Language And Culture: A Study In The Sociolinguistic Perspective

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Abstract: Language is a life line for the whole of humanity and, culture ensures social as well as communal identity to the people of different communities and societies on the face of Earth. Both language and culture are constantly connected to each other and continuously influence each other because of multiple social factors. The study in hand connects the theoretical threads to highlight the relationship between language and culture. Among different genres of literature fiction may be referred to as a rich manifestation of integration and amalgamation of language and culture. The discussion owns some references to this genre and finally concludes that it is difficult rather impossible for a writer to exclude his/her cultural influences in his/her linguistic productivity.

Keywords: Language, Culture, Study, Sociolinguistic, Perspective

1. Introduction

Language and culture play significant role in the social integration and connectivity among the people of a society. To understand the basic concepts of language and culture it is pertinent to look deep into their relationship, their individual place and their indigenous contexts. What is language, how does it affect the thought pattern of an individual, its place in society, its interpretation within a speech community or outside it, cultural implication and practices on linguistic expressions, contextual interpretation of linguistic expressions and practices, their respective frames for their interpretation and meaning making process may be the topics of discussion.

The study in hand discusses the key concept and theories of culture and its link has been developed with language. Culture is an umbrella but vague term. It is, therefore, necessary to discuss it in detail. I have, therefore, presented and discussed different theories of culture, its relationship with language, its different contexts and its overall influence on linguistic thought patterns. The purpose of these theories is to inform the reader about cultural implications and deep rooted thought patterns which can take different shapes and forms and therefore require different vantage points to look at human behaviours and actions. Different cultural theories see culture from different perspectives. Some consider it different form nature, some view it as knowledge, some as communication, some as a system of mediation, some as a system of practices, some as a system of participation and some as predicting and interpreting. These different theories have their own distinct point of views and they see culture from a different lens. The purpose to discuss these theories here is to highlight this concept that due to these theories different people look at and interpret culture from different positions. These different positions, then, compel us to see language from

a different angle specific to one group or the other. These different angles then generate diverse shades of meanings and interpretations specific to one culture or the other.

2.   Objectives of the Study

Certain objectives have been targeted for the present study therefore, the study is meant to

1. highlight the relationship between language and culture,
2. analyze the cultural influences in linguistic manifestation through literature,
3. emphasize the significance of language and culture in the process of understanding a text.

3.   Discussion

Language and culture carry strong relationship since the birth of communities and societies on the face of Earth. Different linguists and scholars have delineated it in different ways in their theoretical deliberations in different span of time. Some theoretical standings of some eminent linguists and scholars are put together here to meet the objectives of the present study. However, in the following paragraph the discussion begins with the prevalent concept of culture.

Defining and explaining culture is not an easy task. It is because of this unexplainable nature of culture that the relationship between culture and language becomes much more difficult to explain. We can never define culture in the objective sense of the term. We always study and interpret it in relation to our own society in which we live and cultural belief, norms and values that we observe. We see and observe culture from our specific positionality and situatedness. It is something that keeps different societies different and distinct from each other because of their cultural situated norms and belief systems, ways of knowing and doing things, ways of communicating and addressing one another, ways of referring to different objects and beings

in a culture specific context, ways of carrying propositional and procedural knowledge associated different cultural specific meanings and interpretation and much more (Duranti, 1997). It is a distinction that keeps us separate and gives us identity – identity to make us recognized as an individual and as a group too. "Culture' is what 'others' have, what makes them and keeps them different, separate from us", says Duranti. (1997: 23). But defining and interpreting culture objectively has now become a dilemma to which Bakhtin calls a ghost. He says that "we have conjured up the ghost of objective culture, and now we do not know how to lay it to rest" (Cited in Bosted, 2005).

This takes us into another aspect of culture where it is seen as knowledge. It is a competent participation in a community whose part we are. Here culture is seen not as an entity to be learned but an abstract phenomenon that is there in the mind of the people of a speech community. Here comes the cognitive anthropologists who see culture as propositional and procedural knowledge. Propositional knowledge is a belief system. It is a "know-that" type of knowledge that is out there in society and one comes to know it with the interaction of the people around and the established norms of the society. On the other hand, procedural knowledge is that comes through observation and by knowing and understanding the procedures that people follow to accomplish some tasks like cooking, hunting etc. It is this reason that makes culture an abstract phenomenon.

