

Review: J. Joseph Errington, *Structure and Style in Javanese: A Semiotic View of Linguistic Etiquette*. (Conduct and Communication Series) Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988. 290 pp.

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The Javanese conceive of the perfect world as a highly ordered place where each being and thing has an assigned position and remains in that position in harmony with every other part. A human society which has created a world with this sort of harmony enjoys a situation called *tata tentrem*, literally, "order with peace and calm." Right conduct consists of activity which aims at achieving and maintaining *tata tentrem*. In general in human society language and related paralinguistic phenomena are the means by which social order is created and maintained, and for Javanese society, where order and harmony, *tata tentrem*, are the focus of human endeavor and the highest good, the language has developed an elaborate and intricate set of variations that are the means by which social structure is created and maintained. First, there are the speech levels (*Krama*, *Madya*, and *Ngoko*), which cover much of the daily vocabulary and which function much like the T-V distinctions of Western languages (*tu* vs *vous* in French, *du* vs *Sie* in German, and so forth—only in Javanese these speech levels are expressed by the ordinary vocabulary, whereas the T-V distinctions are expressed by the ordinary vocabulary, whereas the T-V distinctions are expressed by the second person pronouns and verb concord in European languages). These speech levels assign interlocutors as in-group or out-group, equal or superior vs inferior, high class (*priyayi*) vs low class (*wong cilik*), and so forth. Second, there is the honorific vocabulary (*Krama Andhap* and *Krama Inggil*) which specifies absolute status of a person addressed or referred to. Third, there are terms for the first and second person (or their omission). Fourth, there are kin titles and occupational or rank titles. Fifth, there is the formal-informal speech variation continuum. Sixth, there is Indonesian, for in recent years Indonesian has become an important code in the Javanese speech community and has gained an important role in establishing social order. Finally, in certain restricted and privileged circles of people old enough to have attended Dutch-language schools, Dutch has an important role. In addition to these purely linguistic means there are also gestures, demeanor, approach (indirectness, allusion, and circumlocution) at the community's disposal for creating and maintaining social order.

The aim of Joseph Errington's book is to describe this complicated system and provide an explanation for how it functions in terms of a semiotic model. All the sources of variation I described above are covered, except Indonesian and Dutch. The author is interested not only in listing the forms and telling us how they work in the community, but in providing an explanation for why they should function the way they do in terms of what these forms symbolize and the way in which they symbolize. The community which Errington chooses is not the entire Javanese speech community, nor even speakers in a small area, but rather the *priyayi* of Solo, that is, the people who are connected by family ties to the two royal houses of Solo, the Susuhunan and the Mangkunegaran. Although this group uses many stylistic variants which are confined to the in-group, they epitomize the ideals which underlie the speech of other groups in the Javanese community. The principles which govern *priyayi* conduct are also the principles which

underlie conduct of other members of the speech community. This is not, however, the main concern of the author of this study. His concern is more to show how the semiotic model can provide a rationale for the functioning of speech variation and explain how speech usage can change over time. By way of introduction, he traces the political history of Solo since the eighteenth century and the development of political structures which gave rise to the *priyayi* class and had a role in shaping their conduct.

The basic assumptions of this study are similar to those which I expounded above, namely, that speech forms are not only a vehicle of referential meaning, but also a vehicle of engaging in and mediating face-to-face interaction. In other words, for forms which show stylistic variation there is "referential meaning" and "social meaning." The positing of social meaning implies that there is an integral relation between stylistically differentiated speech varieties and interactional contexts to which ordered behavior is oriented. However, the significances of speech style do not reside wholly in the relations of individual utterances to independently observable features of contexts of occasion of use, nor can they be entirely described in terms of these relations. Speech style uses also have significance as mediators for the establishment of social relations in interaction—that is, social relations are negotiated and reciprocally realized by the participants of a speech event by means of stylistic variation. The author is at pains to place speech as part of a totality of human behavior which is oriented to specific interactional contexts and creates social structure. There is other behavior which has this property as well.

This system of behavior is described in a semiotic model, and a great portion of the book is devoted to anchoring individual facts of behavior in the model. A most basic notion is that of indexicality. Representative entities or signs have an indexical character if there is an existential dynamic link between that sign and whatever that sign represents. For example, personal pronouns and deictics are speech forms which have indexical modes of reference, and these basic notions such as indexicality are also applicable to paralinguistic and other behavior. A physical gesture of pointing is prototypically indexical. A speech style is indexical insofar as tokens of its use conventionally presuppose recurring features of social contexts, e.g. a status relation between speaker and interlocutor, and so on.

Another concept is that of strategic interactive use. Because stylistic variations are the means for establishing and maintaining social relations, conventions which index social relations have the property of being susceptible to transformation, for strategic use gives scope for innovations and creation of new norms. This concept is the basis for explaining how and why change takes place.

