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WOMEN'S COLLEGE
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**A LINGUISTIC AND TEXTUAL
STUDY OF
"A PASSAGE TO INDIA"**

In fulfilment of an M.A thesis proposal submitted by

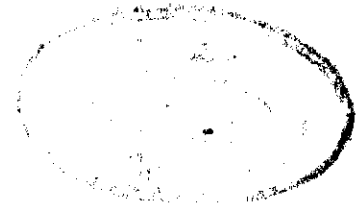
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Introduction

1.1 This thesis has as its primary aim the study of discourse. Discourse is used here to mean language in use. Usage entails context with all its complexity of features and processes.

The first working construct, therefore, is that language does not occur in a situational or cognitive vacuum. It is futile to study language without dissecting the different variables of context. Consequently, the study looks at discourse in relation to the contextual factors and modalities that help create it and sustain its coherence.

The second construct is that language is context sensitive i.e. patterns and organization in language form are influenced by the features of context. The research tries to participate in deciding what the relevant parameters are that bear on the structure of language

Thirdly, language is communicative and involves a dynamic effort to negotiate meaning. This effort, however, is sometimes threatened and sabotaged by cultural differences in habits of meaning and communicating.

1.2 Another main concern of the thesis is to engage in critical discourse analysis. This new area of study explains language in terms of its key role in making power relations, social struggle, ideologies, discrimination and prejudice. Language is seen as an

instrument of control as well as communication. Critical discourse analysis focuses on data from discourse types such as intercultural and unequal encounters. **Roberts et al.**¹ says that:

Critical discourse analysis is the detailed description of linguistic structures and vocabulary in order to explain how discourse manipulates people and maintains the social status quo. (p.78.)

Also :

It serves to show the strong and pervasive connections between linguistic structure and social structure. ² (p.6)

1.3 Methodological preliminaries of the thesis:

In trying to form a logic for human linguistic ability, **Chomsky**³ says that :

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest and errors in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. (p.3) ¹

Chomsky believes that language in use is degenerate and unworthy of study to begin with. With a conviction in

1.C. Roberts & al.(1992). Language and Discrimination. London:Longman.

2.R. Fowler & al. (1979). Language and Control. London : Routledge and Kegan Paul.

3. N. Chomsky. (1965). Aspects of the theory of syntax. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

"neutrality" and "idealization", Chomsky has since been aiming at a formal model of grammar that achieves what he calls explanatory adequacy. This he hopes will unravel the innate structure of the human mind.

The only merit of a formal model is that it is a restatement of the facts at a tighter level of abstraction and generalization. However, it is a model which has not remained unchallenged. There is one thing that a formal model cannot do, says **Givon**¹, "It cannot **explain** a single thing. Nor can it explain itself." (p.6).

Givon² emphasizes that:

A dysfunctional paradigm in science is a conceptual trap, constraining the mind of the practitioner just as viciously as steel bars would his body. (p.2)

Consequently, a functional explanatory approach to language use is the method adopted in this research. It allows for a holistic integration of different levels of analysis to be excersized.

1.4. The pragmatic study of language in various situations and contexts involves looking at pragmatic principles. These fall into two major classes. The first is composed of those which derive from cognitive language processing principles. The second class is constructed from those which are based on social convention and are culture dependent. The first is textual pragmatics while the second is social pragmatics. The

1. Talmy Givon. (1979). Understanding grammar. New York: Academic Press.

2. Ibid.

thesis works with both these fields respectively. The first chapter deals in textual pragmatics. It studies some principles of textual rhetoric and their relationship to interclausal coherence and grammar. Whereas the second and third chapters are involved with social pragmatics. The second chapter analyzes the interpersonal communication of racism in conversation. Furthermore, the third chapter discusses communication breakdown and miscommunication between different ethnic group members.

Each chapter deals with a different type of discourse , employs different analytic tools and is based on different research backgrounds. Therefore, each chapter required that its review of literature be allocated in that respective chapter .

1.5 The research will study two types of discourse :

- **Written narrative text.** (Chapter 1)
 - **Intragroup communication** (Chapter 2)
- **Dialogue**
 - **interethnic communication** (Chapter 3)

Both of these discourse types are taken from E.M.Forster's novel "A Passage to India". The written narrative text of the novel is looked at from a discourse point of view in chapter one of the

thesis. Whereas chapters two and three give attention to the dialogue present in the novel. The study will classify the dialogue in the novel into three classes according to type of participants or speakers involved.

CLASS 1. Dialogues between members of dominant in-group where ethnic attitudes are reproduced in talk about out-group members.

CLASS 2. Accounts of racist attitudes towards out-group members in dialogue between Indians.

CLASS 3. Interethnic dialogue, that is, discourse between members of different cultures .

Chapter 2 is concerned exclusively with Class 1 and Class 2 dialogues. Class 3 dialogues are given separate focus in Chapter 3.

1.4 Division of thesis and description of chapters :

Chapter One

Discourse, Textual Rhetoric and grammar in "A Passage To India."

This chapter includes a discussion of :

- The impact of the process of building a text world on grammar in written narrative production and comprehension.
- A review of different definitions of text .

- Principles of coding , grammaticalization and textual rhetoric.
- A discourse grammatical study of particular syntactic constructions in the novel namely, participle and verbless clause.⁵

Chapter Two

An analysis of the verbalization of ethnic prejudice in the dialogue of "A Passage To India" .

The goals of this chapter are as follows :

- An overview of the cognitive dimension of racism.

This section outlines how ethnic prejudices are represented and used in memory and how these affect intergroup perceptions, evaluation and interaction.

- An analysis of how underlying ethnic prejudice becomes manifest and how it can be traced in talk about out-group members.

This section looks at what in-group dominating members think about out-group members and how this relationship influences what they say . How their form of talk is organized at various levels is analysed.

- An analysis of how prejudiced discourse is produced and monitored by interactional strategies and social goals.

- An analysis of the persuasive dimension of communicating prejudiced attitudes.

Chapter Three

A pragmatic analysis of interethnic communication in "A Passage To India."

This chapter looks at communication breakdown or pragmatic failure in conversation between members of different ethnic groups. It begins by reviewing the literature on the pragmatics of interethnic communication . It then goes on to look at some revisions in the principle of cooperation . It also analyzes , using the dialogue in the novel, how differences in communicative styles , power relations and perceptions of the situation can influence the negotiation of meaning in a conversation.

Conclusion

Towards the end of the research the findings which result when the method of analysis is applied is concluded . Also the extent to which these findings help us understand the phenomenon at hand is reviewed. Furthermore, ideas for future research are suggested.

1.5 Terminology

The following are some clarifications of how some of the terms will be used in the thesis :

Discourse : This is used to mean language in use . This definition includes the communicative context of use and the text itself.