Language and Culture

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Language is a part of culture. It is a capability acquired by man as a member of society. Sometimes we observe that people sharing same culture speak different languages and contrariwise, people whose languages are related may have very different cultures. In India Hindu and Muslim speak almost the related language but both have a very different culture. Similarly other sects of India like Buddhist, Zoroastrian, etc converse in Hindi language but their cultures are different. The Muslim, Hindu and Christian of Keral speak related language but their culture is different. The reverse situation – people speaking different languages but belonging to same culture. The Jain community of Maharashtra speaks Marathi, Jains of Gujarat speaks Gujarati, Jains of Andhra speak Telugu, Jains of Karnatak speak Kannad, while Jains of U.P., M.P., Bihar, and Rajasthan speak Hindi. Thus the entire Jain community of India has the same values of life, same eating habits, customs and traditions and a set disciplined life. Thus linguistic and culture areas denies the preposition that language is part and parcel of the culture tradition.

We have done detail studies of speech communities on ordinary everyday conversational material which include both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of culture and the ways in which linguistic change may be specifically related to changes in other aspects of culture. As we know, the vocabulary of a language varies in response to cultural change.

A language can tell us a lot about what is important in a particular culture. For example, if we look at the vocabulary of a language we find a great deal of elaboration in words describing certain phenomena, while in other areas there is no any elaboration at all. The Eskimo language, for example, has a vocabulary rich in words describing details of the Arctic environment. In one Eskimo language there are 12 separate and unrelated words for wind and 22 words for snow. That means 22 different kinds of snow are recognized in the Eskimo culture.

Through the process of enculturation a person masters a culture and learns to speak a particular language. According to American linguist-Anthropologist, **Edward Sapir** (1924), the entire knowledge of world's culture lies in language. He holds the view that the vocabulary of a language is an encoding of that culture's cognitive categories. **Stephen A Tyler** (1969) in his edited volume on 'Cognitive Anthropology' has argued that the reality of a language is a socio-cultural product and hence relative. He says, "Culture is that complex hole which includes

knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs and another capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society".

The interrelation of language other aspects of culture is so close that no part of the culture of a particular group can properly be studied without reference to the linguistic symbols in use. As illustration we need only consider social organization, the complex of cultural traits which governs the relations of individuals and groups in human society. To determine the precise nature of those relations it is always necessary to analyze not only the meanings but often the grammatical form as well of the terms employed to symbolize intra-group relationships.

An interesting example may be taken from the Hindi speaking community among whom social dyadic relatives and familial dyadic relatives are divided into several groups in terms of the degree of familiarity or respect displayed in their relations with one another (Jain2000). There are three second person pronominal alternatives in Hindi*: aap* (you) *tum* (thou) and *tu* (thee). Structually ***aap*** is plural and ***tum*** are plural and ***tu*** is singular. But this structural division of pronouns based on numbers does not explain their actual usage. Pronouns have got their social meaning. As Palakornkul (1975:11) observes, "A choice of pronoun is not made arbitrarily. On the contrary there are systematic rule to guide and govern the speaker's choice". Paul Friedrich's (1966) work on Russian pronouns also points the same fact. Grammar does not tell adequately which pronoun is appropriate in a given context. We can use all the three pronouns for one person depending upon the social context.

Brown and **Gilman** (1960:253) affirm that "a man's consistent pronoun style gives away his class status and his political views". They also maintain that the 'truly feudal pronominal pattern' of Hindi and other languages of India is 'consistent with the static Indian Society'. They add nevertheless that Indian "society is now changing rapidly and, consistent with that change, the norms of pronouns usage are also changing".

