CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC IDENTITY THROUGH UNDOCUMENTED BHOJPURI PROVERBS

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Abstract

The present paper tries to capture the socio-cultural and linguistic identity of Bhojpuri speakers through some selected and undocumented proverbs. The cultural iceberg model by Hall (1976) shows that the surface structure of an iceberg represents the physical entities of a community and the deep structure of that iceberg represents the inner world or features of the given community.

Keywords: Cultural Iceberg, Identity, Proverb, Bhojpuri.

Introduction

India has a rich heritage of traditions and cultures. Every community here has its unique culture, language and ethnicity. The main focus of this paper is on some undocumented proverbs used by the Bhojpuri language community members. On one hand, linguistic behaviour may help to reveal the social structure of a community and, on the other hand, it may untangle many unobservable concepts and perceptions of the given community.

Bhojpuri

Bhojpuri is an Indo-Aryan language. It is a non-scheduled language in India. It is also known as Bajpuri, Bhojapuri, Bhozpuri, Khotla, Piscimas, 'Bihari' (pejorative). Grierson (1884, 1980) states that it is a colloquial speech used predominantly in the Eastern region of Uttar Pradesh and in the state of Bihar. This dialect further falls into a group that has been referred as 'Bihari' or Magadhan, a single language that comprises three dialects, namely, Bhojpuri, Magadhi and Maithili. Ethnologue (25th ed., 2022) mentions that Bhojpuri is spoken mainly in Uttar Pradesh (Azamgarh, Ballia, Basti, Deoria, Ghazipur, Gorakhpur, Mirzapur, and Varanasi districts);

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Bihar (Champaran, Saran, and Shahabad districts); Jharkhand (Palamau and Ranchi districts); Madhya Pradesh; West Bengal; Assam and Delhi. It is also used in Mauritius, Nepal and South Africa. According to the 2011 census, there are 5,06,00,000 Bhojpuri speakers in India. The total number of users in all countries is 5,24,63,000. As a first language (L1) Bhojpuri is spoken by 5,23,03,000 speakers and as a second language (L2) there are 1,60,000 Bhojpuri speakers.

The following figure shows that there are some regional varieties of Bhojpuri language. Some of them can be mentioned here: Uttar Adarsh Bhojpuri, Paschim Adarsh Bhojpuri and Dakshin Adarsh Bhojpuri. It must be mentioned here that the data for the present paper was collected from the native Bhojpuri speakers of Varanasi districts where Paschim Adarsh Bhojpuri is used. The age group from whom the data was collected extends from 40 to 70 years old. Studies show that being located in a Hindi belt region, this language is ignored by its speakers themselves, as Hindi is a dominant language in terms of socio-economic status.

Figure 1: Bhojpuri language and its regional varieties collected from Bhojpuri Adhyayan Kendra, Benaras Hindu University on 29.06.2022

Proverb

The Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature And General Information (2020) defines proverb as "a short pithy saying in common and recognized use; a concise sentence often metaphorical or alliterative in form, which is held to express some truth ascertained by experience or observation and familiar to all." Proverbs are parts of linguistic expressions used by the speakers of a language in their day-to-day communication. These are transmitted from one generation to another verbally. The enigmatic mysteries of life are hidden in them: human experience, revaluation of past, warning and awareness for the future, encouragement and many more. They enlighten the younger generation through the wisdom contained

in them. The usage of proverbs is a simple way of saying traditional messages.

Cultural Iceberg

Hall (1976) presents the Cultural Iceberg model in his book called *Beyond Culture*. He shows that a culture can be compared to a natural iceberg whose only 10% is visible as it lies above the water and the rest i.e., 90% is submerged. This model shows that one can see, hear, taste, smell and touch the surface part of the culture. This consists of some observable phenomena like food, dress, music, drama, art, craft, literature, language and celebrations. But there is also a deep part of this culture which one cannot observe physically. This includes some unobservable phenomena like notions of modesty, concept of beauty, ideals governing child raising, relationship with animals, definition of sin, courtship practices, notions of leadership, concept of past and future, arrangement of physical space, concept of cleanliness, humour, attitudes toward elders, tempo of work, definition of obscenity, nature of friendship and many more.

Figure 2: Cultural Iceberg

In the current study, we are going to show what observable and unobservable phenomena are encoded in Bhojpuri proverbs. This analysis basically has two parts; one is linguistic representation and another is sociocultural representation of the Bhojpuri language community. Then, it is interpreted how linguistic identity and socio-cultural identity are constructed through the Bhojpuri proverbs.

Data Analysis

1. ɟekəɾ   ɟeʈne   \ɾəʈən
    whose-REL   how much   care
    wokəɾ   woʈne   pəʈən
    whose-COREL   how much-COREL   fall

'The greater the pampering, the greater the fall.'

The proverb in (1) teaches the given language community its value system. Linguistic analysis shows that alliteration is predominantly found here.

