UNIT 15: LANGUAGE AND REALITY

UNIT STRUCTURE

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15.1 LEARNING OJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- Define Language;
- Make clear various nature of language within the realm of linguistic philosophy or analytic philosophy;
- Explain and examine philosophical problems are linguistic in nature;
- Describe the linguistic turn or linguistic revolution in 20th century analytic philosophy;
- Discuss semantics, pragmatists, mentalist and poetic approaches of language;
- Define Reality. Describe the very nature of Reality or ontology;
- Describe Wittgenstein's picture as a model of reality
- Explain the semantic, pragmatic, cognitive and metaphysical approach of the relationship between language and reality;

- Discuss the relationship between Language and Reality with reference to Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus;
- Discuss the relationship between Language and Reality after P. F. Strawson.

15. 2. INTRODUCTION:

The main contention of this unit is to show the relationship between language and reality. This unit may be segmented into three different sub-sections. Section one deals with the very nature of language; section two deals with the very nature of reality or ontology and section three deals with the relationship between language and reality.

15.3. LANGUAGE AND THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE

What then is language? The general definition of language is that it is a medium of communication between the speaker and the hearers. Thus communication is binary in the real sense of the term where there remain two communicators of which one has been designated speaker and the other has been designated hearer. In this sense communication is made possible with the speaker and the hearer. When we talk of communication, we thereby mean speaker-hearer communication. Language thus is the tool or instrument through which communication is made possible. This is the general perception of language. But when we understand language with regard to linguistic philosophy or philosophy of language, we have a different perception of language. In fact we notice various nature of language within the realm of linguistic philosophy or analytic philosophy. According to Locke, every word is the sensible mark of ideas. In this sense every word as the constituent of language is significant because it is associated with idea. Every word bears a sense as the mark of ideas. According to Noam Chomsky, language is the mirror of human mind (Language and Mind). A man is known by the language he uses. As language is the mirror, it would reflect the inner mind of man. Chomsky says that every normal individual at the time of his or her birth biologically preoccupied a language organ in his

left hemisphere from which language has been generated spontaneously. Chomsky calls it Transformational Generative Grammar (in short TGG). Thus, we have a mentalist interpretation of language after Chomsky.

According to Martian Heidegger, language is the house of being. Language is poetic and creative according to Heidegger. He talks in favor of poetic language and the distinctive feature of language is that it would be creative in nature.

Besides Locke, Chomsky and Heidegger, the central issue of language is primarily concerned with Semanticists and Pragmatists. Initially linguistic turn or linguistic revolution appeared during the first few decades of 20th century mainly for two important accounts. First, philosophical problems are linguistic in nature. Secondly, most of the traditional philosophical problems were engendered due to the misinterpretation or misapprehension of the meaning of language. As philosophical problems are linguistic in nature, they must be either solved or resolved or dissolved by means of language. Thus language upfront took the guard of linguistic philosophy. The impact of linguistic philosophy is revolutionary because it discarded the relevance of metaphysics by conceiving it as a dead body.

However, regarding the very nature of language, linguistic philosophers were sharply divided into two board groups, such as, semanticist and pragmatists. Semanticists talk in favor of ideal or artificial or constructed or logical language, whereas pragmatists talk in favor of natural or ordinary or everyday language. Thus our understanding of language would either be artificial language or ordinary language or poetic language or mental language. Those who talk in favor of ideal language, they are called semanticists. Russell, early Wittgenstein, Frege, Carnap, Tarski etc., are the proponent of ideal or artificial or logical or constructed language. On the other hand, those who talk in favor of natural language, they are called pragmatists. Later Wittgenstein, Strawson, Austin, Ryle etc., are the proponents of natural or ordinary or everyday language. From philosophical point of view there are different approaches of language, such

as, semantics, pragmatists, mentalist and poetic approaches. Each school conceives language as a tool or instrument or medium of communication.



Activity 15.1

- Explain various nature of language within the realm of linguistic philosophy or analytic philosophy.

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- How many ways the impact of linguistic philosophy is revolutionary? Give reason in support of your answer.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Communication is binary. (True/ False)

Q 2: According to Chomsky / Locke every word is the sensible mark of ideas.

Q 3: According to Noam Chomsky / Locke / Wittgenstein language is the mirror of human mind.

Q 4: Linguistic philosophers were sharply divided into two / three / four board groups.

Q 5: Name the supporters of ideal language.

