

Ambiguity and *Tatsama* : a critical study**Bipin Kumar Jha**Cell for Indian Sciences and Technology in Sanskrit
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Abstract:- All of us who live in the world of the word communicate through language. When we use language as a medium for accurately communicating ideas, that is why it is obvious to arise misunderstandings while meanings shift, for example 'दिनकरः अस्तं गतः'। In this example we find two different meanings. Such sentences come as ambiguous sentences. Thus we can say that language cannot exist without ambiguity. In this research paper I have tried to focus on ambiguity in the perspective of tatsama.

Key words- Language, semantics, linguistics, meaning, *tatsama*.

Ambiguity and How Does It Affect the Language.

There are the two methodologies of linguistic studies. First one is a synchronic aspect and second one is a diachronic aspect. Change of meaning or semantic change is the part of the broader area of diachronic linguistic aspect. Whenever we analyze languages in regard of historical period we have to inspect the manuscripts as well as other written resources belonging to the earlier periods and the later periods during the change of meaning. Sometimes we find that the later meaning is quite different from the earlier meaning but on the other hand it is observed that, a certain word can provide various meanings. This process reveals the meaning shift and plurality of meanings. These aspects create multidimensional changing in the lexical component of the language i.e. meaning shifts, ambiguity. We can see some examples

EXAMPLE- 01**Ambiguity in a word**

Sl. No	word	POS	Meaning	English meaning
1	हरि	Noun	बिल्ली के वर्ग में सबसे अधिक बलवान हिंसक जंगली जन्तु जिसके नर की गर्दन पर बड़े-बड़े बाल होते हैं	Lion
2	हरि	Noun	हिन्दुओं के एक प्रमुख देवता जो सृष्टि का पालन करने वाले माने जाते हैं	Lord Vishnu
3	हरि	Noun	यदुवंशी वसुदेव के पुत्र जो विष्णु के मुख्य अवतारों में से एक हैं	Krishna
4	हरि	Noun	वृक्षों पर रहने वाला एक चंचल स्तनपायी चौपाया	Monkey
5	हरि	Noun	सिंह जाति का नर	
6	हरि	Noun	कश्यप की क्रोधवशा नामक पत्नी से उत्पन्न दस कन्याओं में से एक	Daughter of कश्यप
7	हरि	Noun	एक वर्णवृत्त जिसमें चौदह वर्ण होते हैं	A prosody

We see that the term हरि has seven meanings i.e., lion, lord (विष्णु), कृष्ण, monkey, daughter of कश्यप, वर्णवृत्त. Such type of words creates ambiguity while they are used in the language because of their multiple uses in various contexts, and because of their plurality in meaning also.

EXAMPLE- 02

Ambiguity not only affects vocabulary but also the sense of the sentences. Here we have some common examples of ambiguity:

1. **A good life depends on a liver** – here the word liver denotes two meanings, first it refers to the person who lives in certain specific place secondly it indicates the organ located in the upper right portion of the abdominal cavity.
2. दिनकरः अस्तं गतः। This sentence also involves with dual meaning. First it can be taken as दिनकरः (the Sun) has set. Secondly it may be दिनकरः (name of a person) has sunk (in the river etc.).

EXAMPLE- 03

In the example mentioned above we have seen ambiguity in sentences. Now we are going to present the example of ambiguity from a literary work entitled William Blake's 'The Sick Roses', a short lyric.

“O Rose thou art sick.

The invisible worm,

That flies in the night

In the howling storm:

Has found out thy bed

Of crimson joy;

And his dark secret love

Does thy life destroy”

Certain word of this poem shows ambiguity. Here the “crimson bed of joy” deals with multiple meaning meanings, first it refers to the leaves of the flower rose utilized by the flies in the night as a bed, secondly it denotes the extreme joy during the deep love, etc. In the same way the “dark secret love”, on the one hand depicts the love with evil motive and on the other hand it identifies the deep, serious and faithful relationship in love, etc.

We can also present the examples from Sanskrit literature.

दुर्गलङ्घितविग्रहो मनसिजं सम्मिलयस्तेजसा।

प्रोद्यद्वाजकलो गृहीतगरिमा विष्वग्वृतो भोगिभिः ॥

नक्षत्रेशकृतेक्षणो गिरिगुरौ गाढां रुचिं धारयन्।

गामाक्रम्य विभूतिभूषिततनू राजत्युमावल्लभः ॥

Here राजत्युमावल्लभः has two meanings. First one deals with the concerned king and second one is related with lord 'Shiva'.

The chart given below is a justified example of ambiguity in meaning.

