

Grammarians on the Question “Is Language Thought?”

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Abstract

This article explores the perspectives of Indian grammarian philosophers on the intrinsic relationship between thought and language, juxtaposed against recent findings in contemporary cognitive science. A recent paper in the journal *Nature* titled "Language is primarily a tool for communication rather than thought" by Evelina Fedorenko, Steven T. Piantadosi, and Edward A. F. Gibson argues that language in human being is primarily a tool for communication, challenging the notion that language is necessary for thinking. This has reignited the traditional debate on the difference and non-difference between language and thought. Indian grammatical philosophy, particularly through the works of Bhartr̥hari, asserts that language and thought are fundamentally inseparable, with Bhartr̥hari's *Vākyapadīya* positing that linguistic cognition is an integral part of human consciousness and that thought processes are inherently linguistic. This study examines these philosophical assertions, comparing them with contemporary theories, and presents arguments and counterarguments from both Indian and Western perspectives. Finally, the paper delves into the possibilities of language and expression, suggesting avenues for further research. This paper aims to foster a more fruitful discussion on the intricate relationship between thought and language rather than resolving the controversy.

Keywords: Language, Thoughts, Reference, Determinate, Indeterminate, Grammarians, Bhartr̥hari, *Vākyapadīya*, linguistic cognition, *śabda*, *citta*, philosophy of mind, cognitive science, communication

Introduction

The controversy surrounding the relationship between language and thought significantly influences philosophical theories and cognitive frameworks. The perception of this relationship shapes the problems these theories address and their effectiveness in solving them. To navigate this complex issue, we must tackle several fundamental

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questions: Is language a vehicle for thought? Is it structurally different or non-different from thought? Is language confined to material forms such as verbal articulations, written symbols, gestures, and signs, or is it a broader concept? If language is viewed as a vehicle for thought, it implies a structural distinction between the two. This perspective suggests that language serves as a tool to express and communicate pre-existing thoughts. Consequently, the mechanisms of thought and language would be fundamentally different, with language acting as an intermediary that translates cognitive processes into communicable forms. This view aligns with the hypothesis that thoughts can exist independently of linguistic expression, and language merely facilitates their transmission. The challenges of this perspective include addressing how thoughts are structured and processed without language, explaining the translation process from non-linguistic thought to linguistic expression, and accounting for the varying degrees of cognitive abilities in individuals with limited language proficiency, such as young children or those with language impairments.

Conversely, if language and thought are non-different, it suggests that they are inseparable and that cognitive processes are inherently linguistic. This viewpoint posits that thinking itself is a linguistic activity and that language is the medium through which thoughts are formed and processed. This raises the philosophical question of how a tool can be both the means and the end—a paradox where language is both the process and the product of thought. The challenges of this view include explaining how different linguistic structures across languages influence cognitive processes, addressing whether and how non-linguistic creatures or pre-linguistic infants think, and exploring the implications for understanding abstract and non-verbal thinking, such as visual-spatial reasoning or emotional processing.

Indian grammarians, particularly those in the traditions of Pāṇini and Bhartṛhari, offer a distinct perspective by not limiting language to its material garbs. They perceive language (*śabda*) as a concept that exists both as a thought-object (idea) and its manifestation through speech, writing, gestures, and symbols. *Śabda* is thus not confined to verbal expressions but encompasses the entire cognitive process of understanding and communication. Key concepts include *śabda*, which embodies both the idea and its linguistic manifestation, and intelligible beings, which are cognitive or philosophical entities that exist beyond physical forms and are the true objects of thought, manifested through language. This is akin to the Western logos, representing the idea that language and thought are fundamentally intertwined, with language being the vehicle that reveals and manifests cognitive processes.

Understanding the relationship between language and thought has practical implications for various fields, including cognitive science, linguistics, and philosophy. It influences how we study and interpret cognitive processes and language acquisition, affects theories on language structure and usage, and shapes philosophical inquiries into the nature of consciousness, knowledge, and reality. The debate on whether language is

a vehicle for thought or non-different from thought remains unresolved. However, exploring these perspectives provides valuable insights into the cognitive and philosophical dimensions of language. Indian grammarian philosophy offers a nuanced understanding by viewing language as a concept that encompasses both thought and its material expressions. This paper aims to further the discussion on this intricate relationship, serving as a gateway to deeper exploration and understanding of the unity of thought and language.

