

LANGUAGE DEVIATION: BRINGING LANGUAGE FROM SCIENCE TO FASHION

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Abstract

The article argues that the non-literal way of thinking is the potential force in creating language creativity in lives. Besides to be brought as a means of communication, language should be delivered in a more personal and mediating for every student's individual character, voice, culture, and background. The direction of ELT is still to the conformity to situational communicative functions. Class is considered as a place for equipping students with situational-linguistic features so they are able to fulfill the communicative demands in some particular situations (science). Language deviation can be introduced to the class for the students to be able to cloth free and personal feeling, thoughts, and aspirations (fashion). The study applied library-study approach to answer the inquiries. It suggests that Language deviation requires the user to have prior knowledge in English and to have higher level of creativity. Students can learn to play with the language by applying foregrounding. Foregrounding involves stylistic distortion of a certain language at any level of language. In classrooms, teachers can apply lexical distortion in the form of neologism and semantic distortion to challenge students to be able to think beyond literal meaning.

Keywords: language deviation, creativity, foregrounding

Introduction

In 1967, Heinz's advertising slogan hit the market. It went with "Beanz Meanz Heinz". This slogan was considered as the best-known advertising slogan in the United Kingdom based on a poll held by Creative Review magazine from the same year it was launched. The slogan sat on the top position over 20 popular slogans such as Nike with "Just Do It", anti-war slogan "Make love, not war" or Tesco "Every little helps". That position even endured for 40 years. Why is a slogan with an offbeat, syntactically peculiar sentence could beat clearer, better words-arrangement slogans? Precisely due to its peculiarity, "Beanz Meanz Heinz" resounded the most in people's head. Heinz and other products' advertisements manipulate the linguistic forms and play with the words by applying foregrounding. Foregrounding can be conducted by applying deviation and parallelism (Carter. & McCarthy, 2004 in Vasquez, 2019). The former refers to a technique to deviate the language forms from the prevalent norms and conventions of everyday language use. The deviations can be applied in the phonological aspect, graphological, lexical, grammatical, semantic, or to the register aspects of the language. Example of graphological deviation can be seen from Joyce (1986) in Vasquez (2019) as he

wrote a bizarre string of letters as the drawn-out sound of a train “Frseeeeeeeeeeeeefrong”. It is unpronounceable, meaningless, and hardly conceivable.

Deviation at the level of meaning and words can be reflected in simile and metaphor. The deviation in genre can be seen for example from the way an advertisement is written in the form of sonnet. While *Parallelism* is a technique of playing the language with unexpected regularity such as applied in *alliteration* in Shakespeare’s play “*full fathom five thy father lies*”, *rhymes* such as the last word of lines in “There Will Come Soft Rain” by Teasdale “There will come soft rain and the smell of the *ground*, and swallows circling with their shimmering *sound*; and frogs in the pools singing at *night*, and wild plum trees in tremulous *white*”, *alliteration of echo* as ringing in Winston Churchill’s speech to the Commons on June 4th 1940 (Fox, 2014):

We shall not flag not fail
We shall go on to the end
We shall fight in France and on the seas and oceans.

and *words repetitions* as in Abraham Lincoln quote “You can fool some of the people all the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time”. (Swann & Deumert, 2019) Words repetition is also commonly played by people in classic Tongue Twister such as Wordy Woodchuck, Sea Speak, Pete’s Pick, etc.

The fact that words can resound and stay easily in a long period of time in people’s head as those advertisements’ slogans, speech, and various famous literary works show how words can be very powerful. Those words are played not only for an ornament, but they are purposeful. They present the sentence to be appealing, persuading and schema refreshing to attract and engage its targets audience. People also use language creativity to display identity and the purposes and functions of language play can vary based on the communicative encounters (Boxer & Cortes-Conde, 1997 in Swann, 2018). For instance, to socialize, people use humors to spice up the day. *Knock-Knock* game is an example of humor by playing with words. Or to be seen as fun-type humorous, engaging person, a man makes a joke to a woman he has a crush into to bridge him for further deeper talk.

