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A MONTHLY OF DRAVIDIAN LINGUISTICS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

ICDL-2016 & 44<sup>th</sup> AICDL

A BRIEF REPORT

(Continued from the last issue)

The third session of the conference conducted at the Humanities Auditorium dealt with *Computational Linguistics*. Reena Raveendran and Muhammad Shafi jointly presented a paper on *Cyber Language* in which they spoke about the language used in electronic mail, internet chat rooms and in text messages sent among cellular phones. They further explained how this cyber language differs from the natural language. Thennarasu Sakkan's paper *Tamil-pronouncing Dictionary* (in preparation) focused on the machine-readable Tamil-pronouncing dictionary which contains over 5000 unique basic words taken from

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45<sup>th</sup> AICDL & INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

ON CASE, AGREEMENT AND POSTPOSITIONS AT  
 UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

(23–25 June 2017)

The **45<sup>th</sup> All India Conference of Dravidian Linguists** and an **International Symposium on Case, Agreement and Postpositions** will be held at the Centre for Advanced Studies in Linguistics, University of Delhi from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

the Tamil corpus along with their word classes, transliteration and phonetic transcription with examples. Among the other papers presented were Mohan Raj S.N.'s *Word Sense Disambiguation in Malayalam* and Anitha K.'s *A Sandhi Splitter for Malayalam Language*.

A parallel session on Sociolinguistics was held in the Conference Hall. S. Prema in her paper *Is Malayalam a Diglossic Language?* tried to study the possibility of Malayalam as a diglossic language and also referred to various discourses that

contrast the diglossic situation in Tamil with that of Malayalam. Reji A.L.'s paper on *A Sociolinguistic Perspective: SMS and MMS as Social Practices* pointed out the specific features of SMS and MMS as texts and analyzed them by using the theories of new literary studies. Anusree Sreenivasan and Devune Datturam's paper on *Contact and Convergence between Telugu-Urdu: A Case Study of Urdu spoken in Prakasham District* made an attempt to examine and illustrate some of the aspects of Urdu language spoken in Prakasham district in Andhra Pradesh. Several other papers were also presented in this session.

*Language Learning and Teaching* was the theme of the session held at the Lecture Hall Complex. L. Rajesh & P.V. Lakshmana Rao in their paper *Animation as a Tool for Language Teaching* spoke extensively about the advantages and considerations of using animation (audio-visual aids) for language teaching. M. Udaya's paper *The Use of Corpora in assessing the Vocabulary Knowledge of Undergraduate Learners* dealt with the methods by which the vocabulary of undergraduate learners could be assessed. Fatemeh Joharifard presented a paper on *Blended Learning in Language Classrooms*. He made a review of the incorporation of technology into the course of study, specifically with relevance to the implementation of alloyed programs from the perspective of the teacher.

Session 4 conducted after tea-break was on *Phonology*. The papers presented during this session include Indira Kothalanka's *Spectrographic Analysis of Telugu Affricates*, Babi Duli's *Junctures in Telugu*, Shagi G.U.'s *Identifying Acoustic Correlates of Semivowels in Malayalam* etc.

The parallel session in the Conference Hall had *Sociolinguistics* as its theme. S. Rajeswari presented her paper on *The*

*Realization of Address Terms in Telugu in Andhra Pradesh*. The paper focused on identifying nine principal terms of address and simultaneously studying the influence of westernism and modernism in the use of personal names and catch phrases. Sree Ganesh Thottempudi and Amitava Das's *Social Media Texts and Code Mixing* reported the initial study to understand the characteristics of code-mixing in Telugu social media texts, exemplified by Facebook messages in mixed English-Telugu and Telugu-English. S. Shazida in her paper *The Sociolinguistic Study of Gender Address Terms in Muslim Speakers in Andhra Pradesh State* dealt with the choice of the gender-differential linguistic style in the use of names among Muslim speakers in Andhra Pradesh.

Under the theme *Ethnolinguistics*, N. Kalaivani presented the paper *The Grammatical Rules of Tolkāppiyam and Names of Places in Tamil*. She talked about how the structure of Tamil language during the early period was studied through *Tolkāppiyam* and how many linguistic features in this grammatical text were applied to know the formation of names of places found in the Tamil language. In a nutshell, this paper tried to trace the old forms of commonly used Tamil words. Jenny Merry Daimari in her paper *Tai Aiton: An Ethnolinguistic Study* made an attempt to present the ethnolinguistic description of the Tai Aiton community of Assam. Then Bharati presented a paper on *Shepherds' Production and Linguistic Variation*. The session ended with the Chairman's concluding remarks.

