

GRAMMATICAL CONSCIOUSNESS ON ENGLISH MEDIO-PASSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS: IS IT ESSENTIAL FOR EFL TEACHERS' COMPETENCY STANDARD?

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Abstract

Most EFL learners in Indonesia have already known that English grammatically has active and passive constructions. However, the so called medio-passive constructions in English have not been seriously introduced and understood by many EFL learners; they do not have sufficient knowledge and "grammatical consciousness" on the stylistic constructions, then. The lack of understanding and grammatical consciousness may raise academic and psychological problems on English grammar. Such lack of grammatical consciousness may academically affect both learners' and teachers' competency standards. Many students cannot use grammatical and communicative English appropriately in academic and practical uses. This paper briefly discusses the academic need for grammatical consciousness on the medio-passive constructions as part of learners' and teachers' competency standards in EFL, particularly in multilingual speakers like in Indonesia.

Key words/phrases: *medio-passive, grammatical consciousness, EFL, competency standards*

Introduction

It has been "common sense" so far that linguistic studies and findings are highly needed to construct, to establish, and to have further development for linguistic theories and to supply linguistic and grammatical data for any programs of language teaching. Language data and linguistic features are theoretically and practically used in the processes of any language learning. Based on Valdman's, Corder's, and Spolsky's, Stern (1994:174) states that a linguist may seek validity in a coherent and consistent linguistic theories, while a language teacher judges a theory for its usefulness in the design of materials, in curriculum development, or in instruction. Different linguistic theories may offer different perspectives on language, and they can be treated as equivalent resources. Then, it can be claimed also that the descriptions of language made by linguists can be academically 'applied' in the sense that they provide the data needed for writing teaching grammar, course book, dictionary, and other materials for language teaching.

Among the others, voice system of a learnt language is one of many linguistic and grammatical phenomena which need serious attentions in order to know specific grammatical features of the language. The understanding on voice system on English, for instance, is not only needed for academic reasons, but also necessary for having grammatical consciousness in psychological-academic needs.

As a nominative-accusative language, English grammatically differentiates active and passive clause constructions as the grammatical constructions based on voice system. The learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia have already been introduced that English grammatically differentiates between active and passive constructions. It has been academically known that the passive clause construction in English is grammatically indicated by the formula: *BE + Past Participle* (see Jufrizal et. al., 2009; Mukhaiyar and Jufrizal, 2012; Jufrizal, 2013a,b).

However, many EFL learners do forget that the following active constructions must be semantically understood as the passive ones (see Jufrizal, 2013a):

1. *It happens everyday, sir.*
2. *Your idea sounded controversial, but we were ...*
3. *It seems that you are not ready for that moment.*
4. *The golden window opened only twice a year.*
5. *Reservoir fills with tap water like in the left position.*

It is frequently found, both in speaking and writing, that EFL learners in Indonesia practically use the following constructions, instead.

- (1*) *It is happened everyday, sir.*
- (2*) *Your idea was sounded controversial, but we were ...*
- (3*) *It is seemed that you are not ready for that moment.*
- (4*) *The golden window was opened only*

twice a year.

(5*) *Reservoir is filled with tap water like in the left position.*

The English clause constructions (1) – (5), which are linguistically called by some linguists as *medio-passive constructions*, have not been seriously introduced and discussed in EFL classroom. The teachers and/or lecturers of English grammar do not special attention and grammatical explanation that the constructions do not follow the grammatical rules of passive voice, but they are semantically comprehended as passive ones. They almost forget to introduce to the EFL learners that such “specific” construction is one of grammatical-stylistic construction in English (see Hundt, 2007).

In fact, the constructions like (1*) – (5*) are not naturally accepted in English, although they “formally” follow the formula of English passive voice. They are commonly appeared as the “passive sense” expressed by Indonesian learners of EFL. It occurs “naturally” as the phenomenon of language interference from *bahasa Indonesia* into English. In addition, the following ungrammatical constructions were also commonly found in EFL learners’ writings:

(6*) *It was seemed all right at that time.*

(7*) *The wooden window is opened twice a day.*

(8*) *It is looked as a simple problem.*

Many students do not really know that the followings are the grammatical ones in English.

