COURSE GUIDE

ENG 831
LEXICOLOGY AND SEMANTICS OF ENGLISH

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Introduction

This is a three credit unit course presented in five modules. The general aim of the first module is to provide you with an in-depth understanding of how the meaning of a sentence's component words and their arrangement in syntactic structure determine sentence meaning. In module two, you will learn more closely about connectives and logical quantifiers. I shall also explain the truth relations in entailment and presupposition. Modules three and four discuss other necessary information needed to determine sentence meaning apart from the syntactic structure. Some of these are the speaker's and addressee's background attitudes and beliefs, their understanding of the context in which a sentence is uttered, and their knowledge of how language can be used to inform, to persuade, to mislead, and so forth. Module five introduces you to some aspects of formal semantics.

Course Aims

The aims of this course are to

- Explicate the challenges in doing semantics
- Describe the roles of syntax in sentence interpretation
- Present how logic is applied in sentence interpretation, proposition and entailment
- Discuss the various relationships that exist between signs and their users
- Examine the nature of relationship between concepte and general thought on the one hand and thought and reality on the other

Course Objectives

At the end of this couse, you should be able to

- Discuss the challenges in doing semantics
- Identify the roles of syntax in sentence interpretation
- Discuss sentence relations and truth
- Explain how proposition and entailment could the discussed in logic
- Examine the relationship between signs and their users
- Discuss the nature of the relationship between concepts and general thought

Working through this Course

I would advice you to carefully study each unit, beginning with this Study Guide, especially since this is an advanced course in semantics. Also make a habit of noting down any question you have for tutorials.

Course Materials

You have been provided, in this course, with the following items:

- The course guide;
- The study units;
- Recommended texts;
- Assignment file; and
- The presentation schedule

Study Units

ENG 831 is a 3-Credit Unit course for postgraduate students. There are five modules in this course, each has four units except module 3 and 5. Module 3 has an additional unit while module 5 has 3 units. Thus, you will find twenty units in the whole text. The five modules in the course are as follows:

CONTENT

Module 1: Syntax and Sentence Interpretation

Unit 1: Challenges in Doing Semantics
Unit 2: Structural Ambiguity
Unit 3: Thematic Roles
Unit 4: Interpretation of Pronoun

Module 2: Sentence Relations and Truth

Unit 1: Meaning and Logic
Unit 2: Propositional Logic
Unit 3: Entailment
Unit 4: Presupposition

Module 3: Meaning and Context I

Unit 1: Deixis
Unit 2: Speech Act Theory
Unit 3: Indirect Speech Act
Unit 4: Politeness I
Unit 5: Politeness II

Module 4: Meaning and Context II

Unit 1: Conversational Implicature
Unit 2: Cooperative Principle I
Unit 3: Cooperative Principle II
Unit 4: Knowledge as Context

Module 5: Formal Semantics

Unit 1: Words, Concepts and Thinking
Unit 2: Componential Analysis
Unit 3: Translating English into a Logical Metalanguage

Revision

References and Further Readings

There is a list of references at the end of every unit. You are encouraged to search for these sources and consult them for further information. It will also be very profitable to consult other standard textbooks on each of the topics discussed.

Assessment

You have access to two types of assessment. These are the Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs) and the End of Semester Examination. You will be expected to sit for an examination at the end of the course.

Tutor Marked Assignments (TMA)

At the end of each unit, there is the TMA which you will be expected to attempt, applying the information, knowledge and techniques you have acquired in the unit. As the University is now largely automated in its operations, the tutor marked assignments are now done online and the grading immediate. This has largely helped in reducing the burden of slowness in accessing results by students. Make sure you keep up with the dates for submission of your TMAs as given to you on the University web site and your Study Centre. TMAs carry 30% of your final assessment.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination carries 70% of your final grading score. Moreover, the examination is now conducted on the electronic platform by the University as noted above. Questions will be drawn from all areas of the course. You will be required to read the course material very well before the examination. You are also required to improve your computer skills for your own good.

Course Marking Scheme

The total score for the course is 100% - comprising 30% TMA's and 70% for the examination. It is advisable that you do all you can to pass both your TMAs and the examination to give you good standing in your final grade.

Course Overview and Presentation Schedule

S/N	Title of Work	Weeks of Activity	Assessment
Module 1: Syntax and Sentence Interpretation			
1	Unit 1: Challenges in Doing Semantics	1	TMA
2	Unit 2: Structural Ambiguity	2	TMA
3	Unit 3: Thematic Roles	3	TMA
4	Unit 4: Interpretation of Pronoun	4	TMA
Module 2: Sentence Relations and Truth			
5	Unit 1: Meaning and Logic	5	TMA
6	Unit 2: Propositional Logic	6	TMA
7	Unit 2: Entailment	7	TMA
8	Unit 3: Presupposition	8	TMA
Module 3: Meaning and Context I			
9	Unit 1: Deixis	9	TMA
10	Unit 2: Speech Act Theory	10	TMA
11	Unit 3: Indirect Speech Act	11	TMA
12	Unit 4: Politeness I	12	TMA
13	Unit 5: Politeness II	13	TMA
Module 4: Meaning and Context II			
14	Unit 1: Conversational Implicature	14	TMA
15	Unit 2: Cooperative Princinple I	15	TMA
16	Unit 3: Cooperative Princinple II	16	TMA
17	Unit 4: Knowledge as Context	17	TMA
Module 5: Formal Semantics			
18	Unit 1: Words, Concepts and Thinking	18	TMA
19	Unit 2: Componential Analysis	19	TMA
20	Unit 3: Translating English into a Logical Metalanguage	20	TMA
21	Revision	22	

What You Will Need for this Course

First, I think it will be of immense help to you if you try to review what you studied at the undergraduate level in *ENG 331: Introduction to Semantics* and other related courses at that level. This will refresh your mind on what semantics, and the study of meaning generally, is about. Second, you would need to purchase some of the texts recommended as important for your mastery of the course content. You need quality time in a study-friendly environment every week. You should be prepared to visit recommended wesites and reputable institutional or public libraries accessible to you.

How to Get the Most from the Course

The units are intended to guide you just as a teacher would. You will be required to read each unit very carefully. You will also need to attempt all the exercises. Every unit has been presented in a similar structure – introduction, objectives and the main content, the objectives highlight what you are expected to achieve, while the introduction provides a short overview. The details are presented in the main text.

Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials

The University will provide you tutors at your different study centres for tutorials on areas of the course that may be difficult. Tutors are expected to have contacts with you on specific periods. Your tutors will also assess your progress and comment on how you progress.

Conclusion

This is an advanced course in semantics but you will get the best out of it if you cultivate the habit of relating it to day-to-day use and application of meaning in all situations.

Summary

This Course Guide has been designed to furnish the information you need for a fruitful experience in the course. However, how much you get fro the course depends on how much you put into it in terms of time, efforts and planning.

I wish you success in ENG 831 and in the whole programme!

COURSE MATERIAL

ENG 831
LEXICOLOGY AND SEMANTICS OF ENGLISH

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CONTENT

MODULE 1 SYNTAX AND SENTENCE INTERPRETATION

The general aim of this module is to provide you with an in-depth understanding of how the meaning of a sentence's component words and their arrangement in syntactic structure determine sentence meaning. In the undergraduate course on semantics, *ENG 331: Introduction to Semantics,* you learnt that words and morphemes are the smallest meaningful units in language, hence you studied concepts such as synonymy, which is a term used to refer to any set of words or expressions that have the same meanings in some or all context; antonymy or semantic opposition which refers to words or phrases that are opposites to some components of their meaning; polysemy, which means a situation where the same word has a set of different meanings; homonymy, where a single form has two or entirely distinct meanings and hyponymy which is used to refer to a class, a relation of inclusion. In that course, you also learnt terms such as paraphrase, anomaly, contradiction, tautology, presupposition, entailment, proposition, redundancy, meaninglessness and vagueness. These terms are used to analyse the meaning of sentences. You may need to revise the relevant areas of ENG 331.

