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A MONTHLY OF DRAVIDIAN LINGUISTICS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

**TAMIL NADU CHIEF MINISTER  
JAYALALITHAA IS NO MORE**

The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Puratchi Thalaivi Dr. J. Jayalalithaa passed away at the Apollo Hospital, Chennai at 11.30 p.m. on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016.

On this sad occasion, the members of the International School of Dravidian Linguistics, the Dravidian Linguistics Association and the International Journal of Dravidian Linguistics express their heartfelt condolences to the people of Tamil Nadu.

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**45<sup>th</sup> ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF DRAVIDIAN  
LINGUISTS & INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM on  
*Case, Agreement and Postpositions*  
(23-25 June 2017, University of Delhi)**

Those who would like to participate in the 45<sup>th</sup> AICDL & INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM on *Case, Agreement and Postpositions* are requested to fill up the registration form (which can be downloaded from our website [www.ijdl.org](http://www.ijdl.org)) and send it along with the registration fee (**Rs. 2000/-**; for life-members of DLA and students **Rs. 1000/-**) to the Secretary-DLA, International School of Dravidian Linguistics, V.I. Subramoniam Memorial ISDL Complex, St. Xavier's College P.O., Thiruvananthapuram – 695 586 as early as possible. Accommodation can be assured only for those who register early. For late registrants, accommodation will be provided only as per availability. Those who need separate hotel accommodation should intimate the Local Convener before **10<sup>th</sup> June 2017**. In that case, the charges with regard to food and accommodation in hotels will have to be borne by the participant.

## SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF QUASIMORPHEMES IN MALAYALAM AS A BIOLINGUISTIC RESEARCH TOOL

(Concluding Part)

**Materials and Methods:** Two sets of apparently non-sememic quasimorphemes were studied. The first one is *timi-* which is word initial in the nouns as in *timi-ra* ('cataract'), *timi-la* ('a percussion instrument'), *timirima* (*aṇu* 'atom'), *timi-ṅalam* ('whale') and *timi-rp-* ('bubbly feeling'). The second set begins with *para*. The meanings of the words in each set can be analyzed as follows:

### Set I. *timi*

The meaning of *timi* in Sanskrit is given as 'a kind of whale', 'Zodiac sign Pisces', 'mother of sea-monsters' and 'fish'. In Tamil, the meaning is 'aquatic animal' and in Malayalam the meanings are 'aquatic animal' and 'sea'. The above words can be analyzed in detail.

a. *timira*, in Sanskrit and Malayalam, means 'cataract of the eye lens'. When it progresses, the vision gets 'dusty', with only tiny specks of light entering the eye, before total blindness develops. Often specks of opacity can be seen in the lens which coalesce later. In this word, *timi-* has a connotation of minuteness.

b. The meaning of *timiṅalam* is literally swallower of *timi-* (*galam* means 'swallow'). In Sanskrit, the meaning of *timiṅalam* is given as 'a 'fabulous fish' that swallows a whale', in tune with the meaning given to *timi-*. In Malayalam, *timiṅalam* means 'whale' and 'sea-eater'. The main food of whales including the blue whale, the largest animal in the world, is phytoplankton and zooplankton, which are very tiny creatures, many of them being microscopic. Plankton is equivalent to dust particles or specks of the sea. The whales swallow sea-water and then push it out, retaining the plankton inside the mouth by means of their comb-like *baleens*. The Malayalam meaning of 'sea-eater' for whales is thus very appropriate. Here too, the word *timi-* has a connotation of minuteness.

c. *timirp* means a bubbly feeling inside oneself, just as tiny bubbles form in beer and coalesce. Here too, there is a connotation of minuteness.