(6) *It seemed all right at that time.*

(7) *The wooden window opens twice a day.*

(8) *It looks like a simple problem.*

The grammatical constructions as in (1) – (8), linguistically called *medio-passive constructions*, are actively constructed but they should be semantically understood as passive ones. As they are more on stylistic rather than grammatical constructions, many EFL learners and teachers as well, think that the passive ones as in (1*) – (8*) are grammatical; they do not have sufficient linguistic knowledge and grammatical consciousness on the *medio-passive constructions* in English. Such lack of grammatical consciousness may academically affect both learners’ and teachers’ competency standards. Consequently, they cannot use grammatical and communicative English appropriately in academic and practical uses. This paper, a further analysis developed based

on researches conducted in 2009 and 2012, discusses *the academic need for grammatical consciousness on the medio-passive constructions as part of learners’ and teachers’ competency standards in EFL, particularly in multilingual speakers like in Indonesia.*

The main purpose of the discussion presented in this paper is to see the academic and psychological essence of having linguistic knowledge on English *medio-passive constructions* in order to build and develop “grammatical consciousness” as a part of teachers’ competency standards. It is believed that the theoretical understanding on English *medio-passive constructions* belongs to “specific” grammatical consciousness needed by learners and teachers of EFL as their competency standards in order to be able to communicate in English well. The data and information presented in this paper are those collected through a descriptive research conducted in 2009 (Jufrizal et. al., 2009) and a library research conducted in 2012 (see Mukhaiyar and Jufrizal, 2012). Other information and additional data for the discussion were from practical-accidental classroom activities at the English Department of *Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni Universitas Negeri Padang* where the writer formally teaches.

Brief Review of Related Theories

1. The Phenomena of Medio-passive Constructions in English

Linguistic studies on voice system cross-linguistically may give complicated and detailed data and information for language teaching in general. Traditionally, the term voice refers to the name for a verbal form according as it primary expresses the action or state with regard to its subject, which may be represented as acting (active voice), undergoing (passive voice), or affected by its own action (reflexive [middle] voice). Whereas this and other traditional views see the opposition between active and passive in terms of whether the subject represents an actor, or agent, or an undergoer, or patient, consideration of the so-called impersonal passives would require a slightly broader view of the passive category if it were to embrace both personal and impersonal passives, both which in fact stand in opposition to active forms (Shibatani in Kulikov and Vater (eds.), 1998:117; see also Shibatani in Shibatani (ed.), 1988:3). The fundamental opposition of the

three categories of voice system in human languages cross-linguistically can be illustrated as:

- (i) *active category* : action occurs under the subject's control
- (ii) *passive category* : action occurs not under the subject's control but under that of another entity apart from the subject.
- (iii) *middle category* : action occurs under the subject's control and its development is confined within the sphere of the subject.

Most linguists use these three voice system categories (active voice, passive voice, and middle voice) to indicate the types of clause constructions typologically, especially in grammatical typology. These three types of voice are naturally possessed by nominative-accusative languages, such as English. The grammatical features belong to the formal style of language. In other side, non-formal style of language may have the same grammatical construction as one of the three voice systems but it has different semantic sense; it is the type of stylistic constructions (see Hundt, 2007).

The case that different language styles determine and influence semantic and pragmatic meanings of language is also common in human languages. It is caused by the phenomena that style in the use of language is an intuition of the speakers. Darbyshire (1971:11), in this point, states that the intuition is simply that there are varieties of language-uses which are felt, but not made explicit, in some vaguely social and non-linguistic way; speakers use language in a different way from that which they would use in ordinary conversation (see also Jufrizal, 2013a).

The examples (1 – 8) presented in part A above are the 'deviation' of formal-grammatical constructions and their semantic senses; the grammatical constructions are in active voice but semantically they are passive senses. This type of clause constructions may have something to do with language styles and practical uses socio-culturally Jufrizal, 2013a). These "fascinating" constructions are simply called by linguists as the mediopassive constructions (Hundt, 2007). According to Hundt (2007:1 – 3), medio-passive constructions in English can be fascinating and stylis-

tic. The fact is that a verb in the active voice without any additional morphological marking can be used a functional notion that is neither clearly active nor a straightforward passive. In addition, mediopassive constructions are also of interest because they are a potential source of variation between different national varieties of English. For examples, New Zealanders and Australians often say that a television programme *screens*, Americans prefer to say *air*, and British speakers tend to use *show*. Following Legenhausen's, Hundt (2007:3) furthermore says that mediopassive construction is described as a marginal structural type, which flourishes mainly in special registers. It is liable to show varying degrees of conventionalization, pattern irregularities and individual idiosyncrasies.