[To be continued]

K. Rajyarama

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

(Continued from the last issue)

It will be appropriate to recall some maxims of Bloomfield such as *the statement of meanings is the weak point in the study of language and it will remain so until human knowledge advances far beyond its present state*, and that the linguist cannot express meanings but has to appeal to students of other sciences or to common knowledge for this. He also opines that morphological constructions are more elaborate than those of syntax; hence languages differ more in morphology than in syntax. The variety is so great that no scheme can classify languages morphologically. He extols that, in main, the techniques of systematic study of morphology were developed by Hindu grammarians, meaning the ancient Sanskrit ones. It may be noted here that in Sanskrit, as well as in Malayalam, which have alpha-syllabaries, most letters have their own designated phonetic values.

Bloomfield had noted that certain pronominal words have root-forming morphemes with phonetic-semantic resemblances of doubtful significance. These words presumably have different roots. They can be segmented with an observable basis but the meanings of the components are ill-understood and they do not rise to the level of morphemes purely for semantic reasons. He calls this conditional morphemic segmentability and the examples given are *re-ceive*, *re-tain*, *con-ceive* and *con-tain*. There can be other examples too such as the word-initial cluster *imp-* as in *implore*, *important*, *imply* etc., which do not bear any apparent resemblance to the *imp-* in *impossible* (*im-possible*) but there are a few conditionally segmentable words where the root-forming sound clusters suggest some semblance of a meaning. These include the initial root-formers such as *fl-* suggesting moving light (*flash*, *flare*, *flame*, *flicker* etc.), *fl-* suggesting movement in air (*fly*, *flap*, *flit*, *flutter* etc.) and *gl-* suggesting unmoving light (*glow*, *gleam*, *glare*, *glint* etc.) as well as the final root-formers such as *-sh* suggesting

violent movement (*bash*, *crash*, *dash*, *flash* etc.). Unfortunately, reflecting Bloomfield's views on semantics, linguistics has considered root-forming morphemes as non-entities and as not worthy of study. One possible reason could be that, since English has borrowed words from many languages, the original meanings which could supply the semantic links have been lost.

These root-forming clusters are termed as quasimorphemes and it has been suggested that they may exemplify the triad of signs identified by Peirce viz., iconic, deictical (index/deixis) and symbolic (Eliason, E.J.). According to him, *scr-* (*scratch*, *scrawl*) is, being onomatopoeias, acoustically iconic and *fl-*, *sk-* etc., are articulatorily iconic, being related to tongue movement. *th-* (*θ*, *ð*) in *this*, *that*, *those*, *them* etc., resemble a pointing gesture, an indication, and the *tr-* in *travel*, *transport*, *traffic* etc., are arbitrarily symbolic. Since morphemes carry the smallest units of meaning corresponding to sememes, those quasimorphemes which suggest a meaning may be termed as sememic quasimorphemes or quasisesemes.

Many, if not all, languages are likely to have sememic and non-sememic quasimorphemes. In a language, if a large number of quasimorphemes is found, each to have a meaning which contributes to the meanings of all the words in which they are present, then it can be concluded that these words were 'intelligently designed'. It can then also be reasonably concluded that the people to whom that language belongs have a higher than mean FoL.

All languages are considered as equal in terms of formal elegance and functional efficiency, as is implied in the concept of universal grammar. There is no evidence of these being manifested more or less intensely in some languages than in others. This being the case, the population to which a particular language belongs cannot be said to have a FoL which is more or less robust than others but there could be an exception here. A pidgin is a simple language which gets developed for communication between two groups of people

speaking different languages when they come into contact with each other. When children of pidgin speakers start using it regularly as their first language, it becomes creole, a language in its own right, with its own lexicon and syntax. Considering English itself as a creole, Bailey & Maroldt (1977) defined creole in a broad sense as a gradient mixture of two or more languages and in a narrow sense as the result of mixing which is substantial enough to result in a new system that is separate from its antecedent parent systems. Creolization in a way validates the assumption that human beings indeed have a FoL. Creoles are generally despised and stigmatized. If a creole does not wither away, it could be so because that particular population has a more robust FoL.

