INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

Enrichment of Career by Knowledge of Language and Literature IV
(ECKLL IV)

PROCEEDING

Communicating Across Cultures:
The Role of Learning and Teaching of Language and Literature In the Era of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)

Faculty of Letters – Dr. Soetomo University
In collaboration with
Balai Bahasa Provinsi Jawa Timur, KEMENDIKNAS
Surabaya, August 18, 2016
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This paper aims at analysing R.H. Robins' idea on word classes or parts of speech in his book General Linguistics. The identification focuses on the number of parts of speech/word classes, the criteria used in the classification and the approach used. In making the interpretation, the writer refers to some other references for comparisons. From the analysis, it was found that Robins classified English words into nine classes based on traditional approach and traditional grammar. The criteria used in the categorization is the syntactic relation, not semantic or morphological criteria. One word can be categorized into more than one class, depending on the grammatical relation in the sentence.
I. INTRODUCTION

There are several different terms used to refer to word class which used by R.H. Robins. Nelson Francis (1957) and Harry Shaw (1986) uses parts of speech to refer to the same thing. Bloomfiled in his masterpiece Language (1933: 196) used both: word class and parts of speech. According to him, the term "parts of speech" has been used traditionally in Europe for long. Harimurti Kridalaksana (2014) uses word class or word categorization. Some other linguists use lexical category to refer to the same thing.

Harimurti Kridalaksana (1990: 1) states that word classes has an important place in the study of grammar during the time of Aristoteles (in the fourth century BC). All the discussions on language began with the word classes. This tradition was transferred to Indonesia, too. Therefore, some of the text-books of Bahasa Indonesia written by the Indonesian language experts include word classes. Those experts are, among others, S.T. Alisjahbana, Goris Geraf, Ramlan, Samsuri, Anton Moeljono (Muslich, 1990). The difference is that those experts do not focus on the word classes only. Word classes are treated as one of the aspects of grammar and discussed together in balance with other aspects of grammar.

According Harimurti Kridalaksana (1990: 6-7), so far there have been three approaches to the study of word classes, that is, traditional approach, universal approach, and descriptive approach. The traditional approach holds the idea that word classes are the ones used in Greek and Latin grammar, that is, the principle of the word classes which was introduced by Aristoteles and other Greek philosophers. The characteristics of each class is not important. The universal approach used by Jesperson for the first time relates logic to grammar. As a result, this approach classifies words into five classes: substantive, adjective, pronoun, verb, and particle. Although they are universal, they are manifested differently in different languages. The descriptive approach which was pioneered by Sapir holds the view that each language has its own word classes because each language has its own scheme. Descriptive approach also states that the traditional approach which was used in Greek and Latin cannot be applied to the nouns of European language.
system. According Bloomfield (1933: 190), different languages will have different construction; therefore, the word classes can be different.

This paper is trying to interpret and analyze Robins’ idea on word classes in his book General Linguistics: an Introductory Survey (1980). The questions to be answered in this interpretation and analysis include 1) the number of word classes according to Robins, 2) the approach used in the classification, and 3) the criteria used to put certain words into certain categories.

Moreover, it is intended to point out the weaknesses of Robins’ description. To achieve this objectives, the writer of this paper uses comparative method. The writer tries to compare Robins’ idea with the idea of other experts, both Indonesian experts and non Indonesian experts.

II. ROBINS’ IDEA ON WORD CLASSES
R.H. Robins was a professor of general linguistics in the University of London. Having a strong background in French, Latin and Greek, he spent most of his time teaching at the universities and conducting researches on language and linguistics, not only in Europe and America but also in Africa and Asia. Of all his works, General Linguistics: an introductory survey, which was first published in 1964, is an outstanding one. This book is widely used in the department of language and linguistics at the universities, including Indonesia. As reflected in the title, this book is very comprehensive since it covers a wide range of topics from phonology to semantics and recent development of linguistics, mainly the relationship between language and other fields of studies such anthropology, philosophy and psychology.

The topic of word classes is presented and discussed in Chapter VI under the title “Grammar (page 171). The following is the summary of Robins’ idea on word classes in his book General Linguistics, third edition, (1980).

1. Syntactic relation is used as the basis to put certain words into certain word classes. “words may brought into word classes by reference to the syntactic relations that they contract with one another in sentences ...” (p.171). For example, mother and cooks in the sentence ‘Mother cooks in the kitchen’
cannot be put in the same class because of their syntactic relation. The word “big” and “cheap” can be classified or put in the same class both have the same syntactic relation with nouns as seen in the following:

- big house
- cheap house
- the house is big
- the house is cheap

On the other hand, the word “friendly” and “slowly” cannot be put in the same class or parts of speech because different syntactic relation in spite of their morphological similarity. Consequently, we can say “friendly boy” but we cannot substitute the word “friendly” with the word “slowly” and say “slowly boy”.

2. In most languages, paradigmatic variations in word forms are used to differentiate one word from the other into sets of classes. For example, words like “horse” and “horses” are put in one and the same class because of the form and the substitutability. “... many words are differentiated formally into sets of classes by paradigmatic variations in word forms” (p.171).