In this module, which is made up of four units, you will learn how syntax, the study of how words are structurally combined, helps determine meaning. There are many different ideas about precisely how the meaning of a sentence's component words and their arrangement in syntactic structure determine sentence meaning. Some of these are structural ambiguity, the assignment of theta roles, and the interpretation of pronouns. However, you will first learn how to tackle the challenges in doing semantics. These have to do with definitions. You will study these topics as listed below:

Unit 1: Challenges in Doing Semantics
Unit 2: Structural Ambiguity
Unit 3: Thematic Roles
Unit 4: Interpretation of Pronoun

UNIT 1 CHALLENGES IN DOING SEMANTICS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is more or less an introduction to this course. In it I shall discuss some of the challenges you will likely face in doing semantics. These challenges have to do with definitions. A definition is an attempt to show the meaning of one word (or other linguistic expression) by means of some other words which 'say the same thing'. I shall highlight these challenges and examine how you can overcome them.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After you have studied this unit, you should be able:

- identify the challenges in doing semantics
- tackle these challenges

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

A definition is an attempt to show the meaning of one word (or other linguistic expression) by means of some other words which 'say the same thing'. That is, definitions depend on the relation of paraphrase. Aristotle, in his treatise *On Definitions*, observed that ‘it is the easiest of all things to demolish a definition, while to establish one is the hardest’ (Goddard 1998:27).

3.1. Challenges in Doing Semantics

Semantics is the study of meaning communicated through language. In doing semantics it is important to understand a concept called Definitions Theory. To give the meaning of linguistics expressions, we need to establish definitions of the meaning of words. The assumption here is that when a speaker combines words to form sentences according to the grammatical rule of his or her language, the words definitions are combined to form phrase and then sentence definitions, giving us the meaning of sentences. However, the task of attaching definitions to words leads to a number of challenges. Let us examine some ways in which definitions can go wrong.

3.1.1. Obscurity

Any explanation of a word-meaning worth its salt must be framed in terms of simpler, more easily understood words. If not it is an obscure definition. As observed by Aristotle (quoted in Goddard 1998:27), ‘we make things known by taking not any random terms, but such as are prior and more intelligible… a man who does not define through terms of this kind has not defined at all’. It is easy to find examples of obscure definitions in dictionaries. For instance the *Concise Oxford Dictionary 9th Edition* defines the noun *demand* as follows:

demand /dɪˈmɑ:nd/ n. an insistent and peremptory request, made as of right

Are the words in this definition ‘prior and more intelligible’ than the word whose meaning is being explained in the first place? For instance, if a person didn’t have enough command of the English language to understand *demand*, is it likely that he would be able to understand *peremptory*?

Here are some other examples from various dictionaries. In each case, the words in the definition are no simpler than those being defined.

take: accept or receive possession of
make: to produce by any action or causative agency
fire: state of combustion

Definitions can also be obscure if they employ ordinary-looking words in a semi-metaphoric way. For example, in the following definitions, *come* and *bring* are not being used in their ordinary meanings.

become: come into being
find: to come upon by chance
finish: to bring to an end

Another type of obscure definition is the use of unusual phrases which one can hardly imagine an ordinary person ever saying. Some examples are given below.

> *love:* a settled good-will
> *gather*: to bring together in one company or aggregate
> *distress:* severe pressure of pain, sorrow, etc

Scientific definitions are also another type of obscure definition, for example

> ***air**:* a mixture of oxygen, nitrogen and other gases
> which surrounds the earth and forms is atmosphere
>
> ***water**:* a compound of hydrogen and oxygen H_2O,
> freezing at 0^oC and boiling at 100^oC
>
> ***circle**:* a closed plane curve every point which
> is equidistant from the given point, the centre.
> Equation $(x – h^2) + (y – k)^2 = r^2$ where r is the
> radius and (h, k) are the coordinates of the centre.

Aside from the obscure wording, scientific definitions can be faulted as containing information which is not part of ordinary linguistic competence and which is not shared by every member of the speech community. Conversely, they omit information which is part of the everyday concept, e.g. that people need to breathe air to live and that water is drinkable (Goddard 1998).

Obscure definitions are futile. They may appear to explain something – for instance, you may agree that *fire* means a *state of combustion* – but that impression is due to the fact that you already understand the meaning of the words in the first place. The definition in itself is failing in its task of making meaning explicit and intelligible. At best, an obscure definition is just putting of the necessary explanatory work – it replaces the job of understanding one obscure or unknown term by the job of understanding another.

3. 1. 2. Circularity

To state the meaning of a word, we use other words. For example, Palmer's (1976) definition of *salt* as *the stuff we add to salty food.* Aristotle defines *sun* as *star that appears by day.* The problem in Aristotle's definition is that the definition of *day* will probably have to involve *sun.* This is a problem that faces dictionary writers. If one looks up a word such as *asperity* in an English dictionary, one might find a definition like '*the fact of being harsh or severe especially in the way you speak or treat somebody'*. To understand the definition of this word one has to understand the meaning of *harsh* and *severe*. In some instances, it may take several steps before the circle closes: A is defined via B, B via C, then C via A.

asperity: the fact of being harsh or severe especially in the way you speak or treat somebody
harsh: severe scrutinizing, critical and rigid in manner e.g. harsh criticism.
severe: very harsh or strict e.g. a severe punishment.

fate: a person's destiny
destiny: that which happens to a person or thing thought of as determined by fate

give: a verb used to indicate that somebody presents or delivers something that he/she own to another person to keep or use.
present: to give or hand something to somebody.
fitting: suitable or appropriate.
suitable: such as to suit; appropriate fitting.

receive: accept delivery of: take into one's hands
accept: consent to receive
take: accept or receive possession of

appropriate: suitable or fitting for particular purpose
fitting: suitable or appropriate
suitable: such as to suit; appropriate, fitting.

3. 1. 3. Superfluous Components

A superfluous component is one upon whose removal the remainder still makes the term that is being defined clear. Let us examine the definition of *weapon* given below.

weapon: an instrument of offensive or
defensive combat; something to fight with

The first component of the definition is not only obscure (the words *offensive, defensive* and *combat* are no simpler than *weapon*) it is superfluous, because the second component does the same job.

3. 1. 4. Use of Disjunctions

Disjunction means using *or*. By saying *A* or *B* we don't have to state explicitly what A and B have in common. Most disjunctions in dictionaries seem to introduce inaccuracy or else to be superfluous.

to tempt: to persuade or try to persuade (especially
into doing something wrong or unwise) by
the prospect of pleasure or advantage.

The first disjunction *to persuade* is superfluous and can be dispensed with entirely. The second (something wrong or unwise) can be simplified to ‘something bad’ and the prospect of ‘pleasure or advantage’ can be simplified to ‘something good (for this person).

3. 1. 5. Linguistics knowledge versus encyclopedic knowledge

Our quest for meaning demands that we make sure that our definitions of a word’s meaning are exact. It is believed that meanings of words exist in the minds of native speakers of the language. Thus, meaning is a kind of knowledge. If this is the case, the question we should ask is: *is there a difference between this kind of knowledge and other kinds of knowledge that people have?* There is a distinction between linguistics knowledge (about the meaning of words) and encyclopedic knowledge (about the way the world is). For instance, someone who sows is a tailor, but you may know it as a fashion designer. If I say, ‘A tailor sows my gown’. Presumably you will understand what I mean, even though you know someone who sows as a fashion designer. Do our words have different meanings when we both use the word ‘tailor’ in the above sentence?

Another, aspect to this problem is: What should we do if we find out that those speakers of a language differ in their understanding of what a word means? Whose knowledge should be considered as our ‘meaning’? If we consider one speaker’s meaning we will be limiting our semantic description to an idiolect, the technical form for an individual’s language. More so, if we use experts’ knowledge to resolve this we will be moving away from ordinary speakers to use a scientific definition, for words have the danger of making semantics equivalent to all of science. It also ignores the fact that most of us seem to understand each other talking about say, places/locations without any training in geography.

3. 1. 6. Meaning and context

Another type of challenge is looking at what a particular utterance mean in context. When we speak, context adds to the meaning of words. For examples, the following sentences could be given at least two interpretations.

(1) ***All Yorùbá teachers*** were honoured.
(2) ***The shooting*** of the armed robbers was terrifying.

In the first sentence, *Yorùbá teachers* could refer to teachers who are from the *Yorùbá tribe*, it could also be interpreted as teachers who *teach Yorùbá*. In the second sentence, *the shooting* could be carried out by the armed robbers, in which case, they shot some other entity. It could also be interpreted to mean that the armed robbers were the entity that received the action; in this case, some other people shot them.

