

CHAPTER - VIII

SEMIOTIC STUDY OF ADDRESS TERMS

8.1 Non-Verbal Behaviour

Non-verbal behaviour refers to communicative human acts other than speech. Thus non-verbal behaviour includes facial expressions, eye movements, hand and arm gestures, postures, positions as well as use of space between individuals and objects and various movements of the body, legs and feet. Silence (Thirumalai, 1987) also comes under this non-verbal behaviour because dropping of some elements in the speech or missing elements in the speech utterances can also make sense. Non-verbal behaviour includes a variety of subtle aspects of speech, variously called paralinguistic or vocal phenomena. It seems that there are several ways in which non-verbal behaviour is clearly related to verbal behaviour. For instance, the following non-verbal communicative acts get easily translated into word :

The gesture with folded hands : vanakkam 'a mode of greeting'

A gesture of hand shake : 'hello'

This chapter is concerned with the description of terms of address and their relation to non-verbal behaviour. An attempt

has been made to study the address forms of different individuals belonging to various social groups and their relationship to non-verbal behaviour which aids/accompanies the verbal behaviour.

8.2 Relationship between Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

The relationship between verbal and non-verbal communication may be characterised in six different ways (Thirumalai, 1987).

They are :

1. The relationship between verbal and non-verbal communication is one of the latter playing supplementary role to the former.
2. The relationship between verbal and non-verbal communication is also one of the former playing a supplementary role to the latter.
3. The relationship between verbal and non-verbal communication could be one of correspondance as well.
4. The relationship between a verbal act and a non-verbal act is one of dependance.
5. Verbal and non-verbal acts can be independent of one another
- and 6. The relationship between verbal and non-verbal act is one of non-relevance.

Kongu society by analyzing the non-linguistic factors such as willingness to offer and accept a seat on the verandah of a house and giving and receiving of milk products or cooked rice on informal occasions, to judge the rank of caste.

Levinson (1982) has studied the ranking of caste through linguistic media by analyzing the use of tu/vou pronouns i.e., giving and receiving the pronouns ni/ni:nka among the members of different castes to judge the rank of the caste.

Thus, both linguists and ethnographers have shown interest in studying the interactional patterns of the people and have tried to find the ranking differences in the interactional behaviour.

8.4.2 Status of a Person and Non-Verbal Behaviour

Thirumalai (1987) observes that there is a relationship between the status of the people and the non-verbal behaviours such as proximity, eye sight, facial expression, gesture, language and silence.

8.4.3 Terms of Address and Semiotics

Sociolinguistic studies of address forms and terms in various languages have considered the variant address forms as indicators of relative social status of the addresser and addressee. These

live in thatched houses in a congested atmosphere. However, some variations could be found in the pattern of house among scheduled castes. The Parayas and Cakkiliyas live mostly in thatched houses whereas the Pallars live in tiled houses. Space can be seen clearly between castes in the geographical contiguity of the habitats. Thus near the Kottaimariamman temple, Brahmin priests live and next to them, the backward community people mostly Gounders and people of other castes are settled. The individuals of scheduled caste live in places which are away from the places where the people of forward and backward communities live.

Brahmins live near Paṭittorai which is near the kottaimariyamman temple by the side of which a canal passes. The Gounders and other non-Brahmins live in the next orbit which is away from it, and the scheduled caste people live still away from the non-Brahmins. Thus ranking of the caste in terms of other castes may be judged based on the geographical distance the caste occupies from the elitist temple in the village.

8.5.3 Touchability

Touchability is closely associated with the phenomenon of pollution. Touchability as a social institution functions to create distance between various social groups. While untouchability as a social act is prohibited by law, creating distance between members of different castes through the phenomenon of untouchability

variant forms have semiological significance due to their contextual and cultural occurrences. This chapter aims to study the inter-relationship between the address forms and the non-verbal behaviour and to bring out the significance of the role played by them in the inconsistent status encounters and also to study how linguistic media gets an assistance of non-linguistic media in differentiating the rank or status of persons in the interactions.