According to Goodenough:

> "…culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behaviour, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and

otherwise interpreting them." (Goodenough 1964:36 as quoted by Duranti, 1997:27)

This links culture with language as both are cognitive entities. We describe and interpret culture with the help of language. "To know a culture is like knowing a language. They both are mental realities. Furthermore, to describe a culture is like describing a language." (Duranti 1997: 27). Duranti further says that "cognitive anthropologists rely then on the knowledge of linguistic categories and their relationships to show that to be part of a culture means (minimally) to share the propositional knowledge and the rules of inference necessary to understand whether certain propositions are true (given certain premises). To this propositional knowledge, one might add the procedural knowledge to carry out tasks" (Duranti 1997: 28-29). According to cognitive anthropologist Edward Hutchins, there is a very strong relation between the human and social material resources available for interpretation and thinking. Knowledge is not always in the individual mind. It is also in the tools that a person uses, in the environment that allows for certain solutions to become possible, in the joint activity of several minds and bodies aiming at the same goal, in the institutions that regulate individual's functions and their interactions. (Duranti 1997: 31)

It is, then, not individual alone that is in charge for change but a whole system that is coherent and keeps individuals united to perform their own individual tasks under its umbrella. It is an individual and 'joint activity of several minds' that makes change possible and to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct the existing knowledge but from a different perspective. This gives an idea that knowledge is distributed. Every individual is at least representative of one aspect of it not the whole. Edward Sapir understanding this nature of culture very rightly says that "Every individual is, then, in a very real sense, a representative of at least one sub-culture

which may be abstracted from the generalized culture of the group of which he is a member" (Sapir 1949a:515). Duranti further discussing this nature of knowledge according to the western popular views says that:

All members of a culture are considered to have the same knowledge. But this is clearly not the case. People from different parts of the country, different households within the same community, or sometimes even individual within the same family, may have quite different ideas about fundamental cultural beliefs (e.g. the identity or existence of God), different expertise in mundane cultural practices (e.g. cooking and eating), and different strategies for interpreting events and problem solving. (Duranti 1997:32).

These fundamental cultural beliefs, cultural practices and different strategies for interpreting events and problem solving lead individual to see 'the truth' from a different angle. Living in the same community, people's cultural beliefs affect the thought pattern of the member of that community. It constructs a different perspective to what I name as 'cognitive wall' to see through but in a specific direction. These cognitive walls can be of religion, creed, norms, cultural values and belief systems within a speech community or within a group of people sharing some common grounds. If these cognitive walls are existing in their sensitivities within one community, then these walls can be 'thickly described' in intercultural communities where cultural beliefs and thought patterns are in a larger contrast with each other.

Language carries with it different cultural beliefs and thought patterns of a speech community. It classifies them according to their importance to carry out different functions. Different

individuals of a speech community share these beliefs and communicate their thought patterns from a specific point of view. About this Duranti says that "Language, not only as a system of classification, but also as a practice, a way of taking from and giving to the world, comes to us with many decisions already made about point of view and classification." This stereotypical behaviour is because of "the unreflective use of linguistic expressions that presuppose gender, race, or class differentiation." (Duranti 1997: 32). John Gumperz strengthens this view and highlights the specific way in which language can be a barrier to social integration in a multilingual society. This view is further strengthened by Coupland when he says in one of his article Sociolinguistic Theory that:

> Social scientists taking a more hermeneutic stance 'regard theory as primarily an interpretation of social reality which leads to understanding via adequate description… [They try to identify] the meaning of an action from the point of view of the social actor's own culture' (Turner 1996: 7 as quoted by
> Coupland, Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 1998: 113)

Coupland further says that Ethnomethodology, conversation analysis and Gumperz's theory of conversational inferencing are approaches which tend this way (Coupland, Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 1998: 113)

The third group of linguists and anthropologists see culture as communication. This theory sees culture as a system of signs. The basic view of this theory is that: "culture is a representation of the world, a way of making sense of reality by objectifying it in stories, myths, descriptions, theories, proverbs, artistic products and performances. In this perspective, people's

cultural products, e.g. myths, rituals, classifications of the natural and social world, can also be seen as examples of the appropriation of nature by humans through their ability to establish symbolic relationships among individuals, groups, or species" (Duranti 1997: 33)

This view of culture as communication was first presented by Claude Levi-Strauss. According to him "all cultures are sign systems" that help to categorize the world in terms of binary opposition. Levi-Strauss believed that it is not people who communicate reality but reality itself that communicates through people in different shapes — 'stories, myths, description, theories, proverbs, artistic products and performances'.