In the Yoruba language *ojà oba* ‘market king’ (the king’s market) might be interpreted differently based on different contexts in which the word is used.

1. Mo lo sí ọjà ọba ‘I went to the king’s market’.
2. Iná jó ọjà ọba ‘Fire gutted the king’s market’.

‘oja oba’ in (1) and (2) above may refer to a market owned by the king or a market for king only. It may also mean an expensive market. But the knowledge/understanding of the context that the speaker or hearer has coupled with background knowledge will determine the kind of meaning that will be attached.

So, here is the problem: if features of context are part of an utterance meaning, then how can we include them in our definitions. For instance, *it’s getting late* may mean *let’s leave* if said to a friend while in party. It may also mean *time for bed* if said in a family setting.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Are you able to explain how a definition could be obscure? Give examples in your explanation. How would context be used in the interpretation of the sentence? ***All Yorùbá teachers*** were honoured.

3. 2. Meeting the Challenges

Circularity

One solution to the problem of circularity is to develop a semantic metalanguage with which to describe the semantic units and rules of all languages. A metalanguage is tool of description, for example a Yoruba/English dictionary, it is a kind that would be neutral with respect to any languages, that is, that would not be biased, that will satisfy scientific criteria of clarity, economy, consistency, etc. However, there are claims that a metalanguage with such capacity is unattainable and that the best policy is to use ordinary language to describe meaning.

Linguistic Knowledge versus encyclopedic Knowledge

Mental lexicon is the knowledge a speaker has of the meaning of words. Modeling of conceptual knowledge helps to resolve the problem of linguistic knowledge versus encyclpeadic knowledge. A fundamental human faculty is our ability to form domains and categories of knowledge, to partition objects in the world into meaningful sets such as living things, man-made objects, animals and tools. During the process of acquiring a new concept, we learn not only its meaning but also the domain and category to which it belongs. To model is to give a simplified version of something complex or to give a particular version of an article. So, modeling of conceptual knowledge will be to assign a particular lexicon to give meaning of a word in order to bridge the gap between the linguistics knowledge and the encyclopedic knowledge.

The Contribution of Context to Meaning

Literal versus non-literal meaning distinguishes between instances where the speaker speaks in a neutral, factually accurate way and the instance where the speaker deliberately describes something in untrue or impossible terms in order to achieve special effects. Instances are given below in the following expressions.

a) I want to sleep. (when someone feels tired and the eyes are closing)

Non-literal expressions:

b) I need to rest.
c) I can close my eyes for years.
d) My bed is calling me.
e) See you tomorrow.

Non-literal uses of language are traditionally called figurative expressions; they are metaphor, simile, irony, metonymy, etc.

Also, pragmatics helps to solve this issue. Pragmatics concerns the transmission of meaning through language. It is the study of how people comprehend and produce a communicative act or speech act in a concrete speech situation which is usually a conversation. It distinguishes two intents or meanings in each utterance or communicative act of verbal communication. One is the informative intent or the sentence meaning, and the other the communicative intent or speaker meaning.

4.0 Conclusion

To give the meaning of linguistic expressions, we need to establish definitions of the meaning of words. In doing this, we should simpler and more easily understood words, avoid superfluous components and the use of disjunctions.

5.0 Summary

Despite the fact that there are challenges in our quest for meaning, some of which you learnt in this unit, you also studied how to tackle some of these challenges. In the next unit, you will learn how explain structures that have more than one meaning known as structural ambiguity.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

In not more than 11/2 (one and half) pages each, explain how to meet the following challenges in doing semantics: obscurity and the use of disjunctions.

Explain how context could be employed in the interpretation of expressions. Your explanation must be more than one and a half pages.

7.0 REFERENCES/FOR FURTHER READING

Fromkin V. & R. Rodman. (1993). *An Introduction to Language: Fifth Edition.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers

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Ndimele, O. M. (1999). *Semantics and The Frontiers of Communication: Second Edition.* Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press Ltd

O'Grady, M. (1997) 'Semantics: the analysis of meaning'. In O'Grady W, M. Dobrovolsky & F. Katamba. (Eds.) (1997). *Contemporary Linguistics: An Introduction*. New York and London: Addison Wesley Longman Limited

Palmer, F.R. (1996). *Semantics*: *Second Edition* Cambridge: CUP

Saeed, J. I. (2003). *Semantics: Second Edition* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd

Taiwo, O. (forthcoming). *Introductory Semantics and Pragmatics for Nigerian Students*

UNIT 2 STRUCTURAL AMBIGUITY

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

You must have read the Course Guide. I assume that you have familiarised yourself with the introductory comments in Module 1. This unit is the first among three units of this module that discuss the role of syntax in sentence interpretation. The main thrust of the unit is to identify how the components words of some sentences can be combined in more than one way to have different meanings.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify constructions that are structurally ambiguous and the constituent parts that cause the ambiguity
- analyse the parts that are involve in the structural ambiguity
- explain adequately the various readings that could be given to constructions that have more than one meaning.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Structural Ambiguity

In the undergraduate course on semantics, ENG 331, you learnt that ambiguity is a grammatical phenomenon in which an expression can be given more than one interpretation. You were also taught the distinction between lexical ambiguity, a situation where a construction has more than one meaning due to the presence of a particular word in that construction, and structural ambiguity, a type of ambiguity in which a particular word or phrase can modify more than one constituent or can be involved in more than one relational association. You don't need to understand the way in which words are combined to identify lexical ambiguity, but this is not the case in structural ambiguity because it is possible that words which do not have more than one meaning in isolation may have two or more meanings when combined with other words in a construction. In this situation, you should be able to identify word combinations that are ambiguous, explain and analyse the ambiguity. We shall focus on these in this unit. In doing this, I will use many examples, identify the ambiguous parts in the examples, analyse them with the aid of tree diagrams where possible.

Structural ambiguity can be as a result of how the whole sentence is organized or the way a particular word or phrase is placed in a sentence. For instance, in the sentences below, the words or phrases in italics are responsible for the ambiguous interpretations given to the sentences.

(1) ***All Yorùbá teachers*** were honoured.
(2) ***The shooting*** of the armed robbers was terrifying.
(3) ***Visiting uncles*** could be boring.
(4) They fought ***with us***.

In the first sentence, *Yorùbá teachers* could refer to teachers who are from the *Yorùbá tribe,* it could also be interpreted as teachers who *teach Yorùbá.* In the second sentence, *the shooting* could be carried out by the armed robbers, in which case, they shoot some other entity. It could also be interpreted to mean that the armed robbers were the entity that received the action; in this case, some other people shot them.

In *'Visiting uncles* could be boring*'* the italicized phrase could refer to *uncles* that would come on visiting. With this interpretation, these uncles are the cause of boredom. The other interpretation would mean that *the act of visiting* uncles is what is actually boring.

The last sentence, '*They fought with us'*, could also be given two interpretations; it could mean that *they fought us* in which case *with* in the sentence refers to the subject pronoun *they.* The other interpretation is where the word *with* refers to the object pronoun *us.* Here, it would mean that *they joined forces with us or supported us* in the fighting.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Look for phrases or sentences that could be given more than one interpretation, identify the words or phrases that are responsible for such interpretations and explain how the ambiguity is structural rather than lexical.

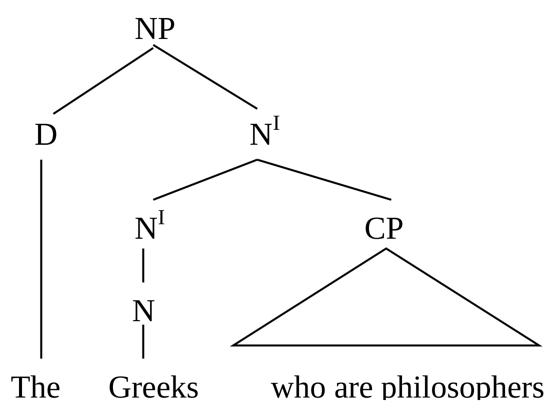
3.2. Tree Diagram Illustrations of Structural Ambiguity

Some sentences are structurally ambiguous in that the meanings of their component words can be combined in more than one way. In other words, the manner in which words are grouped together in syntactic structures reflects the way in which their meanings are combined by the semantic component of the grammar. This is why it is possible to represent structural ambiguity in language by providing a different tree structure for each interpretation that a particular utterance has. If you examine the sentences in (5) below, taken from Fromkin and Rodman (1993), you will notice that the use of comma causes a change in meaning. This is another instance of structural ambiguity..

