
**A STUDY OF CAUSAL CONNECTION AND MEANING
IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF CAUSAL THEORY OF REFERENCE**

*Muhammad Abdullah
Ghulam Ali Buriro
Mashooq Ali Khowaja*

ABSTRACT

Harmony among the people in society is not reflected only through their regional affiliation but also through abstract, ideational or conceptual relationship prevailing in the society. Clarity of concepts results into firm beliefs and shun the human behavior from confusion and vacillation. In the present study, the relation of causal connection and meaning was analyzed in the perspective of causal theory of reference. After a comprehensive analysis it was concluded that for unambiguous and prompt transfer of newly developed knowledge (ideas or concepts) causal connection need to be strengthened at appropriate level. In case of delayed transfer due to weak/breakage of causal connection, the purity of information may be distorted and confusion prevailed in the society about the phenomenon to be disseminated. In this regard, efforts may be put in to reduce the communication gap as much as possible among the people of a society. The acceptance of world as a global village among people of different nations all over the world is a big success in this regard.

Keywords: Causal, Connection, Meaning, Theory, Reference

INTRODUCTION

In the day-to-day lives of human beings, clarity of concepts plays positive role in terms of the possession of strong faith and beliefs, whereas ambiguity, vagueness, confusion or distortion in the same perspective create serious problems including the lack of satisfaction, harmony, unity and discipline. To ensure the clarity and to avoid ambiguity, communication gap must be minimized at all levels. It can be made possible by strengthening the relationship among people with different faiths, beliefs, norms, traditions, customs, sects, religions, professions, interests etc. Language is a very important and effective tool of communication (Palmer, 1996) in this

regard. This medium of communication with its effective role has changed the whole world into a global village through electronic media, internet and other means of telecommunication. Particularly, English as a lingua franca (Bjorkman, 2008) is worth mentioning in this perspective.

The very basic and main component of a language is a word or name, which is used for identification or representation of an object. This phenomenon of naming, referencing, identification or presentation has been under discussion by the philosophers for decades. The debate has taken different directions and different theories have been propounded. Causal theory of naming, causal theory of meaning, causal theory of reference, descriptive theory of reference, hybrid theory of reference, and theory of knowledge are most prominent theories of the result of this debate among the scholars especially in the field of philosophy.

Semantics being an area of linguistics was also influenced by this move in philosophy and subsequently theories like mentalist theory by Noam Chomsky (1971), behaviorist theories of meaning (Wundt, 1912; Bloomfield, 1914; Watson, 1924; Weiss, 1928 & Skinner, 1961) as quoted in Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia, Verificationism or Theory of Verification by A. J. Ayers in 1936 and after that truth conditional theory (Davidson, 1967) emerged to study the meaning in different perspectives of human life. The causal theory of reference which emerged in response to descriptive theory of reference is the sole concern of this study. This theory highlights the importance of referents for developing understanding and transferring of concepts or ideas through the process of 'baptizing' or 'reference borrowing' in terms of causal chain. The process of naming also known as 'baptism' is undoubtedly very important, but when something is named especially the abstract phenomenon, it is equally important that causal chain or causal connection be maintained at an appropriate level to avoid confusion or ambiguity of notion toward the referent. The concept of causal connection has been elaborated and discussed in the following in detail to highlight its importance in multidimensional aspects of human life relevant to human understanding of ideas or concepts of objects or abstract phenomenon in true perspective of their meanings.

In the following lines (i) causal theory of reference, (ii) causal connection, (iii) maintenance of causal connection, (iv) breakage of

causal connection, (v) relationship of concepts and causal connection, (vi) formation of concepts through reference, (vii) vague concept through weak connection, (viii) have been discussed as main features of the study to analyze the worth of causal connection in the causal theory of reference followed by a conclusion in the perspective of the whole discussion.

CAUSAL THEORY OF REFERENCE

Causal theories of names gained popularity in 1970s due to the interest of Saul Kripke & Keith Donnellan, in the relationship of name and object or referent. This theory of reference determines the scheme of referents for names or terms in particular. These (names or terms) may include the terms of logic, personal names, proper names, natural phenomenon or phenomenon related to metaphysical world. According to the theory, the referent of a name is fixed by an activity of 'baptism' (Kripke, 1972) also known as dubbing. Then this name is permanently attached with the object to which it refers. This may be said as the first part of the theory.