15.4 REALITY AND THE NATURE OF REALITY

Just like language there are various perceptions about the nature of reality. Various linguistic philosophers have given various interpretation of reality. According to Locke, reality is nothing but the totality of experience.

For Quine, reality is what there is in the world. For Wittgenstein, reality is the totality of facts. For Strawson, reality is the totality of particulars and for Heidegger; reality is the totality of equipment. Thus within the sphere of linguistic philosophy there we find different interpretations of reality. Reality is nothing but the part of the world. Reality may be internal or external, empirical or metaphysical.

15.5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND REALITY

So far we have outlined the nature of language as well as the nature of reality within the realm of linguistic philosophy. It is revealed that there are various perceptions of both language and reality. Accordingly, there develops various theories as of the relationship between language and reality. There is no question of doubt that language is all about of knowing reality. Even many would say that reality is nothing but linguistic decision. That means the nature of reality would be determined on the basis of the nature of language. In linguistic philosophy we may find four different theories of the relationship between language and reality. These are as follows:

(a) The semantic approach of the relationship between language and reality.
(b) The pragmatic approach of the relationship between language and reality.
(c) The cognitive approach of the relationship between language and reality.
(d) The metaphysical approach of the relationship between language and reality.

Linguistic philosophy was dominated by the semantic and pragmatist approaches of the relationship between language and reality. These two approaches actually try to develop the relationship between language and reality from external point of view. For them language and reality are separate entities and language has external responsibility or implication of knowing reality. Reality is something external and language is taken into account to know the external reality. Unlike the semantic and pragmatic approach, the cognitive approach of the relationship between language and reality is

internal in nature. It states that the basic function of language is not external, but internal. Language is the mirror, the bearer of ideas. Therefore, language helps us to know what is going on internally. The metaphysical approach of the relationship between language and reality differs from other three approaches. This actually appears as a rebound of what had been lost at the hand of logical positivism. It states that language is the house of being. As the question of being is a sort of metaphysical inquiry, the language of being has a different nature altogether. Heidegger is the proponent of such approach where he conceives poetic language as the house of being. According to Heidegger, the very nature of poetic language is that it is creative in nature. And that is why it is capable of knowing being. Language is the house of being, being is nurtured by means of language, being takes the help from language of becoming. This ongoing unit will confine to show the relationship between language and reality within the semantic and pragmatic approaches.

As the semantic approach there we find the contribution of many linguistic philosophers. So considering the length of this unit, we confine ourselves only within a very important model offered by early Wittgenstein in his Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (henceforth TLP). Again under pragmatic approach there we find the contribution of many linguistic philosopher of making the relationship between language and reality. However, considering the length of this unit, we may confine only within a particular model offered by P. F. Strawson.

15. 5. 1 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND REALITY WITH REFERENCE TO WITTGENSTEIN'S TLP:

Wittgenstein's interpretation of the relationship between language and reality is known as the atomistic or logical interpretation. Here he conceives language as propositional and reality as the totality of facts. We think his interpretation of language and reality is technical. He conceives language as the totality of propositions. What then is a proposition? He understands proposition form logical point of view. According to Wittgenstein

every proposition has two sense, i.e., either the proposition would be true or the proposition would be false. That means a proposition says something always either in the form of 'to be the case' or 'not to be the case'.

As Wittgenstein conceives language as the totality of proposition, he accordingly prefers logical or ideal language instead of ordinary language. Like many other semanticist Wittgenstein finds ambiguity and vagueness in ordinary or natural language. As a result of that instead of ordinary language, he has chosen idea or artificial language for knowing reality. As a proponent of ideal language, Wittgenstein was influenced by Russell. Russell has offered a very unique feature of ideal language. Semanticists in general hold that ordinary language by its very nature is ambiguous. Accordingly, ordinary language has to be revised in favor of artificial or constructed language. Thus there appears the relevance of constructionism or revisionism. Russell, Mill, Carnap, Frege and others employed ideal language as the semanticists. For them the body of ideal language would be proper names. It is because to be a name is to be a name of an object. However, Russell advanced one step further in order to show that not all proper names would be genuine proper names. In this regard, he classified proper names as logical and ordinary proper names and then claimed that only logical proper names known by acquaintance would be treated as genuine proper names. In this regard he developed theory of acquaintance and theory of descriptions.