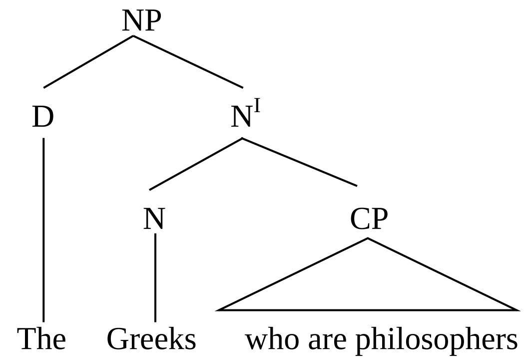
5a. The Greeks who are philosophers liked to talk
 b. The Greeks, who are philosophers, liked to talk

The first sentence, (5a), means that among the Greeks, the ones who were philosophers liked to talk. The second sentence, (5b), means that all Greeks were philosophers and liked to talk. The relative clause *who were philosophers* perform different syntactic functions in the two sentences; hence, the different meaning. The NPs with the relative clause have the structures in (6a&b).

6a



b.



(Fromkin and Rodman 1993:143-146)

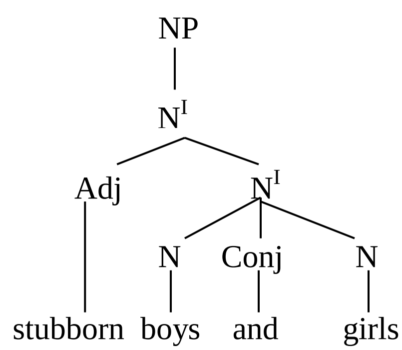
In the tree diagrams in (6) above, the relative clause is represented as the CP (Complementizer Phrase), it is the sister of the N^I (pronounced as N bar) in (6a) and that of N in (6b). The different levels of representation represent the different modifications of the relative clause which is the reason for the ambiguity.

Other instances of structural ambiguity are given below.

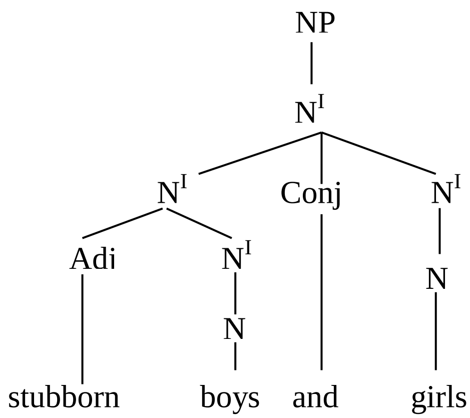
7. Stubborn boys and girls

The noun phrase above has at least two interpretations, the modifier *stubborn,* is responsible for the ambiguity. It could modify both *boys* and *girls*, with this rendering, boys and girls are stubborn. On the other hand, *stubborn* could modify only *boys*. If this is the case, then boys but not girls, are stubborn. The two possibilities are illustrated with the tree diagrams in (8).

8a.



b.

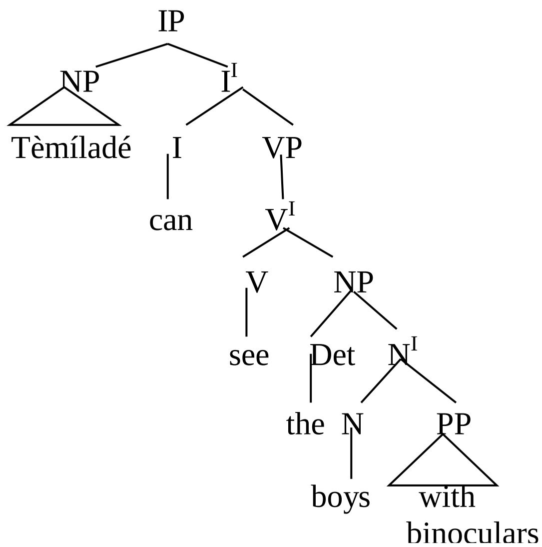


In the tree diagrams in (8), *stubborn*, the adjective, is the sister as well as the daughter two different N-bars (N^I). In (8a), the N^I which is the sister of *stubborn* dominates *boys* and *girls* because it is the mother of the two. This dominance shows that *stubborn* modifies both *boys* and *girls*. However, in (8b), *stubborn* is the sister of an N^I which dominates only *boys* and nothing more. Here, we see clearly that *stubborn* modifies only *boys* without the inclusion of *girls* because *girls* has a different N^I which dominates it.

9. Temilade can see the boys with binoculars.

The prepositional phrase, *with binoculars*, is responsible for the structural ambiguity in the sentence in (9) above; hence, it could be given at least two meanings. The two possible readings are that *Temilade can use binocular to see the boys; Temilade can see the boys who are with binoculars*. We also represent the two meanings in the tree diagrams below.

10a.



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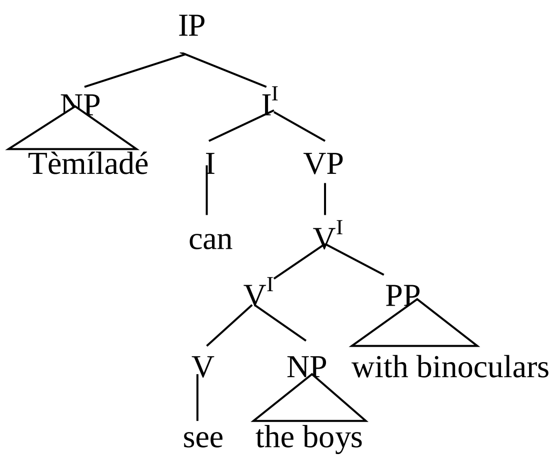

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Examine the tree diagrams in (10a &b) and discuss how the structures explain the ambiguity in the sentence in (9).

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is not uncommon to come across constructions that could be given more than one interpretation in language. Speakers of the language know how to give different meanings to such constructions because of their communicative competence. They do this by interpreting structurally ambiguous constructions by paying particular attention to how the components words in the said constructions are combined. By doing this, the various meanings of structurally ambiguous constructions would be brought out clearly.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, effort has been made to identify constructions that are structurally ambiguous and the constituent parts that cause the ambiguity. You learnt how to analyse the parts that are involve in structural ambiguity. I gave tree-diagram illustrations for you to be able to identify and explain various ambiguous constructions. We shall continue our discussion on the role of syntax in sentence interpretation in the next unit by examining thematic roles assoiated with nouns and nominals in a construction.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Submit a five-page essay (A4, 1½ spacing) in which you explain with at least five examples, structural ambiguity. You are also to draw tree-diagrams of the different interpretations of at least three of the examples you gave.

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UNIT 3 THEMATIC ROLES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In unit 1, you learnt about how we have to appeal to syntax to interpret structural ambiguity. Apart from using some examples to illustrate this, I also used tree diagrams for you to be able to identify structures that could be given more than one interpretation. In this unit, you will learn more on the role of syntax in the interpretation of meaning. In the last unit, (Unit 1), you learnt how the combination of some words in a construction can bring about structural ambiguity, now we shall discuss how verbs (and sometimes prepositions) assign roles (functions) to nouns or noun phrases in a construction. This is known as thematic or theta role assignment. You need to understand the meaning of a particular verb (or preposition) before you can tell what specific role it assigns to nouns or noun phrases in a construction. Some of the sub-topics you will come across in this unit are different thematic roles and how these they are assigned by verbs.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After you might studied this unit, you should be able to

- explain thematic roles
- identify various thematic roles that could be assigned by verbs (or prepositions)
- state how thematic roles are assigned to different nominals in different constructions

- discuss the relationship between the deep structure of a construction and theta or thematic role assignment
- explain the theta role criterion

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 What is Thematic Role?

Another aspect of semantic interpretation involves determining the roles that the referents of NPs play in the situations described by sentences. This is known as thematic role. The term thematic role (also known as semantic role, theta role, θ role) is used to describe the part played by a particular entity in an event. For example in the sentence below, the NPs have three semantic roles.