The action of dubbing is limited in its nature. It may be exercised within two individuals or a group of people. But we experience that knowledge transfers from one individual to another individual, one group to another group, one society to another society, one nation to another nation, one generation to another generation, one civilization to another civilization, one culture to another culture and so on. The second part of the theory is meant to address this transfer of knowledge. How it comes that the people not present at the time of baptism and unaware of the baptized name, use the same name for the same object to which it refers. I am interested to elaborate this aspect of the causal theory. These words (names) help to form concepts through an evolution process which drive the human life to a greater extent. It all depends upon the connection (contact) of the individuals to each other at the personal, domestic, social, national, international, religious, conventional, traditional or cultural levels of diverse domains of the life of humanity in the present world.

CAUSAL CONNECTION

Human knowledge and experience can be traced back in the form of a connection from individual's present age to birth. If we can create a sequential connection of a person's life in an appropriate

context, we may approach to the metaphysical world of the individual in term of his beliefs, faiths and subsequent performance. For example to understand the role of prominent and renowned personalities/celebrities, we study their autobiographies; to understand the technique or true message of the writers we try to find them among their contemporaries; and more specifically to comprehend the message of revelation in true and accurate perspective, we try to refer it to authentic explanations carried out in an absolute and precise background, settings or context.

Kripke (1972) gave an idea of different ways for approaching at references. He talked about “causal relationship” between the name and its referents (object). This relationship was termed as “sense” by Frege (1892). It is also termed as “causal chain” and it can also be termed as a causal connection. This connection cannot be limited to referring back to names and objects only, it is equally important for the transfer of concepts formed by individuals at one end to the individuals at other end at all levels of social interaction. The deliberate or non-deliberate manipulation of this connection results into distortion of ideas at individual as well as social level. This forward or backward relationship may be termed as abstract relationship because it is concerned with world of concepts and ideas. This forward direction of the causal connection determines the expansion of meanings or understandings of some new phenomenon in the society.

MAINTENANCE OF CAUSAL CONNECTION

The maintenance of this causal connection is highly important for the purity of information to be transferred from one person to another person. All those persons who are connected to each other may be due to their family, profession, faith or religion has less confusion among them. Fair relationship is a guarantee to harmony of a social class. This connection works in the life of a human being like a signal of telecommunication in the field of electronics. The strength of the signal along with clarity of line of sight between the receiver and transmitter determines the success of communication. If the signal is strong and line of sight is not clear the communication will not be good. Same is the case of connectivity between individuals of the society in multiple contexts of human relationship. If there is less

communication gap, there will be less confusion and more harmony in the relationships of humanity.

The nature of connection (relationship) also determines the nature of verbal or nonverbal behavior of the people in a society. Accuracy of words (without any deliberate maneuvering or manipulation), meant for supporting a person to understand a new fact, results into further development of the society and shed the clouds of confusion or vagueness in ideas and concepts from the society. For example in the field of science and technology people all over the world are strongly connected and possessed less confusion or conflicts as compared to the other areas of social sciences. Asian (Bangladeshi, Indian or Pakistani) doctors, engineers or scientists (physicist, chemist, pharmacist, biologist, zoologist etc.) can easily adjust themselves among Australian, European, African or American doctors, engineers or scientists as compared to social scientists (historians, religious scholars, linguists, sociologist etc.).

In a closely connected society there are more chances for development. If new ideas emerge in any field anywhere it can be easily transmitted, transferred or spread in the society at indigenous or international level through a condensed relationship or strong connectivity among the people of the society. The focus of the society is achieved to make progress in that specific domain of interest and new dimensions are discovered with strong coordination and cooperation; and this all becomes possible by minimizing the communication gap which results into sharing of right information at the right time. Therefore, it may be concluded that maintenance of a healthy connection is compulsory for the transfer of knowledge in the form of words or names after the activity of baptism for the clear possession of thoughts.

BREAKAGE OF CAUSAL CONNECTION

In case of breakage in the causal connection, severe threats to social life can be accounted for. Confusion of verbal behavior due to some problem in the connection may result into confused social behavior. There can be different reasons for this breakage in connection like lack of confidence, biased behavior, conflict of interests etc. The emergence of the concept of professionalism can be seen as a positive outcome to overcome the semantic uncertainty in the life of human being. Intra professional relationship is a good

example of strong causal connection, whereas inter professional social connections are always weak. It is therefore paramount that the culture of professionalism may be promoted. The famous proverb “Jack of all trades master of none” also fits in this case.