Wittgenstein in his TLP took clues from Russell. His interpretation of language is to some extent Russellian. For Wittgenstein, the constituent of proposition are logical proper names. Accordingly, it can be said that language is the totality of propositions and the constituents of propositions are logically proper names. A name, according to Wittgenstein, denotes an object and the meaning of a name is the meaning of an object. If a name fails to denote an object, then it would not be treated as a name. Thus, there is no scope for a name of denoting an object. A proposition is formed by means of two or more names with the help of relational terms. Relational

term is needed because without the help of relational term, no proposition is formulated. Thus, out of two names along with a relational term an atomic proposition is formed. In every atomic proposition there are two names and one relational term. From atomic proposition one may construct compound or complex proposition. Alternatively, it can be said that language is the totality of propositions. A proposition, if not atomic, can be analyzed into atomic proposition. An atomic proposition is further analyzed into names. A name cannot be further analyzed into name. A name denotes an object. A name is thus treated as the atomic constituent of proposition or language. This is how Wittgenstein formulates language as the mark of reality.

Reality for Wittgenstein is the totality of facts. What then is a fact? A fact is something which makes a proposition as either true or false. In this regard, Wittgenstein in his TLP says, "The world is the totality of facts, not of things." Why does Wittgenstein say that the world is the totality of facts, but not things? Many would say that the world is the totality of things or objects. Why does Wittgenstein deny this? Actually Wittgenstein intends to know the world with regard to truth and falsity. He introduces his celebrated picture theory of meaning or proposition to know about the world. If the world is conceived as the totality of things, then it would be a mere description to know the world. But his anticipated structure of proposition is no longer associated with description. Instead of description he introduces the concept of logical space to know the world or reality. In this regard Wittgenstein says, "The facts I logical space are the world." There remains the possibility of accident in description, because it may perhaps be the case what is described may not be a real or proper description. This was the problem of ordinary language. However in logic, nothing is accidental according to Wittgenstein. He goes on to say that if a thing can occur in a state of affairs, the possibility of the state of affairs must be written into the thing itself. In logical space there is nothing accidental, because no new possibility can be discovered later.

15. 5. 2. PICTURE AS A MODEL OF REALITY:

Wittgenstein brings the concept of Picture as a model of reality. That means the relationship between language and reality is made possible with the help of his picture theory of proposition. According to Wittgenstein, a picture represents a situation in logical space, the existence and non-existence of states of affairs. That is why he attributes a picture as a model of reality. But in what sense a picture is anticipated as a model of reality? In this regard Wittgenstein says a picture is a model of reality because a picture is a fact. Thus a fact through a picture makes the proposition as either true or false. Alternatively, it can be said after Wittgenstein that every proposition pictures a fact. There must be a one to one correspondence between each element of the picture and each element of the fact. The elements of the proposition are names and the elements of the fact are objects. Every name denotes an object. Wittgenstein says the fact that the elements of a picture are related to one another in a determinate way represents that things are related to one another in the same way. There must be a structural isomorphism or structural connection between the elements of the propositions and the elements of the fact. In this regard, Wittgenstein brings the concept of pictorial form and pictorial relationship. According to Wittgenstein, pictorial form is the possibility that things are related to one another in the same way as the elements of the picture. That is how a picture is attached to reality.

This is so happened because there underlies pictorial relationship which makes it into a picture. It is mainly for the pictorial relationship the relation between language and reality is made possible. Wittgenstein anticipates such correlations while preconceiving the relationship between language and reality. Such correlations between the elements of the propositions and the elements of the fact make the picture possible. If a fact is to be a picture, it must have something in common with what it depicts. There must be something identical in a picture and what it depicts. This enables the one to a picture of the other. Wittgenstein says, "What a picture must have in common with reality, in order to be able to depict it - correctly

or incorrectly - in the way it does, is its pictorial form". He then says 'a picture cannot, however, depict its pictorial form, it displays it'. Even though a picture represents its subject from a position outside it, but it cannot place itself outside its representational form. Every picture irrespective of its form must have in common in reality in order to be able to depict it. It is the form of reality according to Wittgenstein. As Wittgenstein introduces the concept of logical space, he thereby means to say that a picture whose pictorial form is logical form is called a logical picture. Every picture is logical picture because whatever it depicts, it depicts in logical space. Only logical pictures, according to Wittgenstein, can depict the world or reality. The logico-pictoirial form of a picture is common with what it depicts. A picture represents a possible situation in logical space. As a model of reality, every picture agrees with reality or fails to agree. If it will agree with reality it would be true picture and if it will fail to agree with reality then it would be false. Pictorial form plays all important roles in representing reality. The agreement or disagreement of its sense with reality constitutes its truth or falsity. In order to tell whether a picture is true or false we must compare it with reality. As proposition and fact are independent with each other, there are no pictures that are true a priori. This is how the relationship between language and reality is made possible after early Wittgenstein.