1.	**Máyọ̀wá**	rolled	**the ball**	down	**the hill**
	AGENT		THEME		LOCATION

This sentence identifies three entities, *Máyọ̀wá*, *the ball*, *the hill*, related by the action described by the verb ***roll***. You should note that a verb is related in various ways to the constituents in a sentence. The relations depend on the meaning of the particular verb. The sentence in (1) portrays the three entities in specific roles. *Máyọ̀wá* is the entity responsible for initiating and carrying out the action, *the ball* is acted upon and has its position changed by the action and *the hill* is the location or place of the action.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Write down three (3) sentences. What are the entities in each of the sentences?

3.2. Different thematic Roles

If you take another look at the sentence in (1), you will realize that the three noun phrases in it have three thematic roles of *agent*, *patience* and *location*. This means that there are different thematic roles that can be assigned which you need to know. I shall now go ahead and list some of the thematic roles identified in the literature so that you will be able to recognise them where necessary. In doing this, I have written the relevant role-bearing nominal in bold letters in the examples.

AGENT: The agent role is the initiator of some action, the entity that is capable of acting with volition, the person that performs an action.

2a. **Esther** cooked the food
b. **Olu** killed the poisonous snake on the farm

In the sentence in (2a), **Esther** is the entity who performed the action of cooking while **Olú** in (2b) carried out the action of killing the poisonous snake.

PATIENT: The entity undergoing the effect of some action is the patient, it often undergoes some change in state.

2b. Olu killed **the poisonous snake** on the farm
3. The sun melted **the ice.**

In the two sentences above, **the poisonous snake** in (2b) and **the ice** in (3) are the entities that underwent the effect of the action performed by **Olú** in (2b) and **the sun** in (3) respectively; hence **the poisonous snake** and **the ice** are the patients.

THEME: The theme is the entity which is moved by an action or whose location is described. In the sentence in (1), repeated below,

1. Máyọ̀wá rolled **the bal**l down the hill.
4. **The book** is in the library.

the ball is the entity which is moved by the action of the verb *roll* while in (4), **the book** is the entity whose location is described.

EXPERIENCER: The entity which is aware of the action or state described by the predicate but which is not in control of the action or state is the experiencer.

I want you to examine the sentences in (5) below.

5a. **Dèjì** saw the smoke
b. **Wálé** heard the door shut
c. **Esther** felt ill

In the sentences in (5), *Deji* in (5a), *Wale* in (5b) and *Esther* in (5c) are the entities that were aware of the action or state described by the verb, they were not in control of the action or state, hence; they are the experiencers.

BENEFICIARY: The beneficiary is the entity for whose benefit the action was performed. You will understand the beneficiary role better if you study the sentences below.

6a. Esther filled in the form for **her friend.**
b. He washed **the car.**

Her friend in (6a) and **the car** in (6b) are the entities performing the beneficiary roles in the sentences above. This is because they were the entities that benefited from what the verbs described.

INSTRUMENT: The instrument is the means by which an action is performed or something comes about.

The entities performing the instrument roles are in bold in the following sentences.

7a. She cleaned the wound with **an antiseptic wipe**.
b. They signed the treaty with **the same pen**.

LOCATION: The place in which something is located, takes place or the place where an action occurs is the location.

The location is in bold in each of the sentences below.

8. The ball rolled down **the hill**

GOAL: The end point of a movement or the entity towards which something moves is known as the goal.

9. She handled her license to **the policeman.**

In (9), **the policeman** is the goal because it is the entity who collected which *the licence*.

SOURCE: The entity from which something moves or the starting point for a movement is the source. For example in the sentence in (10), **Jos** is the place where the plane came from and therefore, the source.

10. The plane came back from **Jos**.

3.3 Thematic Role Assignment

Now that you know and can identify theta or thematic roles, you need to understand and be able to explain how various thematic roles are assigned in sentences or constructions. In doing this you could start with these questions:

- Where do thematic roles come from?
- How does the grammar ensure that the appropriate thematic role is associated with each NP in a sentence?

Thematic roles originate in word meaning. Our knowledge of verbs includes their syntactic category, how they are subcategorized and the thematic roles that their NP subject and object(s) have, and this knowledge is explicitly represented in the lexicon. Thus if the sentence *"Déólá killed the snake"* contains an agent and a theme, it is because the verb *kill* has the type of meaning that implies an entity that does the *killing* (an agent) and an entity that gets *killed* (a theme). In the sentence, *"The farmer sent the yam from Ìṣẹ́yìn to Lagos"*, if we understand *Ìṣẹ́yìn* as a source and *Lagos* as a *goal*, it is because of the difference in the meaning of the prepositions *from* and *to* that occurs with these NPs.

Thematic roles are assigned to NPs based on their position in syntactic structure, with each NP receiving one and only one role. Other examples are given below.

11a. **Fọlákẹ́** put **her bag** on **the desk**
Agent theme location

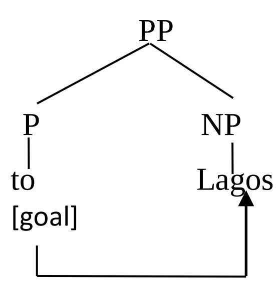
b. **The man** died.
experiencer

c. **Esther** gave **the money** to **Démọ́lá**
Agent theme recipient

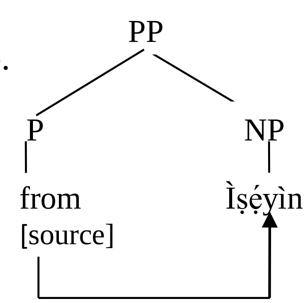
d. **Démiládé** borrowed **the money** from **Ṣẹ́gun**
Recipient theme source

A preposition assigns a thematic role to its complement NP as is the case in the tree diagrams in (12) below.

12a



b.



A verb assigns a thematic role (a theme) to its complement NP. A verb phrase assigns a thematic role to the subject of the sentence. The assignment of theta roles (thematic roles) as illustrated above is in line with a universal principle known as *theta-criterion* which states that:

13. Theta Criterion (θ-Criterion)

Each argument (noun or nominal) bears one and only one θ-role (theta (thematic) role) and each θ-role (theta (thematic) role) is assigned to one and only one argument.
(Chomsky 1981:36)

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Write down at least six (6) sentences; identify the various thematic roles performed by the various nominals in the sentences as well as the verbs that assign the roles.

3.4 Deep Structure and Thematic Roles

In grammar, the deep structure of a construction is that from which the construction is derived. It is the underlying structure which serves as the input to the derivation of another construction. For example, the sentence in (14a) is the input of that of (14b), it is the underlying sentence from which (14b) is derived.

14a. The man should bring what?
b. What should the man bring?

(14b) is derived with the help of WH movement which moved *what* from the end of the sentence in (14a) to the beginning of the sentence in (14b). Our concern is to identify the thematic role assigned to the moved element, *what* in (14b). You should remember that the THEME role is assigned to the complement of verb. In (14a) therefore, *bring* assigns the thematic role THEME to *what.* Our knowledge of English informs that, though *what* now occupies the sentence-initial position in (14b), we still know that the thing that is brought is *what.* We are able to understand this because the thematic role is assigned at deep structure before movement took place. To put it in another way, I am saying that the complement of *bring* is *what* in (14b), it receives the thematic role THEME by virtue of its position in deep structure in (14a), not in surface structure where it occurs at the beginning of the sentence. This allows us to draw the following conclusions:

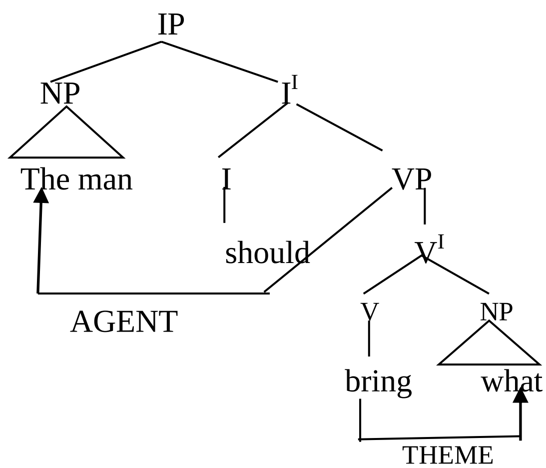
15. An NP's deep structure position determines its thematic roles

What the rule in (15) says is that no matter the present position of an NP in a construction, its position at deep structure is where that NP is assigned its thematic role and not its position at surface structure. In other words, if the position of an NP at deep structure is different from that at surface structure, the deep structure position of the NP is where its thematic role will be assigned. Therefore, a moved NP is assigned thematic role before movement.

