

Are Humans the talking Animals? Exploring Language as a Window to Physical-Metaphysical Knowledge

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Abstract: Through language, a religion came into existence at the heart of human life. The language used within a believing religious knowledge manifest in itself the objective references, matters which address the problem of knowledge both physical and metaphysical. The concept of human being as a speaking animal (thinking ability) in Islam embodies the meaning of the logical tradition in which man acquires knowledge through language, both in terms of pronunciation, writing, and hearing resulting in the impact of manners (*akhlaq*) in acting and behaving. Language intermediates men to the mentalistic and action aspects of a concept of thought. In this paper, the writer explores a different philosophical perspective on how Islam views linguistics as 'scientific knowledge' which includes the study of language on the basis of tasawwuf science or the Islamic point of view.

Keyword: *human being; language; linguistics; Islam; knowledge*

Introduction

Upon discussing the relationship between language and philosophy, it has almost been a commonplace for language scholars (linguists) who always put philosophy into a prestigious position. According to Oesman (2009, pp. 22), this is due to the object of philosophy is human thought, something invisible to the human's eyes, however, its scope is broader than any other sciences since it includes everything that exists. Thus, it is unsurprisingly that philosophy is the core of all sciences including linguistics. Language studies initially were actually carried out by philosophers instead of the linguists. In ancient times, philosophers solved various kinds of philosophical problems through a language analysis approach. A linguist, Edward Sapir argued that language, in the strongest opinion - is the greatest potential that makes the individual as a social being. This opinion reflects two things. First, human communication with one another in society is not easily obtained without language. Second, the existence of a collective language between individuals in a group / people functions as a fixed and distinctive symbol for solidarity between individual speakers (Katsoff, 1989, p.48–63).

If we wish to spend a moment of thinking on the nature of human beings, then we will find various kinds of answers about how humans are in the actual life. However, if referred to Islamic understanding, islamically humans can be philosophically defined as "*alhayawan alnatiq*" which means "the speaking animals or creature". This language ability distinguishes humans from other creatures amongst the God's creations. By the language skills, humans are able to communicate, interact, and be cultured. It is not surprising if a lot of linguists claim that the deepest essence of humans is nothing but on the language. Especially if we wish to juxtapose this concept with the religious life guidance coming down to earth as revelation which aims to humanize the humans, then the existence of language as a tool to understand revelation becomes urgently needed.

In the context of the Islamic tradition, the development of linguistics is highly fundamental. This is as was told by historians, the preliminary science ever developed earlier at the phases of Islamic civilization development is linguistic science. This as if becomes a commonsense

among the scholars, that the Muslim community was described in Rippin's term (1990 cited in Esha, 2011, p. 6) is the scripturalist faith which is a society whose faith is strongly influenced by the revelation texts, where they pay important attention to language as a tool for understanding the revelation. Al-Qur'an as a revelation for Muslims has become a central text in the civilization. The foundations of Islamic science and culture grow and stand on the foundation on which the text becomes the center object of study. Text civilization (*hadharah al-nash*) created in this context, however, cannot be separated from linguistic science where the text understanding tool is located (Zaid, 2005, p.1). On the one hand, we as religious people, should believe in God must be accompanied by mindfulness of thinking ability, not just traditional awareness of preserving ancestral heritage, no matter how the patterns and concepts of religion we believe in.

In the development of philosophy as a scientific discipline, the holy book of Muslims, the Al-Qur'an calls on people to observe everything both in the heavens and the earth and the core of themselves, which is done to recognize the nature of truth. In the context of this conversation, language as an important part in human beings really needs to be studied to achieve the recognition of the nature of God's power. If we attribute the main problem that philosophers have worked on since the early period, namely those that focus on the nature of nature and the nature of human beings, then it is clear that Islam does advocate such research. This is as emphasized by the God of Islam, Allah SWT in the Qur'an said: "Verily in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day there are signs for people of intellect". (Surah Ar-Rum: 22). The core problems we are addressing in this article are; (a) how is the position of linguistics in the perspective of Islamic studies, (b) how are linguistic relations, and the nature of language by thinking (philosophizing) and epistemology of science in the concept of humans as the speaking animals.

Method

This study is a typical of language studies and its relation to the sociology of religion. Thus, the approach that suit to this study is the Sociolinguistics approach, which examines the relationship of language and society integrated into two fields researchable separately, namely the formal structure of language by linguistics and the structure of society by sociology. This study applied qualitative approach. The qualitative research is a research seeking to build people's perspectives that are examined in detail and established with words, holistic (comprehensive and deep) and complicated.