The linguistic and theoretical understanding, discussions and analyses on English medio-passive constructions are relatively difficult and problematic for pedagogical goals, such as in the teaching-learning processes of EFL. The mediopassive constructions are theoretically related to the phenomena of voice systems in general, and have complex relationships with active, passive, and middle-passive voices. Then it also has semantic relations with the ergative constructions, the basic clause constructions in ergative-absolutive languages (Jufrizal, 2013a, b). This paper does not theoretically discuss all aspects of mediopassive constructions as linguists do, but it just introduces the need essence for understanding the medio-passive constructions in English as a base for building and developing grammatical awareness on EFL which are fundamental for learners' and teachers' competency standards.

Hundt (2007:7) explains that syntactic aspects which are important for the description of medio-passives include the transitivity and voice system, (adverbial) modification, aspectual restrictions, and the relation between medio-passive and reflexive constructions. Typically, the object of the transitive pattern occurs in subject position in a mediopassive construction. Another important characteristic of medio-passive constructions is that they are morphologically active but semantically passive-like. They are not straightforward passives semantically because the subject-NP in medio-passive typically shares in the responsibility for the action expressed by the verb: often, a property inherent in the

subject-NP facilitates the action. What are dealing with it is thus not only simply a question of morphology or syntax but an aspect at the interface between syntax and semantics.

According to Hundt (2007:11 – 16), three apparent restrictions on medio-passives formation in English have been used to distinguish between medio-passives on the one hand and ergatives (verbs like *open*, *freeze*, and *break*) on the other hand. These are (a) the need for (adverbial) modification; (b) temporal-aspectual restrictions; and (c) the implication of an external agent. Unlike medio-passives, ergatives can be used intransitively without modification and in non-generic context. They also usually do not imply an external agent. The examples (9 – 11) below are the examples of ergatives (verbal constructions) in English.

(9) *The door opened.*

(10) *The slush had frozen over night.*

(11) *The vas broke.*

The distinction between medio-passives and ergatives is far from being a clear-cut one. The examples (12) – (14) show that medio-passives occur without (adverbial) modification.

(12) *... the weather heats up ...*

(13) *Glass recycles.*

(14) *Wrist strap detaches to trigger panic alarm.*

Temporal-aspectual restrictions are apparently another feature of medio-passive constructions. Unlike ergatives, medio-passives do not readily combine with past tense marking or the progressive aspect. Why is it so? The fact that medio-passives typically focus on inherent properties of the NP in subject position makes them into generic statements. In other words, medio-passive constructions do not normally refer to events in time; typically, medio-passive constructions are non-eventive. See (15) below!

(15) *... polyethylene crystallizes readily and cannot ...*

The third feature that is used to distinguish medio-passive constructions from ergatives is the notion of 'agency'. Agent in medio-passives is implied, like in (16).

(16) *Each dispenser holds 12 soda cans and fills from the top.*

The examples of medio-passive constructions above show that they are grammatically constructed in active (voice) clauses, but their meanings tend to be semantically understood as passive-like ones. Linguistically, the term passive-like is preferred because the

meanings are not the real passive ones; the senses active are still semantically inside. Naturally, this type of constructions is influenced much by the conventional-cultural style and practical-made constructions of language uses. It can be seen and assumed that those constructions are less formal and commonly used for certain registers. But it does not mean that they are used limitedly. They are, in fact, semantically and pragmatically productive constructions in English.

2. Language Learning and Grammatical Consciousness

It is commonly known that the terms first language (L1), second language (L2), and foreign language (FL) are frequently used in Sociolinguistics and language teaching-learning. Linguists and language teaching methodologists use some theoretical and practical definitions on the terms. Simply, Stern (1994:9 – 18), for instance, states that L1 is the language naturally and firstly acquired and used since childhood. It is the language someone has in the first environment and develops in such a way as the natural processes. Second language is the language possessed and used (by someone) after the L1 through learning in bigger environment. Then, FL is the language possessed by particular speakers through academic learning and particular purposes after L1 and/or L2. Based on these simple ideas, language teaching and learning should be related to the phenomena of L1, L2, and FL in nature.