3. Sometimes, classes which are differentiated paradigmatically coincide in membership with classes which are differentiated syntactically. In this case, priority should be given to the syntactic classification rather than morphological classification. For example, the words big and hot are paradigmatically the same but beautiful and understandable are paradigmatically different from the words big and hot. In this case, syntactic classification can be used so that these four words are put in the same class as adjective because of their syntactic relations with nouns.

4. In principle, words are classified on the basis of the syntactic behavior, then “supplemented and reinforced by difference of morphological paradigms” (p.173). It means that the first criteria to put a word into certain classes is the syntactic relation. The form is the second consideration. For example, the word “writing” in Writing is my favorite subject is classified into noun not because of
the form but because of the syntactic behavior, that is, its relation with other
words in the larger unit.

5. According to Robins (1980: 173), the term 'word classes' and 'parts of speech'
refer to the same thing. There are nine word classes. They are: noun,
pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, article, interjection.

6. One word can be classified into more than one classes. In English, for example,
the word 'fun' can be classified into noun and adjective, depending on its
syntactic relations. The word 'before' can belong to three classes as seen in
the following:

- He came before breakfast (preposition)
- He had come before (adverb)
- He came before we left (conjunction)

   (page 174)

7. Word classes can be closed or open. According to Robins (1980: 174), an open
class can be defined as "one whose membership is in principle unlimited". On
the contrary, closed classes refer to "fixed and small number of words, which
are the same for all speakers of the language" (p. 174). Noun, verb, adjective
and adverb belong to open classes since their membership is unlimited in the
sense that they can accept the addition of new words through the process of
derivation, inflection and compounding. In contrast, preposition, auxiliary
verbs, conjunction, pronoun, determiner belong to closed classes since its
members are fixed and usually do not change. Accordingly, the newly created
and loan words belong to open classes.

III. ANALYSIS

This analysis focuses on the three problems formulated in the introduction, that
is, the number of word classes, the approach used by Robins, and the criteria
used in categorizing a word.

A. The Number of Word Classes or Parts of Speech
Robins (1980: 173) classifies the English words into nine classes. They include noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, pronoun, article, conjunction, and interjection. This classification is the same as the classification done by Donatus. Donatus as cited by Kridalaksana, classifies the words into nine classes and he uses the Latin terms: nomen, pronomen, verbum, participium, adverbiium, praeposito, coniunctio, interjectio. (Kridalaksana, 1990: 4). Compared with the one by Aristotel, Robins’ classification is different. Aristotle (Wahab, 1990: 6) classified the words into ten classes: nomina, verba, adjectiva, adverbia, numeralia, pronomina, coniunctio, prepositio, article. This classification was widely used in Indonesia up to now.

Robins does not mention anything about other classification, especially the ones done by the structural linguists such Nelson Francis (1958: 235). Nelson Francis’ classification is very different. He classifies the words into two big groups: content words and function words. Content words include noun, main verb, adjective, and adverb. These are words which give us a picture or content in our mind. The rest are function words- words which function to express the grammatical relationship. These include auxiliary verbs, prepositions, conjunctions/connectors, pronouns, determiners. The subclasses of determiner are quite broad: article (a/an, the), possessive adjective (my, your, etc), demonstratives (this, that, these, those), quantifiers (some, all, both, etc), intensifiers (very, really, etc).

According to Nelson Francis, most determiners are noun determiners since they are used before the nouns as seen in the following:

- the house (definite article)
- my house (possessive adjective)
- that house (demonstratives)
- some houses (quantifiers)

In addition, intensifiers are not noun determiners but adjective or adverb determiners since they used to limit the adjective or adverbs as seen in the following:
- very old ---- correct
- very slowly ---- correct
- really old ---- correct /
- very house ---- incorrect

Another term for intensifiers is 'qualifiers since its function to qualify the adjective or adverb.

In Indonesian language, Harimurti Kridalaksana (1990: 49; 2014: ) classifies the words into thirteen classes: nomina (noun), verba (verb), adjectiva (adjective), adverbia (adverb), pronomina (pronoun), numeralia (number), intero- gativa (question word), demonstrativa (demonstrative pronoun), artikula (article), preposisi (preposition), konjungsi (conjunction), kategori fatis (particle), interjeksi (interjection).

The above discussion shows that the number of word classes is not only one and it varies from time to time, from language to language. Therefore, Bloomfiled is right when he states that different languages will have different construction; therefore, the word classes can be different (Bloomfiled, 1933: 190).