For Geertz, culture is communication too. But unlike Levi-Strauss he does not see 'cultural differences as variations of the same unconscious human capacity for abstract thought'. He tries 'to understand underlying similarities among cultures'. He understands human culture through interpretive practices rather than just trying to explain it. These interpretive practices are on an on process, every time with a new understanding. This relates his perspective with Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. According to Geertz:

> The concept of culture I suppose … is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (Geertz 1973: 5 as quoted by Duranti 1997: 36)

These webs, for Geertz, are the thick areas that need interpretation in order to understand meaning. It is a careful investigation of one's cultural beliefs and thought patterns to see, analyze, interpret and reflect in order to understand the truth that is hidden in text. Language is culturally embedded and its interpretation is not possible without cultural webs' interpretation and understanding. With the help of language people interact with each other and communicate their ideas which are developed by the culture whose part they are. It is very much public. "Culture … is public … it does not exist in someone's head …" says Geertz. It means that culture is an external phenomenon that is 'out there' to be seen and observable for interpretation. It is through this interpretation due to which different meanings are possible as it is a social phenomenon.

Culture is communication but this communication is not only the semiotic one rather it is indexical one as well. It is this indexicality of signs that we point to, presuppose or bring into "the present context beliefs, feelings, identities, events". This helps in order to understand and interpret the meaning of the text. Language is arbitrary in nature. In it a word not only stands for an object or concept but points to something in the context. It is this contextuality of meaning that is further interpretable.

Culture is also viewed as a system of prediction and interpretation of the phenomenon around — the people, their behaviour, their speech acts, their performances, and their individual occurrences whether written or spoken. Speakers are social actors and they predict different sorts of behaviour in different contexts and then interpret it in order to make sense of the text or utterances. Without this act of prediction their life is not stable. Duranti says that they live 'in a state of chaos and uncertainty that would be too unstable to ensure their well-being'. He further says that:

> People make predictions such as which language or dialect is appropriate to speak in a given situation, that a question is likely to be followed by an answer, and that people will laugh at their jokes if they are friendly. (Duranti, 1997: 47)

These social actors are complex beings and participate in complex systems which are almost unpredictable, says Duranti. This unpredictable behaviour of people places one in a difficult situation to interpret their behaviour. "How often something happens (is said, heard, written, done) is important in people's life" (Duranti 1997: 48). Their behviours may be different manifestations of single phenomena. Due to different manifestation of prediction and interpretations, there is the possibility of different interpretations. Duranti further strengthens this idea and says that" In addition to being open to the possibility of different interpretations (by different people, at different times, in different languages or styles), we must actively engage in the suspension (or "bracketing") of the most obvious interpretation, an act that phenomenological approaches have often seen as a crucial step for the rational understanding of the world. As students of human behavior, we must realize that what might appear "natural" about any one interpretation may in fact be extremely "cultural" and hence that confessions of ignorance or uncertainty are just as important as the reasonable explanations provided by our favorite consultant or our favorite theorist. (Duranti, 1997: 48)

This culture dependent human behaviour and its interpretation in different contexts and in different situations are the most important

aspects for human behaviour predictability and its practices in different situations. This active engagement in the suspension of the most obvious interpretation is a way to open up new possibilities for different interpretations depending upon different human behaviours and cultural practices. Human's linguistic practices are context and culture dependent. This strengthens the concept of meaning specificity in specific contexts. Agar terms this specific context as 'interpretive frames' that are necessary in order to interpret and understand the meaning of the text in context. According to Duranti:

> The extent to which a given phenomenon is seen as an occurrence of a more general category is partly due to our interpretive frame. This is true of individual sounds and words, which are never pronounced exactly in the same way, as well as of types of speech exchanges or verbal performances. This means that we always have two choices: look for the general in the particular or the particular in the general. The theoretical question is always also an empirical question: what is the ground for our generalization? Where did we get our categories? Where did we look for evidence? (Duranti, 1997: 48)

He further says:

> Social actors themselves are involved in the work of making their actions and their interpretations fit into particular

"models." An actor-oriented approach tries to understand those models through an analysis of the participants' specific actions.