At one extreme we find the relations between siblings of the same sex, who treat each other with friendliness and cordiality. At the other extreme are the relations of an individual with the relatives of his spouse, which are marked by extreme deference and studiously maintained respect observances. Those distinction is faithfully reflected in the language, which possesses not only a considerable vocabulary of respect terms to be used in special third person pronoun (ve) for respect relatives and a special second person form (aap) when such kin are addressed directly. A wife calls her in-laws in plural pronoun. (aap baithiye) <u>*You sit*</u> where "aap" is a respectful pronoun. If the indirect object in such a construction had reference to a relative not of the respect group, the form would be (tu a: baith) <u>you come and sit.</u>

To generalize on linguistic change, we must see it as a part of the wider process of cultural change. Because linguistics is the oldest of the sciences dealing with culture and because its descriptive techniques have gained objectivity and a precision far beyond that produced by other sciences of culture, its contributions to the problem of cultural change should be far greater than

is actually the case. That such contribution has not been made results in part from the linguist's extreme concentration on language alone and has neglect of the problem of determining the role of language in the total culture.

Anthropologists, too, have until recently been more concerned with the study of specific aspects of culture than with the problem of cultural integration. This has led, especially among those primarily interested in culture history, to the conclusion that culture is the mere assemblage of traits, held together only by the accident of existing in the same society at the same time. With such a view of culture, the study of cultural change becomes, like much of historical linguistics, a record of the results of change rather than a study of the forces responsible for change.

To collect data for the present study the questionnaire-interview method was used for Hindi. The source of data were 200 subjects (144men and 56 women), representing different sections of society, from Sagar and Damoh districts of Madhya Pradesh, India. For tabulation and analysis, different contextual situations encountered in the corpus were rearranged from that on the questionnaire to point out differences by generation, blood relationships, ceremonial relationships, social relationships, etc. For English existing descriptions of pronouns were drawn out.

We find that culture is an integrated whole. Changes in the several departments of a culture must be viewed as different aspects of a single process. Changes in one aspect of a culture must inevitably result, sooner or later, in changes in all other aspects.

For example when East India Company become ruler of India the relations between individuals and groups in working place : the relatively more intimate relations between the employer and the employee were gradually replaced by the more impersonal and complicated relations of employer and employee. With this conception of cultural change follows changes in language.

The patterns of pronominal usage for various dyadic relationships are summarized in Table-1

TABLE – 1

Pronominal Usage in Various Dyadic Relationships (%)

		Speaker	gives	to	Speaker	Receives From	
SI.No.	**Dyadic Situation**	**A**	**T**	**t**	**A**	**T**	**t**
1.	Mother	64.6	33.3	2.1	3.0	85.5	11.5
2.	Father	88.5	11.5	--	2.5	88.5	9.0
3.	Y B	1.5	87.5	11.0	74.5	23.5	2.0
4.	E B	79.5	20.0	0.5	--	94.5	5.5
5.	E B W	88.0	11.5	0.5	63.0	36.0	1.0
6.	m EZ	77.5	20.5	2.0	4.0	84.0	12.0
7.	u EZ	52.0	46.0	2.0	1.0	92.5	6.5
8.	Y Z	1.0	84.5	14.5	69.0	27.0	4.0
9.	H	75.0	22.5	2.5	19.6	78.6	1.8
10.	W	12.0	84.5	3.5	87.0	12.3	0.7
11.	H F	100.0	--	--	19.0	79.0	2.0
12.	W F	98.6	1.4	--	78.0	22.0	--
13.	H M	100.0	--	--	21.0	79.0	1.8
14.	W M	96.0	4.0	--	74.0	26.0	--
15.	S W	21.4	76.8	1.8	89.0	2.0	--
16.	D H	82.6	17.4	--	97.5	2.5	--
17.	H E B	100.0	--	--	50.0	50.0	--
18.	W E B	79.0	20.0	1.0	90.0	10.0	--
19.	W Y B	19.4	79.2	1.4	98.6	1.4	--
20.	H Y B	68.0	28.6	3.6	89.3	9.0	1.8
21.	H Z	82.0	18.0	--	80.0	20.0	--
22.	W Z	33.6	65.0	1.4	94.0	6.0	--
23.	Women to male friends	71.2	27.0	1.8	73.2	25.0	1.8
24.	Women to female friends	40.0	54.6	5.4	30.3	64.3	5.4
25.	Men to male friends	27.0	63.0	10.0	27.0	63.0	10.0
26.	Men to female friends	56.0	44.0	--	62.5	37.5	--
27.	Colleague of the same age	60.5	37.5	2.0	64.5	34.0	1.5
28.	Colleague of older age	97.5	2.5	--	63.0	37.0	--
29.	Boss to younger subordinate	75.0	25.0	--	99.5	0.5	--
30.	Boss to an older subordinate	94.5	5.5	--	97.5	2.5	--
31.	Teacher at School	100.0	--	--	36.0	62.5	1.5