Sl	Word	Meaning related to the king	English	Meaning related to Shiva.
1	दुर्गलङ्घित	दुर्गेः लङ्घितः	Winner of fort	पार्वत्या लङ्घितः
2	तेजसा	सौन्दर्येण	By beauty	नयनोत्थितज्योतिषा
3	विभूत्या	ऐश्वर्येण	Prosperity, bliss	भस्मेन
4	उमावल्लभः	राजा	King	शिव
5	गिरि	वाचि	In speech	हिमालयः
6	गां	पृथ्वीं	The earth	वृषम्
7	सम्मिलयन्	पराभवन्	By defeating	नाशयन्

Thus we can say that ambiguity often inherent in words, sentences and languages.

Types of Ambiguity

Different principles, dimensions provide a specific base for a classification of ambiguities. If we consider broad classification, besides intentional and non-intentional ambiguities, there are surface meaning, deep meaning, denotative, connotative, scientific, literal, emotive meanings etc. comes under the category of ambiguous meanings. We have an example of ambiguity in these sentences: 'the house is on the fire' and 'my heart is on the fire'. First sentence denotes the scientific, surface meaning. It denotes only action, no emotion or deep meanings are involved in it, while the second sentence deals with the emotive meanings i.e., the heart of a person is confronting with either love or anger, jealousy for other person. Intentional ambiguities are often seen in some literary text, while is related to the real uses of language in worldly perspective, e.g., we often use un-intentionally the word *Krishna* as a noun or name of someone while intentionally it refers to the color 'black'. Many scholars of linguistics have classified it on the basis of several components. That's why there is great difference among their views. Sir William Empson (1906-1984 AD) has given some basic principle which is useful for identification of ambiguity. He has classified ambiguity in seven types in his seminal work entitled *Seven Types of Ambiguity* which can be listed below-

- Any information or idea is effective in several ways at once.
- Multiple meanings are resolved into one.
- Two unconnected meanings are given chronologically.
- Several meanings combine to depict an ambiguous state of mind of the poet.
- A creative use of language by the poet.
- Contrast meaning involved in to the poem and the reader is required to invent interpretation.
- The contradiction in meaning reflects a contradiction in the mind of the poet.

Other scholar of linguistic like Ullman has also given scientific, reasonable classification of ambiguities which can be seen in *tatsama* words clearly. The linguistic research of Ullman can be directly applied for ambiguities in *tatsama* words also. Ullman emphasizes that ambiguity is a linguistic condition in which there are the shift and the plurality in meaning. These directly affect the structure of languages. i.e., phonetic, grammatical and lexical.¹ Thus Ullman give three types of ambiguity. Phonetic, grammatical and lexical.

Phonetic Ambiguity

The first type, according to Ullman is phonetic ambiguity. It denotes the ambiguity during the speech due to phonetic structure of sentences or phrases. Different words may be pronounced alike homophones and thus became phonological ambiguity.

For example

Sl	Word-1	Word-2
1	लताऽगच्छत्	लताऽऽगच्छत्
2	Sea	See
3	Plane	Plain
4	here	Hear
5	Specially	Especially
6	Later	latter

First example in this chart is from Sanskrit, where we see लताऽगच्छत् means Lata went (simple past) but on the other hand लताऽऽगच्छत् gives different meaning. Because here the inflection of गम् is अगच्छत् that of आ + गम् is आगच्छत्. This is because the adjunct अ is always to be affixed closest to the main verb, i.e. after the prefix उपसर्ग such as आ. So आगच्छत् is

actually आ + अगच्छत्. One can appreciate that आ + अगच्छत् becomes आगच्छत्². In the same way the words sea, plane, here, specially, later are used with similar phones (pronunciation) in different meaning.

Grammatical Ambiguity

The grammatical structure of a sentence often complex and sometimes due to identical grammatical forms, the meaning of sentences are become shifted. Thus grammatical ambiguity directly creates ambiguity in the structure of meaning.

Sl	Word	Meaning -1	Meaning-2
1	वन्द्याम्-	पूजनीयां	बन्दी भूतायाम्
2	मतः	मुझसे	उन्मत
3	भवानीशः	शिव	भवानी के उपपति

In the above chart we have tried to analyze the example of grammatical ambiguity.

Lexical Ambiguity

Third one is the lexical ambiguity. It arises, when a single word is connected with two or more meanings. This is of two types 1. Polysemy and 2. Homonymy. Sentences will become ambiguous when they have words which are either polysemous or homonymous.

Example of polysemous ambiguity-

Sl no	word	Meaning 1	Meaning-2	Meaning -3
1	सैन्धव	सिन्धु देश का आदमी	सैन्धा नमक	सिन्धु देश का घोडा
2	Citrabhānu	सूर्य	आग	XXX

Example of homonymous ambiguity-

लताऽगच्छत् and लताऽऽगच्छत् deal with different meanings having same pronunciation (phones).