d. *timirima* is not seen in Sanskrit or Tamil and can be taken as a Malayalam word. Its meaning is given as 1/22 which is 0.0454545454545455 and one of the 22 *śruti-s* (microtones or micro-intervals i.e., the smallest difference in pitch, recognizable by the human ear) of Indian music. This word obviously is related to music. The terminal *-ima* in *timirima* means 'eyelid'. The smallest unit of time in Vedic system is *nimiṣa* ('blink of an eye') and its duration is 0.2112 seconds. Pitch is essentially frequency i.e., the number of vibrations per unit time. It is possible that *timirima* is also related to *nimiṣa*. Another meaning of *timirima* is *aṇu* which in Sanskrit means an 'atomic' unit of matter or time. In this instance too, *timi* has a connotation of minuteness.

e. *timila* is a percussion instrument unique to Kerala, used in various ceremonies related to Hindu temples. The most characteristic feature of *timila* is its centrally constricted hourglass shape unlike other drums which bulge at the centre. The design is such that it has strings tying together both ends which help in fine-tuning it for a range of *aḡsara kālā-s* (unit of time), much more than any other percussion instrument and thus produces sounds of a broader range of pitch than any other instrument. It is obvious that *timi-* here too refers to time. This combined with the hourglass shape may refer to the concept that time flows in discrete 'quanta' or atomic units just like the minute sand particles in an hourglass. Therefore, *timi-* here too has a connotation of minuteness.

To summarize, the quasimorpheme *timi* is obviously a Malayalam invention with a quasi-sememic sense i.e., an icon, minuteness etc. This meaning of *timi-* significantly contributes to the meaning of all the five words in which it is the root.

### Set II. *para*

The *r̥* here is the heavily trilled alveolar sound which is a Dravidian phoneme not seen in Sanskritic languages.

The words in which *para* is the root are *para*, *parakkal*, *parava*, *parambu* and *parayuka*.

a. *para* is a vessel for measuring paddy, of which it can hold about eight kg. Occasionally, *para* is used as a short way of asking someone to “speak”.

b. *para* is also the root of *parakkal* meaning ‘flight’. When a bird takes flight, its wings displace a definite volume, a measure, of air. Here too, the relation between the quasi-morpheme and the meaning of the word viz., a measure of volume of air displaced by each stroke of the wing, is maintained although the actual volume will be different for various birds in various situations, and is not necessarily the same as that of the *para* used for measuring paddy. *parava*, with the same root, means ‘bird’, meaning that *parakkal* ‘flight’ is what *parava* ‘bird’ does.

c. *parambu* is a measured area of land cleared of growth for the construction of a house. There is a connotation of measurement here although not of volume.

d. *parayuka* is when we speak, a particular, definite measure of air is used for articulation which may be different for various vowels and consonants and varies between individuals although remaining the same for any particular one in ordinary speech. Although there is no unit for this volume, there is a unit for the duration taken viz., the *mātra*. Obviously, this is related to the volume of expelled air too. The connotation is very apparent even though the exact volume of *para* (the vessel) is different. Speech is often done in a ‘measured’ way. When one speaks, there is a mental ‘measurement’ of what is to be spoken, which words are to be used etc., and this could be one reason that *para*, a unit of measurement, has come to be used as ‘Speak!’. To summarize, the quasimorpheme *para* has a connotation of a unit i.e., an icon of measurement, and contributes to the meaning of each of the words in which it is present word-initially.

*Relation with European Languages:* In view of the presumed ancient contact with European civilization, it will be interesting to see if the quasimorphemes presented are related to words in European languages.

*timi-*: The word ‘timbre’, denoting the characteristic quality of a musical note, is from the medieval Greek word \**tympanon*, of unknown origin, meaning ‘kettle drum’. The phonetic similarity of *tym-* and *timi-* and the fact that *timila* is a drum is striking. The word ‘*tympanum*’, eardrum which receives sound waves, is related to *tympanon*. The similarity of *timi-* to ‘time’ and Old English *tima*, meaning small unit of time, as well as the Old Norse *timi* (‘time’, ‘proper time’) and Swedish *timme* (‘an hour’) is also striking. The word ‘thimble’, which appeared in mid 15<sup>th</sup> century, meaning ‘a covering or sheath for the thumb’, is presumed to be from Old English *thymel*, formed from *tuma* + *el*. *timila* is played using fingers covered by a hard sheath, suggesting some connection with *thymel*.