32.	Professor at College/University	100.0	--	--	64.0	36.0	--
33.	Doctor	99.5	0.5	--	84.5	15.5	0.5
34.	Stranger	93.0	7.0	--	92.0	8.0	--

Abbreviations : B = brother, Ch =children, D = daughter, E=elder,

F = father, H = husband, M = mother, m = married,

P = parents, S = son, u = unmarried, W = wife

Y = younger, Z = sister.

3.1 An analysis of Table-1 shows that the influence of the opposite sex is quite distinct in the family. The son is often found drawn towards the mother and the daughter(s) towards the father. The son uses the pronoun *aap* (64.6%) or *tum* (33.3%) for the mother. Only rarely does he use the pronoun *tu* (2.1%) for her and when he does so it is to express his support and solidarity.

Indian society is essentially male-dominated and the social structure is mostly patriarchal. The position of husband is regarded as far superior to that of wife. As Table 2 shows; 75% wives use *aap* and 22.5% use *tum* for their husband in normal situations. Husbands normally use *tum* (84.5%) for their wives and the switch to *aap* conveys either sarcasm or irritation.

Thus among all the pronouns, **aap** shows maximum social distance. Like the pronoun **tu, aap** is also stigmatized pronoun for many people and is not used in some relationships, but violation of this rule does not have the same consequences as the use of a prohibited **tu.** For instance, if a father uses **aap** for his son, it will make the addressee and the audience uncomfortable. Such a usage nevertheless has a greater possibility of occurrence then **tu** to a father. The pronoun **tu** for father is an undesirable and a very insulting usage, but **aap** for son will be considered funny at the most. Thus Hindi **tu** and **aap** express roughly the same social meanings as English **thou** and **you** used to express respectively. Like Hindi pronouns, Old English and Middle English used to make the distinctions between honorific and non-honorific, general and specific uses of pronouns. Modern English does not make such distinctions and uses you in singular as well as in plural contexts. The pronouns **thou, thee** and **you** have been reduced to **you** whereas in Hindi we still have all the three pronouns – **aap, tum** and **tu**. It reveals that our society has not yet reached

the unidimentional solidarity semantics toward which the present European pronominal usage seems to be moving.

The domain of choice for the selection of a particular pronoun is restricted. An inappropriate selection may create unpleasantness between the dyads and sometimes may even lead to undesirable consequences. It will not cause any serious effect if one commits a 'grammatical error' whereas the violation of cultural norm will result in serious misunderstandings or ill feelings.

When the English merchants landed on the shores of India, they found hordes of natives willing to wait on them. The Indians could not speak the English language but they were always ready to try. With the result the Englishmen, in their attempt to help the Indians, simplified their speech. As the head of the domestic staff of a European household in India used to be called 'butler', the English spoken by him came to known as 'Butler English'. Butler English has been defined as "the broken English spoken by native servants in the Madras Presidency which is not very much better than the Pidgin English of China… The oddest characteristic about the jargon is (or was) that masters used it in speaking to their servants as well as servants to their masters."(Yule and Burnell: 1968)

The generally uneducated English-knowing bilinguals such as (a) guides showing foreign visitors around (b) vendors selling their wares to foreigners frequenting Indian markets (c) the domestic staff of hotels catering to tourists and upper-class Indians (d) the staff of prestigious clubs and other recreation centres and (e) the domestic staff employed in racially mixed or westernised Indian households are ranked at the zero point. Their English is termed Butler English and it is spoken in a very restricted set of domains mainly for communication on limited matters between master and servant. It functions as a link language in domestic situations. Kachru (1969) gives supporting evidence, "In South Asia it is very common to come across users of English who have acquired some control of restricted items of English, but cannot use the language in any serious sense. Some such varieties have been labelled Baboo English, Butler English, Bearer English, Kitchen English."