Safeguards against Ambiguity and Sanskrit Tradition

As we know that Sanskrit has long history of linguistic tradition. Where many scholars have discussed a lot on special area. Etymology is one of the most predominant areas of Sanskrit tradition. Grammarians like यास्क (निरुक्त, 7th century BC), पाणिनि (अष्टाध्यायी, 5th century BC), शाकल्य (पदपाठ), भर्तृहरि (वाक्यपदीय, 5th century AD), नागेश (मञ्जूषा, शेखर³, उद्योत, स्फोटवाद etc. 18th century AD), and poets like भामह³ (काव्यालङ्कार), आनन्दवर्द्धन (ध्वन्यालोक), मम्मट⁴ (काव्यप्रकाश), विश्वनाथ (साहित्यदर्पण⁵), पण्डितराजजगन्नाथ⁶ (रसगङ्गाधर), and logicians like गङ्गेश (तत्त्वचिन्तामणि), रघुनाथशिरोमणि (दीधिति), जयन्तभट्ट (न्यायमञ्जरी), उदयन (न्यायकुसुमाञ्जलि), जगदीशतर्कालङ्कार (शक्तिवाद, व्युत्पत्तिवाद) and hermenuticians like कुमारिल (श्लोकवार्तिक, तन्त्रवार्तिक), वाचस्पतिमिश्र (शास्त्रदीपिका) have analyzed the multidimensional aspects of words and meanings. As we know well that ambiguity has to be dealt with the principles for determining the meaning of a given language entity. In linguistic tradition of Sanskrit, the relation among the lexical entries (प्रकृति), different suffixes (प्रत्यय), and their particular meanings (अर्थ) are expressed in rules called नित्यः शब्दार्थ सम्बन्धः, Which means the relation of word and

² <https://simplesanskrit.wordpress.com/category/lessons-1-to-10/>

³

⁴ 2nd ullaas

⁵ Dvitiya pariccheda

⁶

meaning is stable. सङ्केत (signifier) establishes the relation (सम्बन्ध) between word (signifier) and meaning (signified). Knowing any language means knowing the सङ्केत (signifier) about the relation between word (signifier) and their meaning (signified). वाच्य (primary-verbal), लक्ष्य (secondary), व्यंग्य (suggested) are three types of meanings (signified). For example- गङ्गायां घोषः. Primarily it means there is a hut in the river Ganga. Secondary it identify the hut situated at the bank of गङ्गा (लक्ष्य), and finally its implied meaning suggests the association of the hut in regards with शीतलत्व पावनत्व (coolness and purity) of the river Ganga. सङ्केत (signifier) is the resource of knowledge. The eight ways to understand signifier.

शक्तिग्रहं व्याकरणोपमान कोशास्रवाक्यात् व्यवहारतश्च।

वाक्यस्य शेषात् विवृतेर्वदन्ति सान्निध्यतः सिद्धपदश्च वृद्धाः⁷॥

According to this verse व्याकरण (grammar), उपमान (vehicle), कोश (dictionary), आस्रवाक्य (the particular sentence whose constituent it is), व्यवहार (language use), वाक्यशेष (sentence segment), विवृति (exposition), and सान्निध्य (relatedness) are the resources of signifier. अन्वय (association) & व्यतिरेक (difference), and अवाप (insertion) & उद्वाप (removal) are techniques that can be used to understand signified. पदज्ञान (knowledge of the word), पदार्थज्ञान (knowledge of the meaning of the word), सङ्केतस्मरण (recollection of signifier) are the means available for human beings to acquire verbal knowledge. In this way the process of determining meaning encounters two situations. Where some words have fixed meaning e.g., the English word 'fire' has only one meaning i.e., 'agni' and secondly the word 'date' has multiple meanings e.g., 'the specified day of the month', 'Sweet edible fruit of the date palm with a single long woody seed' etc. Ambiguity is looked upon as „anekaartha“ , i.e. multiple meanings. The concept of „anekaartha“ is restricted to the primary meaning not according to लक्ष्य (secondary) and व्यंग्य (suggested) meaning. The principles relevant to resolve ambiguities are listed in the following stanza

संयोगो विप्रयोगश्च साहचर्यं विरोधिता।

अर्थः प्रकरणं लिङ्गं शब्दस्यान्यस्य सन्निधिः॥

सामर्थ्यमौचिती देशः कालो व्यक्तिः स्वरादयः।

शब्दार्थस्यानवच्छेदे विशेषस्मृति हेतवः॥

This stanza implies that, if there is any problem as to which of the several meanings of a word is to be appropriate, there are several factors which prove the relevancy of the expected meaning. These are संयोग (union), विप्रयोग (dissociation), साहचर्य (association), विरोधिता (oppositeness), अर्थ (intention), प्रकरण (extra linguistic context), लिङ्ग (gender), शब्दसन्निधि (proximity of words), सामर्थ्य (forcefulness), औचिती (consistency, appropriateness), देश, काल (time or period), व्यक्ति (person), स्वरादि (sound or accent etc.). These factors can be justified as below.

