

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Related Studies

No other similar studies have been done with regard to language structure and language use of Hindu netizens in online matrimonial context. However, a study done by Pathak (2005) with regard to “*Matrimonial Advertisements in India: A Sociolinguistic Profile*” is very much relevant to be reviewed for this study as it has provided some insights, especially into the use of language in Hindu matrimonial contexts. Pathak investigated on language use of the advertisers when they describe some culture-based or non-culture based factors in their materials to be advertised in newspapers in India with the intention of seeking suitable marriage alliances. The advertisements commonly contain the details of the candidate, familial traits, and of course on the supposed traits of the potential life partner. Pathak has presented extracts of phrases from the advertisements (the discourse of his study) that elaborate factors pertaining to some main factors including economic factors, education, personality, looks and other pitfalls such as castes and sub-castes of the candidates. He observed and presented **lexical items** that are reflective of the mentioned factors whereby one of the important areas emphasised by Pathak correlates well with this study - the **linguistic features** (lexical and structural forms) in such discourses. He stated that the candidates’ language is an expression system connected with the content and focus of the message, which is applicable for this study that analysed digital transcripts instead of prints that function as matrimonial advertisements too. The only difference being the mode of execution. According to Pathak, the language of matrimonial advertisements, like that of other advertisements,

aims at precise, clear, glamorous and catchy communication, and this again is valid for this study whereby most of the discourses analysed seem to be like that. He also found that the most remarkable aspects of the language of matrimonial advertising is the use of **adjectives** including highly expressive adjectives (such as *wheatish*) and this has been proven true in this study also. **Synonyms** that express a range of meaning is another remarkable aspect of language found, be it in Pathak's study or this study itself. The use of some lexical items that marked semantic shifts observed by Pathak is also another similar observation in this study, for example, a word or phrase that is meaningless in the British context will be informative in the Indian English context. Besides, Pathak has, in fact stressed five years back that computers will play an important role in future match-making at the hands of marriage bureaus or organisations and this has indeed been realised by the launching of numerous **online matrimonial sites** in the present-day context.

A presentation script that gave some ideas on the realisation of online Indian matrimonial sites and their functions has been also reviewed to support this study. It is a project known as '*MIS/Web2.0 Project on Matrimonial Websites*' done by Khandelwal *et. al.* (2000). He has stated that the year 1997 has marked the beginning of a new era in matrimony related accomplishments including life partner-searching when **BharatMatrimony** (one of the matrimonial sites from which the digital transcripts were extracted for this study) first provided online matrimonial services to Indians in India. This matrimonial site along with its other counterparts have been providing global services ever since with many interesting features including those which enhance the trust of users.

Some basic information on concepts of sociolinguistics used in this study is obtained from the book *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* by Holmes (2001).

## 2.2 Discourse Analysis as a Methodological Tool

Linguists need to study text because text is an important manifestation of language. Discourse in linguistics context, as defined by Simpson and Weiner (1997) in The Oxford English Dictionary, is a connected series of utterances; a text or conversation. According to Verdonk (2002), a discourse is the process of activation of a text by relating it to an appropriate context. In short, it is the reader's or listener's reconstruction of the writer's or speaker's intended message. Verdonk also stated that a discourse can be an ideological construct of particular socio-political or cultural values. Amongst tens of definitions for 'discourse', Schiffrin *et. al.* (2004) stated that linguists particularly, have defined the discourse as anything 'beyond the sentence'. Zellig Harris, one of the modern linguists, (and Chomsky's teacher) paved the way for linguists to analyse language above the sentence level, calling this unit of analysis 'discourse'. It was Zellig Harris who first embarked on the study of relation of sentences and coined the name 'discourse analysis', which afterwards denoted a branch of applied linguistics (Cook, 1990). The analysis of discourse therefore focuses on language in use, the relation of language to context and the relations of cohesion within a text (Brown and Yule, 1983).

## 2.3 Cohesion and Coherence of Discourses

Cohesion is the relation between forms and patterns in texts whilst coherence is the way meanings are understood. Some review has been done to aid with the analysis pertaining to **cohesion** and **coherence** of discourses in this study.

de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) quoted that “... *cohesion relates only to the interconnectedness of the ‘components of the SURFACE TEXT’ while coherence relates to ‘how the configuration of CONCEPTS and RELATIONS which underlie the surface text, are mutually accessible and relevant’*”. Some texts, whatever their content may be, ‘connect’ each other readily than others, and are therefore easier to read. Although this is related to rhetorical organisation, the bottom line is still - how they ‘cohere’.

