A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON SIGNIFICATION AND SUGGESTION

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Abstract:*The academic paper entitled, "A Comparative Study on Signification and Suggestion" is an attempt to compare and study two key terms in the philosophy of language such as Signification (Sign, Signifier and Signified) and Suggestion (Vyanjana). These two terms are still a subject of research in modern semantics. This comparative study aims at comparing both Eastern and Western schools of philosophy of language to come up with the similarities and individual traits of both schools. In order to make the study more brief and accurate this academic study mainly focusing on Saussurean understanding on sign from the Western side and Vyanjana from Sabdhabodha (One of the source of knowledge of the Nyaya Epistemology) from the East. Both these linguistic philosophies mainly deals with word and its meaning on the basis of structure and context.*

Key Words: Vyanjana, Sign, Signifier, Signification

Introduction
1.1. Introduction

Language is nothing but a constructed one. It does not hold any mysterious nature within it by its nature. It is obtained naturally, because each individual has an innate universal neural syntax inside the brain. It is this universal neural syntax enables a language learner to acquire any language logically. That is the only reason why any difficult language is acquired by a child born in that linguistic context. A child learns its mother tongue at the early days only because of the linguistic atmosphere around. But philosophers take diverse positions in the assumed expedition in identifying the exact reason behind language acquisition and meaning generation. Language is the medium through which we approach any reality, because sensation is only a source whereas language is an active medium. It means that sensation is an individual experience whereas language is a contextual experience. Language is acquired, preserved and transmitted through the meaningful arrangement of words in context. Systematic studies on language as stated above have begun before Common Era. David Crystal describes the chronological development of language and linguistics in his epoch making work *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*.

Often, the observations have been subjective and anecdotal, as people reflected on such topics as the nature of meaning, ideals of correctness and the origins of language. But from the earliest periods, there has been an objective approach, with scholars investigating aspects of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation in detailed and organized way. At the end of the 18th century the subject attracted an increasing number of specialties, so much so that it rapidly became possible to see the emergence of a new field of scientific research with language analysis as it focus. This approach, first known as philology, dealt exclusively with the historical development of language.[1]

Historical awareness of the origin and development of language is needed to explore the major tenets of language and meaning and to describe at length the multifarious concepts related to it.[2] According David Crystal, "A religious or philosophical awareness of language can be found in many early civilizations; in particular, several of the important issues of language analysis were addressed by the grammarians and philosophers of Ancient Greece, Rome and India."[3]

1.2. Word and Meaning

The word represents the reality or meaning. A word conveys meaning through the association of difference. Each word of a particular language is understood with the help of the other words available. And the associations of the different words in languages represent the reality or meaning. That is, ultimate meaning is not possible without having an

Omni glottal language. Many philosophers have tried to untie the mysterious nature of language and meaning. The linguistic philosophy has its origin when human beings have begun to use language logically and systematically to express simple and complex realities around him. The best example to prove this statement was the ancient grammatical text composed by Panini. David Crystal, a linguist describes the content of *Astadhyayi* in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. David Crystal says:

The *Astadhyayi* ('Eight books'), dealing mainly with rules of word formation, are composed in such a condensed style that they have required extensive commentary and a major descriptive tradition has since been established. The work is remarkable for its detailed phonetic descriptions: for example, places of articulation are clearly described, the concept of voicing is introduced, and the influence of sounds on each other in connected speech is recognized (the notion of *sandhi*). Several concepts of modern Linguistics derive from this tradition.[4]

So it is clear that every culture has its own understanding and clarifications to the language and linguistic philosophy. Though the modern linguistic philosophy argues its originality, it is originally a kind of manipulation of the ancient language philosophy. The modern society took linguistics as a branch of study with the lectures of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). Actually when his academic development is studied historically it is clear that he has got a good Sanskrit ground in the field of linguistic philosophy. As far as the observations it is clear that he has introduced Sanskrit linguistic terms in modern terms to the modern society. He studied the basic sensible unit of the language in terms of a combination of the sound unit and to which it is referred to. All his lectures are compiled by his students and published it on the title *Course in General Linguistics* in the year 1916.[5] According to his reach and study language is to be studied as if a system of signs. Structuralism has got its origin in the field of language with his linguistic theories. He has left few hinds of a deep grammatical structure which energizes the entire system of signs systematically. But later it is Chomsky who has developed that particular field under TG grammar. The foremost pronouncement of this academic paper is particularly based on the relation between *Signification* and *Suggestion*. The following paragraphs introduces the following chapters.