The Distinction between 'Language is Thought' and 'Language of Thought' Hypothesis

Before moving any more forward with the issue we should have a look at a rather similar hypothesis, "The language of thought hypothesis". This hypothesis by Jerry Fodor in his book the language of thoughts states that thinking appears in mental language. What it states is that the nature of thought is such that it possesses language like structure. Thinking according to this hypothesis takes place in a language of thought and thought like language has syntax. It proposes that thinking occurs in a non-verbal, innate and mental language known as mentalese. The next question that then automatically comes in mind is the question why? Because this mental language is considered to be brain's internal code used for information processing and performing cognitive tasks. It is abstract, symbolic and universal, independent of any spoken language. This hypothesis helps us explain that how individuals can have thoughts and concepts that are not easily expressible in their spoken language, and why people from different linguistic backgrounds can think about the same concepts. An example can be the case When you think about a complex idea, you might not always use complete sentences or verbal language; instead, you might use abstract symbols, mental images, or concepts that are translated into words only when needed for communication.

The hypothesis that language is thought suggests that language and thought are indistinguishably linked and that linguistic structures shape the way we think. It often aligns with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis or linguistic relativity of psychology, which posits that the language you speak influences your cognitive processes and worldview. One may again ask why? Proponents argue that language provides the categories and structures through which we interpret and understand the world. Without language, certain types of abstract thinking or reasoning might be impossible or fundamentally different. This idea emphasizes the role of linguistic structures in shaping cognitive patterns and how people from different linguistic backgrounds may perceive the world differently. The way different languages express concepts of time can influence how speakers of those languages think about time. For instance, some languages might have multiple words for different types of past events, potentially leading speakers to have a more nuanced understanding of the past. Thought is inherently verbal and structured by linguistic categories. Thought is dependent on and shaped by the linguistic structures of

the spoken language. This clarifies that Saying "thinking occurs in a mental language" emphasizes an internal, universal cognitive code that operates independently of any spoken language. In contrast, saying "language is thought" emphasizes the idea that cognitive processes are inherently tied to and shaped by the structures of the language we speak. Both perspectives highlight different aspects of the relationship between language and thought, offering insights into how we process and interpret information.

Two Approaches on Language and Thought

Philosophers differ on their approaches towards the issue in two ways:

Language and thought, while distinct entities, share an intricate relationship where language is often seen as a secondary tool for expressing primary thoughts. Philosophers grapple with defining language in terms of reference, positing that meaning can refer to external objects, internal senses, represented facts, experiences, or even transcendental signified. Despite their varied perspectives, these philosophers converge on the notion that all such concepts reside within the realm of language, which plays a crucial role in shaping reality. This implies that meanings, thoughts, and expressions do not exist independently of language. This raises a series of profound questions: Is it accurate to assert that the realm of language is restricted to logical semantics and facts? Are these concepts separate experiences, or are facts solely logical experiences? Can language itself be considered a fact, and similarly, is meaning a fact? If language and meaning are independent facts, what relationship can exist between them?

Ludwig Wittgenstein's approach to these questions is notably fragmentary, making it challenging to discern a consistent line of thought in his work. Wittgenstein emphasizes the centrality of meaning in language and famously posits that "the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sec 43). However, his analyses do not always culminate in steady, coherent arguments or conclusions. Wittgenstein perceives a significant logical gap between language and the world and endeavors to bridge this gap by identifying a semantic technique wherein meaning serves as the common element linking language and the world. According to Wittgenstein, the world becomes meaningful through the representational capacity of language. This pursuit led him to seek meaning independently of both the world and the word (Glock, 193).

Nevertheless, Wittgenstein's explanations often reveal paradoxical contrasts. In his attempt to elucidate the world, he appears to construct a parallel world of logical facts, thereby relegating language to this conceptual realm (Kenny 63-64). For Wittgenstein, reality is not simply the world itself but the totality of facts about the world. This perspective led him to propose a third realm, consisting of conceptual facts, alongside the external world and the world of language. This tripartite model, intended to interpret our experiential world, has arguably complicated our understanding of knowledge has also been referred to by PMS Hacker.(Hacker,1986). Wittgenstein's attempt to demarcate a clear boundary between language, the world, and the realm of facts has introduced

complexities that challenge the coherence of our conceptual frameworks.