Despite its powerful function of language deviation in everyday lives, when English is brought into classes, especially in the context of performing English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, language is distorted to be seen as merely a class subject. The emphasis is on how students can maintain language’s accuracy and properness and how to bring students to perform English as close as possible as native speakers do. Even since the concept of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was getting widely recognition in schools around the globe 1990s, the direction of English Language Teaching (ELT) is still on the conformity to situational communicative functions. Class is considered as a place for equipping students with situational-linguistic features so they are able to fulfill the communicative demands in some particular situations. In means *language teaching is served as a science*. Kurtz (2011) ascertained that condition by saying that current educational trends placed immense focus on standardization, predictable improvement, outcome-orientation and testing. In many countries, English Teaching applies product-based curriculum and top-down policy. Top authorities have set the teaching content and assessment standards. As a result, teachers at schools are too busy at keeping up with the set demands and targets in curriculum.

A little space for students to express themselves in their uniqueness along with various backgrounds and cultures they bring due to the demand to employ native speakers-like in English, and the implementation of stiffy curriculum, leaving students not easy to bring their uniqueness and personal voice as well it hampers students’ diversity of backgrounds and cultures to raise. In addition, language as a form of communication is expected to be able to provide space for expression so that each communication process has a higher value (Agung, Wijayawati, and Pujihastuti, 2021).

Language creativity should bring ELT to provide more space for English not only seen as a science but more as a fashion. A fashion in the context that language should be able to cloth students' very personal expressions, feelings, voice, aspirations, ideas in the most unique and personal way. The paper is served to provide answers on some questions; how important is to recognize language deviation as a part to build language creativity in ESL context; how is the place of language creativity in ESL and what forms of language creativity that can be adopted in the classroom. The spirit of this paper is in line to the intention to bring back the nature of education that is to serve the needs of society meeting the challenges of the fast-changing and unpredictable globalized world to ensure quality students to *life* and *work*.

Theoretical Framework

Jakobson in Maybin and Pearce (2006) in Ronald (2016) explicates some language functions, namely (1) *referential function*, it means language is used to convey information based on communicative events, (2) *emotive function*, the language is used to show the speakers' attitude (3) *conative function*, is seen as an instrument to affect or influence hearer, (4) *phatic function*, language is used to keep the channels of communication open or end. (5) *metalingual function* perceives language as codes to convey messages. (6) *poetic function*, this function emphasizes the linguistic qualities of words themselves instead of the factors of the situations.

From Jakobson's typology of language functions, schools mostly don't cover up the poetic function of language. This is the aesthetic function of language that is not merely conveying information or getting involved in a communicative event, but it is another side of language to *get* the audience's attention in communicating messages. Poetic function is a part of language creativity. Lakoff and Turner (1989) in Ronald (2016) explained that familiar poetic/literature figures such as metaphor, irony, and hyperbole are normal and ubiquitous linguistic components that have been used by human being to ascertain that human mind is basically non-literal. The non-literal way of thinking is the potential force in creating language creativity in lives.

Besides seeing the nature of language that shows creativity is inherent with the language, teaching language creativity also brings other benefits. Based on Tin's research (2010), it shows that complex and creative language use can transform unfamiliar utterances into familiar ones. In her research, the students were challenged to shape and reshape their language syntactically and paradigmatically through Simile. Her research shows that teaching creativity can optimize students in employing their linguistic competence with their creative sense of thinking. The tasks of language creativity mostly provide opportunities to students to work together collaboratively yet still bring along their originality, inventiveness, and uniqueness can create classroom atmosphere which is challenging, collaborative yet organic and genuine. This situation was also indicated by Tin's research that the students through acrostics and similes they were stimulated to construct collaborative dialogue. Kurtz's research finding about improvisation as a part of language creativity activity supported that notion. It revealed that when provided with meaningful communicative activities in a more flexible infrastructure and collaborative learning, the students inclined to have more courage to take more communicative risks (Kurtz, 2011).

Carter (2016) mentioned that the elements of creativity are creation, novelty, originality, Genius and individuality. Genius and individuality are elements to collaborate individual ideas with sources, opportunities and skills to innovate, *Art*: creativity can perform aesthetical sides of the works, *inventiveness*: invention is perceived as spontaneous, individual, and genius creation, *appropriacy*: creativity requires a sharp sense of adjusting cultural aspects and various contexts across different societies within time spatial continuum. Kurt (2011) specifically discussed about improvisation as another element of creativity. Maybin and Pearce (2006) in Ronald (2016) divided language creativity in three approaches; inherency, sociocultural, and cognitive

approach. Inherency approach sees creativity from the intrinsic linguistic features that are employed in the texts. Eagleton (1983) in Lazar (2015) argued that the literature works which are valued and revered in a society for particular reasons (literary canon) is simply because they are fashioned by particular people for particular reason in a particular time. Last, cognitive approach sees language creativity from the reader's minds. The value of creativity is determined from the way the readers are engaged with the texts and the context in which it is read.