Linguistics and Philosophy in Islam

The term "Islamic linguistics" in this context does not have to be seen as an attempt to create a new conflict in linguistics, namely between Western linguistics and Islamic linguistics. The Islamic linguistics term in this article is nothing but just an attempt to establish a logical and philosophical framework which embodies linguistics sustaining the Islamic epistemology, in accordance with the idea of Islamic knowledge. Therefore, there is no need for misunderstanding, expressing linguistic ideas through the embodiment of the Islamic epistemology we need to reduce the general concepts of language that have been described in Western linguistic traditions, both about language units such as phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases, clauses, and discourse and about various concepts such as dialect, intonation, stylistics etc. Islam views the reasoning tradition acquired by humans through language, both in terms of pronunciation, writing, and hearing, resulting in the impact of character (*akhlaq*) in acting and

behaving. Language makes a person connected to mentalistic aspects and actions on a concept of thought (Amin, 2008, p. 69).

The development of philosophy in the Islamic world changed rapidly through the attempt to translate various kinds of books of science, especially Greek philosophy into Arabic. But that does not mean before that, Arab Muslims have not known and practiced philosophy, either in terms of the way or system of thinking, as well as "truth/wisdom" which is the product of philosophical work. They have known the term "al-hikmah" which means "wisdom" and an attempt to find it. After being internalized into the term philosophy (philosophy) into the vocabulary and traditions of the Arab Muslim nation, the two terms are used in the same sense or alternately to express the philosophical and philosophical notions of the Islamic world at that time (Omar, 1979, p.25).

Language philosophy is assumed to be a tool in uncovering religious phenomena, we can see through the exchange of religious ideas in a communication, both between individuals and collectively, always using a sign system. This sign system allows communication. Therefore, the relationship between the sign of giving birth to the system allows the exchange of ideas between people. The system is transformed into a sign or language structure. Language also means a value system that encompasses all acts of human movement. Tradition, culture, customs, way of thinking and so forth are expressed through language. Meanwhile, language as a communication tool, to borrow a term introduced by Saussure, *speech* (hereinafter, an utterance). In this case, language plays a very important role. Language is the only entity in which religious teachings are communicated. Without its existence, religion will never exist. Even the world does not mean anything without it (Barthes, 1973, p. 14).

Through a language, religion manifests in the middle, even at the heart of human life. It is undeniable also that in language, religion is contested for power. Therefore, religion can be reduced in language. The existence of religion lies in the language. The language of religion that is present in our midst, whether in the form of jargon or the results of deep thought, is always believed to be true. It is also believed that the language used for religious knowledge has an objective reference. For example about God. When the scriptures speak of God, it means that God is objectively "there". Even the rules made based on the language of religion were truly spoken by God. Nobody denied this. However, religious language still does not have sensory references. Because of the five senses of man, and even the ratio is limited when talking about metaphysics (the divine realm). Human senses and ratios (mind) can only come into contact with phenomena (things as they seem), not with nomina (objects in themselves) (Hardiman, 2004, p. 141).

What has been formulated as knowledge, is in this sense refers to phenomena, or what appears to be, does not come into contact with objects in itself "thing in its self". Likewise with metaphysics, in this case God, what we see is not God to him. However, he is from natural phenomena that humans can infer about the existence of God. Only faith guarantees the objectivity of information in a religion. Meanwhile, the religious language in the form of revelation and interpretation of revelation, is then seen as a universal teaching. The universal category of religious language means that what is taught in the holy text applies to all humanity. Eternal teachings that are not eroded by time and space. At the time the holy book was down, perhaps the teachings of the scriptures were particular. Because he was present to answer the problems faced at that time. However, when times have changed, with changing problems, the teachings of the scriptures become normative. This means that what happened historically at the time of the holy book was revealed, with its universal category, come into disappear. The

religious language used in the following period has become a universal general principle (Mubarak, 2007, p.12)

The Concept of Humans as Speaking Animals

The God of the Muslim community, Allah SWT glorifies humans and exceeds them from His other creatures by giving them reason and ability to think. Islam positions reason as one of the basic *ijtihad* (effort making processes) in considering the *aqidah* (belief) implicit in the al-Qur'an and also as something that will be held accountable by Allah SWT later in the afterlife. For that reason, ignoring the role of reason is considered an error or sin. This is as the God emphasized in the Qur'an Surah al-Mulk, verse 10. The Koran calls on people to use their minds and to remind of the existence of accountability in the hereafter, and through the word of His Surah al-Isra ' verse 36. "And do not follow what you have no knowledge of it. Indeed, hearing, sight and heart, all of them will be held accountable ", firmly the Islamic Religion teaches Muslims not to easily believe in radial thoughts or become religious blind followers of ancestral beliefs that existed before which in tradition often overrides the role of reason. The last Messenger of Allah (*Rasul*) in Islam, Prophet Muhammad P.B.U.H, through the history of al-Tarmizi, in which he said, "Do not be a blind follower". In this context, the idea of having exhausted our capability on thinking (*ijtihad*), including philosophy is quite important in understanding the teachings of Islam, especially on interpreting the Qur'anic revelation texts to be referred to as sources of Islamic Shari'a law by Ulama '(Islamic scholars).