8.5 Semiotics of Address Forms

8.5.1 Proxemics

Proxemics is the term used to refer to "the study of how man uses the space - the space that he maintains between himself and his fellow beings and which he builds around him in his home and office" [Hall, 1977]. It is the study of the ways in which the individuals use physical space in their interactions with others and how this use of physical space influences behaviour of all concerned. The following variations are observed :

8.5.2 Space in Locality

The housing pattern of the hamlets itself gives a clue about the nature of the proximity. The arrangement of housing patterns clearly exhibits the variation among different caste groups. Gounders live in tiled, independent houses whereas the Harijans

live in thatched houses in a congested atmosphere. However, some variations could be found in the pattern of house among scheduled castes. The Parayas and Cakkiliyas live mostly in thatched houses whereas the Pallars live in tiled houses. Space can be seen clearly between castes in the geographical contiguity of the habitats. Thus near the Kottaimariamman temple, Brahmin priests live and next to them, the backward community people mostly Gounders and people of other castes are settled. The individuals of scheduled caste live in places which are away from the places where the people of forward and backward communities live.

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still continues in certain levels. In public places like tea-shop, small road-side hotels, there is no discrimination as far as the serving of tea is concerned. All the people irrespective of caste are served tea in the tea shops. However, there is some difference in the nature of the cup in which tea is served. Tea or coffee is served in stainless steel cups to those who are of high income groups and in glass cups to others.

Another instance of the observance of untouchability is the following : An agricultural labourer of the same community is permitted to enter and go upto the interior room of a landlord's house whereas, the scheduled caste labourers are restricted only upto the verandah where he sits down on the floor whereas the landlord will be sitting on a raised platform (tinnai) or on a cot. Drinks, if offered, have to be taken without sipping the glasses while the non-scheduled caste people may sip the drinks.

8.5.4 Seating Arrangements

Seating indicates rank determined by the willingness to offer and accept a seat on a raised platform (tinnai) or on a cot to a member of another caste. As already mentioned, landlord - labourer difference is found in seating arrangement. In the landlord's house, the landlord sits on the tinnai and the agricultural labourers

irrespective of caste sit before him on the floor. However, same caste old age agricultural labourers sometimes share the verandah or tinnai with the landlord.

8.5.5 Space in Conversation

The people belonging to scheduled communities particularly labourers keep distance with the landlords. They could not stand very close to the landlord. They have to keep some distance while conversing with their masters. This type of behaviour is found among the middle and old age group people.

8.5.6 Proximity and Address Forms

The space between the participants in the speech event gets reflected in the speech behaviour of the persons involved. Thus, the people of forward and backward communities who live close to the elitist temple are addressed honorifically by the people of scheduled communities. The following are some of the examples :

- | | | |
|--------|---|---|
| sa:mi: | - | 'lord' highly deferential address term |
| ni:nka | - | 'you-pl' second person honorific singular pronoun |
| avuṅka | - | 'he' honorific referential pronoun |
| -a:nka | - | honorific pronominal termination |

the middle and younger generation of scheduled community have utilised this opportunity and are slowly stepping up in the social mobility ladder. The younger generation of the Gounder community and Brahmin community has accepted this change and give respect to the younger generation of scheduled community.

This is reflected in the linguistic usages as well. They exchange the honorific pronoun -nka to each other and the honorific attention caller ennanka is used to draw the attention of one another. They share the seat on varandahs or tinnai. Similarly the educated scheduled caste people are able to get tea served in stainless steel cups on par with other higher social groups.

8.5.8 Eye Sight

Eye contact plays an important role in determining the status of persons taking part in the speech act. To mark one person's higher status, the speaker does not see the hearer's eye directly. Thus, a landless labourer while speaking to his superior landlord, avoids seeing the master's eye directly. The agricultural labourer either looks ^{at} the earth or any other direction than his master's face. If a labourer converses with another labourer, then both of them can look one another directly.

In the inter-personal level, eye plays an important role in prohibiting or exercising power, etc. Generally, service caste and scheduled caste people particularly those who belong to the Parayar and Cakkiliar groups are not permitted to see the food which the people of backward and forward communities are eating. At the time of eating the food, if a person of the same caste comes to the landlord's house, he will be invited for eating. However, if scheduled caste people come, they will not be invited.

8.5.9 Face

Face is the most important part of the 'face to face' interaction between two persons. Just like eye contact, face is also used as a parameter. The face may be seen or may not be seen by those who take part in the speech event, i.e., speakers or hearers in accordance with their status level. Facial expression of emotions also is very important. When two equals meet, say,

landlord - landlord

educated - educated

they smile and enquire about each other and they exchange pleasantries.