1.3. Chapter Summary

The second chapter entitled "Signification" discusses the fundamental relationship between *Signifier* and *Signified*. It also deals with how meaning can be composed by adjoining smaller elements (*Signifier* and *Signified*) through signification. The concluding chapter entitled elucidates the uniqueness of the structure of all words or sentences in generating different levels of meaning. This chapter studies the theory of *Vyanjana* in detail and asserts that there are many similarities between Signification and Suggestion. In this chapter the similarities and differences are systematically analyzed.

II. SIGNIFICATION
2.1. Introduction

Ferdinand de Saussure, in the *Course in General Linguistics*, describes language as a system of signs (a word is a sign) to which we respond in a predictable way.[6] According to him, the sign is made up of a signifier (e.g., the acoustic form of the word, the sound) and a signified (e.g., a mental concept). These two are combined in the mind resulting in understanding or meaning (e.g., perceiving the sound "cat" signals the object "cat"). The bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary; any word can be used to signify anything.[7]He also envisages *semiology* as a science of signs. For him language is only one of the systems studied by semiotics. Semiotics is a key to unlock the cultural phenomena where multifarious signs play in different forms. He presents the model in the dyadic tradition. Here he explains the meaningful element of a language *Sign* consists of two inseparable elements; 1). *Signifier* and 2). *Signified.*

The twenty first century linguistic critics describe *signifier* as the form of reference point whereas *Signifeid* as the referred point. But Saussure defines them as "Concept" and "Sound Pattern." A linguistic sign has only a conceptual existence. Here the material thing outside is not taken into consideration. According to Tanveer Ahmed Muhammadi**, "**The internal system of these signs is binary. It comprises a sound segment (signifier) and another segment, "thought" he termed as "signified". Signifier is

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essentially a sound image than merely a sound. A particular sound image relates to a particular thought.**"9**

2.2. Functions of the elements of the sign

A sound pattern always work in the mind in association with a perceived conceptual impression. Therefore this sound pattern is functioning just like a catalyst that mediates in meaning generation. Because the sound pattern and the material thing to which it is referred to has only an arbitrary relation. But onomatopoeic sound patterns are different. Sign becomes a meaningful unit only when the both elements are given an appropriate association.[10] For Saussure, both of the said elements are purely psychological.[11]

2.2.1. Signification

Within the Saussurean model, the *sign* is the whole that results from the association of the signifier with the signified.[13] The signifier – signified association is known as "Signification."

The process of the association these internal elements are depicted with arrows (see Figure2.2). The horizontal broken line marking the two elements of the sign is referred to as 'the bar'. For example if we take sign consisting of:

• A *signifier*: the word 'Tree';

• A *signified concept*: The Idea Tree and also the real tree. From this it is very clear that both the said elements play a vital role in the conceptualization of an idea. It also promotes the notion that both these elements cannot be totally meaningless and formless. A signifier has multiple role in the realm of meaning generation. It will not limit itself within the boundaries of a single signified but a kind of suggestiveness also works with it. Sometimes a chain of signifiers are observed in the application of sign in the linguistic gymnastic.[14] Saussure makes it clear that writing relates to speech as a signifier to signified or as Derrida puts it, for Saussure writing is 'a sign of a sign'.[15]Most subsequent theorists who have adopted Saussure's model tend to refer to the form of linguistic signs as either spoken or written (e.g. Jakobson 1970, 455–6 and 1984b, 98).As for the *signified*, Umberto Eco notes that it is somewhere between 'a mental image, a concept and a psychological reality'. Thus it can be concluded thatSaussurean followers treat the signified as a mental impression.