Finally, all theories are mortal. After the discussion of language, culture and linguistic diversity, here our purpose is to bring in the discussion of different anthropologists and linguists and their point of view in relation to interpret the text to draw cultural meaning of the text under study. Here by 'cultural meaning' we mean that language and culture are social phenomenon and the text constructed is also a creative work of a writer who him/herself is the part of that speech community. In order to understand the text there is a need to interpret it at different levels and in different interpretive frames. For this purpose different interpretive frames are required which give logical and systematic understanding of the text and the meaning it constructs.

If we adopt a dialogic perspective on culture, meaning of a text is understood in its dialogic nature. It views culture in its dialogic nature, that is, as "emergent and dynamic, rather than as stable and given" (Bostad, 2005: 2). As language and culture are inseparable and have intricate relationships, meaning of the text is understood through interaction and interpretation which is social in nature. In this sense meaning is also "dynamic and embedded in social life."

Cultural aspect of the study of the text operates with an extended concept of language (Risager, 2006). Stuart Hall (1997) explains this extended concept of language. He maintains:

> How does language construct meaning? How does it sustain the dialogue between participants which enables them to build up a

culture of shared understanding and so interpret the world in roughly the same way? Language is able to do this because it operates as a representational system. In language, we use signs and symbols– whether they are sounds, written words, ectronically produced images, musical notes, even objects – to stand for or represent to other people our concepts, ideas and feelings (Cited in Risager, 2006).

Language is the most important means of communication through which we conduct our life. We communicate in different contexts and these contexts and situations are created by the speech community whose part the speakers are. These speech communities have their own and separate culture and ways of looking at and to live life. Communication context is connected with culture in multiple and complex ways. It seems fruitful for me, for example, to view language in cultural context and its respective frames of reference which help to understand meaning; the way it is written, the way it is communicated, and the way it is understood by an insider and by an outsider.

Language is culturally embedded and cannot be understood without the context specific to that society that bears that language. "A social group", says Gumperz, "held together by frequency of social interaction patterns and set off from the surrounding areas by weaknesses in the line of communication" (Hudson: 1980 p.26). This 'frequency of social interaction patterns' decreases at border areas and dilutes to a considerable level when it enters into another neighbouring social group which is distinct in its culture and social patterns. This distinction of culture and social patterns are reflected through their language.

This concept of culture and social patterns leads one towards the most important concept of language, that is, 'linguistic determinism.' This makes us recall Sapir- Whorf Hypothesis that language determines thought to a considerable extant. To what extent language determines thought process is questioned. But this linguistic determinism is not fully true as humans have a peculiar capability of creativity that is necessary for their survival. According to Sapir:

> "Language is … a self-contained, creative symbolic organization, which not only refers to experience largely acquired without its help but actually defines experience for us by reason of its formal completeness and because of our unconscious projection of its implicit expectations into the field of experience."
> (Sapir, cited in Lucy, 1992:20)

This shows that language categories are necessary to anticipate experiences even if they do not have any direct relation with the experience because of its abstractness and arbitrariness. This abstractness and arbitrariness of a language is difficult to understand as there is no direct relationship between a word and the object it signifies. Language is 'self-contained' in the sense that it keeps all social patterns that run through the society and are understood fully by the people of that society. "Language is a guide to 'social reality'… Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society … the 'real world' is to a large extant unconsciously build up on the

language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached … We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation … (Sapir, cited in Lucy, 1992:22)

It is this concept of a language which has become 'the medium of expression' for a social group. That social group thinks and acts on 'the lines laid down' by their language. Language shapes their thoughts and provides a framework to think and see things from a particular perspective. It is because of this framework that people construct their own 'social reality'. In the same way another social group constructs a different 'social reality' under the framework provided by their language. It is because of this reason that "the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously build up on the language habits of the group." Different societies have different worldviews peculiar to their culture in which language is embedded. But this does not mean that one worldview is better than the other one, rather they are different worldviews and specific 'interpretive frames' are required to interpret and understand their peculiar worldviews. In order to study a specific worldview, culture provides interpretive frames to understand language which then leads to the understanding of the peculiar 'social reality' constructed by that specific society. Misinterpretation of indigenous 'social reality' by non-indigenous people may lead to variation in meaning and so differences arise. This happens when one tries to overlook indigenous culture and studies language independently and interprets it according to his/her own cultural background. "The culture of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to

read over the shoulder of those to whom they properly belong." (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000: 97). In order to understand indigenous work and worldview one has to study indigenous culture and cultural situatedness of meanings as they appear in the indigenous culture and context.