Sanders (1997) quoted that “*Understanding a discourse may be regarded as the construction of a mental representation of the discourse by the reader. An acceptable discourse representation has a property that distinguishes it from the representation a reader might make of an arbitrary set of utterances: The representations of the segments in the discourse are linked coherently.*”

As quoted by Tanskanen (2006), “*a text is a unit of language in use*” (Halliday and Hasan, 1976), and “*the analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use*” (Brown and Yule, 1983).

...“*hearers and readers do not depend upon formal markers of cohesion in order to identify a text as a text. ... those formal realisations which are available to, but not necessarily utilised by, the speaker/writer in constructing what he wants to say*” (Brown and Yule, 1983).

A familiar type of explicitly marked cohesive relationships in texts is indicated by formal markers which relate what is about to be said to what has been said before – markers like *and, but, so* and *then* (Brown and Yule, 1983).

This study tries to relate the structure of language with that of its use in matrimonial context with regard to the presentation of profile pages in the form of digital transcripts extracted from selected online matrimonial sites.

#### **2.4 Study of Language Structure: Morphology, Syntax and Discourse**

**Language** is an organised system that operates as an outer system and an inner system. The outer system which is also known as the peripheral system directly relates speech sounds and meanings, whereas the central system (inner system) is concerned with the formation of grammatical structures namely, the **morphology and syntax** (Hockette, 1958).

In the central system, there are ordered set of rules which explains the morphological categories both inflectional and derivational. All these morphological forms find place in structures, namely the noun phrases and verb phrases. The phrases in turn find place in sentences in an organised and formalised way. When we communicate orally, or through writing, we try to make use of all such features and structures and try to relate and connect them in such a way that they can be easily comprehensible by the readers or listeners. While connecting or relating, there is a set of forms (connectors, particles, etc.) used to maintain needed cohesiveness in order to convey the intended meanings more coherently. Though sentences are rule-based, when they are used in a cohesive discourse, they are not only governed by the structural rules but also conditioned by the contextual use of language (which involves sociolinguistic conditions) (Karunakaran and Williams, 1983).

In order to make a more explicit discourse, certain features are either preferred or avoided. So there are always certain additions, omissions and replacements in the form of transformational rules when a discourse is formed (Karunakaran and Williams, 1983).

For example,

*I know.* (in this sentence *I* is used as a nominative-subject form)

*enakkut teriyum* (the equivalent of ‘*I know*’ in Tamil; ***enakku*** stands for *for me* in which *me* is a complement rather than a subject). This kind of occurrence and change is a must in Tamil.

So, **transformation** is needed to understand the intended meaning (Karunakaran and Williams, 1983).

**Morphology** is the study of word structures. It studies the different categories of morphemes that makes up grammatical forms as well as the morphological processes involved in forming them (Arley *et. al.*, 2008).

When phrases and sentences are formed, sometimes there takes place ambiguity due to structural difference (due to grammatical relationship) between the constituents that occur in it because of grammatical relationships popularly known as Immediate Constituent (IC) relationship (Nida, 1949).

For example,

*Flying planes are dangerous.*

This sentence is ambiguous because of the IC relationship between the constituents that occur in the sentence. One can give two meanings for this structure by relating ‘*Flying planes*’ are dangerous and ‘*the flying planes*’ are dangerous. The meaning (all structural) changes when the constituent relationship is changed.

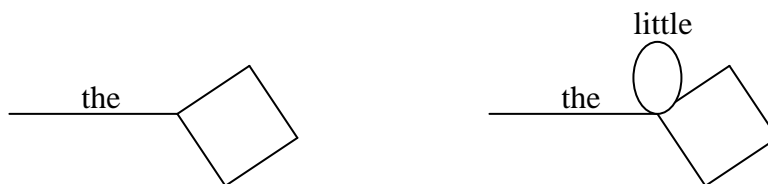
In this way, when we make a discourse, there is a possibility for ambiguity – so certain features should be avoided to have well-formed cohesiveness and understand the meaning without difficulty. The agreement between subject and verb also makes a sentence more cohesive (Nida, 1949).