2.3. Imagery of a dubious sided paper

Both the verbal and the idea are compared to two sides of a paper by Saussure. For it is not possible to understand or comprehend the concept of a paper without the presence of both its sides. That means there is an inseparable link between these sides what makes them as if it were one. They were 'intimately linked' in the mind 'by an associative link' – 'each triggers the other'[16]. Saussure puts foreword these elements as interdependent units. Take the case of a word and its meaning. A word is a phonological meaningful unit or units. Though it is said in such a way that a word always carries meaning, this concerned meaning is actually an attributed one within a context. Therefore a sign being a sound unit as well as a mind impression could not be understood out of a linguistic context where a signifier is referred to its referent. Saussurean representation of the correlation of the elements of a sign is not a mere depiction of an arbitrary relation, but it also represents how these elements are conjoined in producing meaning. The inseparable association of these elements are emphasized by using two arrows in Saussurean diagram on meaning generation. Why I said so is because when an utterance is produced it brings it referent also along with it. For example when the sound unit "Dog" are produced it also brings an image or a mind impression along with it. Because it creates an image of "a dog" in the hearer. The "dog" will have all the universal quality what make its essence. The relation between the elements of the sign is thus inseparable. But out of its context it signifies nothing unless its referent is known to its context. Therefore locus also plays a vital role in meaning generation.

2.2.3. The relational system

> Saussure argued that signs only make sense within a system where a number of signs are involved. His theories of meaning are obviously focused on structural relation. A kind of abstract relation is vital than the individual meaning of signs. It is clear from this statement that functional aspect of a sign is given more importance in the actualization of meaning. *Saussure did not define signs in terms of some essential or intrinsic nature.*

For Saussure, signs refer primarily to each other. Within the language system, 'everything depends on relations' 17.

No sign makes sense on its own but only in relation to other signs. Both signifier and signified are purely relational entities.[18] That means a sign gets and varies its meaning in accordance with its relation to other signs as well as its locus. "This common type of variation is that a few signs of the same language (ASL) are different across regions in North America; nevertheless, ASL speakers still understand one another. E.g. "supper" and "dinner" in English. "Flat" in British English for "apartment" in American English and "tube" for "television" respectively)."[19]

III. CONCLUSION

3.1. Introduction to Indian Linguistics

The Indian linguistic philosophers could develop their own interpretations in the field of semantics. Among these philosophers Panini has been considered an important linguist in the development of Sanskrit grammar.[20] But here I am dealing with only the levels of meaning of word and its semantic function in a sentence. This semantic level is mainly discussed in the Nyaya epistemology. There are four sources of knowledge in this school. They are perception, Inference, Verbal Testimony and Upamana. Among these four sources the third one (Sabdha or Verbal Testimony) is going to be discussed in detail. *Aptavakyam Sabdhaha (*Sentence from reliable authority). How can it be possible? It is through word which has semantic potency (Semantic potency means the capacity of a word in producing primary, secondary and tertiary levels of meaning) we come across the true knowledge. What is truth? It means something true to the reality. A word being the sensible unit of a sentence should be able to communicate truth (Semantic existence). First among the three semantic potency is *Abita* (Primary meaning). It means literal meaning. Here *vachaka* is the word and *vachyartha* is the meaning. There are four kinds of primary meaning. They are 1. Meaning by convention, 2. Derivative meaning, 3. Derivatively Conventional meaning and 4. Derivatively different and conventionally different meaning. When there is inconsistency with the primary meaning we go for the secondary meaning. It is very close to the primary meaning. Here *Lakshaka* is the word and *lakshyartha*

is the meaning. Any idiomatic expression comes under this category. There are thre kinds of Lakshana. They are 1. Jahat (Exclusive implication)[21], 2. Ajahat (Inclusive)[22] and Jahatajahat Lakshana (Exclusive-Inclusive).[23] The third kind within the semantic potency is Vyanjana.[20] In the book entitled *Modern Linguistics an Introduction* S.K. Verma and N. Krishnaswamy give an introduction to Panini: *Panini gives a scientific analysis of the structure of Sanskrit in his Astadhyayi. Bloomfield described the grammar of Panini as a monumental work of human intelligence. Patanjali an early student of the Paninian School, defined the purpose of the Astadhyayi as the preservation of the ritual language in its traditional form; the capacity of generation of forms from one pattern to other; the sanctity of the grammatical science itself as an integral part of scripture; the economy of description to facilitate memorization; and the clarity of description. Panini wrote a mathematical grammar capable of generating new forms which also accounted for all extant forms and construction in his language (327).* [21] Exclusive implication- Here primary meaning is completely abandoned.