Method

The research is an analytical review of the language creativity at schools. The study applied library-study approach to answer the inquiries. Firstly, the study drew on the place for language creativity in ESL context based on the literatures in curriculum development in its relation with language creativity. The next, the study brought some types of wordplay styles as a part of applying language creativity in various contexts and forms. The study reflects the result of exploration on the gap between the implementation of ESL in Indonesia with the dynamic of English use in media and literary works based on writers' personal teaching experience and discussions depicted in various scientific works such as books, journals, and magazines. This study provides my answers to address those inquiries that engaged mostly with my more-than-a-decade experience to teach academic, general, and vocational English in Indonesian schools in various levels and regions.

Findings and Discussions

Language; between Fun and Function in the Classroom

Fromkin et al. (2011) suggested that knowing language is knowing the sounds, words, and the rules to combine the elements in it. That perspective lies strongly on how a language, in this case is English, has been taught in classes. Learning language is close to learn behaving as the native speakers do. Accuracy and properness are the standard to assess one's performance in using the language. The tendency in ELT is to separate the students from their students' first language and cultural background instead seeing what the students possess before they come to English class as potentials to spice up their learning of a new language. Cook (1999) in Gillian (2015) mentioned that the prominence of the native speakers in language teaching can obscure the learners optimizing their potentials in attaining the goals in learning and it is contrary with the distinctive nature of successful L2. L2 users should be seen as multicompetent language users rather than a deficient native speakers. Thus, the direction of ELT should on recognizing L2 students as L2 users both in and out of the classroom and to provide large space for students to spill out their genuine creativity in the use of L2. It means English, besides to be brought as a means of communication, language should be able to cloth feeling, thoughts, aspirations, ideas, in fashionable, unique, engaging, interesting, quirky, eccentric, offbeat, even in a bizarre way! Language can be very personal and mediating for every student's individual character, voice, culture, and background.

To attain that purpose, there is a need to steer the movement of ELT in schools to bring back the origin of the function of language as not only teach students how to perform the language accurately and properly but also able to bring referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic functions of the language to be introduced and practiced by the students. For instance, the function of language to affect hearer is so far served in curriculum as the teaching of persuasive text that is still on the conformity to proper and accurate English. Meanwhile, the most successful slogan in the history of advertisements even goes to "Beinz Meanz Heinz" an arrangement words that are not listed in the dictionary of any language. Ignoring the rule and putting letter "z" might be a brilliant decision made by Maurice Drake in his slogan. Making the slogan as grammatically, morphologically, and phonologically peculiar. In term of language as the emotive function, students are introduced to describe feelings and situations descriptively with some additional introduction to literary works such as poetry or short stories. The form of poets modeled in the classes tend to be in the form of prosaic poetry

or poetic prose as it is considered ideal in poetic composition (Leech, 1969). Now take a look at the famous Auden's poem entitled The Wanderer:

*There head falls forward, fatigued at evening,
And dreams of home,
Waving from window,
spread of welcome,
Kissing of wife under single sheet,
But waking sees
Bird-flocks nameless to him, through doorway voices
Of new men making another love.*

The poem does not conform the accepted syntax in English. The poet is subjectless and articleless. It seems made to evoke psychological state and a sense of exile's loss of identity. ELT should broaden its scopes as not only control students with native-speaker-based proportionality, yet it is also a chance to celebrate and embrace the L2 by providing the chance for students to play and to have fun with the L2. Washing Post holds annual *neologism* competition named as Washington Post's Mensa Invitational. Neologism is an activity creating new words, terms, or phrases by modifying or altering some parts of the common or existing words. Various new words have been listed in English dictionary considered as new terms such as *webinar, malware, blogsphere, microblogging, keywords, etc.* Various creative innovative works and literary products show that playing with words, giving students freedom to have fun, play, manipulate, even deviate the words could channel them to unprecedented discovery in language.

There are various Javanese jokes that deviate English that are considered as "low" class jokes as they are seen as jokes made by people who do not have proper knowledge in English. The examples of the jokes can be seen as follow:

Words play 1

A: *Apa Bahasa Inggrisnya anjing?*
(What is the English of *anjing*?)

B: Dog

A: *Apa Bahasa Inggrisnya makan?*
(What is the English of *makan*?)