Stern (1994:19 – 21) also states that language learning includes all kinds of language learning for which no formal provision is made through teaching; language learning takes place all time. Language teaching, in other side, can be defined as the activities which are intended to bring about language learning. In this sense, it can be said that language teaching widely so as to include all activities to bring about language learning. Foreign language teaching and learning, of course, need some well-planned and programmed activities in order to assign and provide learners with the sufficient FL grammatical features and communicative uses, as well. The teaching-learning processes of EFL are more complicated than those of L2 and L1. EFL is learned by people who already use at least one other language and who live in a community in which English is not normally

used. This community is inevitably influenced by norms that are not those of English-speaking countries and those norms influence the teachers' and learners' expectations of the language learning processes (see Tomlinson in Hinkel (ed.), 2005:137). The condition may cause linguistic and socio-cultural problems in many EFL learning programs. Among the others, the phenomena of language interference, inter-language communication, and pragmatic transfer are commonly found.

Review of Related Literature

Native language (NL) refers to the first language a child learns. It is also known as the primary language, the mother tongue, or the L1 (first language). On the other hand, Target language (TL) refers to the language being learned (Ellis, 1997). Furthermore, he states that second language acquisition (SLA) is strongly influenced by the learner's first language (L1). The learner's L1 also affects the other language levels-vocabulary and grammar. This is perhaps less immediately evident, but most language learners and teachers would testify to it (Ellis, 1986)

In line with Ellis, David Atkinson (1987:241) lists appropriate uses for the L1 in the L2 classroom as the following:

In a provocative article, Elsa Auerbach (1993:9) gives a sociopolitical rationale for the use of the L1 in ESL classrooms. She primarily addresses the situation of immigrant ESL learners studying in the United States. In this article, she states that 'everybody classroom practices, far from being neutral and natural, have ideological origins and consequences for relations of power both inside and outside the classroom.

Furthermore, Auerbach (1993) suggests the following possible occasions for using the mother tongue: negotiation of the syllabus and the lesson; record keeping; classroom management; scene setting; language analysis; presentation of rules governing grammar, phonology, morphology, and spelling; discussion of cross-cultural issues; instructions or prompts; explanation of errors; and assessment of comprehension.

Parallel with what Auerbach mentioned, Piasecka states, 'one's sense of identity as an individual is inextricably bound up within one's native language'. If the learner of second language is encouraged to ignore his/

Full of language interference, such as grammatical interference, in forms of the rearrangement of patterns that result from the introduction of foreign elements into the more highly structured domains of language learnt, is not academically expected for better result of EFL learning. It is a common-sense notion that L2 and FL learners use elements or structures of their native language in speaking and writing in the language they are learning. The language interference phenomena can come to all levels of language because of linguistic and non-linguistics factors. That is why it is easy to find EFL learners in Indonesia, for example, use Indonesian and/or their local language features when they speak or write (see further Appel and Muysken, 1988; Stern, 1994; Tomlinson in Hinkel (ed.), 2005). Academically, a lot of language interferences in many aspects of language learnt give "negative" effects to learners' and/or teacher's competency standards.

In order to reduce the "unexpected-negative" effects of grammatical interferences on EFL learning, it is assumed that EFL learners and teachers have to realize that there are grammatical and stylistic clause constructions in English, as briefly discussed above. In this case, learners' grammatical consciousness on English medio-passive constructions needs to be built and raised. According to Yip in Odlin (ed.) (1994:123), grammatical consciousness-raising is academically essential in language learning, moreover in foreign language learning. The idea of pedagogical grammar, proposed by grammarians on language learning, as the pedagogical-practical combination of descriptive and prescriptive grammar explicitly declares that grammatical consciousness is necessary to help foreign language learners, including EFL learners in Indonesia, to have sufficient linguistic-grammatical competence. This is crucially essential to have fair communicative competence as shown by listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (see also Chalker in Bygate et.al. (eds.), 1994; and Brown, 2001).

The grammatical consciousness on English medio-passive constructions is not only useful in written uses, but they are also highly needed for spoken expressions. It gives better foundation for having language skills because the understanding may help learners to have accepted English expressions.