Another basic concept is that of "pragmatic salience." Namely, some forms are more powerful indicators of social relations than others (they do more to establish social relations). To put it another way, some forms are more susceptible to strategic use than others. These basic concepts are the principal anchors for Errington's description and explanation. In addition, there is a fine web of distinctions which the author delineates and which account for certain details of development and difference of pragmatic force among various forms.

The most persuasive proof of the power of the author's model to elucidate stylistic variation is its ability to provide a rationale for changes, for this rationale provides a basis for predicting where and by what means changes may take place. A clear example of this are the changes of the first and second person pronouns in the course of somewhat longer than the past century. These pronouns are pragmatically salient par excellence.

They shift in pragmatic value as a result of recurring strategic use, with the cumulative effect of expanding the range of referents (the persons to whom and by whom they were used). This amounts to a progressive reevaluation (or devaluation since the forms affected by this process of widening range of referents are honorific) which is made up for by a repeated assimilation of new forms into the personal pronoun repertoires. These new forms derive from formerly nonindexical, indefinite, or figurative expressions. For example, an honorific second person pronoun such as *sampeyan* in the course of the century gets applied to an ever-widening circle of interlocutors, such that *sampeyan* must be modified by some apposition in order to distinguish superior addressees from equals and inferiors. The apposition which developed is *penjenengan dalem* which means literally, "the functionship of the palace." This was used as a nonindexical form in conjunction with titles either in address or reference. However, when *penjenengan dalem* comes to be used in conjunction with *sampeyan*, it is but a short step for this form to become indexical, and at this point the first part of the combined form is now free to drop off as being redundant.

The power of this model is also demonstrated by its ability to provide explanations or point out facts which hitherto had not been recognized. A good example of this kind of analysis is in the treatment of *aturi* and *suwun*, both of which are of the honorific vocabulary showing deference to the person addressed or referred to (*Krama Andhap*). However, *aturi*, which is unspecific and can be glossed with meanings ranging from "give and offer" to "say, tell, ask," is of high frequency, especially in direct address, except in the case of petrified forms (like in forms meaning "ask for pardon" and the like). For example, instead of saying, "I request you to buy a book" (with *suwun*) one may also say, "I am reporting to you that there is a book to buy" (with *aturi*). Thus when a speaker directs an interlocutor who must be given honorifics to do something, he has the option of using a fiction that he is reporting information rather than directing action, and this is a strategy for muting the directive force of the utterance. It has previously gone unnoticed in the literature that *aturi* and *suwun* are in reality quite different types of things and behave very differently in creating social order.

The danger of the existence of a model with predictive powers is that it can lead the scholar to positing data rather than finding it, and this book is not entirely free of this problem. The author has restricted himself to examining a narrow range of data which could be mulled over at leisure and objectively. He bases himself on prescriptive manuals and reports, either in the literature or by informants. This is supplemented by the author's experience in living in the community and using the language on the basis of daily interaction over the course of what amounts to several years (although interrupted). Apparently there were no recordings made—that is, no specimens of speech events which one could analyze leisurely apart from the whirl of ongoing interaction. Even more surprising, the author does not avail himself of the vast resources of the dramatic literature and, most important, of the prewar novels, which use stylistic variation as a means for depicting the protagonists and characterizing their social relations. Although it is difficult to know how accurately the novels reflect what actually happened in interaction, they are a good idealization of the illocutionary force of stylistic variation, for they had to meet the expectations of their readership. Thus they are an important source for elucidating what was expressed in the prescriptive manuals, and enabling us to get a clearer judgment of the validity of what is stated there.

This lack of grounding in data casts a shadow over the descriptive statements. I am inclined to disbelieve one or two of them. For example, it is stated blandly (pp. 220–22)

that interjections like *kok* and *lho* (which express surprise or some personal emotional involvement) are avoided in refined styles characterized by muting of sharply indexical elements. This statement is made on the say-so of informants and on the basis of what appears in the few prescriptive texts examined. However, in transcriptions of recordings, in texts of Javanese dramas (including *wayang*), and in the prewar Javanese novels, where the protagonists were for the most part *priyayi*, one sees without question that these interjections and others like them were and are used in refined courtly speech addressed to high-ranking interlocutors. In fact, these interjections seem to be no less common there than in other styles. This statement is surely incorrect, but one of only a few suspicious ones. On the whole Errington's analysis is highly credible and makes perfect sense in terms of what I know about Javanese language use and how Javanese society is structured. However, a basis in good data would make the conclusions more trustworthy.

There still remains much to be done in analyzing stylistic variation in Javanese. At this point we need solid data from various areas, various social groups, and over periods of time, which could provide the statistic for testing the propositions put forth in this study and provide richer and more meaningful exemplification of the principles proposed here. Errington has done the hard work of providing the model in terms of which these data can be understood. With these theoretical underpinnings he has shown how data of speech variation can provide insight into the functioning of Javanese society. For this reason this book is a basic contribution both to sociolinguistic theory and to Indonesian studies.