Bayisa, 2016). In Javanese culture, there are two types of taboos: behavioral and verbal taboos. The behavioral taboo refers to a prohibition to conduct something (e.g., in dressing, eating, going outside the home, etc.; and the verbal taboo refers to a prohibition to produce improper utterances in public space.

In Javanese culture, one of the social rules controlling the people's behavior can be seen from an utterance *"ira ilok"* (e.g., improper of doing). This utterance is meant to convey a prohibition not to conduct inappropriate activities or dishonest behaviors, such as eating and drinking while standing, leaving home in the evening or at night alone (especially for a young woman), or the like. A parent (especially mother) will remind her daughter utilizing an expression *"ora ilok" (breaking a socio-cultural rule)* when going out by herself in the evening or at night. In this respect, leaving home alone at the time for a woman is regarded as improper behavior; therefore, it is socio-culturally forbidden.

In general, in the Javanese language, a girl or a woman who violates the decency rules by making prostitution a commercial commodity is referred to as "bocah nakal", 'wong nakal, *or*

"balon". (e.g., a naughty girl/woman). This utterance *"bocah nakal", "wong nakal" or "balon"* is usually used to replace *"lonte" or "begenggek"* (prostitute). *Lonte or begenggek* is regarded as a vulgar utterance. In Indonesian, the word or utterance "lonte or begenggek" is referred to as *"pelacur"* (prostitute). In Indonesian culture, the utterance *"pelacur"* (prostitute) is euphemized to be *"pekerja seks komersial"* (e.g., a woman earning money from prostitution), *"wanita tunasusila"* (e.g., an immoral woman), or *"pramuria"* (e.g., a woman satisfying the sexual appetite of the man behind the nose). Among the three utterances, the most polite one is *"pramuria."*

In French, the word *fille* pertaining to "daughter" is honorable. However, when it is aimed at addressing "young women", people should use the word jeune fille because the word fille itself is often used as a form of euphemistic for "prostitutes". For women, especially young and unmarried ones, the use of taboo rules is meant to protect collective and public identities and property and social identity (Bayisa, 2016).

In most cultures, especially in Javanese culture, a girl or a young woman's virginity is regarded as a symbol of honor for herself and her family. Therefore, pregnancy before marriage is socio-culturally tabooed. A wedding in this condition is frequently called a marriage by accident. A child born from such a marriage is commonly called *"anak jadah"* (bastard). The utterance *"anak jadah"* is tabooed to mention in a public space. Instead of saying *"anak jadah"*, people usually use *"anak"* followed by the mother's name, such as *"anak ibu Anu."*

Furthermore, menstruation is a part of a woman's life. It has been considered as an unclean, dirty, and embarrassing thing. During the menstrual period, a woman is treated as an untouchable person; she is not permitted to do certain things such as to conduct prayer, a visit to a sacred space, or the like. Thus, the term "menstruasi" (menstruation) is usually avoided to be said. Instead of saying *menstruasi,* Indonesian people (especially women) use M (the initial phoneme of *menstruasi*). This is meant to present a euphemistic meaning of menstruasi itself. They know that M stands for *menstruasi. S*ome women prefer to use *"sedang kedatangan tamu'* (e.g., being visited by a guest), *"sedang berhalangan"* (e.g., having a monthly problem), or the like. Besides, generally, women avoid discussing on a topic of menstruation.

Like menstruation, menopause is a vital stage in the women's lives of women. In general, they are fearful of menopause, and therefore they try to hide from the beginning. Similar to menstruation, some women also try not to discuss the menopause problem. This psychological stage brings about a moral crisis that includes both sadness and anger.

5.2.7. Avoiding taboo of delicacy
In general, people avoid directly mentioning tabooed utterances related to those of delicacies, such as various types of illness and death. The illness suffered by a person is, in fact, something unpleasant for him. People usually tend not to use names of disease as they refer to. But, they try to replace the utterances with their euphemistic forms. CA is generally used for cancer. In Indonesian, *buta, tuli, bisu*, and gila are replaced with *tunanetra, tunarungu, tunawicara*, and *tunagrahita*. These physical and mental shortcomings are usually called *"kekurangan fisik"* atau *"keterbelakangan mental"* (e.g., disabilities).

5.2.8. Euphemism related to taboo of misfortune, diseases, and death
For everyone, fortune is expected; misfortune is unexpected. The fortune may be talked in a discussion; the misfortune is tabooed speak out. Up to the present time, people still admit to the sort of fear and superstition associating with the taboos; many of them often carry talismans when traveling, usually try to avoid walking under ladders, and still believe in the lucky or unlucky numbers.