It is believed that high grammatical consciousness will help EFL learners and teachers to have better competency standard as it is required by curriculum formally used (see Stern, 1994; Brown, 2001; Jufrizal, 2013a). Although the medio-passive constructions are not the normal grammatical constructions, but the stylistic ones, they cannot be avoided in learning programs. The stylistic constructions are frequently used in specific purposes which are not commonly known by EFL learners through the formal-practical teaching of grammar in classrooms. Therefore, the grammatical consciousness on the medio-passive constructions is one feature to establish learners' competency standard in the teaching-learning processes of the English language (see Yip in Odlin (ed.), 1996; Jufrizal, 2013a, b).

Data Analysis and Discussion

1. The Grammatical Consciousness on Medio-passive Construction in English

As it has been previously mentioned, medio-passive constructions are the 'deviation' constructions from traditional voice system, active and passive voice construction. Legenhausen as quoted by Hundt (2007:3) states that the mediopassive construction is described as "a marginal structural type, which flourishes mainly in special registers, is liable to show varying degrees of conventionalization, pattern irregularities and individual idiosyncrasies. The mediopassive construction belongs to 'specific' grammatical construction that has stylistic uses and meanings. This is very important to know that it needs socio-cultural behavior in English uses in several English speaking-countries; different countries may have different form of medio-passives (see also Jufrizal, 2013a,b). It is also linguistically stated that medio-passive constructions concern with morphosyntactic aspects and voice system. Typically, the object of the transitive pattern occurs in subject position in a medio-passive construction. They are morphologically active but semantically passive-like. They are not straightforward passives semantically because the subject-NP in medio-passives typically shares in the responsibility for the action expressed by the verb; often, a property inherent in the subject-NP facilitates the action. In this case, medio-passives are not simply a question of morphology and syntax, but also an aspect at the

interface between syntax and semantics (Hundt, 2007).

In clear-cut cases of medio-passive constructions, the verb is modified either by an adverb (like in (17)) or by a modal verb (like in (18)). Negation (like in (19)) is a third way of focusing on inherent properties or 'design features' of the subject-NP (see Hundt, 2007:7 – 8).

(17) *Morton's newest product turns out to sell as well as its stock did.*

(18) *Scraps of fleece may combine to make a multi-colored fleece hat, ...*

(19) ... *Barbara Boxer doesn't shock easily.*

Then, medio-passive constructions (i) need for (adverbial) modification as in (20); (ii) need for temporal-aspectual restrictions as in (21); and (iii) need the implication of an external agent as in (22).

(20) *Keep the finger in for a longer time and it will "freeze".*

(21) *According to Ian, the work finished satisfactory at the end of February.*

(22) *The boat sank all by itself.*

As the data presented, the EFL learners (and the teachers, as well) need to know and have grammatical consciousness on the nature of English medio-passive constructions. The learners should psychologically realize as the grammatical consciousness that the stylistic constructions are morpho-syntactically constructed in active voice, but they should be semantically understood as passive ones. In addition, the medio-passives are more on a language style rather than grammatical features. The English native speakers create and use the constructions as they like, and then socio-culturally accepted as a language style. In reality, British English may have different forms and particular verbs used as medio-passives compared with those commonly used in American or in New Zealand. In this case, the medio-passives should be 'acquired' as they are appeared in language uses of speakers in English speaking countries. It is obviously believed that these are the main points, among the others, that should be kept in learners' mind as a part of competency standard they academically have to possess.

2. English Medio-passive Constructions: how essential is it for EFL learners in Indonesia?

For many Indonesian learners of EFL, the English mediopassive constructions

bring about serious linguistic and academic problems. The constructions such as (1*) - (8*) above are frequently found in students' writings and commonly heard in their spoken language. Furthermore, such types of ungrammatical constructions are also appeared in students' translations and other language features (Jufriзал, 2013a,b).

The followings are more problematic English clause constructions written by EFL learners as they are found in their theses (Mukahiyar and Jufriзал, 2012; see also Jufriзал, 2013a,b).

(23) **Secondly, it is implied that ...*

(24) **Each cycle was consisted of plan, action, observation, and reflection.*

(25) **This research was focused on the implementation ...*

(26) **The questions were related to the topics ...*

(27) **The research was aimed at improving ...*

The native speakers of English tend to use active constructions for (23) - (27) as in (28) - (32).; they are grammatically and semantically acceptable in English.