When two labourers meet each other, their face becomes bright often while their conversation is in progress. However, when a landlord and an agricultural labourer converse, that is, during

unequal encounter, smiling is very minimum and exchange of pleasantries is not possible. It is observed that smiling does not take place in front of or in the vicinity of a superior.

8.6 Language and Silence

8.6.1 Culture and Address Forms

The relationship between the mother-in-law and the son-in-law is an avoidance based relationship in Tamil culture. While most of the kinship terms are used to address as well as to refer to the concerned kins, a notable situation is found in the case of mothers-in-law who use no address term to address their sons-in-law. Though address and reference terms are available for mother-in-law (i.e., ma:mi:ya:r, atte, akka:), these are all not used to address her. Similarly, the terms such as marumakan, ma:ple are available as address terms to address sons-in-law but they are not used to address the sons-in-law.

Similarly uttering the names of husbands and the elder sons of paternal or maternal affinal relatives is a taboo for women in Tamil culture. Thus, culture prohibits the use of certain address forms.

8.6.2 Prolonged Pause and Status

A prolonged pause between the words also makes a sense that the speaker gives respect to the hearer. When a subordinate makes a request to his superior a prolonged pause is found between the words.

koñcam cunna:mpu

persu. lime

irunta: kuṭunka

if available give + Hon. Suf.

'If lime is available, please give (me)'

This, pause in between words mark the respect to the addressee.

8.6.3 Incomplete Sentences and Status

In some contexts, an incomplete sentence produced by the speaker also marks respect to the addressee.

sa:r nu:ru ru:pa:ykku

sir hundred rupees + Dat.

The above request is made to a superior along with the non-verbal behaviour that a hundred rupees currency note on the speaker's

hand or inserting the finger into the pocket to take the currency note out, which implies that he needs change. Thus kinesic clue accompanying with some linguistic structure or feature make a sense.

8.7 Address Conflicting Situations

When a person is addressed without honorific forms, then the addressee will retort the addresser by means of not responding to the addresser's call. Thus, a village sweeper did not respond to the call of an old age speaker of Gounder community who used the following sentence :

to:tti inka va:ta:

menial! here come + Non. Hon. PT

'Oh menial! come here'

The forty year old sweeper did not respond to this call and reported to the neighbour in the following way.

avan

to:ttinna:

ku:ppitta:n

he + Non.Hon. menial + quotative + Inter. called + Non.Hon. + PT

ku:ppittuk kitte:

irukkattum

call Pre.Con. + Emph. let (he) be

'Did he call me as a menial (then) I shall not respond to him'

Thus, use of non honorific address term leads to break up in the personal relationship though they are in unequal statuses.

8.8 Gestures

Gestures are formed by movements of the parts of the body such as facial muscles, head, limbs or body. These movements may express a thought, feeling or mood. These acts may accompany oral speech and thus they may be used to emphasize the ideas.

8.8.1 Gestures as Interpersonal Ranking

While speaking with the superiors, the subordinates are expected to be quiet without making any movements of the body in front of them. Thus, between an agricultural labourer and a landlord, the interaction has been marked by very limited body movements on the part of agricultural labourer whereas landlord freely uses the body movements such as directing the hands towards something or somebody, etc.

However, among equals the gestures are used freely. While talking with the superiors, the subordinates accept the views of superior by moving their head upwards and downwards and verbalizing a:ma:nka 'yes'. Thus a verbal act is associated with non-verbal act to emphasize the theme.

8.8.2 Non-Verbalizing Phenomena

When certain individuals have been asked to make a request to their superiors not to park the bicycles in front of their houses, the subordinates replied that instead of making request to the superiors, they themselves would take the cycles away and park them aside. This shows that in some levels, linguistic strategies are of little use in speech acts. Thus, in front of the superior, a subordinate hesitates to make a request. Here non-verbalization plays a role as a status denoting device. Moreover, it indicates that subordinates avoid giving instructions to their superiors.

8.9 Conclusion

The above analysis brings out the close relationship between the social structure and the physical lay out of a village. The settlement pattern closely correlates with the social structure. Apart from this, the physical posture of an individual, the space between the speaker and hearer, observance of silence, etc. have linguistic significance in a communication situation. The misuse or an improper use of an address form results in conflict and break up of relationship. From this study, it has become possible for us to show that the social change taking place in the village situation, especially the economic and educational development of the backward and scheduled communities, is reflected in the way in which they are addressed by others.