Michel Agar talks about 'interpretive frames' in order to study language. He says that language of a society is best understood when we interpret it in its context. These texts and contexts are interpreted in cultural frame. According to him "when we lift up a piece of discourse— be it lexical item, utterance, or extended text— interpretive strands of association and use stick to it like putty." (Agar, 1997: 466). These interpretive strands of association and use are reshaped by "the analyst into interpretive frame." But the analyst develops these interpretive frames on the basis of his/her knowledge about the language and the culture under study. Agar says that frames are necessary for the interpretation and understanding of the language and its embeddedness in its culture. He explains further that:

> "Frames are structures of interrelated expectations into which a particular expression fits. Frame provides a context in terms of which an expression makes sense, knowledge in terms of which the poetic echoes can be made explicit. Frames vary in scope, link to other frames, and in general offer a useful systematic fiction on terms of which the analyst can make explicit a way to understand, a way to interpret, a problematic pieces of language." (Agar, 1997: 467)

These 'problematic pieces of language' are not easy to understand and interpret. They are

'puttied thickly' in a language through their association and use in the society. It is because of this reason that frames vary in their scope depending upon the context and association of some words and meaning which are puttied so thickly in one's culture that it becomes very difficult for other's to interpret and understand it fully. Due to this reason language is difficult to understand from a non-indigenous lens as the non-indigenous reader sees it through the medium of his/her culture and language. Frames, says Agar, provide a context. This context is something which is embedded in culture and culture is something that 'happens to' the people when they encounter differences and become conscious of something within themselves. Different expressions fit and adjust in an interpretive frame specific to a culture that belongs to one society. A text written in one's culture is an ensemble of the norms, ways of doing and knowing things' contexts, and values of that culture no matter that text is written in native language that belongs to one culture or the text which is written in a non-native language that does not belong to that culture. Knowing a second language means to be aware of the norms and traditions of the foreign culture. But it is not possible to grasp and understand each and every norm, custom, and tradition of that culture fully. There are certainly certain areas which are messy and grey, which are insurmountable and not possible to be understood fully. These are the points which Whorf refers to as 'Whorfian cliffs' and Agar as 'rich points'.

Agar refers to Sapir who says that a language is "a mountain range with plenty of valleys and trails and a few vertical cliffs" (Agar, 1997: 467). He further says that "Rather than a Whorfian wall, a Whorfian Alps would be a better image" (Agar, 1997: 467). According to him: "the cliffs are difficult because— on one side of the language barrier or another, or perhaps on both sides— the problematic bit of language is puttied thickly into far-reaching networks of association and many situations of use. When one grabs such a piece of language, the putty is so thick and so spread out that it's impossible to lift the piece of language out" (Agar, 1997: 467) These cliffs are the indigenous thought pattern which is difficult to interpret and understand without specific interpretive frame. If these difficulties are overlooked, there is a considerable chance of misinterpretation of an indigenous language from a non-indigenous lens and so misconception arises. An interpretive frame provides room to understand localized text and its culturally situated meanings puttied thickly in a society. It is because of this reason that an indigenous reader comparatively better understands an indigenous text as he/she is culturally situated and puttied thickly in that culture that provides them with interpretive frames for better understanding.

Agar discusses 'the Whorfian Alps' and says that in linguistic communication among different people having different languaculture, many cultural and linguistic differences arise. These may be of different nature and of different levels. By different nature we mean that these cultural differences may be of religious, social, political and of ethnic levels, whereas by different levels, we mean, that all cultural and linguistic differences cannot be of same levels of intensity— some may be small, some large and some unable to be understood. Agar calls these insurmountable differences as 'rich points'. These are the rich points where people misunderstand each other. He says: "the problem is Whorfian, with a simple twist. Unlike Whorf's the argument about language differences is not a global one, that two languages, in general, constitute an insurmountable or difficult barrier, depending on which version of Sapir-Whorf hypothesis you hold to. Instead, the argument is that points of contact vary — some, perhaps most, are easy jumps; some are traversed only with

difficulty; and a few are almost impossible to connect. (Agar, 1997: 467)

Interpretive frames are located and constructed according to localized culture for better understanding of the localized text. This can be constructed keeping in mind the social surroundings, norms, values, religion, and the language of a society. These factors play a considerable role in a social group and are helpful to construct an interpretive frame to understand localized text produced in that society. This interpretive frame is helpful for the reader who reads the text from an indigenous or non-indigenous lens. It helps to interpret and understand the indigenous/localized text.