In Islamic philosophy, human beings are the called '*al-hayawanu natiq*' the speaking animals (on the sound interpretation by Islamic scholar 'interpreted as the thinking human beings). The term *natiq* or having capability in producing a language in this sense reflects a meaning in which humans are able to use their intellect to reveal the signs of God's greatness found in the universe and their ability to formulate the meaning behind these disguised signs. Formulating the meaning here as was emphasized by al-Attas (1995: 121), since through such ability of producing and using the language, people can consider, distinguishing as well as explaining everything being viewed or perceived around them. More precisely, the word *natiq* (in Arabic language) is derived from the same root as *nutq*, then the term is further used in a scholarly discipline of the *al-mantiq* discourse (the science of logic in Arabic linguistics), which is a science related to establishing arguments (reasoning object through argumentation). Logic is a branch of philosophy which studies the basics and rules of reasoning guiding a person to obtain the correct conclusions, however, it turns out that logic does not just involve thinking of seeking the truth but also solving problems accurately, effectively, efficiently and safely (Oesman, 2012, p. 13 & 108).

The concept of "speaking animals" (*al-hayawan al-natiq*) or rational beings, and human ability to create linguistic symbols in meaningful patterns (words, phrases, clauses, and discourses), is quite possible due to the existing abstract and subtle thing in human being, the so called logic (*al-'aql*). The *aql* or logic is a 'bond' that refers to active units and recognizable, bind and collect scientific objects into apatterned symbols (words). The mind here shares the same interpretation as the human's heart, spirit, and self. While, reason or logic is an abstract substance and its existence becomes a tool for rational souls to recognize and distinguish truth from falsehood. The reason becomes an essence underlying human self-interpretation. Language that integrates in the concept of reason or logic is an important part in the concept of human self-management and at the same time becomes the basis of human knowledge about him/herself (al-Attas, 1995, p. 121).

Islam really views the science of language 'linguistics', especially in terms of the study natural language as an innate faculty that labels the nature of every human being, regardless of the world in which mankind originated from. The Qur'an as the holy book and the source of knowledge for Muslims, describes the language of mankind, in the Qur'an, Allah SWT said: The Most Gracious God who teaches the Qur'an. He created man, teaches him cleverly speaking. "(Surat al-Rahman, verse 1-4).

The aforementioned Qur'anic verses, we can drive an understanding that basically Allah SWT created humans while giving them the ability in language use ability, in other words, 'language faculty', also called language potential. In its concept this ability has been bestowed on every human being since being born into the world. According to Chomsky (2000, p. 81), this language tool or organ has grown in the embryonic phase (this potential, can be further called the language acquisition device (LAD), obtainable through experience and teaching, made possible through social intermediaries such as family and friends, institutions education and the surrounding community LAD, according to Chomsky, includes the study of Universal Grammar which includes describing the sound science of utterances, connecting words to discourse, and establishing utterances meaning, all of this has been quite extensively explained in the study of phonology, syntax and semantics (Chomsky, 2000, p. 81).

In an Islamic view, the language skills that are given by God to humans are closely related to the concept of giving knowledge since humans in the spirit realm, namely before the soul is blown into the human body (embryo) (al-Attas, 1995, p. 174). It is also connected about how human existence at the stage in the spirit realm has communicated with Allah SWT (the basis of monotheism). As He said: "And when thy Lord brought forth the offspring of the sons of Adam from their loins, and Allah took witness against their souls:" Am I not your Lord? " They say: "Yes, we are witnesses". (that we may do so) that on the Day of Judgment you will not say: "We are indeed a people who are unaware of this (Surah al-A'raf, verse 172)]

In Al-Qur'an verse 172, Surah al-A'raf above is very clear that humans have been given the potential / language skills before birth to the world, even though human communication (at that time) with God, Allah SWT is certainly not in the form certain languages as we use them in human nature in general. In addition, from the explanation of the granting of language potential, it leads us to an explanation of the process of the decline of knowledge (knowledge), namely how humans receive knowledge about the creator, as the basis of monotheism or the concept of the essence of God. That is, since still in the realm of the soul, every human (embryo) has been blessed with divine knowledge. Basically, humans recognize the existence of God as the Creator, humans know of themselves as God's creation (as Muslims acknowledge the existence of one God, namely Allah SWT), and from that knowledge also humans understand the other nature of all God's creation. Therefore, a Sufi (Muslim religious expert - usually who pursues the highest field of science in Islam, *Tasawwuf*) once said "Whoever knows himself, he knows his God"