(28) *Secondly, it implies that ...*

(29) *Each cycle consisted of plan, action, observation, and reflection.*

(30) *This research focused on the implementation ...*

(31) *The questions related to the topics ...*

(32) *The research aimed at improving ...*

It can be linguistically seen that these constructions appeared in the students' writing and speaking caused by the "direct" transfers of Indonesian (or Malay) 'sense' of passive meanings into English. It can be categorized as the "negative" grammatical transfer of the first language or a kind of "negative" language interference (see also Jufriзал, 2013a). If the negative transfer is mostly allowed at advanced level of EFL learning without academic corrections, learners will have no grammatical consciousness on the medio-passive constructions, then. It is scientifically assumed that learners will be lack of grammatical competence which in turn comes to less competency standard. This condition may make serious problems in communicative competence. It is also a type of "negative" fossilization possessed by Indonesian learners of EFL. Accordingly, the grammatical consciousness on the English medio-passive constructions is essential for EFL learners and teachers in order to have sufficient competency standards.

How essential is the grammatical consciousness for EFL teachers' competency standards? It is academically and psychologically believed that the grammatical consciousness on English medio-passive constructions is highly essential for both EFL learners' and teachers' competency standards, at least, for four reasons. Firstly, since the medio-passive construction is a grammatical-stylistic construction in English, the EFL learners and teachers have to know and have knowledge on it. If they do not have fair grammatical consciousness on the construction, there will be many clauses and/or sentential constructions produced by the learners (teachers) which are not communicatively accepted. Such condition indicates that they have less grammatical competence and lack of competency standard, then. It is sure that such condition is not academically expected in any EFL learning programs.

Secondly, no or lack of grammatical consciousness on the medio-passives may cause less grammatical competence and it normally comes in turn to less communicative competence which indicates less competency standard. Lack of competency standard naturally goes to problems on language skills as the realization of communicative competence. Analogically, better grammatical consciousness on such constructions facilitates better grammatical and communicative competence in the foreign language. The grammatical consciousness is not a type practical skill, but it is more on language awareness and psychological condition. To comprehend and to be able to use the constructions communicatively, the learners not only need to study the descriptive grammar, but they should study the cultural-stylistic factors of language, as well. These facts should be comprehended by the EFL learners and kept in mind as grammatical consciousness.

The third reasons how the grammatical consciousness on English medio-passive constructions is essential for having competency standards is that the successful and professional EFL teachers have to have knowledge on detailed grammatical properties naturally found in English. The medio-passive construction is a part of grammatical-semantic properties of English itself. So that, for non-native speakers of English like learners and teachers of English in Indonesia, they should

build and develop the grammatical consciousness on medio-passive constructions in order to be skilful in English. In this remark, grammatical consciousness on one of stylistic clause constructions, such as medio-passives, may academically and psychologically support grammatical competence and establish the competency standards needed in particular levels of English learning.

The last reason how the grammatical consciousness on English medio-passive constructions is essential for having competency standard of both EFL learners and teachers is that the EFL learners and non-native speakers of English have to be in socio-cultural awareness of the English uses communicatively. The grammatical consciousness can be assigned as basic-psychological condition for speakers to create grammatical and communicative constructions used for practical language events. In accordance with this, some constructions in particular languages are not only based on grammatical forms; some are constructed as the “deviation” of the formal ones. The linguistic facts should be academically known and practically used in certain language skills. These are all parts of building and establishing competency standards required by grammar learning, in nature.

Conclusion

The grammatical consciousness on English medio-passive constructions is highly essential for both EFL learners and teachers in Indonesia. It is one feature of language awareness and grammatical competence that really needed in language performance. That English has medio-passive constructions should be consciously realized by the EFL teachers (and learners), especially at intermediate and advanced levels. Less attention given to the stylistic constructions may cause unexpected results of EFL teaching-learning program in Indonesia. It is obvious that the English medio-passive constructions should be a part of the EFL teaching programs. Moreover, the development of language styles, like the mediopassive construction, tends to develop quickly. The teachers and instructors of EFL grammar need to have positive attitude on the language development, as well.

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