The formulation of dictionaries and etymologies of the words and the analysis of the language at lexical, morphological, syntactical and discourse level are meant to save the humanity from confusion and manage a common reference to eliminate the conflict of ideas in terms of weak connection or breakage of connection among them. We need to familiarize our nations (especially the third world countries) with the means of consultation in the form of internet and encyclopedias and also make these resources available to them. The causal connection under discussion is an abstract phenomenon. Its strength or weakness is judged through verbal behavior. The clarity or distortion of thoughts and ideas determines the nature of relationship within a society. In case of the breakage of causal connection, there are high chances of the loss of data and it may ultimately result into ideological disturbance in the society. Sometimes this connection is deliberately disturbed to manipulate the facts about the ideology of a nation and then it is given a new direction in accordance with the agenda of the dictators or manipulators. The basic ideologies of a nation should be managed through the academic syllabus in the education system at appropriate levels under the monitoring of national academic committees.

RELATIONSHIP OF CONCEPT AND CAUSAL CONNECTION

Frege (1892) translates the relationship between object and its referent as ‘sense’ He claims that references are formed by senses however his clarification of the senses is not clear. Kripke (1972) defines the bond between name and its referent as a causal relationship. This sense or causal relationship results into the formation of a concept, which is needed to be transferred or spread in the society. In other words when a reference is fixed with an object the very first time, then what we require is that it should be purely conveyed to others. This transfer of concepts depends upon the nature of the bond of relationship between individuals. The strength of this causal connection will determine the success of conceptual transfer. If the society is closely connected and people share and consult the information with each other, then there will be less conceptual

conflicts among them. In the opposite case there will be more problematic situation.

This is the reason that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) advised his followers to live in the form of a congregation and unity. He further advised that if someone dissects himself from the society it is like a goat that has left the herd and can be easily attacked or killed by a wolf. According to the one of the traditions of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) all Muslims are like one body or one wall. In terms of body if one part of the body feels pain or disturbance the whole body feels pain or disturbance. In terms of a wall every single brick strengthens another brick and they hold the burden equally without any discrimination. The people of a society need to be connected with each other like the components of an electronic circuit. Any input or change in the social set up must be felt at all levels accordingly. Therefore, we can conclude that concepts and causal connection have equal importance in the social setup. A new concept or change in the society cannot give fruitful or intended results without causal connectivity at an appropriate level.

FORMATION OF CONCEPTS THROUGH REFERENCE

The contextual interpretation of an abstract phenomenon by an originator or interpreter forms a reference. According to Genone, J. and Lombrozo, T. (2012) a number of conceptual theories have promoted that formulation of concepts is determined by referents to which these concepts refer. An accurate possession of a concept depends on an accurate possession of descriptive information related to the referent of the concept. He gave the example of "GOLD". He said, "It is a matter of believing that gold is a shiny, malleable metal often used for making jewelry. People often lack extensive knowledge of the properties and kinds picked out by even the most familiar concepts, however, and frequently possess false beliefs about them, making it difficult for theories that emphasize descriptive information to explain even the most ordinary cases of concept possession".

According to Laurence & Margolis (1999) as quoted by Genone, J., & Lombrozo, T. (2012) this problem reflects ignorance and error occasionally at the end of those people who try to form a concept through descriptions related to an object. The descriptive theory fails in this regard to form a uniform concept through

description because the description of an object may differ person to person in each case.

Kripke (1972) in his “Naming and Necessity” talks about the importance of causal connection in the process of conceptualization. He claims that objects in the form of persons, places and things etc. when named travel through a causal chain for those who are not present at the time of naming activity. This name works as a reference to that object to which it refers. All those who are connected to one another in terms of the utilization or application of the term or name can be easily informed and the change in respect of addition or deletion can be easily accommodated or compensated. The acknowledgement or awareness of this new name or word results into the construction of a new concept about that object at an individual or social level. It happens even without availability of sufficient description related to that object. The concept may differ individual to individual because it is formed through a subjective approach and according to the theory of verification; it is verified through sense experience at an individual level that is known as weak verification in verificationism (Beaney, 2006). It may include the vision, context, background knowledge, interest or verbal ability of an individual. The problem of the uniformity of the concepts formed through reference in this case can be resolved by strengthening the causal connection.