[22] Inclusive- Primary meaning+ something else (e.g. protect the ghee from the crows.) Anandhavardhana speaks a lot on Vyanjana in his epoch making scholastic work *Dhwanyaloka.* It is the suggestive power of a language. It is what transforms a group of words into poetry. Here *Vyanjana* is the word and *vyanjyartha* is the meaning. It deals with the potential suggestive sense. *Rasa* is the end result of suggestion. It delights people. Anandhavardhana developed a new theory which goes beyond meaning. For him poetry is a combination of words that delight the reader.[24] "The third type of implied sense is *'rasadhvani'*. It consists in suggesting *'bhaava'*, feelings or sentiments. In *rasa dhvani* emotion is conveyed through *'vyanjaka'*. Rasa is the subject of *'vyanjakaas'* as differentiated from *abhidha* and *laksana*. Its cognition is almost simultaneous with the expressed."[25]

26 Joby John, Expansive Grammar (Teekoy: Turn Books, 2015),4.

3.2. Comparison between *signification* and *suggestion*

Meaning generation is a process where words are associated to generate a particular meaning. The main question addressed by this academic work is whether there is a common ground in structural semantics and suggestive power of a word or group of words. Semantics and syntax are interrelated, that is, a change in syntax causes a change in meaning. Therefore both these faculties are universal properties of languages, even at the single word level. To be specific it is clear that the syntax of a sign (Here syntax means the arrangement of signifier and the signified) makes slight meaning variation. Therefore when signification and suggestion are compared it can be traced out that even within suggestion the internal process that is taken place is signification. Sometimes a word denies its meaningful existence by being meaningful.26 That is, it gets meaning only when a thing (which does an action, which is in a state or with possession) is referred to by it and the referred thing gets its identity only when other referred things get their existence. Another difference between signification and suggestion is that syntax and semantics are highly correlated in signification whereas in suggestion many signifiers are added to another signifier. One common feature found in both these items is the arbitrary nature. It is not clear how the elements are conjoined within a sign and it is the same when suggestion is also taken into consideration. A sign may suggest different levels of meaning according to the person who receive it, because subjectivity also affects the meaning of a sign in suggestion. Therefore signification and suggestion are interrelated as if a signifier and signified within a sign.

End Notes

1 David Crystal. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). 408.

2 Joby John. *Expansive Grammar.* (Teekoy: Turn Books, 2015)4.

3 Crystal.408.

4 Ibid., 407.

5 Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in general linguistics* (London: Forgotten Books, 2015.)

6 Ibid.,65.

7 Ibid.,66.

8 Ibid.,114.

9 Tanveer Ahmed Muhammadi, "Saussurian Structuralism in Linguistics," *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics* Vol.20 (2016): 26. http://iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JLLL/article/viewFile/29642/30435

(Figure 2.1)8

10 John E. Joseph, "Ferdinand de Saussure." *Linguistics* (June, 2017), http://linguistics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199384655.001.0001/acrefore-9780199384655-e-385.

11Saussure, 66.

12Ibid., 66-67.

(Figure 2.2)Concept and sound pattern12

13Ibid., 67

14 Ibid., 115.

15 Christopher Johnson, *Derrida* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 34.

16Ibid., 66.

17 Saussure 1983, 121.

18 Ibid., 118.

19 "Language variation in sign language," https://www.handspeak.com/learn/index.php?id=111.

23 Exclusive Inclusive means "This is that."

24 According to Anandvardhana and Dhvani-theorists, Dhvani or poetic suggestion is the soul of poetry or poetic composition and it is revealed to a sympathetic enjoyer of poetic composition by an entirely distinct power of a word called suggestion or Vyanjana.

25 "DHVANI AND RASA", 108. http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/644/8/08_chapter3.pdf

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