**Structural linguistics** is an approach that ‘analyses and describes the structure of language’, as distinguished from its comparative and historical aspects (Matthews, 2001). The purpose of Structural Analysis is to see if there is a well-formalised set of rules in the formation of larger constructions, especially discourses. There are different types of discourses such as spoken discourse, written discourse, conversational discourse and dramatised discourse to name a few. The very same content can be put in different patterns, for example, a novel written and a novel acted. Different patterns portray different types of cohesion, hence the need to study Structural Linguistic or to apply the structural linguistic methodology to distinguish one from the other.

**Syntax**, the core component of sentence structure, entails the way words, phrases and clauses are ordered and formally organised grouped. It is the study of the principles and rules for constructing sentences in natural languages (Arley *et. al.*, 2008). Distribution and focussing of information may not be possible without syntax (Wales, 1989). Hoey (2001) stated that all texts have social functions. Texts also have a location in time and

space. He also stated that the basic unit of analysis in written text is defined as a *coherent* segment of text with a *topic* and *function* in the discourse.

Syntax, according to Chomsky (1957), is the study of principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in particular languages. The central notion in linguistic theory is that of ‘linguistic level’ – phonemics, morphology, phrase structure, etc. Chomsky considers a language to be a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements. In his *Elementary Linguistic Theory*, Chomsky has represented a finite state grammar graphically in the form of a *state diagram*. The grammar can be extended by adding closed loops to the diagram as the following:



This theory is also applicable for our study since the writers of the discourses used a remarkable number of adjectives to add details to their sentences and by doing this, they have extended their sentence (made it infinitive).

Chomsky has also stated that English is not a finite language, hence there is much room for the extension of its sentences using various word forms.

The following shows the breakdown of a sentence with reference to Chomsky’s phrase structure model which was adhered to in this study.



Sentence:     'the girl reads the book'  
                  |            |  
                  NP + VP

NP:            the girl  
                  |     |  
                  T + N

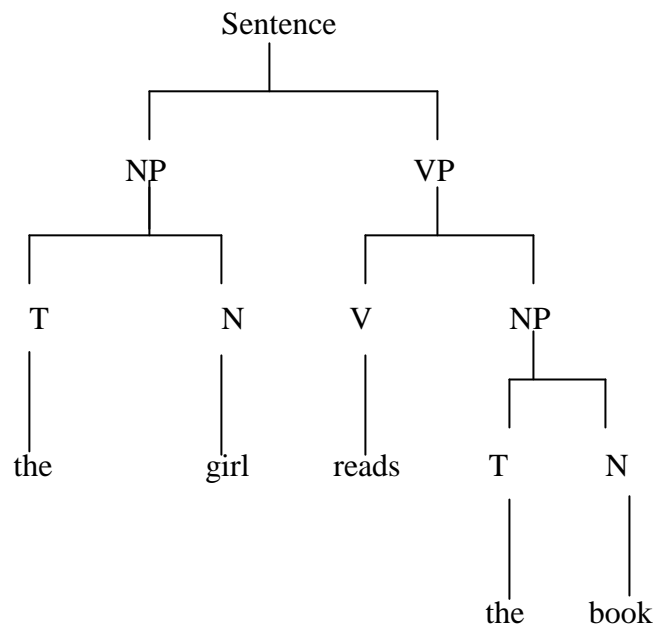
VP:            reads the book  
                  |            |  
                  V + NP

T:             the

N:             girl, book

V:             reads

Chomsky termed this a 'generative grammar', referring to the way in which a system of rules can generate an infinite array of acceptable sentences (Chomsky, 1965; Harris, 1993). Generally, these structural descriptions are represented by a tree diagram, or labelled brackets.



According to Chomsky, there is no way of ordering the elements NP and VP relative to one another. In English, noun phrases are contained within verb phrases, and vice-versa.

Phrase structures are considered as a single level, with a set of representations for each sentence of the language.

There are different types of sentences like simple sentence, compound sentence and complex sentence. Compound and complex sentences are derived either by the process of ‘conjaining’ or ‘embedding’ the simple sentences. All these sentences are used in the formation of a discourse. But when discourses are formed, there are certain basic formation techniques followed, like initiation of a discourse, continuation of a discourse, and connecting the sentences used in the discourse to make it more ‘cohesive’ in structure and more ‘coherent’ in comprehension (Burton-Roberts, 1986).