



A STUDY OF LANGUAGES BEYOND WORDS

DR. ABHISARIKA PRAJAPATI

Asst. Professor (English)
School of Arts & Humanities
Reva University
Bangalore (KR) INDIA.

ABSTRACT

With the dawn of human civilization we evolved a pivotal way and systematic pattern for communication which we all know as language. In fact, invention(discovery) of language is a prominent signature in the history of human inventions and cultural evolution. Our language has scientific approach and abundant of words for specific emotions, temper and situation. This is human nature as well to name everything what he or she encounters in life. This might have triggered the beginning of organizing our thoughts and ideas in to words which are meant to be spoken. But there are lot of other different languages also do exist in our life and around us as well. This paper is a sincere attempt to explore and study languages which are beyond words. They exist in form of signs as Ronald Barthes told us and sometimes they are hidden and we need to decipher the meaning. This paper is exhaustive while making a study, there may be some more languages which I could not find but my aim is just to stimulate and encourage more scientific study on the subject which completes our life and life style too. I have tried to study the language of fashion in clothes, language of roads and language in nature.

INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the most beautiful creations of this world. We have so many languages around the earth. Through language we give meaning to things. This is how we make sense of the world, objects and events and we are able to express a complex thought and intricate ideas. When a child cries, it speaks something to its mother, when a sunflower turn towards the sun it says something to us, when we laugh we express our happiness when we clap we speak and when rain drops it produces some meaning for us. Not only we human beings but animals, our nature around us and sometimes the entire cosmos seem to speak some language or other. The three traffic lights stand for language which we all supposed to understand and they seem to command by their language. There are so many languages either silent or loud or sound or in style or in statement or in system or in senses which are beyond words. This Paper is a sincere attempt to present and explore those hidden aspects of languages which convey some meaning to us without speaking a word. Thus there are two process- one

DR. ABHISARIKA PRAJAPATI

1Page



through which we give meaning and one is a language of words in which we can include signs, images and way of representation. Language and communication is not limited to only words which we code and decode. The signs and images and even sounds stand for or represent the concepts and the conceptual relations between them which we carry around in our mind and together they make up the meaning system of our culture and formulates a pattern.

Visual images, signs, system of representation whether produced by hands, mechanical electronic digital or sound they are some kind of language when they are used to express meaning and so are the language of facial expression or of gesture or the language of clothes are of equally important if they produce meaning. Even music is a language with complex relation between different sounds and chords. Therefore any sound, word image or object which function as a sign and is organized with other signs in to a signs system which is capable of carrying and expressing meaning are language but it demands active participation of interpretation, reading and attentive perusal.

Further I take language of fashion in clothes for my study. Fashion is connected with representation it can be representation of mood of a person, mood of society, sensibility of contemporary life and life style. Representation in fashion as an image means to say something about or to present something meaningfully. The clothes which we wear make a statement in itself in our age of high self-consciousness. It is a kind of visual language which has its own diction, vocabulary and grammatical structure. In fashion in clothes we can find particular meaning of formal design elements like angular- masculine, curvilinear- feminine that have relations to occasion- dark blue means formal, serious, light blue -informal. Bright colors in clothes for spring and light and white shades for summer-they all have an established agreement of their own in our culture for which we have developed a language in our cultural and artistic milieu. For uniform which as a role clearly establish the occupational identity of their group. Fashion in clothes represents various cultures too and their environment as well. It is not limited to personal level. It shows a collective accepted phenomenon. It reflects our thoughts and flaunts our organized behavior and speak our pattern of thought also. It shows our approach and trends of mind and speak our bent of mind. Fashion in clothes builds our cultural and personal identity and define our self. Fashion has several systems of dressing. Uniform in army and uniform for particular institute or uniform in schools or any other organization give the people a collective identity. Fashion in clothes is in fact a cultural phenomenon. It is a tool to understand a particular culture and civilization.

When archeologist try to decipher and explore the trends in some ancient collapsed culture like Mohan Jo Daro they take sample of clothes to highlight and to examine the minor and micro tissues of culture through clothes. The quality in clothes, their fabric, color, design pattern reveal their standard of thought and speak for the whole civilization as a prominent representative.



“The historian and the sociologist are not charged with simply studying tastes, fashions or comfort; they must list, coordinate and explain the rules of matching and usage, of what is constrained or prohibited, tolerated or allowed. They must establish not the ‘images’ or the traits of social mores, but the links and the values; they must accept this as the precondition for any attempt to establish the relation between dress and history, because it is precisely the normative connections that are, in the final instance, the vehicle of meaning. Dress is essentially part of the axiological order.”(p. 24, Ronald Barthes)

We use language of fashion in our writing and reading as the word- weave, to spin, outspin, texture and text color and above all cut paste have become a phenomenal words of our contemporary world. In fact, in past three decades the study of fashion has developed as a sophisticated theoretical and empirical base. It addresses itself to psychology, sociology, philosophy, economics, history, film studies, marketing and trade. Now days even pink has become feminine and blue has boyish tag of its own. The emphasis is on fashion in clothes as a kind of language in which clothing style functions as signifiers. In postmodern societies, fashionable styles reflect the complexity of the ways people perceive their relationship and connection with each other. There is connection between fashion and self-identification and self-image. There is increase of individualism and therefore there is an automatic and spontaneous growth of fashion and style in clothes. Moreover, in our postmodern era we are celebrating our power of expression through language of fashion. In postmodern societies we rebel and prefer to avoid commitment to a specific identity so as to remain free to experiment with alternative identities. In the 19th century Lord Byron the famous and bohemian poet of that era used to wear tilted hat that showed his rebellious attitude towards English system of his days but Shelley did not like to wear a hat he threw his hat that expressed his total disagreement and powerful rebel against society. Even in India Mahatma Gandhi tried to make people understand his principles of self-dependence through cotton and with symbol of charkha (spinning wheel). Hence fashion in clothes works, manifest and projects strong language and act as symbols of significant meaning. wonderfully.