Malayalam is mainly spoken in Kerala and in Lakshadweep. Kerala has a long western coastline of nearly 600 km. with a maximum width of 120 km. The only source of spices in the past, Kerala had trade relations with Europe since ancient times, as evidenced by Roman coins found in various parts of Kerala. It has found mention in the Bible and St. Thomas the Apostle is believed to have arrived here in 32 A.D. Malayalam is a Dravidian language, but a sizeable quantum of its lexicon consists of Sanskrit words or presumably its derivatives. Malayalam is unique in its phonemic inventory, since it includes alveolar voiceless stop *t'*, equivalent to the English *t*, which is not found in any other Indic language. (Tamil has it, but pronounces it as *ttr*.) Malayalam has been heavily influenced by English, second only to Sanskrit, and these have been summed up as phoneme borrowing, loan words, style changes and frequent use of passive voice, abbreviations and the use of Malayalam suffixation for English words. On the other hand, Malayalam is recognized as one of the classical languages of India and many of the oldest Dravidian literatures have been composed by Keralites. Kerala has a rich heritage of Ayurveda, the Indian medical science, as well as knowledge of the Vedas. It has the highest literacy rate among all states in India. All these indicate the possibility that Keralites indeed have a higher-than-mean FoL. In fact, the so-called influence of English as well as the presence of alveolar *t'* in the phonemic inventory may be

reflecting the unusual capacity and adaptability of the FoL of Keralites, concordant with the assumption that syntax and phonology have high heritability. In view of the unique features of Malayalam outlined above, it was considered that Malayalam is a suitable language for this study. This paper is a report on the preliminary study.

One obvious question here is how to approach the study and which aspect of linguistics is to be selected. Syntactic and phonological aspects have been studied well and the above-stated peculiarities have been noted although not in a positive way. Lexical items are presumably less prone to be affected by heritable genetic factors but when a language and the racial memory of a people are concerned, it may not be so. Moreover, in the case of Indian languages, the morphology of words itself includes a lot of 'intra-word syntax' in the form of sandhi rules, which involves phonology too. Here too, Malayalam is unique among the Dravidian languages in that Sanskrit sandhi rules are also applicable. Therefore, the heritability of syntax and phonology could be applicable to lexical items too. Comprehension, memorization and retrieval of lexical items need a good knowledge of areas other than linguistics. The population did not appear to be devoid of this too. All in all, a study on semantics using quasi-morphemes appeared suitable to evaluate the robustness of the FoL in the population speaking Malayalam language.

[To be continued]

V.N. Bhattathiri

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## WORKSHOP ON SCIENCE COMMUNICATION IN DRAVIDIAN LANGUAGES

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The Department of Dravidian and Computational Linguistics, Dravidian University organised a four-day National Workshop on *Science Communication in Dravidian Languages* from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> August 2016 with the financial support of National Education Mission (NEM), MHRD, Government of India. The major objectives of the workshop

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Recent Publications: **The Morphosyntax of the Dravidian Languages**, P.S. Subrahmanyam, 2013, HB, Demy 1/8, pp. xxx + 687, Rs. 1,000/- (US\$ 100/-). **A Survey of Smriti Literature**, N.P. Unni, 2013, PB, Demy 1/8, pp. 8 + 164, Rs. 200/- (US\$ 20/-).

were: (1) to share experiences of science communication among the scholars in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam, (2) to build confidence and capacity among the scholars for using Dravidian languages for science communication and (3) to prepare training material for science communication in Dravidian languages. The major activities in the workshop were: (1) sharing the experiences of the leading science communicators in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam, (2) language-based group discussion, (3) reporting and the discussion of group deliberations, (4) open discussion based on the report and (5) developing a template of a handbook of science communication in Dravidian languages.

Eighteen lectures were delivered by distinguished resource persons who came for this workshop from different universities. The workshop was inaugurated by Prof. Murigeppa, the former Vice Chancellor of Kannada University, which was followed by the keynote speech by Prof. Ramachandraiah and the felicitation address by Prof. G. Balasubramanian, the rector, Dravidian University. Dr. Ganesan Ambedkar, Head of the Department, welcomed the participants. P. Sreekumar, the co-ordinator of the workshop, introduced the theme and structure of the workshop and Dr. Kesava Murty proposed the vote of thanks. Prof. Kanakarathnam, Dean, School of Social Science and Humanities presided over the function.

Reviews of science communication in Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam were presented by Prof. Padmanabha Rao, Prof. Murigeppa and Dr. Ravisankar S. Nair respectively. In addition to the keynote address, Prof. Ramachandraiah delivered a special lecture on *Science Popularisation through Telugu as a People's Science Movement: A 3-Decade Experience of Jana Vignana Vedika*.

In the second session, Prof. K. Rangan discussed *Coining and Standardising the*

*Technical Terms in Tamil*. Dr. Ravisankar presented his ideas on *The Sociolinguistics of Technical Terminology Formation in Malayalam* and Prof. Achuthsankar S. Nair talked on the *Engineering and Technology Communication in Malayalam*.