*para*: The Latin word *par*, meaning ‘equality’, ‘well-matched’ etc., is used to imply measurement. It is of unknown origin and its resemblance to *para*, itself a measurement unit as explained earlier, is noteworthy.

## Discussion

Two sets of words involving two word initial quasimorphemes were studied. The result shows that in both sets, the apparently meaningless, non-sememic quasimorpheme has a definite semantic sense, qualifying it to be labelled as a sememe, which is central to the real meaning of the word.

It can now be recognised that *timi-* is an icon of minuteness and *para* that of a measurement unit. Thus, words, hitherto thought of as arbitrarily symbolic signs, have now attained the iconic status of Peirce’s Triad, thereby increasing the relevant information conveyed by each.

Since these words are demonstrably iconic, it is quite apparent that they did not come into existence by mere chance but were ‘intelligently designed’. More importantly, people who could design such words in their language must have had a well-developed FoL.

According to the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis of Linguistic Relativity, language is relative to the culture and environment of the people i.e., the

structure and lexicon of one's language influence how one perceives and conceptualizes the world, and they do so in a systematic way (The Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis). Therefore, the robustness of the FoL which leads to a virtuous language can very well influence how the external world is perceived and denoted. The reverse can also be true: knowledge of the external world enriches the language. Knowledge and language mutually nourish each other. From this preliminary study itself, which in a way validates the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, it is clear that the people here had a good grasp of arts, biology, mathematics and their own concept of time, possibly from the very ancient period, and developed an adequate language with intelligently designed lexical items to express this knowledge.

The selected two quasimorphemes have an uncanny similarity with certain words in Latin and Greek. In view of the ancient connection of Kerala with Europe, this merits a detailed study.

## Appendix

**Table 1**

*Comparison of Heuristic Language Software and Human Faculty of Language*

Computer	Human Being
Computer Chip	Neuronal Cells
Machine Language	Electrochemical Language
Heuristic Language Software	Faculty of Language
Pre-loaded Lexemes, Syntax Rules	Universal Grammar (UG)
Grammatical Language	universal grammar (ug)

## Acknowledgement

The Malayalam meanings have been taken from Sreekanteswaram's *Sabdatharavali*, NBS, 1983; those of Sanskrit from Sir Monier Williams' and Capeller's *Sanskrit-English Dictionaries* and the etymology of the English words are from *Online Etymology Dictionary*.

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V.N. Bhattathiri

### THOPPIL BHASI AWARD TO PROF. PUTHUSSERI RAMACHANDRAN

Prof. Puthusseri Ramachandran, Hon. Professor of the International School of Dravidian Linguistics & Professor and Head of the Department of Malayalam (Retd.), University of Kerala and a noted writer in Malayalam was honoured with *Thoppil Bhasi Award* for the year 2016 by H.E. the Governor of Kerala Justice P. Sathasivam at a function organized at VJT Hall on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2016. This award, given to those who have made significant contributions to theatre, cinema and journalism, comprises Rs. 33,333, a citation and a memento. The DLA fraternity congratulates him on getting this award.

### ICDL-2016 & 44<sup>th</sup> AICDL A BRIEF REPORT

(Concluding Part)

Praveen Gatla's *Developing Dependency Treebank for Telugu Parser* tried to describe the Paninian grammatical framework using a dependency-based approach. Arvind Jadhav presented a paper on

*Cognitive Representation of Projective Postpositions in Marathi* which discussed the projective spatial postpositions in Marathi in static situations, such as *-war* 'up, on, above', *-khāli* 'under, below, down', *-puḍhe* 'in front of', *-māge* 'behind', *udzwyābādzulā* 'at the right side', *ḍāwyābādzulā* 'at the left side' etc. Hussain's *Framing Religious Personal Names in Malayalam: A Cognitive Linguistic Perspective* studied the religious personal names in Malayalam from a semantics perspective with special focus on Hindu, Christian and Muslim religious personal names. Muhammed Ashraf K. spoke at length about the problems of translating Malayalam language into English through machine translation, in his paper *Problems of Malayalam Machine Translation: Evaluation of One System*. Govinda Chandra Penthoi's *Finite Verb Formation in Kui* and Anirban Sarkar's *Location in Emotions* were a few among the other papers presented in this session.