B. The Criteria

Robins (1980: 173) states that the classing of words into nine groups is based on the meaning and philosophical abstraction. So, his classification is based on the semantic criteria, not syntactic or syntactic relation. Most grammarians (Kridalaksana, 2014: 28), use three possible criteria for the classification: semantic criteria, morphological criteria, and syntactic criteria. Halliday (1994: 30) also recommends that in the process of putting a word into certain class, the first criteria syntactic, completed with the semantic criteria to make it complete. Traditional grammarians use semantic criteria in word category. This can be seen from the way the define words, for example, nouns are words to name a person, place, thing or idea while verbs are words which express an action, or state of thing. (Shaw, 1986: 2). Morphological criteria is less used and if it is used, then it cannot be used alone; it should be accompanied by other criteria, such as syntactic relation. According to morphological criteria,
words like going, cooking and dancing will be put in the same class since they have same suffix- ing. Words like manager, teacher, and cooker will be put in the same class as well since they share similar morphological characteristics. According to syntactic criteria, words like new, big, small will belong the same class since they share the same grammatical relationship in a sentence as seen in the following:

- The house is new/big/small
- It is a new/big/small house

As seen in the example, the three words can substitute one another in the sentence since they have the same grammatical characteristics or position in the sentence. In contrast, words like friendly and slowly, although morphologically similar, cannot be put in the same class/category since they different syntactic relation and cannot substitute each other as seen in the following.

- The boy is friendly (correct)
- The boy is slowly (incorrect)

According to Harimurti Kridalaksana (1990: 42; 2014, 29), word classes or word category should be based on the syntactic behavior which includes the following:

“i. The position of the grammatical unit in the larger unit.
ii. The possibility of the grammatical unit to be accompanied by another unit in the construction.
iii. The possibility of the grammatical unit to be substituted by another unit.
iv. Syntactic function such of subject, predicate.
v. Syntactic paradigm such as active-passive, declarative-imperative, etc.”

Kridalaksana agrees with Robins that in word classes, the first criteria is the syntactic behavior and then supported by the morphological paradigm.

Robins does not say anything about the relationship between word classes and syntactic function such as subject, and predicate. Kridalaksana explicitly
states that word classes should not be confused with syntactic function. “Fungsi tidak boleh dikacaukan dengan kelas” (Function cannot be confused with class). (1990: 43). Consequently, a word functioning as subject in a sentence is not always a noun because the subject position can be filled by several different word classes as seen in the following sentences:

3. Tea is better than coffee.

4. Red is better than yellow.

5. In the garden is better than in the livingroom.

The three examples show that the subject position can be filled by noun, adjective and prepositional phrase.

Another point to mention here is the change or movement of the word from one class to another class. Robins does not say anything about this explicitly. He only says that one word can have more than one classes. Kridalaksana states in his monograph (1990: 43) but he does not elaborate it. Words can move from one class to another because of the morphological process, that is, derivation as seen in the following sentences:

6. He can manage the company.

7. He is the manager.

8. He has the managerial skills.

The root manage (verb) moves to noun because of the suffix (-er) and moves again to adjective because of the suffix (-rial).

In connection with the inflection and derivation, Lyons in Language and Linguistics (1980: 111) states that forms and syntactic function are closely related. “Two forms have the same syntactic function if, only if, they have the same distribution throughout the grammatical sentences of the language”. For example, book and pen have the same syntactic function because they have the same distribution as seen in the following sentences:

- The book is cheap.
- The pen is cheap.

It is apparent that the two words can substitute each other.
C. The Approach

From Robins’ description (1980: 173), it is apparent that Robins adopts the traditional approach in classifying the words. This is characterized by the grouping of words into nine classes. Ideally, a textbook on general linguistics should have a complete description of the three approaches used to classify words: traditional approach, universal approach, and descriptive approach. Because of this, the word classes or parts of speech based on structural linguistics is not touched. The terms “content words” and “function words” are not mentioned at all while those two terms are often used nowadays.

In this case, Nelson Francis (1958: 222-290) gives a complete description about word classes based on the structural linguistics. He classifies the words into two big classes: content words and function words. Content words include noun, main verb, adjective, and adverb. The rest are function words. The criteria used in the classification is not meaning but the syntactic behavior and inflectional form. This can be seen in the way he defines verb. “There are five kinds of verb-marking formal criteria: inflection, function word, derivational affixes, positions, and superfixes”. He also defines noun as word preceded by the noun determiner and it can be identified by the noun-marking derivational suffixes. It can also be identified by the position to another class, that is, before the verb. All these show that word category is based on the syntactic relation and the morphological changes (inflection and derivation).

IV. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, there are three points to highlight. First, in general, Robins’ description on word classes is not complete and thorough. He discusses the word classes from one approach only, that is, traditional approach. As a textbook on general linguistics he should have given other category based on some other approaches. At least he should have discussed two kinds of classification, that is, the word classes based on traditional grammar and word classes based on the descriptive and structural linguistics as seen in Nelson Francis’s work The Structure of American English (1958) because these two
kinds of word classes are very different from each other. Then, there is no information about the historical background of word classes dating back to Greek ages. The second point is that one word can be put into more than one category, depending on the grammatical relation in the sentence. The last, the discussion on word classes or parts of speech never ends since there are still conflicting opinions on how words should be categorized. But most linguists agree with Bloomfield that different languages will have different constructions; therefore, the word classes can be different. We do not expect to have the same number of word classes in two or more different languages such as Indonesian and English since each language is complete in itself.

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