Psycholinguistics and Sanskrit: Is Devabhasha Mother of Psycholinguistics?

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Abstract - Psycholinguistics and Sanskrit

Language, in other words the storehouse of all human Knowledge is represented by words and meanings. Language by itself has an Ontological structure, Epistemological underpinnings and Grammar. Across languages, even though words/usages differ, the concept of meanings remain the same in respective communications. Yet the "Meanings" are understood by human beings based on Contextual, Relative, Tonal and Gestural basis. The dictionary meanings or 'as it is' meanings are taken rarely into consideration, thus human language is ambiguous in one sense and flexible in other.

Computers on the other hand are hard-coded to go by the dictionary meanings. Thus teaching (programming) Computers to understand natural language (human language) has been the biggest challenge haunting Scientists ever since the idea of Artificial Intelligence (AI) came into existence. In addition this has lead to the obvious question of "What is intelligence" from a Computation perspective. Defining intelligence precisely being impossible, this field of study has taken many shapes such as Computational Linguistics, Natural Language Processing and "Machine Learning" etc. Artificial Intelligence instead of being used as a blanket term, is now being used increasingly as "Analytics" in many critical applications.

Sanskrit being the oldest is also the most Scientific and Structured language. Sanskrit has many hidden Algorithms built into it as part of its vast scientific treatises, for analysing "Meanings" or "Word sense" from many perspectives since time immemorial. "It is perhaps our job to discover and convert the scientific methods inherent in Sanskrit into usable Computational models and Tools for Natural Language Processing rather than reinventing the wheel" - as some Scientists put it. This blog's purpose is to expose some of the hidden intricate tools and methodologies used in Sanskrit for centuries to derive precise meanings of human language, to a larger audience particularly Computational Linguists for further study, analysis and deployment in Natural Language Processing.

In addition, Sanskrit even though being flexible as a human language, is the least ambiguous as the structure of the language is precisely defined from a semantical and syntactical point of view. From a Psycholinguistic perspective this blog could also give us a glimpse of the advanced linguistic capabilities of our forefathers as well their highly disciplined approach towards the structure and usage.
Sanskrit and Psycholinguistics:

Sanskrit scholar William Jones formulated the lexical affinities between Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin in his 1786 lecture for the Asian Society of Calcutta. Such affinities among Indo-European languages had been observed since medieval times, but the budding Romantic notion of evolution became the impetus of explaining these affinities from a common origin of these languages. There must have been some proto-language from which all languages in the family evolved. This raised the question of how primordial human beings began to speak such a simple proto-language. This, one realized, was a psychological issue. Ever since, the empirical study of language origins and language functions in human communication has been an important chapter of psycholinguistics. Studying the emergence of language, in particular of sign languages, is still a rich chapter of psycholinguistics.

**Origin, Development and Growth of Psycholinguistics in India and World:**

In the nineteenth century, western philosophers began a serious study of the science of language. Vedic scholars had started investigating the etymology and linguistic development (*nirukta*) about two millennium previous. Yāska (fourth century B.C.E) noted the similarity between the roots of words in different languages and created a collection of Sanskrit roots, similar to the recent Proto-Indo European language development. Pāṇini (fourth century B.C.E) was a grammarian who is often considered the earliest known founder of linguistics.

**Psycholinguistics** was first developed by Bhartṛhari in the fifth century A.D. He taught that the language we use indicates how we perceive and therefore how an individual creates their personal reality—reality as perceived by them. Tāntric literature developed his psycholinguistics more deeply and religiously.