



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

English

LANGUAGE USED IN SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY GROUPS – A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO R.K.NARAYAN'S MR.SAMPATH

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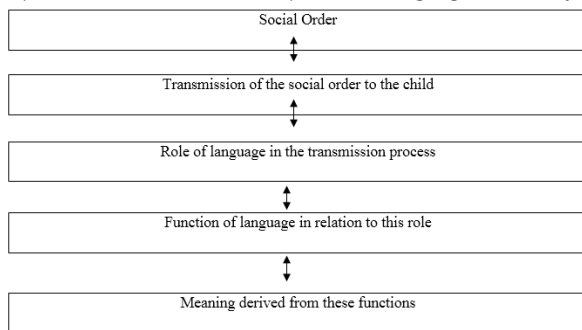
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LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY

The relationship between language on the one hand, and society or culture or behaviour, on the other, has never been denied. But according to the most traditional viewpoint, it is society that determines language. Researches, most often, view language and society as two separate entities and then study it; thus regarding one as the cause and the other as the effect. Most of the time society or one of its surrogates is the object of knowledge and language is taken as the easy – to – handle intermediary that leads to goal.

According to Labov (Chatman, 1972) language is “a sensitive index of many other social processes”; it is a relatively easily studied matter that allows us to draw conclusions about the structure of society. In other words, one can say that language reflects society. A study of language helps in understanding the social set up; for it throws light on the cultural and economical background.

At the basis of Halliday's model(or language is the act of interaction between the subject and his environment.The environment is seen as the social fabric where the individual is placed as the social being. Language is viewed as the most important means for the transmissions of social structure from one generation to the next. The following figure gives a schematic representation of the relationship between language and society



According to the above model an analytical understanding of language presupposes an understanding of society; that is the system of social meaning out of which language grows.

LANGUAGE STRUCTURE AND LANGUAGE USE

Language is the most valuable single possession of the human race. Each and everyone in every walk of life, is concerned with language in a practical way. It is best understood in the context of communication, communication being a naturally and genetically determined function of the human being.

Language is often viewed as a system of expression which relates sound and meaning, and the syntactic, phonological and morphological constructions can be seen as one way of affecting such a relation. Phonology is the branch of linguistics that concerns itself with linguistically significant sound units. Morphology is essentially the grammar of words and deals with the forms of words. It also deals with the relation between the different tenses (take – took) and numbers (dog – dogs). Syntax is the grammar of sentences and is concerned with the way sentences are formed. Semantics is that area of linguistics devoted to the study of meaning. Phonology, morphology, syntax and

semantics are the four major divisions which constitute the structure of language.

Language can vary from to user to user depending on the user's personal characteristics. It can also vary according to the use it is put to. The variation of language according to the user constitutes dialect. Dialect does not mean an incorrect or deviant use of language; it simply means a variety of language which is determined by the characteristics of its uses. Register refers to the language variation according to use. Variation between language or between dialects involves differences at all linguistic levels such as phonology, syntax, etc.

THE KEY PROPERTIES OF LANGUAGE

Human language has been seven properties which do not recur as a whole set in any know non-communicative system, although individually some of them do. The seven important properties are listed below.

DUALITY

Any utterance in a language consists of an arrangement of the morphemes of that language, each morpheme being variously represented by some small arrangement of phonemes. This is what is meant by duality. In other words a language has a phonological as well as a grammatical system.

PRODUCTIVITY

Productivity implies the possibility of producing myriads of sentences never heard area uttered before, which are yet intelligible to the audience.

ARBITRARINESS

Human language is almost entirely arbitrary in its semantic conventions, there is no one-to-one relation between sound and meaning. This accounts for the fact that language differs, and they differ most of all in their grammatical structure.

INTER CHANGEABILITY

By this is meant that any participating organism equipped for the transmission of messages in this system is also equipped to receive messages. As far as language is concerned, the speaker is in principle also a hearer and is capable of saying something he is able to understand when someone else says it.

SPECIALIZATION

This involves triggering of one organism through the communicative activity of another organism. Thus by merely seeing any action, the person is able to understand it. Specialization is a matter of degree, because when the trigger consequences and direct physical consequences of the messages or acts in the system is not specialized, if they have no particular relationship, the system is specialized.

DISPLACEMENT

A message is said to be displaces when the key features in its antecedents and consequences are removed from the time and place of transmission. A great deal of deal of human speech is displaced in this sense.

CULTURAL TRANSMISSION

This is one of the biological mechanism through which the

conventions of a communicative system is built into the organism so that it is able to participate in that system. The acquisition of a habit via the cultural mechanism involves learning; but the element of teaching must also be present. Imitation is one apparently important ingredient for cultural transmission. This stimulation a similar behavior in other individual.