B: *Mbadog*

Mbadog is a *ngoko* Javanese term. *Ngoko* is considered as the lowest level of Javanese language strata.

Words play 2

Malam Minggu: Saturday Night

Minggu Pagi: Sunday morning

Minggu sore; *Sundaykala*

Words play 3

Cantik: beautiful

Ganteng (handsome): just look at me

Words play 4

Daun apa yang tidak bisa disentuh?

(What *daun* that can not be touched)

Daun touch me

Words play 5

Keset: welcome

Keset is doormat. In Java, there is a common writing on the doormat saying “welcome” as it is mostly put in front of the front door.

Words play 6

Kucing garong: criminal cat

Kucing garong is a local term that means bad person.

Words play 7

A: Sayuran apa yang bisa membuat Bahagia? (What vegetable that can make happy?)

B: *Toge* ther with you

Toge is sprouts

Despite the impression of low level jokes, those jokes, in fact, can indicate the mastery of the person to some prior knowledge of terms in English as well as it shows the creators’ language creativity. To say *sunday kala* is equivalent with Sunday afternoon it means the person has known the concept of *days* and *times* in English. For the jokes can “ring the bell” for the speakers, they must know that when a person says “*daun* touch me” means they don’t want to be touched (*disentuh*). Bloom’s hierarchy of learning puts creativity on the level of *synthesis*. They are on the higher level than the competence to replicate and duplicate knowledge. Some societies play with *Talking backwards*. The first speech play is used by people in Cuna, Mulatupu and Niatupu islands in San Blas, Panama. They play the language to convey message in fun way. They pronounce the syllabus backwards (Sherzer, 1976 in Vasquez, 2019). For example:

Osi (pineapple) → *iso*

Takke (to see) → *keta*

Uwaya (ear) → *wayau*

The other style of Cuna speech play, they changed the vowels into all *i*. for instance:

Pia (where) → *pïi*

Tanikki (he’s coming) → *tinikki*

Nuka (name) → *niki*

The next is speech play used by French. They also have backwards speech play. For example:

L’envers “backwards” → *varlen*

Pedes “pederast” → *depes*

Copains “friends” → *painco*

In Tegal, Indonesia, adults apply backward speech play to communicate with other adults to convey message they don’t want the kinds around know the meaning. For example:

Roti kiye nggo Roba (this bread is for Roba) → *itor eyik nggo obar*

Another variation, they insert some syllables with various consonant letters such as “f” or “p” etc within the vowels and the syllabus:

Aku pan tuku klambi (I want to buy some clothes) → *Afakufu pafan tufukufu klafambifi*

In fact, playing language has become a part of power for various famous Youtubers and influencers. Liza Koshy started her career as a Youtuber in 2015 and nowadays she already gained almost 18 million followers with more than three billion views. She was an ordinary girl yet she has brilliant jokes shown in her comedic videos. What stands out the most is in her ability to make jokes by playing with words. For example, it can be seen when she answered questions given by her viewers:

Q: Where do you see yourself in the next 10 years?

A: Probably in front of the mirror.

*Q: If you could change your name into **anything**, what would that be?*

A: Anything.

Q: Liza, do you love us? (and she reads U.S)

A: I do because my boy friend stays in it.

Q: How old are you?

A: It keeps changing

Q: I mean what's your birthday date?

A: Q: March

A: March what?

A: 30

Q: what year?

A: Every year

Q: Are you superstitious?

A: I am extending the species

Krashen (1986) in Alawi (2016) described the number of variables that contribute to impede students' language acquisition process including motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. Those are called as affective filters. Affective factor plays significant role on the students' success in learning new language. Creating a class or lesson is like creating a home for students. It is about how they feel inviting, comfortable and homy. Giving students space to play with the words can increase the sense of belonging to the language they are dealing with. In consequence, it boosts up the students' affective aspect. It is as creating rooms to be "ok" to make mistakes and errors creatively in learning language. Tin (2010) suggests that teaching language creativity can optimize students in employing their linguistic competence with their creative sense of thinking. The tasks for language creativity or playing with the words should provide students opportunities to work together yet still bring along their originality, inventiveness, and uniqueness. When a class is brought with meaningful communicative activities in a more flexible infrastructure and rules, the students will have more courage to take risks.