The 44<sup>th</sup> All India Conference of Dravidian Linguists ended with the valedictory function.

K. Rajyarama

### ON PAMBAN BRIDGE

(Concluding Part)

The Tourism Development Corporation of India estimates that 3000 tourists a day visit Rameswaram and on important festive occasions, it rises to 7000 to 10000 a day. This works out to more than a million a year, perhaps a record for a place with a 40000 population.

About 75% of Pamban Island is made up of white sand, 1 m. to 2 m. above sea level, and the high ground is not more than 12 m. above sea level.

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With Dhanushkodi off the map of India, the steamer service connecting India to Ceylon has also come to an end, but the Pamban Bridge now promotes pilgrimage and tourism to the world-famous temple dedicated to Shiva and is associated with Lord Rama. *Wikipedia* says, "*Temple records show that Rama's Bridge or Rama Setu was completely above sea level until it broke down due to an immense cyclone in 1480 CE*" and adds, "*the temple was built by the Pandyan Dynasty in 12<sup>th</sup> Century, but was quite ancient and Tamil saints have worshipped from the 7<sup>th</sup> Century*". Earlier to that, it was housed in a hut. The ruler of Sri Lanka, Parakrama Bahu (1153-1186), contributed to the temple and was involved in the construction of the sanctum sanctorum of the temple, and at a later date, the King of Jaffna, Jayaveera (1380-1410), shipped stone blocks from Trincomalee's famous temple region to renovate the Rameswaram temple.

*K.V.S. Krishna*

### **NATIONAL SEMINAR ON KĒRALAPĀṆINĪYAM**

The International School of Dravidian Linguistics organized a national seminar on *KĒRALAPĀṆINĪYAM* on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016 at V.I. Subramoniam Memorial ISDL Complex, Menamkulam, Thiruvananthapuram. The seminar was inaugurated by Prof. N.P. Unni, former Vice-Chancellor, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady on 5<sup>th</sup> December. The inaugural session was chaired by Prof. C.R. Prasad, Director, School of Indian Languages, University of Kerala. Prof. Naduvattom Gopalakrishnan welcomed the august audience

and Mr. D. Mano proposed the vote of thanks. Eminent Professors and distinguished scholars in Malayalam, Sanskrit and Linguistics from various universities and departments presented papers and exchanged their ideas.

### **TRIBUTE TO PROF. D. MURTHY**

Dr. D. Murthy (64), Professor of Tamil, Aligarh Muslim University, passed away on 23.10.2016. He took his Ph.D. in Tamil from the University of Madras on the topic *A Critical Study of the Common Vocabulary of Tamil and Malayalam* under the guidance of Dr. S.K. Nayar. He worked as Lecturer in the Tamil University, Thanjavur. Later, he joined as Lecturer in Tamil in the Department of Modern Indian Languages of Aligarh Muslim University where he became Professor of Tamil in 2007 and the Chairman in 2016. He worked as Visiting Associate Professor of Tamil in the Department of South Asian Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland. His contributions to linguistic studies include the compilation of dictionaries on (1) Proper Names, (2) Malayalam and Tamil, (3) Tamil and Malayalam and (4) Literary Terms in Tamil Poetry and Poetics.

*T.N. Satheesan*

### **NATIONAL SEMINAR ON KĒRALAPĀṆINĪYAM**

**(18-20 January 2017)**

*at*

***Department of Linguistics, University of Kerala.***

For further details, please contact Dr. S. Kunjamma at [drskunjamma@yahoo.co.in](mailto:drskunjamma@yahoo.co.in).

### **NEW ENROLMENT FOR LIFE-MEMBERSHIP**

**(November 2016)**

1. **S. Senthil Nathan** (*Membership No. 1280/2016*)

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