Clothes’ primary purpose is to protect us but fashion in clothes represent some meaning and they carry a meaning. We all as a cultural and social creature are bound to or follow the pattern and would like to be in the fashionable way to define our identity or with an intention to be in the main stream. It shows our cultural and social need too and unfolds our changing human psyche as well which is the result of our urge to gratify our inner appetite for a belongingness and cultural agreement.

“At first sight, human clothing is a very promising subject to research or reflect upon: it is a complete phenomenon, the study of which requires at any one time a history, an economy, an ethnology, a technology and maybe even,



as we will see in a moment, a type of linguistics. But above all, as an object of appearance, it flatters our modern curiosity about social psychology, inviting us to go beyond the obsolete limits of the individual and of society: what is interesting in clothing is that it seems to participate to the greatest depth in the widest sociality.” (p 20, Barthes)

To add in this exploration when we see three different kinds of colourful lights at the signal they convey a meaning to us which we have to follow. They are visual language and those things we have internalized in our day to day life to follow. In the same way when we honk while driving it conveys our meaning to get the given person to be alert. When we flash the light, it says something to the other vehicle not only to be alert but tells the speed too. Then left lights and right lights tells our turning towards those respective turns and change of lanes and beware the vehicle behind.

Further research suggest that nonverbal behavior plays an important role in the overall communication process. We depend heavily on nonverbal communication in our daily lives. Not only we communicate through our body language but also we try to interpret unspoken words of other person, reading his or her gestures and their facial expression. In territory of nonverbal communication comes the language of body that we exchange without using words. Body language or no verbal language complements the spoken word when it completes its effective meaning. It also regulates conversational flow. It shows one's interest in the talk or disinterest. And sometimes it tells and explain more than words do.

Our gestures always express more than words, words can be in wrong tone or volume but gestures showcase the feeling attached with the spoken words and they exhibit our thoughts without speaking a word. Gestures substitute and carry a message. Moreover, they express our emotions. Usually these expressions are transmitted through facial expression like smiling , laughing, bowing, frowning etc. Our face itself has ample language potential beyond words. It reflects interpersonal relationships, our aptitude and inner world at its best. If we say it authenticates and bona fides one's spoken words rather. It is the first and foremost source of information. We always try to read other's face to recheck one's communication and try to decipher one's messages through one's facial expression. Even one's enthusiasm, happiness and mood and sensibility could be read by one's face reading. No wonder if now a days these things are flourishing as a science.

With the tone and volume of the pronounced words we emphasize something and we try to communicate more effective meaning and thus we aim at more successful communication. If a teacher is teaching in a class she or he is able to read the question mark on her or his student's face by their facial expression, she understands that they have some queries. This is actually what human nature is. If we are happy our face and whole body accompanies our emotion and they collectively projects our inner feelings. If we are sad they flaunt a gloomy



image of us. If we say broadly each and every word which we speak in language are always or mostly comes out with a particular expression in our body language or else in our facial expression that mean a lot and they produce meaning. When we are angry we feel like being violent we usually try to let the anger come out by throwing things that explains the anger within us if we are silent that also shows some indifference and unresponsiveness towards this world. This is how there are so many languages hidden in our day to day life which works beyond words. In fact this is our capability to connect with our environment.

“To learn another language is more than just learning words and grammar, it involves learning about another culture, too. We learn much of our own culture's body language before we learn to speak, from the time we are children, usually without even being aware of it.” (2)

“There are two broad types of body language: open body language and closed body language. Some body language theorists say that these are very old behaviors which date back to our early ancestors. By maintaining open body language, our ancestors showed that they had no concealed weapons hidden behind their back, their armpits or in their hands. By opening our hands, unfolding our arms and bodies we still show that we mean the other person no harm. When we have closed body language, we appear to be physically showing that we are hiding something from the other person and this can be threatening to them. These messages are often received subconsciously by the other person who starts to distrust our words and what we mean by them. An open manner is a good start to an open, frank conversation.” (Patel, Dipika S.)

We do not know the language of animals though we try to understand their sounds by translating them according to our situational context and we keep on translating until we establish a connection with the animal. Every movement of nature has become a beautiful story in beautiful lines of the poets around the world because they tried to listen to and to make sense of their untold narratives and charm of nature which do not utter words but are available in some language beyond words that has been grasped by the men of letters to mesmerize this world. They could understand their evolution of emotion, they could connect themselves with nature and its vast territory. This is why birds seem to sing and the sea roars, elephant trumpets and flowers opens their petals to see the world.

The concept of representation and reading and rereading of text beyond words has come to occupy a new and prominent place in the world of language and study of culture. There are some wonderful languages around us to which we may be oblivious but they too function as language which really, are a part of our life and moreover they complete our life and our world.



WORKS CITED

1. Barthes, Ronald. The Language of Fashion.
2. <https://rosswolfe.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/roland-barthes-the-language-of-fashion.pdf>
3. <http://english-magazine.org/english-reading/english-language-articles/919-body-language>
4. Patel, Dipika S.”Body Language: An Effective Communication Tool
5. <https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1P3-3465360101/body-language-an-effective-communication-tool>