Agar refers to culture as an individual experience on the basis of individual encounter with it in day to day communication and living. One lives one's culture. It is something which is immeasurable, and we only feel it while owning it. Without owning it we cannot feel it as we are not living it. Due to this phenomenon we misinterpret it and differences arise. These differences can be of different nature and at different levels. By different nature I mean that it can be of religious, political, social, economic, and ethical in nature. This is because these dimensions provide different ways of thinking and acting. It makes one aware and informed about the inner working of human beings who wear that culture. This is not something as an external phenomenon.

> Culture is … what happens to you when you encounter differences, become aware of something in yourself, and work to figure out why the differences appeared. Culture is an awareness, a consciousness, one that reveals the hidden self and opens paths to other ways of

being. (Agar, 1994: 20, italics in original as quoted by Risager, 2006: 111)

Culture, then, is something that happens to an individual. As I have discussed in Chapter 1 that culture provides linguistic resources and these linguistic resources are the cloths of individual's life history and the society in which that individual is living before birth. Before birth I mean, that individual's parents and grandparents are very much part of cultural resources and these resources transfer to their children with the help of language and ways of doings and knowing things. Understanding of the world outside and around comes with cultural resources and cultural practices. It is very much conscious. If it is not conscious then linguistic development is not possible. Individual's linguistic differences are the key resources for language development and the thought pattern specific to that society. Individuals of a specific society move from one place to another and absorb different cultural norms and practices of different cultures where they live for some specific time frame. This absorption makes them capable to interpret and understand 'the other's culture'. By 'the other's culture' I mean the culture that belongs to a different speech community and is different in worldviews organized and systematized by their language and thought patterns. This different worldview is dependent on their language. To put this another way is to say that language controls and directs an individual's thinking and thought patterns to see, analyze, interpret and understand the phenomenon around them in order to make sense of the world. This process takes place both at conscious and unconscious levels. At unconscious level one lives one's culture without even being aware of it. But language development occurs when one uses linguistic resources and practice it in order to change and interpret the phenomenon around and to give new meaning to the existing phenomenon

besides discovering the new ones. All this process takes place at conscious level.

> There is a considerable amount of differentiation within any given speech community in terms of how people pronounce words, construct and interpret utterances, and produce more complex discourse units across social contexts (Duranti, 1997: 51).

Duranti further says that it is challenging to define 'the boundaries of speech community and the type of knowledge that is necessary for being a competent member of such speech community (Duranti, 1997: 51). With all these implications it, then, becomes very difficult for an 'outsider' to un-nit the complicated interwoven webs of cultural threads and intricacies of linguistic resources and its reflection in linguistic practices. This complicated linguistic system, then, stands independently and is complete in itself. We have different languages because we need different expressions to express a single phenomenon present in the world. A very well quoted example is of Eskimos' expression on the phenomenon of snow depending on the use of those expressions differently in different situations. These patterns exist in order to make one see the world around them, to analyse it, interpret it and to understand it. These patterns are very much important in one language. 'Language carries with it patterns of seeing, knowing, talking, and acting. Not patterns that imprison you, but patterns that mark the easier trails for thought and perception and action' (Agar, 1994: 71 as quoted by Risager, 2006:112).

In order to explain the intricate and complicated relationship of language and culture Agar gives the concept of 'languaculture'. By languaculture, he means that a complicated and intricate relationship exists between language and culture and is inseparable. We cannot study language without culture and culture does not exist without language. Language provides linguistic expressions to express different phenomenon while culture helps and provides contexts to explain and understand the meaning which is culturally situated. An individual's worldview is what his/her language provides him/her and its implications within the culture whose active member he/she is. Ager also explains this relationship of language and culture and says that 'The langua in languaculture is about discourse, not just about words and sentences. And the culture in languaculture is about meanings that include, but go well beyond, what the dictionary and the grammar offer' (Agar, 1994: 96, italics in the original as quoted by Risager, 2006: 112).