From the perspective that confines language to verbal articulation and writings, theorists who advocate for reference or representation theories accept that language and thoughts are different entities. In this view, language involves temporality, while thoughts are atemporal. Language is considered an outer manifestation, whereas thoughts are deemed intelligible. However, we diverge from this perspective by accepting that language is not merely confined to external expressions but is intertwined with thought itself. Language infuses thoughts, and external garbs (articulation and writings) are merely instrumental in manifesting the intelligible essence of language. This phenomenon is akin to a flash of the mind, and hence, it is an aspect of awareness in nature. It is not produced but flashes into existence, and this flashing aspect of language prompts the production of articulation, which we commonly recognize as language.

Meaning is not only a logical and linguistic unit but also a cognitive object that serves as a foundation for constructing logical meaning. If there is a represented fact of language, there must also be a fixed fact of what is represented; only then can the relationship between representation and the action represented be accepted. However, if intention, disposition in use, context, and similar factors constitute meaning, then language would not be required for meaning, which would vary with the variation of intention in use. This variation would render communication impossible, as it would rely on factors that are psychological rather than logical and linguistic. Thus, in each communication via language, intention, disposition, or use must be established prior to the knowledge communicated by language. What kind of relationship exists between different represented facts of the same representation? The meaning of the representation will vary in different uses of representation.

The statements "Language is the representation" and "Language represents the world" do not convey the same sense. Language represents the world, but it does not represent itself simultaneously, as a representation cannot be "the represented" at the same time. It is not philosophical to accept that it is only due to our limitations that we form beliefs about the world through the use of language, which simultaneously represents the world and itself. The conceptualization of world-representation is akin to that of Pegasus. Wittgenstein's thoughts, however, are often fragmentary and lack consistency. He does not provide steady and consistent arguments or coherent conclusions from his analysis of concepts associated with language.

Objections Against the Reference Theory of Language

Language is the expression of thought and is not limited solely to reference and representation. If language is considered merely as a reference, it becomes a tool for representing things or facts derived from other sources such as perception or memory, thus being subordinated to moot precepts or abstracted facts, which, in that theory, are primary. This underestimation of language contradicts the active theory of language.

According to this active theoryⁱ, in cognition, language expresses its own nature first, from which meaning is expressed non-differently. If language is taken as a representation of reality or fact, cognition would be defined as represented or referred to, but this is not acceptable to those theorists themselves.

Taking language as representation raises questions about the extent to which language represents reality or facts. If language represents them completely, then knowledge derived from perception and verbal knowledge would be identical, making it redundant to call language a representation; rather, it would be a presentation. If language only represents them to a certain extent, the certainty of the represented facts remains unresolved, leading to partial and uncertain verbal cognition. This brings forth a critical question: is knowledge mute?

In verbal cognition, the cognition revealed by language serves as the impetus for articulations. However, if language is accepted merely as a representation, the question arises: what prompts the production of these representations? Is it external or internal objects, or facts? Abstracted sense-data and facts themselves require an expresser to be abstracted and presented, as they cannot do so independently. When language is implied solely as a representational tool, representationists are not privileged to accept that language is the driving force behind the production of representations of facts. Denying the primacy of language as an expresser—an intelligible entity that expresses its own nature first, from which its meaning is expressed non-differently—is to deny the cause of the incentive to produce referring or representing tools. It is the cognition expressed by language that serves as the impetus to speak.

If language is taken as representation, the issue of identical cognition arises. The cognition expressed by language is an identical cognition of the language itself and the meaning it expresses, which are non-different. In the representation theory, facts are derived through perception. The entity perceived is retained in the mind by memory, and the fact, as resurrected in memory, comes to mind when one desires to represent it. Therefore, there is no foundational principle to base the identical cognition of the entities perceived at the moment, the facts resurrected in memory, the language, and the fact represented by language. Accepting the mind as the base or coordinator among these elements gives undue importance to the subjective element (i.e., the mind), to which all are subordinated for their existence. The possibility of certainty of identity among the objects perceived, the facts in the mind, and the represented facts remains problematic. If identical cognition by language is denied, then the fact represented by language will cognitively be an altogether different fact—distinct from the objects perceived, the facts in memory, and the represented facts—thereby contradicting the identity of objects essential to representation itself.