The third session was an interesting one in which the present status of the Dravidian languages and their speech communities were discussed. The discussion was pioneered by delegates of the four major Dravidian languages. After that, there was serious discussion on this topic. The session was presided over by Prof. R. Padmanabha Rao. At 6.30 p.m., a biographic film of Nobel laureate Mathematician John Forbes Nash, *A Beautiful Mind*, was screened.

On 25<sup>th</sup> August, the fourth session started with a class on *Humanities and Social Science Communication in Telugu* by Prof. N. Bhakthavatsala Reddy. It was followed by the presentation of papers *Language Planning and Human Development* by Mr. K. Sethuraman IPS, *Social Science Communication in Kannada: A Critical Discourse Analysis* by Dr. Meti Mallikarjun and *Communication of Science and Technology in Kannada Language – Challenges and Opportunities* by Dr. T. Niranjana Prabhu.

The fifth session was a group discussion on seventeen points about the science communication and experimental development of science terminology in Dravidian languages for capacity-building by Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam language groups. Two delegates from each group reported the discussions which was followed by an open discussion. Honourable Vice Chancellor Prof. E. Sathyanarayana also joined the open house discussion which was presided over by Prof. R. Padmanabha Rao.

The sixth session on 26<sup>th</sup> commenced with a class on *Experience of using Tamil as a Medium of Science Communication* by Mr. Mano.

It was followed by three classes: *Science Writings - Common Man's Reach - My Experiences* by Dr. G.V. Purnachand, *Introducing Modern Literary Theories in Telugu* by Prof. B. Tirupati Rao and *Writing and Teaching History in Telugu* by E. Harshavardhan.

Based on the input from the classes and group discussions, a template of the *Handbook of Science Communication in Dravidian Languages: Context, Confidence, Capacity, Action and Exercises* was presented by Sreekumar.

The valedictory meeting of the workshop was presided over by Prof. E. Sathyanarayana. The valedictory address was delivered by Mr. Sethuraman IPS. Prof. S. Penchalaih, Dean, Academic Affairs, Dravidian University offered the felicitation speech. Manjunath and Sreekumar proposed the welcome address and the vote of thanks respectively.

Reported by M.S. Bharath Kumar & M. Raja Krishna  
Research Scholars, Dravidian University

## ON PAMBAN BRIDGE

The inauguration of the Pamban Bridge, Indo-Ceylon rail connection, on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1914 served the island well. The plantation companies had 530,000 South Indian Tamil workers working in Ceylon. They had travelled from Tuticorin to Colombo and, earlier, from Thondi to the north Ceylon coast.

The cyclone of 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1964 lashed the entire sea-facing side of Pamban Island which bore the brunt of the furious cyclone from the Gulf of Mannar. That the Rameswaram Temple complex, which faces the Palk Bay, was saved was a miracle. However, the good job done by the Indian

Railways within three months enabled pilgrims and tourists to reach the temple and the lovely beach, walking knee-deep in the still waters of the Bay.

Geological evidence suggests that Adam's Bridge connected Pamban Island to Mannar Island in Ceylon. Pamban Island is 61.8 sq.km. in extent and is about 70 to 80 km. long and satellite images make it look like the head of a crane with its long beak, at the tip of which is located Dhanushkodi and the steamer pier, while the Pamban Bridge is located at the bird's neck connecting it to the mainland, and Rameswaram town is located at the eye of this bird's head. Rameswaram has a population of about 40000, engaged in fishing and tourism.

[To be continued]

K.V.S. Krishna

### NEW ENROLMENT FOR LIFE-MEMBERSHIP (September 2016)

1. **Pradeep Kumar Pradhani** (Membership No. 1274/2016)  
AT Bhatasar, P.O. Gandapatrapali, Via Saintala,  
District Balangir, Odisha - 767 032
2. **Ningombam Sanatombi Devi** (Membership No. 1275/2016)  
C/o Dr. N. Inao Singh, Singjamei Makha, Khongnangpheidekpi,  
Imphal - 795 008, Manipur
3. **Devina Kaul** (Membership No. 1276/2016)  
C-710, Shanti Vihar Apartment, Off Frazer Road, Patna -  
800 001, Bihar
4. **Gulab Chand** (Membership No. 1277/2016)  
Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Ropar,  
Rupnagar - 140 001, Punjab

### DLA News Endowment Fund

07.09.16	Mr. B. Edwin	Rs.	1,000.00
<b>TOTAL AS OF LAST MONTH</b>		<b>Rs.</b>	<b>1,91,256.00</b>
<b>CURRENT TOTAL</b>		<b>Rs.</b>	<b>1,92,256.00</b>