SOCIAL SETTINGS IN MR. SAMPATH

R.K.Narayan's *Mr. Sampath* is said to be ironic and gently human with a comic plot derived from its character. Speaking on the language, one can say that R.K.Narayan's language is beautifully adapted to communicate a different, an Indian, sensibility. Through his writings, he manages to express not only the general Indian sensibility but also a whole range of character, personality and temperament within it. Through his characters he voices his own philosophical thoughts regarding human life and the purpose of its very existence on the surface of this earth.

Almost all the characters in *Mr. Sampath* belong to the same social background. Srinivas, the hero of the novel and the editor of the weekly journal 'The Banner' comes from a family of lawyers. His father was an advocate who had a grand practice and acquired extensive property. But to Srinivas' brother life is a constant struggle. Srinivas did not like this profession and preferred to sit at home reading the upanished. It was only after a lot of persuasion that he decided to do something on his own and thus 'The Banner' was born. Sampth his printer, too comes from a middle class background but when compared to Srinivas, his plight seems to be much worse. In spite of all hardships, Sampth manages to keep a cheerful front. The language used by the both these characters, who incidentally happen to be the two around whom the most part of the plot revolves, is similar to that used by the other characters. Two characters mentioned in this novel who are not Indian, too do not show much variance in their use of the language. Edward shilling the general manager of the bank and De Mallo (who called himself the chief Executive of the film company) are the two characters presented by R.K.Narayan in *Mr. Sampth*, who, though not Indians, do not differ much in their language use when compared to the other Indian characters. Given below is an extract of a conversation between Srinivas and Sampth.

"I can't say that I'm very happy to hear this news, Sampath. I do hope you will think it over deeply. "Said Srinivas, feeling a little uncomfortable at having to sound so pontifical. He got up. "You have to take into consideration the future of all your five children". oh", sampath remained brooding. "well, I'm going to have different establishments. I'm doing nothing illegal, to feel apologetic. After all our religion permits us to marry many wives". (*Mr. Sampath*, 180)

Below given is a conversation between Edward Shilling and Srinivas.

"He is the only one to suffer", said Srinivas. "Yes, at the moment", the other said with a grim smile. Srinivas burst out; "You are very unfair, Mr.Shilling, you cannot sack people at short notice ---" "I'm, afraid I agree with you. But the controlling office at Bombay ---" (*Mr. Sampath*, 106). From the above given extracts, it can be inferred that the language used by Edward shilling, Srinivas and sampth do not vary much. It is truly said of R.K.Narayan that he gives all his characters the same ordinary English to speak.

DEPICTION OF SOCIAL DIFFERENCES THROUGH LANGUAGE

By social differences is here, meant, the cultural background. The aim here is to bring out the different ways in which the cultural background is brought out through language. As he already been mentioned. De Mello and Edward Shilling are the two foreigners who have been introduced in the novel *Mr. Sampth*. Much cannot be said of in this matter, since there is not much of interaction between these foreign characters and the native people. Below given in an instance of the interaction between a foreigner and a native.

Srinivas goes to meet Edward Shilling with a request to take Ravi (Who had been dismissed)back into service. Edward shilling is the

general manager of the bank where Ravi was working. Edward Shilling, on seeing Srinivas says: "Good morning". When Srinivas introduces himself, he (Edward Shilling) asks him, "What can I do for you" he also offers Srinivas Cigarettes which the latter politely refuses. If one goes through the above interaction carefully, one would not fail to notice the signs of an alien culture; namely the English.

Greeting one another by saying "Good morning" (or anything else depending upon the time) it characteristic of the English; a manner which is not very much prevalent among the natives. Also the offering of cigarettes is also a practice not very much prevalent among the natives.

In order to bring out more effective contrast, below is given another instance of interaction between the natives. When Srinivas visits Sampth's house, he says that his wife wants Srinivas to take "Coffee as well as Tiffin now". Latter, Srinivas is offered various dishes. When they meet each other, the natives express either happiness or astonishment, but they seldom greet each other "Good morning" or anything else. When Sampth sees Srinivas, approaching his house, he " Let out a cry of welcome... and ran forward to meet him". (*Mr. Sampath*, 83). In another instance, when sampath visits Srinivas' house the latter cries out; "What a rare visit so early in the day". (*Mr. Sampath*, 111).

Thus we see that the manner of greeting each other is not as much prevalent among the natives as it is among the foreigners. (It must be remembered that these conclusions are in keeping with all that has been portrayed in the novel *Mr. Sampath*).

CONCLUSION

One cannot dispute the fact that in *Mr. Sampath*, R.K.Narayan has made an effective use of the language with social and cultural flavour. No situation is important because it is merely real. Its ultimate reality is a function of the way it expresses a sense of the integrity of all being. R.K. Narayan's novels stand as a testimony to the fact, that he is a writer who is concerned not only with the individual but the society as a whole. The well-being of the society is, according to Narayan, manifested in the man, his occupation, his friends. It is this ability to bridge the gap between the person and his universe that links Narayan with the brilliant past of Indian literature.

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