Agar further explains this relationship of language and culture by explaining the functions and procedures of language and culture. Language, he says, exists within every breath of an individual and inhales with it the culture whose product it is and where the individual is living. Language makes one think, act and react on day to day conversation and communication and to interpret meaning within the contexts that culture provides. Agar says that:

> Language, in all its varieties, in all the ways it appears in everyday life, builds a world of meanings. When you run into different meanings, when you become aware of your own and work to build a bridge to the others, 'culture' is what you're up to. Language fills the spaces between us with sound; culture forges the human connection through them. Culture is in language, and language is loaded with culture. (Agar, 1994: 28 as quoted by Risager, 2006: 112)

Agar discusses about the construction of interpretive frames and says that in order to develop cultural awareness, a layman should first collect rich points and then investigate that whether those rich points form some sort of patterns. These patterns of a language are best understood by different people placing them in linguistic practice in a specific situation in order to define and understand frames. He says that 'rich points' are very important to interpret and understand in order to make sense of the text. "It is there that there is the opportunity to glimpse 'culture', to become conscious of cultural differences" (Risager, 2006:112)

We as researchers, question the analyses and interpretations of the critics, linguists and anthropologists on the bases of the background that they have. No doubt, they interpret and critically analyse the subject but even then, their interpretation is situated unconsciously in their own culture and they interpret it from the cultural lenses which they are wearing — in which they are nurtured. They try to get the 'Native point of view' but their own views are culturally shaded. They themselves are culturally situated. They try to study, interpret and understand 'the Others' from their cultured lens. we, therefore, question their way of looking at things. How can they understand their feelings, emotions, their ways of looking at and interpreting things, and more generally their worldviews which is shaped by their religion, norms, cultural values, gender, class, age and many other social factors? To analyse and interpret cultural discourse, written or spoken, in post-modernist stance and employing post-structuralist view to look at things is also not without problem. Misunderstanding arises out of misinterpretation of the culturally embedded discourse. If one looks at and interprets the image of America in 'The Reluctant Fundamentalist', one must first define one's positionality as a critic, interpreter,

linguist or anthropologist. This positionality will give 'a specific view' to look at thing.

There is American movie 'The Vantage Point' in which the killing of the American president is presented through seven different vantage points. These vantage points/positions give 'an aspect' of 'the truth' which contributes to the understanding of the whole event – truth as a whole. But when at the end all those vantage points/ positions were combined, viewers came to know 'the truth' which the presenter wanted us to know. This was about 'the truth' that was rational and was being presented in movie form. But if we interpret these incidents our interpretations will be different at different times even though the events (the movie) remain the same. Every time we will come up with a different interpretation and understanding of the same event. These 'materials' of social facts of globalization (Blommaert, 2007) never change but our interpretation and way of looking at things give a new meaning to the same material. Blommaert further explains the same phenomenon as:

> Imagine these materials are a Coca-Cola can on a table; if you walk around the table while watching the can, stop every now and then and describe the can as you see it. The description will each time be partly similar and partly different. Yet it is the same can, and no singly description of it is comprehensive, since every single description is biased by the particular position from which we described it. My aim here is not to provide a comprehensive analysis, but to identify and illustrate various positions from which we can analyse social facts of globalization (Blommaert, 2007).

So is the case with our background knowledge and influence of our brought up which is deeply rooted in our society when we interpret and analyse things, behaviour, values, cultural norms of 'the Others'. We interpret it from our 'native view point' which shadows the Other's 'Native point of view' no matter how rational we are. Written discourse can never be detached from its author/creator as they provide the reader a positionality to look at the given discourse. The writer is culturally embedded and can never detach him/herself from the text which s/he has constructed.

4.   Conclusion

In view of the above discussion it may be concluded that language and culture share a very strong relationship and, cultural manifestations are not truly possible without language and linguistic manifestations stand equivocal without appropriate cultural shadows. Beside linguistic proficiency, a piece of literature also demands cultural awareness at the end of the reader and this awareness occupies significant part in the domain of writer's cultural background. Although, the element of subjective interpretation at the end of the reader cannot be ignored but the know-how of writer's culture may help minimize it up to significant extent. However, for maximum understanding of the text both linguistic and cultural awareness stand paramount and inevitable.

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