Playing with the language in the classroom

Foregrounding is originally a term in art for a style or expressions for a work of art that deviates general norms of society. Leech (1968) in Swann & Deumert (2018) brought the term more familiar in linguistics. He mentioned that any deviation in linguistic or in any accepted norms and rules are labeled as foregrounding. In playing with the language, the speaker manipulates, spoils, distorts, or differs language from everyday use. Bussmann in Budiharto (2016) explained that deviation can be used to create rhetorical effect for the reader or listener. In other words, deviation in language creates unconventional way to express and emphasizes the speaker's ideas or messages. To deviate language, it involves chaotic thinking. Chaotic thinking involves the process of thinking that tends to be spontaneous, divergent, and potentially create novel alternatives (Boden, 2011). Basic principles for improving language creativity in the class is to treat language as not only a means of communication but also a resource for creative thoughts, framework for understanding the world, a key to new knowledge, and a source of pleasure and inspiration. Students can play with the language in various aspects of language, such as in the lexical aspect, grammatical, phonological, graphological, semantic, etc. As the illustration of language play, it will be discussed forms of deviation on lexical aspect in the form of Neologism and semantic aspect by challenging students to think logically non-sense and absurd ideas, imagination and thoughts. The use of an easily accepted communication language must still consider the delivery of messages, both implicit and explicit, especially in oral communication in class (Maerice, et al., 2020)

For the former, neologism is a type of deviation to invent new “words” in which the creator may exceed the normal resources of the language. Some famous new words such as *assassination* by Shakespeare. It comes from the word “assassin” an Arabic word combined with the English suffix *tion* then coined the word *assassination*. *Shaggy-bearded* by Spenser, *foresuffered* by T.S. Elliot, and so on. Oxford English Dictionary noted that every year, there are around 1000 new words entry (<http://public.oed.com/the-oed-today/>). These new words indicate the dynamics of human life in various sectors of life. Maybin and Pearce (2006) in Vasquez (2019) predicted that in the future, the use of English worldwide will be drawn from multicultural range of verbal art forms and performances for more personal and specific experience and usage of language instead of for single authoritative English literature tradition. Neologism in the classroom will be opening potentials for more intakes of new terms in English. Playing with neologism is potentially contributes to the findings of unique, creative, lively, meaningful new words.

The later deviation is to challenge the students to be against common semantic logics. It can be done for instance by playing similes and “a nonsense if I were” game. Simile is a figure of speech by comparing two things to make a clear visual description and for metaphorical purposes. The compare, similes use connectors such as “like” and “as”. For example: As cute as kitten, as cold as ice, as innocent as a lamb, as sweet as sugar.

Similes can also be seen in the famous poet Robert Burns entitled “A Red, Red Rose”

*Oh my Luve's like a red, red, rose
That's newly sprung in June
O my Luve's like the melodie
That's sweetly play'd in tune.*

Associating an object with another totally different object as done in Similes can be a step for students to be able to think beyond literal meaning. Figurative language used similes can train students to describe things in creative way. Students can be asked to choose certain number of people and find an object of comparison. One person one comparison along with reasons why they think that can describe the person, for example:

My father is like a book.
He is like a book because he is so thoughtful but silent.

The next step is making those sentences into more complex sentences, such as:
My father is like a mysterious book.
My father is like a mysterious closed-book.
My father is like a mysterious closed-book with fancy cover, etc.

Teacher can replace the person to a situation as illustrated below:

This party is as syrupy as this cocktail
This wedding anniversary is as syrupy as my Martinez cocktail. Etc.
(McCarthy, 2004)

The game of “non-sense if I were ...” is to challenge the students to think if they were ... filled with an adjective of an object. For example, “If I were rich I would ...” the next the student must continue the sentence by an/some unthinkable actions. For example “If I were rich I would take a course in IT so I would be able to hack Taylor Swift’s Instagram to make her account DM me”. Or “If I were a mouse, I would think that Remy (a rat in Ratatouille movie) probably used to be a human just like me”.

Conclusion

All in all, language creativity should be taught at schools as the skills can allow students to be able to see language as not merely a science but it is a fashion. It can more values to language, warps language in engaging, appealing, and unique ways. Few words arranged by creativity, it can generate big possibilities. Therefore, language creativity is the skill that can bring up the amazing sides of languages. So far, there is only a very little space for students to be able to play with the words. Language deviation is a part of activity that requires the students to have higher creativity in playing with the language. Teachers can play challenge the students to manipulate the lexical and semantic elements of the language. Playing with lexical level, teachers can apply neologism and in semantic level games that challenge students to be able to think beyond literal meaning such as Simililes and “If I were ...”.

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