## Language: A Performative Speech

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### Abstract

Language is a performative speech act that naturally takes place in the forms of life. Language teaching in India is mostly centered on language forms (learning the structural understanding of language). Against the backdrop, this paper addresses the core issues of language teaching which have definite reflection on the material development as well as the transaction methodology so as to achieve the desired outcome. Researchers in ELT in other Asian countries have realized the importance of performance based language teaching. It is also observed in the present study that belief system (core and peripheral) shapes the communicative action in a social setting.

### Introduction

Theories of Language Use, for example, theories by the later Wittgenstein, helped inaugurate the idea of "meaning as use", and a communitarian view of language. Wittgenstein (1953) was interested in the way in which the communities use language, and how far it could be taken. Such extensions are also associated with J.L. Austin, P. F. Strawson (1957), John Searle (1969), Robert Brandom (1994), and others. The theoretical models available and the subsequent research carried out in the field of pragmatics indicate the gap created between ESL teaching and

the difference in proficiency of the participants. The concept of native speaker and a continuous effort to achieve the near native proficiency in ESL learners point towards the problems either related to the delivery of the content or the quality of the materials designed.

On the question, do beliefs change? There is a possibility of one response that comes from the very internal structure of a language.

**Discussion**

Analyzing the structure, we find two different justifications - Epistemological and Pragmatic. When we unfold the epistemological structure of language we see it is grounded in our belief system that we carry to live our social as well as personal lives.

On the question, do beliefs change? There is a possibility of one response that comes from the very internal structure of a language.

**Two Types of Beliefs**

Explaining the belief system, we come across two types of belief, namely, core and peripheral.

The **core beliefs** are inexplicably intertwined to religious and cultural specific upbringing of an individual. We can say that the religious and cultural practices through which someone's life being lived, comes from the core beliefs. These core beliefs and the practices, grounded in the core beliefs, can be easily observed within the context of religious and cultural phenomena where there is always a feel of dominant cultural and religious patterns.

However, the **peripheral beliefs** are not as strong, forceful and deeply entrenched into our personal lives (in the form of religious cultural domination). They are the ingredients of a social language. These peripheral beliefs refer to common practices, gestures, common emotions which are pragmatically necessary to build communication outside the religious and cultural domination. In this way, it shows when a person guided by core beliefs remains under the clutch of religious and cultural domination within the religious - cultural context - can have the possibility to get out of the clutch by involving or by incorporating the peripheral beliefs through an extrinsic change. This so called extrinsic change forms an interface between the core and peripheral beliefs.

The interface further seems necessary in order to have a successful social communication outside or different religious- cultural context. Summarizing the difference between the core and peripheral beliefs, precisely, we can say that these are two different patterns of social life that belong to culturally bound and culturally neutral context. These two types of beliefs form the

internal structure of language. Epistemologically speaking, these beliefs are necessary in order to live social and personal life.

**Two Kinds of Justification**

Moreover they are necessary to have a successful social communication in multicultural setting. There are two kinds of justifications to examine the legitimacy of the above explained internal structure. One is **pragmatic justification** and the other one is **rational justification**.

Responding to second one first, rational justification clarifies how a person within a religious-cultural specific context, practices naturally as though he/she is guided by some inbuilt reasons without having any interface or any kind of externality. In other words, he/she is guided by the core beliefs; so inhabitation and belongingness are very internal structure of beliefs and language. He / She does not need an interface to communicate with others. This otherness does not matter in interpersonal communication within the speech community. This is rational justification of having the legitimacy of core beliefs guided by religious and cultural backgrounds.

One thing worthwhile to mention is that the rational justification of the core beliefs has its frame of reference through religious, cultural specific variables. One significant question can be raised at this point: can this rational structure of core beliefs not explain one's social communicative actions outside the culturally neutral context (hereafter, CNC)? In other words, does rational thinking have no import in cultural neutral context? The rational import which is inbuilt in our core beliefs remains intact in our Language Device. But, this rational import loses its importance in guiding social communicative actions in cultural context.

**Why does It Happen?**

Now, we come to the reason - why does it happen? It happens as a speaker ignores his/her core beliefs in order to have a successful social communicative action in CNC context. Figuring out the reasons behind it, we need to explain the pragmatic justification grounded in peripheral belief system. Here we have to understand that when a person is performing a social communicative action in CNC context he or she has to have an interface between the core beliefs and peripheral beliefs. Further he/she has to ignore the core beliefs patterns in order to get out of the domination of religious cultural life. What is it that motivates a person to get rid of this domination can be explained through pragmatic rationalization.

**Iceberg Analogy in Entering and Assimilating Another Culture**

Hall (1976) talks about the iceberg analogy of culture. He also talks about the external or conscious (we see around) & internal or unconscious parts of culture (which includes beliefs, values and thought patterns that underlie behavior). He has categorized culture as –

| Internal | External |
|---|---|
| Implicitly Learned | Explicitly Learned |
| Unconscious | Conscious |
| Difficult to change | Easily Changed |
| Subjective Knowledge | Objective Knowledge |

Based on the above mentioned categorical features, Hall suggests that the only way to learn the internal culture of others is to actively participate in their culture. When one first enters a new culture, only the most overt behaviors are apparent. As one spends more time in that new culture, the underlying beliefs, values, and thought patterns that dictate that behavior will be uncovered. We cannot judge a new culture based only on what we see when we first enter it. We must take the time to get to know the individuals from that culture and interact with them. This is the way to minimize the cultural gap among the native and non-native speakers of a language.

**Forms of Life & Forms of Language**

Addressing to the relationship between the beliefs and the realities with reference to a speaker in culture-specific context and culture-neutral context, we explain social communicative actions on the basis of forms of life and forms of language.

Form of life refers to a system of real events in which socio-cultural practices occur within a religious cultural specific community. For example, Christian community celebrates Christmas day and Hindu community celebrates Holi.

Both perform social communicative action during the celebration successfully because all the members of their respective communities share the same form of life. However when the context gets changed from RC (Religious Context) to RNC (Religiously Neutral Context) or a non-native speaker participates in a different community and performs a social communicative action, one faces a genuine problem because he/she does not belong to this different community.

Consequently he/she does not have the forms of life which is experienced before and which is bound to religious cultural setting. Against this backdrop, a non-native speaker has to participate in a social communicative action. So, his/her participation belongs to only form of language and not to forms of life. Here, forms of language simply mean understanding of language through conventions of language. However, this is only language understating but not the performance of language in true sense which emerges out from the internal structure of socio cultural practices. Thus, from the view point of non-native speaker language performance is not supported through forms of life, whereas in native speaker's case, language performance does not require a support of forms of life because language performance occurs in a well experienced social setting.

Therefore, the difference between forms of life and forms of language stands out only with reference to a non-native speaker.

**Conclusion**

In case of ESL (English as Second Language) teaching, the role of cultural training is of utmost most importance alongside the structural training of the language. There are many English language institutes, coaching centers, independent departments in various general educational as well as professional colleges but they all fail in meeting the requirements of desired proficiency in the target language. It is time to infuse cultural training in language teaching recognizing all the variables so as to develop a comprehensive module, along with the structural training of the language. We hope this will definitely serve the objective of language teaching in real sense.

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