15. 5. 3 STRAWSON'S INTERPRETATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND REALITY:

P.F. Strawson is a pragmatist. Being a pragmatist, he is doing linguistic philosophy with the help of natural or ordinary language. Thus for Strawson, language means natural language and reality is nothing but the totality of particulars. His understanding of particular is at par with object. Thus, he takes commonsense view of the world or reality. Like early Wittgenstein, he does not think that the world is the totality of facts; rather he asserts that the world is the totality of particulars or objects. Thus, he was very much specific about the nature of language as well as the nature of reality.

Before delving into the relationship between language and reality after Strawson, let us know about his understanding of conceptualism. Strawson was a leading proponent of conceptualism. In this regard, he was indebted to Kant. Kant admitted categories of understanding which are common in every human. As a result of that Kant admitted a unified conceptual scheme of humans. Strawson took clues from Kant. Like Kant, Strawson also acknowledged unified conceptual scheme of humans. Such unified core of conceptual scheme would play a vital and significant role in human understanding. There are categories of understanding which are common in humans. Now to make our communication successful, the unified core of conceptual scheme would play vital role.

According to Strawson, we have a unified conceptual scheme on the basis of which successful communication between the speaker and the hearer is made possible. As reality for him is the totality of particulars, identification the particulars means to identify or to know reality. Thus for Strawson to know about the world or reality one has to put emphasize more on successful communication between the speaker and the hearer. Successful communication between the speaker and the hearer will ensure identification of particulars. As a believer of ordinary language, Strawson inclines to say that ordinary language is adequate to make communication successful. Ordinary language at times needs to be revised. However, such revision will confine within the same language. The revision of ordinary language does not lead us to construct an artificial form of language.

How does successful communication between the speaker and the hearer make possible? If the utterance of a speaker is being understood by the hearer then we can say after Strawson that the communication is successful. However, when the hearer failed to understand what the speaker intends to say in such a case communication would be unsuccessful. What does the speaker communicate? What is the content of communication? The speaker communicates the information about particulars (objects). As the world is the totality of particulars, the speaker -hearer communication always would be about particulars. Now as the content of communication is

all about of particulars, any sort of successful communication would ensure the knowledge of particulars. Knowledge of particular or identification of particular is at par with knowledge of reality or identification of reality according to Strawson.

How does Strawson ensure that the speaker-hearer communication would always be successful? Does Strawson rules out the possibility of unsuccessful communication or failure of successful communication? Even though Strawson's conceptualism is based on successful communication and he has claimed that in the process all communication between the speaker and the hearer would be successful, but he does not rule out unsuccessful communication between the speaker and the hearer. It is a general perception that when speaker and hearer do involve in communication, their main intention is to make their communication successful. But in normal cases, it seems to us that sometimes communication would be unsuccessful. In Strawson's case no communication at the end would remain unsuccessful. If speaker-hearer communication would remain unsuccessful then the relationship between language and reality cannot be established. In this sense, Successful communication between the speaker and the hearer would be the hallmark of knowing reality by means of language.

Strawson, of course, inclines to say that at times there remains the possibility of making our communication unsuccessful. In this regard, he classified the totality of particulars in two different categories, such as, basic and non-basic particulars. He then denies unsuccessful communication in the case of basic particulars and affirms the possibility of unsuccessful communication in the case of non-basic particulars. He says when the communication between the speaker and the hearer is confined within non-basic particulars; we cannot deny the possibility of unsuccessful communication. However, such unsuccessful communication eventually be made successful because it would be linked with another language where the content of communication is basic particular. The speaker-hearer

communication is just like a chain of communication where one sentence is linked with another sentence. Every sentence is associated with particular, either basic or non-basic. Basic particular are known to all. Therefore, there is no possibility of unsuccessful communication. According to Strawson there are two predicates, such as, P predicate and M predicate which are basic and of which nobody can make mistake. All other predicates or particulars are in some sense or other associated with these two basic particulars.
What makes us guarantee that sentences associated with basic particulars would be successful all without exception according to Srawson? In this regard, one has to understand Strawson's conceptualism. Strawson following Kant admits that there is a unified core of human conceptualism. All language users have a common unified core of human thinking because of the core conceptual thinking. Such unified core of human thinking makes all communications successful when they are associated with basic particulars. This is how Strawson enables to show the relationship between language and reality.