If identical cognition is accepted by resemblance or by group/assemblage, then the represented fact will merely resemble the perceived fact but will not be identical to it. In cognition by group, differences are primary rather than identity. However, the group

theory is not applicable to representationists because the group comprises different characters—namely, the object perceived, the fact resurrected in memory, and the fact represented—each of which differs not only in character but also in time and space. If these elements are grouped by the mind, it becomes challenging to distinguish between the fact represented by language and the fact retained in the mind. Consequently, there will always be a potential for confusion.

For theorists who view language as a form of expression and prioritize verbal cognition as the ultimate authority, all knowledge is considered to be true. The determination of whether knowledge is valid or not, or true or false, is based on the presence or absence of corresponding referents. This understanding is accessible to those who can comprehend it in these terms. The cognitions stated by the language as "non-veridical, contradictory", etc. are known as such because they are expressed in that manner by language. The analysis and confirmation of truth and falsehood in terms of the presence or absence of referents, which are the objects being represented, are crucial for logical reasoning. However, this is a secondary task that relies on the underlying thought as the foundation. As a result, theorists of representation do not prioritise the cognitive basis of representation and the objects being represented.

Those who acknowledge language as a means of referring to something outside itself consider it to be a tangible symbol or auditory disturbances. Occasionally, they mistakenly identify the latter as physical matter and other times as mental ideas. Is it possible to refer to thought? The former is cognitive and the latter is material in essence; the two are not similar, the latter represents the former indirectly. What is the connection between the two? In the second perspective, cognition and language are indistinguishable. The language is an expressive medium that conveys meaning without any variation. The fundamental concept of "language is thought" is rooted in the absence of distinction between the one who expresses and what is being expressed. Without language, thought and cognition are impossible, as language is integral to cognition (VP 1.123). Negative, positive, contradictory, indescribable, and empty-concepts are all categorized as such due to their representation in language.

For the purposes of this discussion, language refers to the various forms of communication we use, such as speaking, listening, writing, and reading. These forms of communication are simply tools that allow us to express ourselves. When we use these tools, our true meaning is revealed naturally and without any difference. Garbs serve as a manifestation of the concept, which in turn allows the concept to become apparent, a phenomenon referred to as the emergence of consciousness. Regarding the topic of communication, I use the term "language" to refer to both the ability to understand and the specific forms or expressions that represent it. The understanding of the meaning cannot be achieved if the symbol is not expressed through the outward appearances. Garbs are acquired within a language-speaking community and vary across different communities. The signifier is the underlying factor that triggers their appearance in a

speaker, and remains the consistent essence inside them. The signified and its signifier pertain to the inherent understanding found in nature; they represent entities that are made known. Cognition refers to the identical understanding of the meaning and the symbol, as conveyed by the symbol itself. Both objects are comprehensible. If the signifier and the signified are distinct or if they are incomprehensible entities, there will be no need to communicate, and therefore, no potential for expressions.

Thoughts and ideas are comprehensible entities that are imbued with language. Any spontaneous disturbance, feeling, or animal instinct that is separate from language cannot be classified as thought, as cognition is always influenced by language and therefore specific. The activities of animals and insects are driven by instinctual responses, lacking the capacity to comprehend concepts or ideas. If there exists any knowledge that is uncertain or cannot be determined, it falls outside the realm of philosophical debate.

If the objects become detached from the thought and lose their ability to convey meaning in various capacities, it will be impossible to understand, translate, and analyse the transcendental meaning that exists beyond the language. The adoption of a transcendental signified is a metaphysical presumption that is theoretically superfluous and leads to a diversion from studying the nature of meaning as a unit of awareness. The distinction and potential overlap between the signifier and the signified, or language and mind, is a fundamental topic of philosophical discourse. The true value of language can only be accurately assessed when it is comprehensible, revealing the essence of meaning without being influenced by physical, mental, or religious factors, and without being biased towards them. Our understanding, contemplation, and research are not only derived from but also limited to entities that may be comprehended.