They try to avoid tempting fate by avoiding not to speak or talk about misfortune. When we have good fortune, we then try to protect it by doing things such as crossing fingers and touching the given wood. Human beings are said to be pessimistic creatures in nature. They are worried about misfortune.

cogent ··arts & humanities

The English word "accident" originally had the much broader meaning of Latin "accidens" (happening) (preserved in the expression by accident), but now it has narrowed to "misfortune." All the diseases are actually "accidents" of the human body (Allan & Burridge, 2016).

6. Conclusion

A language is said to be an arbitrary vocal symbol. This implies that language consists of speech sounds (e.g., sounds produced by using speech organs) based on the social agreement or convention. A certain word has a meaning because of the language users have given it. A word and its meaning are the results of social agreement or convention. Evidently, the concept of the arbitrariness of language should not stop at "a language is arbitrary, meaning that it is created and developed based on the social agreement."

So far, some linguists have developed the concept of the arbitrariness of language from linguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives. The linguistics lecturers have explained and implemented the idea of the arbitrariness of language in linguistics and sociolinguistics courses. And the language users should be aware of the arbitrariness of language(s). Therefore, they can avoid using the linguistic features belonging to one language while speaking or writing another.

Also, language-use is controlled by linguistic etiquette. Linguistic etiquette is something like guidance for language use in a socio-cultural setting. Linguistic principles cover politeness principles and euphemism. These are meant to make the utterances used in social communication and interaction socially polite and acceptable.

Author details
Fatchul Muin[1]
E-mail: fatchul_muin@ulm.ac.id
Rusma Noortyani[1]
E-mail: rusmanoortyani@ulm.ac.id
Eka Puteri Elyani[1]
E-mail: eka.elyani@ulm.ac.id
[1] Language and Arts Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarmasin, Indonesia..

References
Allan, K., & Burridge, K. (2016). *Forbidden words: Taboo and the censoring of language*. Cambridge University Press.
Bayisa, B. T. (2016, July - September). A study of linguistic taboos related to woman and their euphemistic expressions in oromo society. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 4(3), 69–81. online. www.researchpublish.com
Carol, M. E. (1975). *Aspects of language and culture*. Chandler & Sharp Publishers, Inc.
Communication in the real world: An introduction to communication studies. (2016). University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing Edition.
Coulmas, F. (Ed.) (1998). *The handbook of sociolinguistics*. Blackwell Publishing. Blackwell Reference Online 06 Ju06, No. 2,018. http://www.blackwellreference.com/public/book.html?id=g9780631211938_9780631211938
De Saussure, F. (1966). *Course in general linguistics* (Translated by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye). Mcgraw-Hill.
Duranti, A. (1997). *Linguistic anthropology*. Cambridge University Press.
Finocchiaro, M. (1964). *English as a second language: From theory to practice*. Simon and Schuster, Inc.
Finocchiaro, M. (1989). *English as a second/foreign language from theory to practice* (4th ed.). Prent-ce Hall Regents.
Fishman, J. A. (1965). Who speaks what language to whom and when? In L. Wei (Ed.), *The bilingualism reader* (Vol. 2007, pp. 55–70). Routledge.
Fishman, J. A. (1972). *Language in sociocultural change*. Stanford Univirysut Press.
Fromkin, V., & Rodman, R. (1978). *Introduction to language*. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
Geertz, C. (1960). *"Linguistic etiquette" in the religion of java*. Free Press.
Hockett, C. F. (1958). A Course in Modern Language. New York : The Macmillan Company
Holmes, J. (2001). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. Pearson Education Limited.
Monaghan, P., Shillcock, R. C., Christiansen, M. H., & Kirby, S. (2014). How arbitrary is language? *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological Sciences*, 369(1651), 20130299. https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2013.0299
Nordquist, R. (2020, August 27). *Linguistic arbitrariness*. https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-arbitrariness-language-1689001
Ramelan. (1984). Introduction to Linguistics for Students of English in Indonesia. Semarang-Indonesia: FPBS-IKIP
Troike, M. S., & Blackwel, B. (1986). *The ethnography of communication*. The Camelot Press.
Trudgill, P. (1983). *Sociolinguistics*. Penguin Books Ltd.
Wardhaugh, R. (1986). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. Basil Blackwell Ltd.
Yannuar, N. (2019). *Bòsò Walikan Malangan: Structure and development of a Javanese reversed language*. LOT.

cogent ••arts & humanities

Cogent Arts & Humanities (ISSN: 2331-1983) is published by Cogent OA, part of Taylor & Francis Group.

Publishing with Cogent OA ensures:

- Immediate, universal access to your article on publication
- High visibility and discoverability via the Cogent OA website as well as Taylor & Francis Online
- Download and citation statistics for your article
- Rapid online publication
- Input from, and dialog with, expert editors and editorial boards
- Retention of full copyright of your article
- Guaranteed legacy preservation of your article
- Discounts and waivers for authors in developing regions

Submit your manuscript to a Cogent OA journal at www.CogentOA.com