´ [ɹ-] : initial : ɹekəɾ, ɹet̪ne, ɹət̪ən
´ [-t̪ne] : final : ɹet̪ne, wot̪ne
´ [-t̪ən] : final : ɹət̪ən, pət̪ən

There are two pairs of relative and co-relative elements used: [ɹekəɾ : wokəɾ] and [ɹet̪ne : wot̪ne]. Therefore, it can be said that this proverb is syntactically a relative correlative construction.

2.   mən   mən bʰave   muɾi: hilave
       mind   mind like-PRS head nod-PRS

'One's wish is not shown to others by his/her behaviour.'

This is a way of expressing one's mind which is accompanied with body language. Interestingly, it can be noted here that the one's agreement with others is not shown rather the bodily movement by one's head indicates disapproval sportingly. Alliteration is found with *m* in *mən, muɾi:*, *ave* in *bʰave : hilave*.Complete reduplication is found in the case of *mən mən*.

3. ɹəIsən   mai: t̪əIsən   dʰi:ja
   as-REL   mother   as-COREL   daughter
   ɹəIsən   kakəɾ   vəIsən   bi:jɑ:
   as-REL   cucumber   as-COREL   seed

'Like fruits yield like seeds.'

This proverb teaches the value system to the younger generation of the given community. There is a mention of the kinship relationship between mother and daughter. Besides, natural objects like cucumber and seed are presented. There is a pair of relative – correlative elements: *ɹəIsən t̪əIsən, ɹəIsən vəIsən*. Alliteration is used with *-i:ja* in *dʰi:ja, bi:ja*.

4.   pəhilɑ: ɹi:t̪   məgɑ:ve   bʰi:kʰ
       first   victory   bring-PRS   beggary

'First success asks for modesty.'

This is again an instance of teaching value system to the community members. It implies that one should keep working hard rather than boasting on his first success because persistence and perseverance are valuable human characteristics. In *ɹi:t̪*, *ɹ* and *t̪* are unaspirated sounds and in *bʰi:kʰ*, *bʰ* and *kʰ* aspirated. Again, *ɹ* and *bʰ* are voiced consonants on one hand but on the other hand, *t̪* and *kʰ* are unvoiced consonants.

ʹ ɹiːʈ   : bʰiːkʰ
+V, -ASP i: -V, -ASP   : +V, +ASP i: -V, +ASP

5. mohɑn   gəilən   məlɑːi: kʰɑj
   Mohan   go-PST   cream   eat-NONFIN
   kʰɑi: lehlən   gəttɑː
   eat-CONJ   take-PST   a food

'Actions are different from words.'

Mohɑn is a popular name of Bhojpuri community. Also, it is an alternative name of Lord Shri Krishna in the epic *Mahabharat*. He is an important character in Indian mythology. It is well-known that he loved *məlɑːi:* and he used to take it secretively at his own house and also from the houses of neighbours. Then he was caught by his mother Yashoda and other female members of the neighbourhood respectively. From the point of linguistic view, it is seen that alliteration is used within *kʰaj , kʰai:*; *m* in *mohɑn , məlɑːi:*; *g* in *gəilən , gəttɑː*.

6.   ɹIyəte   gərhən   kə   gərɑːsɑː:
     live-CONVERB eclipse GEN eating
        mUəle   pə   pIndɑː   kə   ɑːsɑː:
        dying   on   pind   GEN   expectation

'Those who deny to follow rituals when alive expect honorary post-death ritualistic offerings.'

Here, in this example, we can easily see a double standard of a person as how one can turn his/her mind according to the situation. Such proverbs encourage us to live our life with full honesty and moral values whether the condition is in your favor or not. From linguistic point of view one can find alliteration in the following pattern:

Initial [g] in [gerhen] and [gerasa].

Final [s] in [gerɑːsɑː:] and [ɑːsɑɑ:].

7. ɹekər   pãv   nə   pʰəʈi:
   whose-REL   leg   negation crack-PST
   u: kɑː: jɑːne   pi:r
   he-COREL   what   know-SUBJ   pain

"One cannot feel others' pain without feeling his/her own"

One should not be treated inappropriately without knowing and understanding the actual situation of the sufferer. Our ancestors also believed that if you have never faced the difficulties of life, you cannot feel others' problems as well. Linguistically, we can also see the alliteration at the final position [ai] in [bivɑːi:] and [ai] in [pərɑːi]. There are relative and co-relative elements also

found like: [ɹekəɾ : u:]. So, it can be said that this proverb is syntactically a relative correlative construction as well.

Findings

This paper tries to capture the world view of the Bhojpuri community speakers which is portrayed through the proverbs prevalent in the community. It presents how they interact with each other (proverb 1), mental status expressing one's agreement with others where body language is important (proverb 2), how they perceive the natural world surrounding them (proverb 3), social behaviour (proverb 4) and work culture of this community (proverb 5). All these things, be it observable or unobservable mark the Bhojpuri identity through the above-given linguistic expressions. Moreover, the linguistic features like alliteration, relative correlative construction, reduplication, etc., are also seen in these proverbs. On the other hand, sub mergerd part indicates the value system in the shape of warning, advice, suggestions, etc. Moreover, this study also can be interpreted from the perspective of extensions of meaning in the field of cognitive semantics where various mechanisms of metaphor, metonymy and others can be analysed.

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