The relevance of deep structure to the assignment of thematic roles is to show that syntactic structure does not only represent the way in which words are organized into phrases, but also is relevant to semantic interpretation.

Secondly, the fact that an NP's position in deep structure determines its thematic role provides additional support for the existence of this underlying level of syntactic structure. This in turn, lends support to the claim that there must be at least two types of syntactic rules: the deep structure and transformation, which convert it into surface structure. In the tree diagrams in (16), (16a) shows the deep structure position of the complement NP which is assigned the **theme** theta role before movement transformation takes place in which the NP now occupies the Spec-CP position in (16b).

16.



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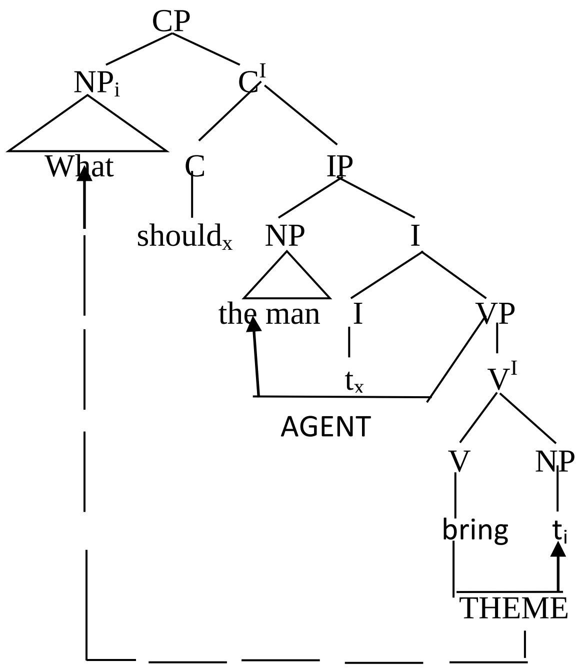


In the tree diagram in (16a), the thematic role THEME is assigned by the verb *bring* to *what* but this thematic role is transferred to the NP *what* in (16b) through the link between the trace of *what* (t_i) at the complement position where it is the sister of *bring* and *what* which now occupies the specifier position of the CP.

3.5 Thematic Role Assignment in Passive Constructions

It is possible to extend our discussion of thematic role assignment in deep structure to the subject of passive constructions. This is because the NP that occupies the subject position of a passive construction gets there as a result of movement. Therefore, the surface subject of a passive sentence bears the theme role as is the case in the sentence in (17) below.

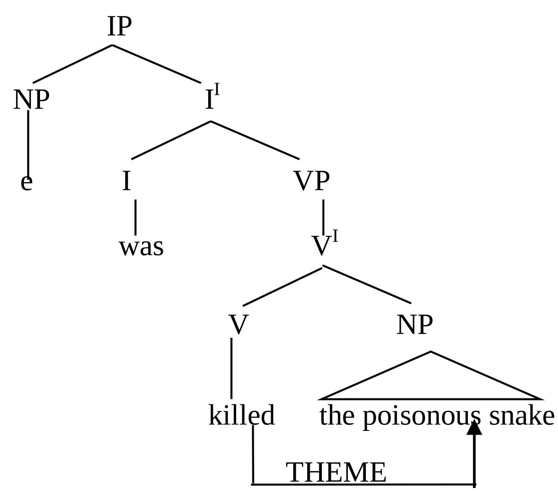
17. The poisonous snake was killed

In (17) the surface subject *the poisonous snake* refers to the entity that received the killing hence it bears the THEME role which should be assigned to the complement functioning as the direct object of the Verb '*killed*' not to its subject. In the sentence in (17), therefore, movement transformation has taken place which moved *the poisonous* *snake* from the complement position to its present subject position. The deep structure of the sentence in (17) is given in (18).

18. e was killed the poisonous snake

In (18) *the poisonous snake* occurs at the complement position as the direct object of *killed*, this enabled it to receive the THEME role from *killed*. This is explicated in the tree diagram below.

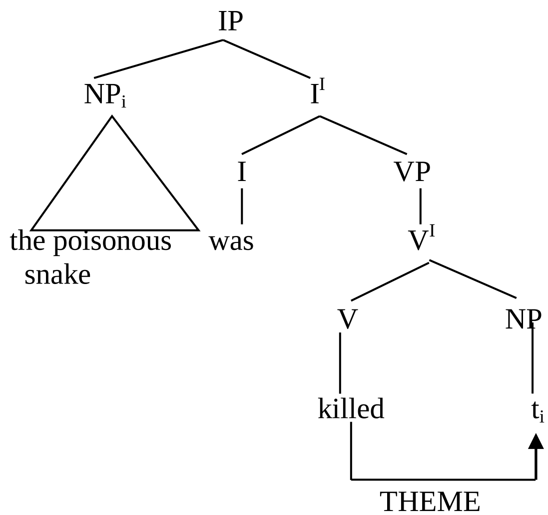
19



Since the NP *the poisonous snake* appears as complement (direct object) of the Verb *killed* in deep structure and since an NP's deep structure position determines its thematic roles, it follows that it will be assigned the THEME role as desired. Note that the passive form of a verb does not have the ability to assign an AGENT role; this is why the subject position NP in (19) is empty.

However, at the surface structure level, since the subject position cannot be empty in the English language, the complement of the verb is moved to occupy the subject position, and this is shown in the tree diagram in (20) below.

20

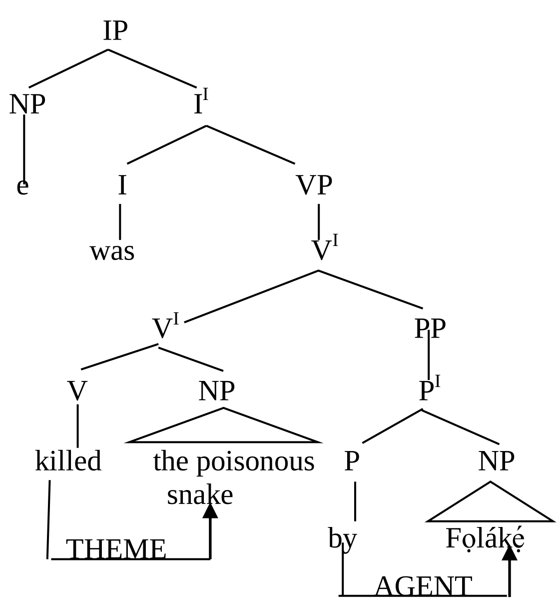


When an NP bearing the AGENT role appears in a passive construction, it will not occur in the subject position but rather as complement of the preposition *by* because the verb is unable to assign as AGENT role, some other element must take responsibility for this assignment of this role. *By*, is that element, being unique among prepositions in having the type of meaning that assigns an AGENT role. Thus, the sentence in (21a) has the deep structure depicted in (21b).

21a. The poisonous snake was killed by Fọlake
b e killed the poisonous snake by Folake

The tree diagram of (21b) is shown below in (22) where the different thematic roles assigned by both the verb *killed* and the preposition *by* are clearly brought out.

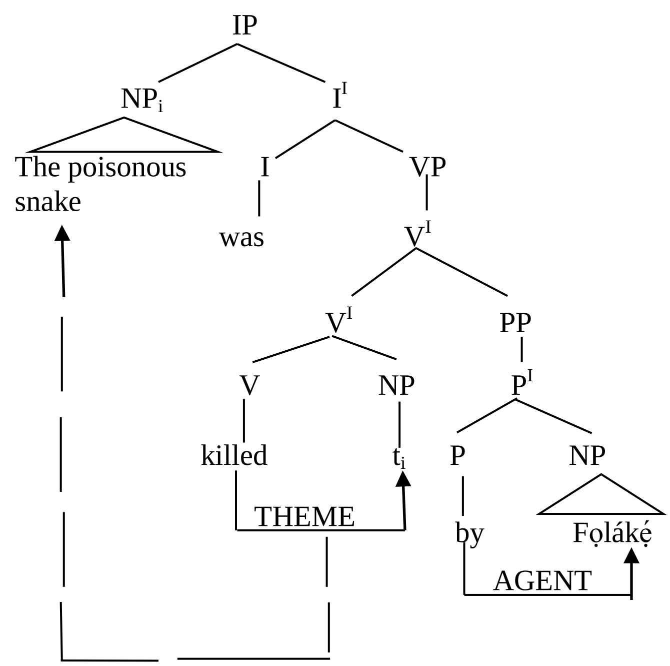
22



In (22), the verb *killed* assigns its THEME role to its complement (the NP *the poisonous snake*) while the special preposition *by* assigns its AGENT role to its complement (the NP *Fọlákẹ́*). This ensures that the sentence has the correct interpretation, with *Fọlákẹ́* doing the killing and *the poisonous snake* getting killed.