Cognition does not arise solely from the act of speaking and listening to language sounds, but also involves the awareness of things and self-consciousness. Phonemes, which are verbal sounds, are merely instruments in the expression of language, but the ability to be understood in the mind is what defines language and sets it apart from the senses. The active theory of language recognises a distinction between knowledge acquired through sensory perception and information acquired through language. Bharthari accurately notes that the senses do not require self-awareness before they may perceive objects (VP 1.56-57). They achieve this through their mere presence upon touch. However, language does not follow this pattern. It manifests itself prior to unveiling its significance. If language is viewed solely as a tool for cognition, similar to our senses, then it would not be necessary to understand the language itself before understanding its meaning. However, this is not the case when it comes to cognition through language. Cognition is only possible if the signifier language (*vacaka*) is disclosed, as cognition is the signified of language. We distinguish between the understanding of the meaning and its conscious recognition. Inside the realm of knowledge, the signified refers to the concept or meaning that is represented by the signifier, which is the perspective of the one expressing it. The things inside this awareness are connected to the signified, but

there is no separate existence of knowledge itself.

Further Questions on Difference and Non-difference

Mimāṃsakas and Naiyayikas may object to the idea that language and cognition are indistinguishable by pointing out that we can experience an object through our senses without prior knowledge or perception of the senses themselves. Similarly, they argue that language is only a tool for cognition, and so, there is no necessity to comprehend language itself prior to grasping its significance. Advocates of the active theory of cognition contend that language has an intrinsic capacity to permeate cognition. According to this perspective, during the process of understanding, language initially communicates its inherent characteristics, from which meaning is then generated. The revelation of meaning is contingent upon the prior expression of language (*vacaka*). The expresser, also known as *vacaka*, functions solely as a cognitive tool, much like sense-data in perception or vocal noises. The light or consciousness serves as the illuminating force for both the expresser and the expressed, rendering them the sole intelligible entities that humans can comprehend.

There is a fundamental difference between the processes accepted by epistemologists' theories of cognition through sources of knowledge like perception and inference and the cognitive holists' theories of cognition through language. In perception and inference, the sense organs (e.g., eyes) and indications (e.g., smoke) function at a distance from the object to be known. Once perception occurs, these elements are separated from the external object. In contrast, in verbal cognition, language is not separated from the object of cognition; it infuses meaning directly. The meaning is not a picture, whether of sound (*śabda*) or external things, and these are not mutually independent facts, as Wittgensteinians might argue. Language, according to this perspective, is a being manifested by verbal noises. Once manifested, it reveals its own nature, known as *sphoṭa*, which is the intelligible essence of language. The meaning is a being that is neither separate nor independent from language. These two beings – expresser and expressed, signifier and signified – are naturally related by the inherent fitness of the former to reveal the latter. The relationship between language and meaning is thus intrinsic and inseparable.

A signifier cannot be called such if it does not express the signified; it is naturally fit for expressing the meaning. The relation between them is a natural fitness of the former in expressing its meaning non-differently. Language infuses not only verbal cognition but all sorts of cognition, including those acquired through sources like perception, inference, and implication. The difference between cognition by language and that by perception or other sources lies in the very process of cognition itself. Sense organs and indications (*linga*) become separated after causing perception and inference, respectively. In contrast, language inseparably infuses cognition. Without language as an idea, no knowledge can be accomplished merely by hearing verbal noises, which are transient and get destroyed

the moment they are articulated.