This position of Strawson, however, cannot be accepted without begging question. After Strawson, many linguistic philosophers have severely criticized Strawson's very idea of unified core of conceptual scheme. Willard Van Orman Quine is a leading proponent of conceptual relativist who not only criticized Strawson; he equally criticized Kant as well. Davidson was also a conceptual relativist and criticized Strawson. They think that there is no unified conceptual scheme for which successful communication between the speaker and the hearer is made possible. Even the position of later Wittgenstein and Austin does not support Strawson. Having said this there is no question of doubt that Strawson's conceptualism opens a new dimension as far as the relationship between language and reality is concerned.



Activity 15.2

Q1: How do philosophers view Reality? Explain briefly

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Q2: Explain and examine various theories of the relationship between language and reality.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: According to Locke, reality is nothing but the totality of experience. (True/False) 7.

Q 7: "Reality is what there is in the world" - who said this?

Q 8: Who introduces the concept of logical space?

Q 9: According to Wittgenstein / Strawson / Quine reality is the totality of particulars.

Q 10: For Heidegger / Locke / Strawson reality is the totality of equipment



15. 6 LET US SUM UP

- In this ongoing unit we have discussed two different models of the relationship between language and reality.
- Wittgenstein's atomistic model would be treated as the replica of semantic approach. Being an original thinker Wittgenstein's picture theory of proposition would impact a lot to other semantic approach.

- Likewise within the realm of pragmatic approach, Strawson's conceptualism holds a unique position. It deserves worthy of philosophical implication.

- Strawson not only extended Kantian forceful conceptualism, he equally has developed how the interpersonal communication between the speaker and hearer makes successful for identifying particulars which are the constituents of reality in general.

- Even many other subsequent theories have been developed within the realm of conceptualism which is in some sense or other would be treated corollary of Strawson's theory of conceptualism.



15. 7 FURTHER READING

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15. 8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. True.
2. Locke
3. Noam Chomsky
4. Two
5. Russell, early Wittgenstein, Frege, Carnap, Tarski etc., are the proponent of ideal language.
6. Ture.
7. Willard Van Orman Quine
8. Wittgenstein
9. Strawson
10. Heidegger

14.12 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very short Questions

Q1: What is language?

Q2: Define Reality.

Q3: Who is the author of Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus?

Q4: What is Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG)?

Q5: What is a fact according to Wittgenstein?

Q6: Name the supporters of ordinary or natural language.

Q7: What is a name according to Wittgenstein?

Q8: 'The relationship between language and reality is known as the atomistic or logical interpretation'- Who expressed this view?

Q8: State Martian Heidegger's account of language.

Q10: Quine is a leading proponent of conceptual relativist - Is it true?

B. Short Questions (Write in about 100-150 words)

Q1: Is language a tool or instrument or medium of communication? Explain.

Q2: Write a note on proposition after Wittgenstein.

Q3: What are the different theories of the relationship between language and reality?

Q4: Discuss Wittgenstein's atomistic model of the relationship between language and reality.

Q5: "Language is the house of being." Elucidate.

Q6: Distinguish between semanticists and pragmatists.

Q7: Distinguish between semantic, pragmatic, cognitive and metaphysical approach of the relationship between language and reality.

Q8: Explain the relationship between language and reality with the help of Wittgenstein's picture theory of proposition.

Q9: Why does Wittgenstein say that the world is the totality of facts, but not things? Explain briefly.

Q10: How Wittgenstein formulates language as the mark of reality? Explain briefly.

C. Long Questions (Write in about 150 words)

Q1: What is language? Explain language as a medium of communication.

Q2: Discuss various nature of language within the realm of linguistic philosophy or analytic philosophy.

Q3: Write an essay on linguistic revolution or linguistic turn.

Q4: Explain and discuss the relationships between language and reality.

Q5: Explain and examine the relationship between language and reality with reference to Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (TLP).

Q6: What does Wittgenstein understand by fact? Explain, after Wittgenstein, the world is the totality of facts, but not things.

Q7: Why Wittgenstein attributes a picture as a model of reality? Discuss.

Q8: Discuss critically Strawson's interpretation of the relationship between language and reality.

Q9: Discuss fully conceptualism after P. F. Strawson.

Q10: What is successful communication? How does successful communication between the speaker and the hearer make possible? Discuss after P. F. Strawson.

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