Since the subject position cannot be empty in the English language as pointed out earlier, an NP movement transformation moves the NP bearing the THEME role from the direct object position to the subject position as illustrated in the tree diagram (23).

23



The tree diagram in (23) shows that the present position of the NP *The poisonous snake* is as a result of movement from the complement of the verb position where it was the object of the verb. The thematic role has been assigned to the NP before movement took place and since it is possible to link the complement position with the subject position as we did above, the thematic role THEME is transferred to the subject of the sentence through the link. If you do not understand this movement operation, there is no way you will be able to explain how the THEME thematic role assigned by the verb to its complement is now interpreted on an NP subject of the sentence in a passive construction.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Examine the tree diagrams in (16), (22) and (23b) and discuss how the structures explain how thematic roles are assigned at the deep structure.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Every nominal in a construction has specific role it is assigned to perform in that construction. This role I identified as thematic role. It is also referred to as semantic role or theta role. These roles are assigned to nominals mainly by verbs. It is also possible that some prepositions assign thematic roles to their nominals. It is evident from our discussion in this unit that you need to understand the structure of a sentence to interpret correctly the thematic roles assign to nominals; this is because you can find a nominal in the subject position which is assigned a thematic role by the verb as the complement of that verb. Therefore, you must be able to explain that such nominals are occupying their present positions as subjects as a result of movement and you should go ahead to give the underlying or deep structures of the sentences in your explanation of how the nominals still retain their thematic roles even when they are no longer the complements of verbs where they are accessible to thematic role assignment.

5.0 SUMMARY

Another way in which syntax affects the interpretation of meaning is in the assignment of thematic role. I have discussed this in this unit. The term thematic role (also known as semantic role, theta role, θ role) is used to describe the part played by a particular entity in an event. I explained that the verb and some prepositions assign these thematic roles to nominals. There are various thematic roles that could be assigned depending on the part played by a particular nominal. I also explained, even with the aid of tree diagram, as it is done in syntax, that the present position of a nominal might not be the place where it received its thematic role. This is because such nominal might have moved from a position to the other for some reason. This is why you should be able to identify the deep structure position of the nominal for you explain how such nominal is assigned its thematic role. In the next unit, we shall be dealing with another instance in which syntax affects the interpretation of meaning. This is in the interpretation of pronouns.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Give two examples each of how the following thematic roles in different consturctions: Experiencer, Patient, Instrument, Beneficiary, Instrument, Location Source and Goal.
Submit a 4-page essay (A2,1½ spacing) in which you explain how the deep structure of a construction determines the thematic role assigned to a nominal.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4 INTERPRETATION OF PRONOUN

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learnt the assignment of theta roles and the role played by syntax in this assignment. You remember that we discussed how verbs, and sometimes prepositions, assign roles or functions to nouns in specific constructions. I also told you that you need to understand the syntax of the language before you can identify thematic or theta roles given to nouns. Another idea about how the meaning of a sentence's component words and their arrangement in syntactic structure determine sentence meaning is the interpretation of pronouns. In this unit, I shall discuss how the speaker of a language interpret these pronouns in context so that misinterpretation or miscommunication does not arise. Concepts that you will come accross include reflexives, pronominals and C-Command (Constituent Command).

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After you have studied this unit, you should be able to

- explain how to interpret pronouns, reflexives and pronominals in context
- define C-Command and use the explanation to interpret pronouns
- examine how beliefs and attitudes affect the interpretation of pronouns/pronominals

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1. Pronouns

Pronouns are a class of words which fill the position of nouns or noun phrases and which substitute for, or cross-refer to, other expressions. The most important class of pronouns is that of personal pronouns, which vary for person (*I*, *you*, *she*), case (*I*, *me*, *my*), number (*I*, *we*) and gender (*he*, *she*). Other classes are reflexive pronouns (for example, *myself*), interrogative pronouns (for example, *what*), relative pronouns (for example, *which*), demonstrative pronouns (for example, *this*) and indefinite pronouns (for example, *someone*). Pronouns function as the heads of noun phrases, and in fact usually constitute the whole of a noun phrase, since modifiers occur with them rather rarely (Leech 2006).

Pronouns may be used in place of noun phrase or may be used to refer to an entity presumably known to the discourse participants. However, there are situations when that presumption fails, in such situations, miscommunication such as the one below may result.

The landlord, trying to get a description of the armed robber, asked "what kind of clothes does he have on?' Mr Òjó, thinking the question pertained to Mr Adédàpọ̀, (the victim, who lay dying of a gun shut wound), answered, "He has a bloody shirt with blue jeans, purple striped shirt." The landlord then gave the police that description (the victim's) of the armed robber.

The misinterpretation given by Mr Òjó is caused by the pronoun *he* in the landlord's question. While the landlord referred to the armed robber who attacked Mr Adédàpọ̀, Mr Òjó interpreted *he* to refer to Mr Adédàpọ̀, hence Mr Òjó gave a wrong information to the landlord.

The category of pronouns includes word such as *he*, *she*, *him. himself* and *herself*. The words are characterized by the fact that their interpretation can be determined by another element in the same sentence. This other element is called the *antecedent*. An antecedent is an expression to which a pronoun refers and which normally precedes the pronoun in the text. The term antecedent is used primarily for the noun or nominal expression which precedes a relative pronoun such as *who* or *which*. For example, in *the girl who had a heart transplant*, *(the) girl* is the antecedent of *who* (Leech 2006:12).

Consider the following:

It seems that the man loves the woman. Many people think he loves her.

In the above mini-discourse, *he* refers to *the man*, its antecedent, with which it is co-referential. Similarly, *her* refers to *the woman*.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain how a pronoun could be misinterpreted in discourse

3.2 Reflexive Pronouns

The use of pronouns in place of noun phrases can be in sentences and across the sentences of a discourse. Within a sentence, the sentence structure limits the choice of pronoun. Consider in this regard the following two sentences.

1a. Esther's children praise her
b. Esther praises herself

In (1a), the pronoun *her* can have the same reference as the NP *Esther* or can be taken to refer to someone not mentioned in the sentence (say Esther's mother). In (1b), in contrast, the pronoun *herself* must have the same referent as *Esther*; no other interpretation is possible. The pronoun in (1a) is called a pronominal and the one in (1b) a reflexive pronoun. I shall go ahead to discuss how reflexive pronouns can be interpreted in context.

Reflexive pronouns are a class of pronouns beginning with the form of personal pronouns and ending with -*self*/-*selves*. They are: *myself*, *yourself*, *himself*, *herself*, *itself*, *ourselves*, *yourselves*, *themselves*, *oneself*. They typically occur later than the subject and verb in a clause or sentence and are identical in reference to the subject; they are also used for emphasis (Leech 2006).

The interpretation of pronominals and reflexive pronouns also differs in the following sentences.

2a Dèjì believed that [$_S$Ayọ̀ trusted *him*]
b. Dèjì believed that [$_S$Ayọ̀ trusted *himself*]

Him in (2a) can refer to either *Dèjì* or someone else not mentioned in the sentence, but in (2b), *himself* refers only to *Ayọ̀*. The contrasts illustrated in (1) and (2) reflect the fact that the interpretation of reflexive pronouns, but not ordinary pronominals, is subject to the following principle.