Critics may argue that the thesis "language infuses cognition" cannot be proven. They contend that language is merely a tool for indicating meaning and facilitating the cognition of that meaning. Just as an indicator always stands at a distance from what it indicates and is separated after performing the act of indicating, the indicator (*siddha*) and the indicated (*sādhya*), the reference and the referent, cannot be considered infused. Is it proper to say that the senses (such as eyes), which serve as means for the accomplishment of the cognition of an object, and the object (such as a pot) cognized through them, are infused together? From the viewpoint of those who consider language merely a means of cognition, they might argue that the word "pot," the meaning "pot," and the cognition "pot" are indicated by the speaker using the same word "pot" because there is no other instrument or means for indicating them all except language. They claim it is only due to the limitation of the speaker that he indicates all instances of "pot" with the same word, and this limitation cannot be taken as a ground for accepting the infusion of cognition with language. They argue that the theory of the infusion of means and ends is inconsistent, as it cannot be proven by any means. There is no infusion of senses (means of perception) and the object (pot) perceived by them. Based on this reasoning, they conclude that the thesis of the infusion of cognition and language is a misconception.

From the perspective of the infusion theory, the objections raised above are based on overlooking the difference between perception and cognition. Seeing does not equate to knowing; it is merely sensing, acquiring sense-data from the things seen, while knowing is always infused by language. It is a distinctive feature of cognition by language that it, unlike the senses, plays a fundamentally different role. According to the active theory of cognition, it is the very nature of language that it reveals its own nature before revealing meaning. Bhartṛhari elucidates this, stating, "as nature cannot change, and as it is based on cognition, one is bound to accept that which is cognized directly" (VP 1.53).

Controversy over Cognition and Abstraction

The process of cognition inherently involves discrimination, and discrimination cannot occur without the use of language. Without the influence of language, how can one differentiate between the meanings of "pot" and "cot"? Even the sensory perception of an item like a "pot," when isolated from language, cannot be understood in its true nature; it will no longer be the subject of cognitive awareness. The cognitive understanding of the location of the pot, whether obtained through sense or inference, cannot be fully comprehended without considering its connection to language. Jayanta Bhaṭṭa (2001, vol. II: 100) and Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (1898) have contended that within the realm of perceptual cognition, specifically the two categories of determinate (*savikalpaka*) and indeterminate (*nirvikalpaka*), the former cannot and the latter should not be considered to be influenced by language. According to them, indeterminate perception refers to cognition that lacks the connection to language (known as *śabdāsamsarga-śūnya*), while determinate

perception involves simply a connection to language without being fully influenced by it. In general, Naiyāyikas consider it paradoxical to acknowledge cognition as being influenced by language while simultaneously asserting the presence of indeterminate cognition. If both determinate and indeterminate cognition were imbued with language, how could they be distinguished?

The problems outlined above stem from the mistaken belief that language is limited to verbal expressions or sounds exclusively. Regarding these concerns, it can be asserted that all objects of cognition are fundamentally and intrinsically influenced by language. The śabda is the sole signifier. Is it possible to acquire knowledge about objects when they are separated from language? If cognition is disconnected from language, it no longer exists. Determinate cognition can be distinguished from indeterminate cognition solely through the use of language. Cognition is determinate because the object of that cognition is clearly represented in the mind. When the items are not easily identifiable, we use the term "indeterminate" because language classifies it as such. If we approach the concept of indeterminate cognition from a mystical perspective, it will not raise any philosophical issues.

Cognition, if it is, for a moment, taken as isolated from language, will not be known and found so. Even in a newborn baby, cognition is also infused by language. The activities like crying, tittering, sucking, vibrating of the vocal organs, etc., of a newborn baby cannot be accomplished if there is no incentive. As the incentive to act or not to act, or something other than to act cannot be denied, cognition as the cause of their incentives must be accepted. As there is no possibility of a newborn baby being taught the language we speak, read, or write, those who take language as confined to those tokens learned gradually after birth fail to understand the nature of cognition and deny even the fact of cognition in the newborn baby. The cognition of the baby, who is completely unaware of the language-meaning relation, is a cognition infused by language. Similarly, in the case of the cognition in the dumb and deaf, they cannot speak or hear verbal utterances/noises, but they know because of the flashes or thoughts expressed in the mind. In their case, when they intend to communicate, the signifier is manifested to them through the gestures of the audience, and the signified flashes forth by the signifier.