Precaution against Ambiguity Due To Polysemy

The context in which a word occurs is the basic safeguard against ambiguity. No matter how many meanings are involved with the word, only one of them will be applicable in given context. Example- सैन्धवम् आनय (Bring salt). In this sentence the term सैन्धव has multiple meanings i.e., Person belonging to Sindh country, A kind of salt and Horse of Sindh country. If anybody demands सैन्धव during lunch then सैन्धव means salt only not to the Person belonging to Sindh country or Horse of Sindh

⁷ न्यायसिद्धान्तमुक्तावली, शब्दखण्ड.

country. Difference in inflection- Different meanings of a polysemous word may be differentiated by difference in inflection i.e., the word will take one suffix or marker in one meaning and another marker in another meaning.

Word order- Multiplicity in word order will also help to alternate two or more senses of the similar word. For example there is a word देय, which gets ambiguous means due to exchange of word order e.g., . देयरक्त (the donation of the blood), रक्तदेय compulsion of giving the blood.

Addition of another word- Sometimes different meanings of a polysemous word are made clear by the addition of another term to that word. For example we may take the term सिद्ध. By adding to the terms मुनि and हस्त. Completely it gives two terms one is सिद्धमुनि and other one is सिद्धहस्त. Here सिद्धमुनि indicates to 'the great saint' while सिद्धहस्त refers to 'an expert person'.

Safeguards against Ambiguity Due To Homonymy

Context -The context in which a word occurs is the basic safeguard against ambiguity. Here the words with same pronunciation or homonyms have several meaning according to the context. Example- लताऽगच्छत् and लताऽऽगच्छत्. Here लताऽगच्छत् means Lata went while लताऽऽगच्छत् Lata came.

Difference in word class- In several cases more than two homonyms relate the different word classes or POS. Example- मित्रं पश्य। there are two meanings due to changes of POS. first one is look at sun. Second one is look at friend. Difference in grammatical gender- In languages where each noun in spite of its certain meaning is classified to concern of a gender whether masculine or feminine or others, ambiguity due to homonymy is removed when words belong to various genders. Example mentioned above is also relevant to this because the term मित्र falls with masculine as well as neuter gender.

Safeguards against Ambiguity and OTASH.

The tool OTASH is developed in regards with the proper standard and norms of ambiguity. Through this tool we can percept the meaning of a TW on the basis of polysemy, homonymy, gender, number of meaning. Specially it is originated for Hindi language and it can be extended with proper relevance for other ILs also. For example if we analyze the term *vikalpa* we find following description-Tatsama category-As per this research present *Tatsama* word falls in category of *pure tatsam word (shuddhatatsamashabda)* ID and references- This *Tatsama* word has been taken from *Tatsama Shabdakosha* and ID for this term is 1188 in OTASH database. Reference of this *Tatsama* word is available in *Tatsamashabdakosha*, therefore a complete analysis has been given here (You may incorporate relevant changes by pressing EDITbutton at the top of the interface). Parts of speech This *Tatsama* word is used as Noun in Sanskrit. Parts of speech for this *Tatsama* word is Noun in Hindi. SynSet and meaning detail In Sanskrit the term *vikalpa* has 2 number of Synonyms, which can be stated as- *shaMka* // *varaNa* whereas in Hindi it has 1 number of synonym which is/are *anishchaya* //. Grammatical description In Hindi, it is used as Masculine gender/s and in Sanskrit, this *Tatsama* word used as Masculine gender/s. Grammatical description of this *Tatsama* word may be given as-*vikalpa* + *su*, [prathamA, ekavachana]. Ambiguity (if) *sanskrit* Synonyms of this *Tatsama* word does exceed, its Hindi synonyms. Meaning of this term in Sanskrit does exceed its meaning of Hindi so This *Tatsama* word is an ambiguous word.

Conclusion

In this way we can state that ambiguity is a type of diffracted meaning in which several interpretations are probable. It is thus an association of any idea or statement whose inherent meaning cannot be properly resolved according to a rule or process with a finite number of steps. In this chapter I have tried to study the ambiguous use of words, sentences and even languages on the basis of semantic perspective. The tool OTASH is also relevant for the perception of ambiguity.

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