

# THE SYSTEM OF SOCIAL LOCUS AND ITS GRAMMATICALIZATION

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This paper deals with the socio-semiotic study of Bajjika, a language spoken in the northern part of Bihar in India. The status of Bajjika is often debated as a dialect of Hindi, where Hindi is a dominant language in the region. Genetically, Bajjika belongs to the same language family as Hindi – Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-Aryan language family and is one of the “Bihari” group of languages.

Linguists at large, the sociolinguists in particular, have engaged in the study of “implicit” meaning of language in relation to society – what is given and what can be inferred in the contexts of situation/culture. In this presentation, I will demonstrate how the social structure of speech community is explicitly coded in Bajjika.

Bajjika is an non-egalitarian society where the social structure is hierarchically organized on certain social orders, for example, caste, class, age, seniority. This phenomenon of social order is grammatically coded in the language. I will show that the social and cultural character of the language is formally on display in every sentence. That is to say, every sentence/clause is ‘pegged into’ the social structure of the community. I call that phenomenon the system of SOCIAL LOCUS.

What this means is that the speaker positions the addressee and the non-interactants who are referred to according to their social status in the community and accordingly selects an appropriate position for himself or herself. In my study of ‘meaning’ in Bajjika, I will demonstrate that even the description of grammatical categories demands an explicit account of the social and cultural structures of society. They are not simply “formal”.

There is a similar corresponding term as Social Locus in Lyon’s (1977) and Anderson’s (1971) works, – “Localism” – where Localism is about the fundamental structure of grammatical categories using space as a kind of psychological cognitive template for thinking about time and grammatical process. What I am going to discuss in my presentation is the system of Social Locus, the interpersonal “pegging” of social structure fundamental to every clause in Bajjika.

The study is based on Systemic Functional theory and approaches to linguistic variation following M.A.K Halliday and is oriented towards the socio-cultural alignment of the speech community. The precursor of my treatment of social structure and social roles in Bajjika is Hasan’s (1996) treatment of similar issues in the context of Urdu speech community. My study is based on my interactions with Bajjika speakers during my three month fieldwork in the Bajjika region and the analysis of spoken and written texts of Bajjika.

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