Jayanta Bhaṭṭa (2001, vol. II: 100) in his *Nyāyamañjarī* and Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (1898) in *Ślokavārttika* (verse 2) have argued that among the two types of perceptual cognition, namely (1) determinate (*savikalpaka*) and (2) indeterminate (*nirvikalpaka*), the former would not and the latter could not be taken as infused with language. They state that indeterminate perception is cognition void of the association of language (*śabdāsamsarga-sūnya*), and that there is only an association (and not infusion) of language in determinate perception. Naiyāyikas, in general, find it contradictory to accept cognition as infused with language while also maintaining the existence of indeterminate cognition. If both determinate and indeterminate cognition were infused with language, how could they be differentiated?

The objections raised above are based on the misconception that language is confined to verbal utterances or noises only. In reply to these objections, it can be said that all objects of cognition, essentially and cognitively, are infused by language. The śabda is the only signifier. Can objects be known if isolated from language? Cognition ceases to be so if separated from language. Determinate cognition can be known as different from indeterminate cognition only through language. Cognition is determinate because the object of that cognition clearly figures in the mind. In cases where the objects do not clearly figure, we use the term indeterminate because language categorizes it as such. If we consider indeterminate cognition in a mystical sense, it will not be of any philosophical concern.

Putting forth the differentiation between determinate and indeterminate cognition, it is appropriate to assert that whether infused with language or not, language is not the basis for their distinction, since all cognition is inherently infused with language. In determinate cognition, the signifier—language as idea or thought (*vācaka*)—is fully expressed, and its meaning (*vācya*) is distinctly understood. In contrast, in indeterminate cognition, the signifier is not fully revealed, leading to a state of non-apprehension or misapprehension where the meaning, with all its distinctive characteristics, is not clearly and decisively apprehended. Nothing can be distinctly cognized without being infused with language. It is through language that inferential cognition is distinctly apprehended. Dream objects and those perceived in deep sleep are also understood distinctly because they are intertwined with language. Knowledge does not exist in isolation; it requires illumination. This illuminating nature of cognition is impossible if separated from language. Cognition of a signified entity isolated from the signifier is not feasible. The notion that the signifier is confined solely to linguistic articulation tools is a mistaken assumption; in reality, it is inherently awareness itself.

Language and Analysis

Scholars have frequently discussed the question of whether language can be objectively studied by itself, considering the intrinsic cognitive limits imposed by humans. H.G. Coward articulates his doubt by asserting that our perception of everything is inevitably influenced by the limitations and biases of language. It is impossible to step outside of language in order to objectively analyse it, according to the Sphoṭa Theory of Language (VP 1) From my standpoint, it is deceptive and unphilosophical to examine a collection of linguistic units exclusively through another collection of units, or to primarily represent them using logical symbols for examination. An inquiry into language from a philosophical perspective should consider it as an independent idea and contemplate its manifestations. Bhartr̥hari, who was a pioneer in this field, highlights that in every act of cognition, language initially manifests itself as a signifier (*svarūpa śabda*), and then its meaning is disclosed in a non-differentiated manner through it (VP 1.50, 1.53). According to the notion of knowing, the signified cannot be understood unless the signifier first

reveals its nature. A signified does not exist autonomously or in seclusion from a signifier. This prompts the essential inquiry: how can a symbol represent itself? Due to the inherent nature of signifiers and signified, it is not possible for language to be objectively analysed by language itself in this fashion.

Nevertheless, if we recognise that language is perceived as a cognitive entity within a cognitive framework and include this in, we could contend that language is inherently well-suited to be examined by language itself. Functional language, known as upādāna-śabda, encompasses two important features. Firstly, it acts as the reason for identifying language itself, referred to as svarūpa śabda. Secondly, it serves as the reason for comprehending the meaning of language. Language can be analysed from two perspectives: as a signifier, which is the physical form or representation of language, and as the signified, which refers to the meaning or concept conveyed by language. When language is used in cognition, it takes on the role of an entity (signified) that may be examined and investigated as an object. The difference between them is based on their specific functions: one acts as the communicator in terms of language, while the other serves as the conveyed message in terms of meaning. The absence of distinction between the signifier and signified enables them to alternately appear and disappear. The attire by which they materialise can likewise be examined and contemplated when they manifest in the mind. When we think about a signifier, we are also thinking about what it represents, because they are inseparable; the thing being represented cannot exist without the representation. Language, when approached as an object of study, allows for the attainment of clarity and knowledge (vacya) through the examination of its conceptual nature. This reflecting process is based on intellect, which is intrinsically accurate – thus guaranteeing efficient communication. Hence, the undeniable validity of examining language by means of language itself, where it serves as both the focus and the target of investigation, remains unchallenged.