Language Diversity and Knowledge as Window to Understanding

The growth and diversity of languages and changes in linguistic rules ranging from phonetic, logical, and syntactic aspects of existing languages are important areas of inquiry to be explored. Synchronic and diachronic linguistics, a comparative study of different languages, and changes in language open the window of our insight into the importance of being grateful for His favors and one of the signs of God's existence. The Al-Qur'an arouses the curiosity of Muslims in particular and all humanity in general to study and uphold the diversity of languages

and declare it as an important sign of divine power which is part of the balance of the universe. The following is a verse from the Qur'an regarding variations in languages: And among the signs of His power is to create the heavens and the earth and the variety of your language and your skin color. Verily in that there really are signs for those who know (Sura Ar-Ruum, 30:22)

Variations between languages can be described by definite rules. They vary widely systematically and with such regularity, linguists have compared this rule with physics "sound laws". Every time we learn a new language, analyze its grammar, and compare its new form with the old or dialect and other related languages, we admire the perfect design in its structure, and therefore with the divine grace of knowledge of the diversity of languages both in the archipelago and in the world is a reflection of His majesty which is to be thankful for.

Then, regarding how language becomes a mediator in the dialectics of knowledge, Ibn Khaldun (p. 277) considers language to be a means of acquiring and giving knowledge. Anyone who explores the world of knowledge is generally faced with ideas which consist of words used to express the idea. Regarding the process, one must have knowledge of linguistic meaning in every word that forms this idea. It must be realized that this knowledge is formed because the people who use a language are familiar with the language they use. Ibn Khaldun (p. 308) also argues that one of the most fundamental traits of language reflection as a medium of thinking is its manifestation in humans of a power or force to predict events. The function of thought is to create a reality model by means of embodiment of internal symbols. In the process of creating a model of reality, humans are given the ability to translate external objects or events into symbols and therefore allow the mind to produce symbols further with inferential reasoning. Finally the mind makes a hypothesis or calculates this new symbol into an external process.

According to Ibn Khaldun, the relationship between perception, knowledge, and language is a process that starts from the perception of reality (*idrak* or *tasawwur*). This perception is then followed by an affirmation or denial of the essential attributes of that reality. After confirming or negating these attributes, then processing and specifying scientific thought or knowledge. To verify the truth, whether accepted or rejected, the ideas that form knowledge in one's mind need to be communicated. This then becomes an important point of the role of language. The relationship of language and knowledge is that linguistic expression is not only from the interpretation of a thought idea. One must also involve himself in conveying his ideas through discussion, teaching, and constant scientific research.

Thus the speaker presents a different philosophical point of view about how Islam places linguistics as "a scientific study / 'scientific knowledge' about language based on the science of *tasawwuf*, in short, the Islamic perspective". Although the teachings of Islam are studied in the language, namely Arabic, but this does not mean underestimating the role of other languages, His words SWT: "And we do not send an apostle (messenger / prophet) but with the language of his people so that he can give a clear explanation to them" (Surah Ibrahim, Verse 4). The fundamental thing that is directly related to linguistics and the suggestion of logical thinking (philosophizing) in Islam is the nature of language as a tool of thinking itself. According to the speaker, the issue of the nature of language is a fundamental problem in the discussion of the philosophy of language and language education. We can reflect on the implications, that without a clear understanding of the nature of language, language education would not be able to take place on the right foundation. Language teaching and learning strategies should not succeed in reaching the core of language education.

Conclusion

The writers' efforts in describing the Muslims' point of view on the concept of the philosophical and language activities continuity, and our attitude as religious people towards linguistic discipline translatable logically through the scientific side of the Muslim faith, which was revealed 1400 years ago. Although our understanding of linguistics has been so long in the path of thought, philosophy and Western views in describing the gift of language, which is not, we should be grateful for the practice of thinking about it. The writers believe that there are many aspects of scholarship explainable through religious understanding, whether from the Islamic, Christianity, Confucianism, Buddhism or Hinduism even to criticize and correlate the ability of common logical reasoning to be specific, namely through the religious perspective/our way of life. However, it is undeniable that both Islamic linguists and philosophers have also been indebted to Western scientists in various aspects that embody the scientific dimension, especially linguistics, both in the classification and elaboration of linguistic tools and in research on language categories and functions.

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