The concepts within a family are stronger than the concepts within a society. If a nation consists of different societies then beside their respective social ideologies, national ideologies will also be stronger. People sharing a common profession will have clear concept about their professional ideologies than family ideologies of each other. The students of linguistics who have got together for their higher studies from different parts of the world will share uniform concepts about linguistics due their similar background knowledge and current context. Therefore, it can be concluded that the nature of causal connection determines the grading of the uniformity or clarity of concepts.

TRANSFER OF CONCEPTS THROUGH CAUSAL CONNECTION

When a new concept is formed due to some kind of scientific discovery, reflection on certain object or may be because of a new idea, an abrupt incident takes place. It may be contrary to the expectations or personal intuition of an individual or society. The

same prevails or travels in the society with respect to its worth in that specific society. The track for its dissemination among the people of the society is determined by the nature or strength of causal chain or causal connection. A well connected society may be termed as a well-informed society. Causal connection works like a path for electric current in an electronic circuit. With maximum impedance matching maximum load is transferred. If the newly formed concept matches with the interests of the society, it may travel fast, if not then it may struck somewhere in the beginning or middle.

Causal connection also depends upon the social interaction within a society. If people in a society shares common traditions, norms, values, culture, religion etc. the social interaction among them may be stronger, and in these circumstances stronger connections prevail, which determine that the society is congruent and coherent. This sort of harmonious relationship results into less confused and more united attitude of the people of the society toward the progress, creativity and acceptance of change in accordance with the new trends emerging in the today's global village.

VAGUE CONCEPT THROUGH WEAK CONNECTION

In the theory of verification propounded by A. J. Ayers in 1936 in his book *Language, Truth and Logic* (Beaney, 2006) the concept of strong verification and weak verification has been prominent in terms of determining the truth or falsity of a statement through verification from sense experiences. Shift from strong verification to weak verification enhanced the domain of statements to be included and consequently included all sort of statements in the category of variables. In other words it took almost all kind of statements to be true or false on the basis of some probable cause or possibility of verification through experience.

In the similar vein human relationship (connectivity) works. In case of a weak connection among the people of a society or group, meanings in terms of perceptions, ideas, concepts etc. get vague or ambiguous. If the connection is weaker among the society there are more chances for the people of that society to be more confused with more distorted ideology. In other case, by strengthening the relationship among the people of the society the ideologies become strengthened and clearer. Therefore, it can be concluded that for easy, immediate and effective transfer, transmission or expansion of newly

formed ideas or concepts; and for the maintenance of their true and coherent sense in terms of understanding or meanings, causal connection (social interaction) needs to be strengthened at individual as well as social level.

CONCLUSION

In accordance with the essence of this debate on causal connection it is quite eminent that only baptism or reference borrowing is not sufficient for the transfer of knowledge in its true meanings in the society. It is also equally significant that channels of the transfer of information i.e. causal connection should also be maintained at an appropriate level. There should be a healthy social interaction among the people of the society at all levels. Communication gap should be minimized as much as possible if not eliminated. A strong causal connection will result in to clarity of social thoughts, concepts and ideas; and pave a path for social harmony, cooperation, coordination etc. It happens due to a strong connectivity among the people of a society and saves them from distortion or confusion of meanings by having close contextual awareness and social interaction.

In accordance with the above discussion it can therefore, be concluded that for easy, immediate and effective transfer, diffusion or expansion of newly formed ideas or concepts; and for the maintenance of their true and lucid sense in terms of understanding or meanings, causal connection needs to be strengthened at levels. In case of weak causal connection or breakage of causal connection, confusion will prevail in the society in terms of distortion, obscurity or vagueness of ideas or concepts, which would be a sign of danger for a healthy nation/society.

REFERENCES

- Ayer, A. J., *Language, Truth and Logic*. (London: Gollancz, 1936).
Beaney, M., *Verificationism* (York: Elsevier Ltd. University of York, York,UK, 2006).
Björkman, B., 'So Where We Are: Spoken Lingua Franca English at a Swedish Technical University'. *English Today*, 24(2), (2008).
Chomsky, N., 'Deep Structure, Surface Structure and Semantic Interpretation'. *Steinberg & Jakobovits*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

Genone, J., *et.al.*, 'Concept Possession, Experimental Semantics, and Hybrid Theories of Reference, *Journal of Philosophical Psychology*, Routledge Vol.25, No.5 (October 2012).

Palmer, F.R., *Semantics*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Russell, B., On Denoting: *Mind Series*, Vol.14, No.56, (October, 1905):479-493.