Possibility of Linguistic Expression

Theorists who maintain a distinction between thought or intelligible beings and reality or things separate from language might argue against the possibility of expressions like "he eats rice" if both language and meaning are considered to be thought or intelligible beings. In their view, the components of such expressions – like "he," an agent; "rice," an object; and "eating," an action – must refer to external entities to make sense. According to this perspective, "he eats rice" is a sentence that expresses an indivisible sentential meaning, which, for grammatical and analytical purposes, is explicated in terms of agent, object, and action. In response to this argument, an opposing view asserts that expressions cannot arise without the intelligible being serving as the cause of their generation. External entities, such as agents or objects of actions, can only exist and fulfill their roles if they are conceived of first. How can they act as agents or objects prior to their conceptualization? According to this favored theory, external things can only be known

when they are apprehended as thought-objects. It is the intelligible being, appearing as a unified entity, that flashes forth and is subsequently conceived or imagined in diverse roles – as an agent or object of action. External things possess a fixed character and cannot assume various roles of finished or unfinished states. Only the intelligible being can be expressed in both finished and unfinished forms. For instance, the expression "make a pot for me" would not be possible if "pot" were considered solely as an external entity. It is the idea of the pot, existing in the mind, that serves as the impetus for such expressions. The external "pot" must be produced, and something that has not yet been produced cannot serve as the object of an action like "making." The idea of the pot emerges first, motivating the expression in which it is presented as the "object" of the action of making.

Conclusion

There is no thought isolated from language. Language is the bedrock of human expression. The infusion of language and thought presents a philosophically robust theory that effectively resolves challenges related to expression, relation, translation, and analysis within linguistic theories that do not prioritize expression. According to this view, even if a thought were considered isolated from language, it would hold little philosophical significance. All thoughts, philosophically speaking, become objects of reflection and investigation precisely because they are articulated through language. Cognition itself is rendered determinate through its infusion by language. In this philosophical framework, language and meaning – along with the relationship between signifier and signified – are considered intelligible beings, contrasting with external Being. Intelligible beings are concepts that manifest as agents and objects according to expectations and expressions. Expressions have the capability to present an object as an agent, an agent as an object, and vice versa. This capability underscores why studying language through language is feasible, and why activities such as reading, writing, analyzing, interpreting, and translating are regarded as cognitive activities. Language plays a decisive role in determining thoughts. It establishes that there is no possibility of isolating any thought from language; rather, language permeates and shapes every facet of cognition and expression. Therefore, within this philosophical perspective, the inseparability of language and thought underpins a comprehensive understanding of how language functions as both a medium and a determinant of human cognition and expression.

Notes

[i] In the active theory of cognition, functional language comprises thought-language and its external manifestations, or garbs. According to grammarians, particularly Bhartṛhari, these two elements are causally related, with one serving as the cause and the other as the effect. Bhartṛhari writes in his *Vakyapadiya* (hereafter VP), "dva upādānaśabdeṣu śabdau

śabdavidoviduḥs eko nimittam śabdanamaparo 'rthe prayujyate" (VP 1.44), which can be translated as "Those who know the Word recognize two causes in words; one is the instrumental cause, and the other is applied to the meaning" (Bhartrihari 1971). From the hearer's perspective, before revelation, language needs to be manifested, and garbs serve as the cause of this manifestation. From the speaker's viewpoint, thought-language is the cause of the production of these garbs.

To make this process comprehensible, Bhartṛhari provides two analogies. The first analogy compares it to an egg: when hatched, the color and shape inherent in the egg are manifested (VP 1.51). The second analogy likens it to drawing a copy of a painting: the painter first observes the painting in a sequence of lines and shapes and then fixes the sequenceless idea of the painting in his mind. This sequenceless idea is then analyzed into parts that serve as the cause of his painting on the canvas in a sequence (VP 1.52)

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