Indians 'accultured' the English language in their typical way. In other words they modified it in accordance with the requirements of the Indian culture. No doubt, this phenomenon is not unique to one colony alone but is typical of all situations of language contact. The language gradually came into contact with various cultures; with the result a number of local varieties of English were produced. This paper seeks to discuss the different linguistic, cultural and social aspects of the language use.

Hugo Schuchardt (1891), a German linguist, who was passionately devoted to the study of the use of English by the natives of India and the Eurasians, identified the following five distinctive types of non-standard varieties of English used in India:

Butler English of Madras

Pidgin English of Bombay

Boxwallah English of Upper India (spoken by itinerant peddlers)

Cheechee English, spoken everywhere by Eurasians

Baboo English, spoken in Bengal and elsewhere (38-64).

When the East India Company emerged as a political power in India in the early nineteenth century, the administrators of the Company began to feel that they needed a large number of such clerks as can read and write English. As the British Empire had expanded to every nook and corner of the world, it was not feasible for the British to send shiploads of clerks from England to India. Hence, an urgent need to promote English in India had arisen, which ultimately resulted in the origin of Baboo English, i.e. the English language written by the native Indian clerks. The children of small farmers, petty shopkeepers, cooks, 'ayahs' (nurses) and the like obtained the basic knowledge of English at such schools as charged no or nominal fees, and as they had become discontented with their traditional professions, they forthwith sought employment as clerks under the British government in India.

It should be noted that Baboo English is not spoken only by a Bengali or in Bengal alone. The term 'Baboo' comes from the Hindustani 'babu', a name usually applied to a native clerk in Bengal and some parts of Upper India: it is a term of respect equivalent to the English terms like 'Master', 'Mr.' and 'Esquire', Yule and Burnell write in *Hobson-Jobson*: "in Bengal and elsewhere, among Anglo-Indians, it is often used with a slight savour of disparagement, as characterising a superficially cultivated, but too often effeminate, Bengali. And from the extensive employment of the class, to which the term was applied as a title, in the capacity of clerks in English offices, the word has come often to signify 'a native clerk who writes English'." The term 'Baboo English' implies the latter sense.

The samples of Baboo English can be found in the articles in *The Times* dated 11April 1882 (p. 8) and 14 April 1882 (p.13). There is another article on 'Babu English' in *Chamber's Journal* of 31 December 1881 (pp 840-2). Again, T.W.J. has come out with some amusing specimens of composition and style in his collection of letters called *Baboo English or Our Mother-tongue as Our Aryan Brethren Understand It.* See the example of one such letter written by a Bachelor degree holder from University of Calcutta:

The extreme stimulus of professional and friendly solicitation has led me to the journey of accomplished advantages to proceed with these elucidatory and critical comments; where in no brisking has been thrown apart to introduce the *prima facie* and useful matters to facilitate the literary pursuits of lily-like capacities. If the aimed point were embraced favourably by the public, all and all-grateful acknowledgements will ride on the jumping border from the very bottom of my heart.

In the above passage, it is very difficult to understand what the writer means. In the Introduction it was written: "The love of display is a very common failing among native students". This is illustrated in an absurd manner by using long and sometimes obsolete words in place of those of ordinary and everyday use.

In the case of educated and half-educated Indians, we quite often note a tendency to use a European language in as bombastic a way as possible. Of course, I do not want to say that styles like those upon which this assertion rests are unheard in the case of Europeans; but they are usually confined to one's native language and to declarations of a genial and easy-going nature.

As Babu Ramchandra Basu puts it in his article 'The English-speaking Natives of Upper India' in *Indian Evangelical Review* (April 1876: pp. 470-83).

The choice of language what Firth calls "a network of bonds and obligations" which is operationally related and have their roots in the sociocultural context of the society. The forgoing account of the Hindi speaker would lead one to an important conclusion that no single factor or hypothesis can account for all the observable facts because of a vast network of forces at play, several of them being heterogeneous and at times vague. According to Mehrotra (1985:78), "An attempt to cover the various ramifications and manifestation of address forms in a language like Hindi is tracing a map of the Gulf stream which comprises a number of cross- currents and even counter currents flowing in arbitrary directions besides the main".

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