3. A reflexive pronoun must have an antecedent in the clause containing it.

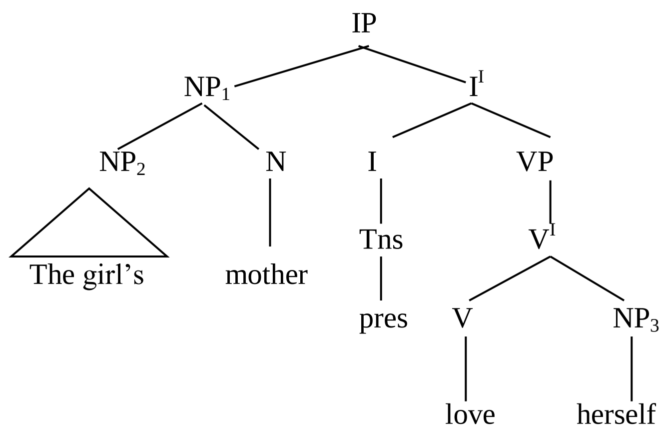
The sentence in (1b) has only one clause, the reflexive pronoun *herself*, has as its antecedent *Esther*, but (2b) has two clauses, with *Dèjì,* the subject of the main clause, and *Ayọ̀,* that of the subordinate clause, as possible antecedents of *himself*. However, only the subject of the subordinate clause, i.e. *Ayọ̀,* can serve as antecedent since only it occurs in the clause containing *himself* in accordance with the principle in (3).

In the light of our discussion above, let us consider the sentence in (4) below.

4. The girl's mother loves herself.

The sentence in (4) above has the tree diagram in (5).

5.



As we have in the diagram above, NP_1 (the girl's mother) and NP_2 (the girl's) are in the same clause with *herself*. By implication, either of the two NPs could be the antecedent of *herself* since the two are in the same clause as *herself*. But we know that the one who loves herself is the girl's mother and not the girl's. The principle needed to ensure this interpretation makes use of the notion of C-Command (Constituent Command).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Explain the principle involved in the interpretation of reflexive pronouns

3.3 C – Command (Constituent Command)

C-command (Constituent Command) is an important syntactic relation which provides us with a useful way of determining the relative position of two different constituents within the same tree, in particular, whether one is lower in the tree than the other or not. In the tree diagram in (5) above, the reflexive pronoun *herself,* (NP_3) occurs at a lower position than NP_1 (the girl's mother), which is its antecedent. The principle which is used in the interpretation of reflexives is stated in (6) below.

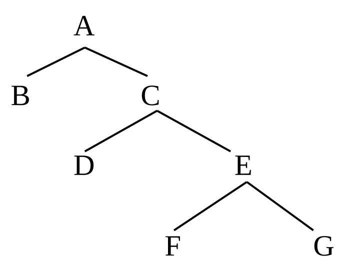
6. A reflexive must have an antecedent that c-commands it.

C-command is defined in (7) and illustrated in (8) below.

7. C-Command

X C-commands Y iff (if and only if) the first branching node dominating X dominates Y, and X does not dominate Y, nor Y dominate X (a branching node is a node which branches into two or more immediate constituents).

8.



Let us me use the tree diagram (8) above to explain the notion of C-Command as I defined it in (7) above. Note that the first node in the tree diagram in (8) is A, also note that node A dominates all other nodes in the tree, it is not dominated by any node, neither does it have any sister. With this explanation and following the definition of C-Command in (7) above, node A C-Commands nothing because it has no node dominating it rather it dominates all the nodes in the projection. But note also that other nodes in the tree diagram in (8) have one node or the other that dominates them. Therefore, it is possible that these other nodes can C-Command and be C-Commanded. For example, node B C-Commands [nodes C, D, E, F, and G] because the first branching node which dominates B is A, A also dominates [C, D, E, F, and G]. C C-Commands B; D C-Commands [E, F, G]; E C-Commands D; F C-Commands G, and G C-Commands F.

Following the definition of C-command in (7), and the illustration in (8), NP_2, *the girl's,* in the tree diagram in (5), cannot be antecedent of *herself* (NP_3) because the first branching node which dominates NP_3 is N^I, N^I does not dominate NP_3. However, NP_1, (the girl's mother) C-commands NP_3, (herself) because the first branching node dominating NP_1 is IP, IP also dominates NP_3 (herself).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Did you understand how I used the tree diagram to illustrate C-Command? Draw a labelled tree diagram which has a transitive verb and show how the subject and object of the sentence C-Command each other.

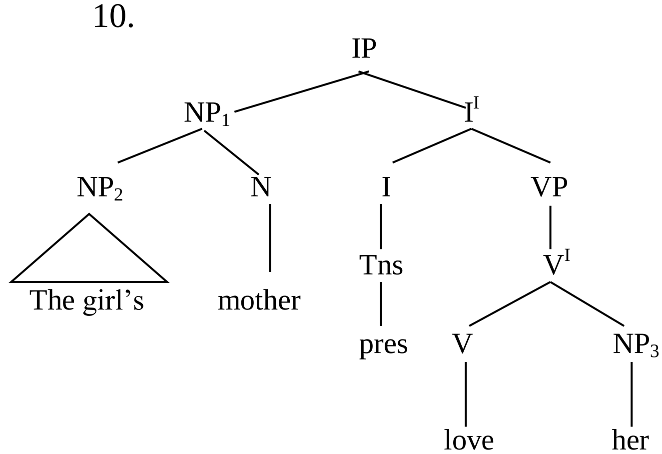
3.4 Pronominals

A pronominal (expression) is a non-anaphoric pronoun like *he, she, him, her, his,* etc. which must not refer to any higher expression within the clause immediately containing it. The interpretation of pronominals is different from what we have in the case of reflexives. Let us consider the sentence in (9).

9. The girl's mother loves her.

In (9) above, *her* can refer to *the girl* but not *the girl's mother.* Note that *the girl's mother* c-commands *her* as is illustrated in (10).

10.



The principle which explains the interpretation of pronominals is given in (11).

11. A pronominal must not have an antecedent that c-commands it.

The principle above confirms that NP_1 which c-commands NP_3 cannot be the antecedent of NP_3, but NP_2 which does not c-command NP_3 is the antecedent.

3.5 Beliefs and Attitudes

People's beliefs and attitudes may inform the interpretation they give to pronouns in utterances. For example, in the interpretation of pronominals, non-linguistic knowledge and beliefs may come to be taken into consideration. In the sentences below (taken from O'Grady 1997:293), the antecedent of the pronominal *he* is based on extra-linguistics considerations.

12. The judge denied the prisoner's request because he was cautious.
13. The judge denied the prisoner's request because he was dangerous

You should note that the two sentences above have identical syntactic structures; the only difference is the adjective *cautious* in the second clause of (12) and *dangerous* (13). The antecedent of *he* in (12) is *the judge* while it is *the prisoner* in (13). Why do they have different antecedents despite the fact that they have identical structures syntactically? The choice of the antecedents in the two sentences has nothing to do with structural principles. Rather the crucial factor involves the belief that a judge is more likely to be cautious and a prisoner more likely to be dangerous. It is also believed that a plausible reason for a judge's denying a prisoner's request is more likely to caution (on the part of the judge) or danger to the public (on the prisoner's part).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Can you discuss the relationship between a pronominal and its antecedent? How do you think that people's beliefs and attitudes could affect a pronominal and its antecedent.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Wherever pronouns such as pronominals and reflexives occur in a discourse, their interpretation is determined mainly by other entities in the discourse. This is why syntax is involved in the interpretation of pronouns. One main concept you should continue to remember in this regard is C-Command (Constituent Command). You need to understand and be able to explain it so that you would know how reflexives and pronominals could be properly interpreted.

5.0. SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt the following:

1. How pronouns could be misinterpreted
2. C-Command
3. The role of C-Command in the interpretation of reflexives and pronominals
4. How people's beliefs and attitudes could affect the interpretation of pronouns.

In this module, we have examined and discussed the role of syntax in the interpretation of words. You should be able to explain by now how the positioning of words and phrases in syntactic structures helps determine the meaning of the entire sentence. This is known as the principle of compositionality, which states that the meaning of a sentence is determined by the meaning of its component parts and the manner in which they are arranged in syntactic structure. You have learnt structural ambiguity, where the meanings of the components words in some sentences can be combined in more than one way. You also learnt how verbs (and sometimes prepositions) assign roles (functions) to nouns or noun phrases in a construction. The roles assigned to nouns or nominals by verbs and prepositions are known as thematic or theta roles. Finally, you were taught how the speaker of a language would interpret pronouns to avoid misinterpretation or miscommunication.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. In not more than 2 pages each, explain how the following could be properly interpreted:

    i. Reflexives

    ii. Pronominals

2. In just one page, discuss with only an example, how people's beliefs and attitudes could affect their interpretation of pronouns.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Goddard, C. (1998). *Semantic Analysis: A Practical Introduction* Oxford: OUP
Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics: Volumes I&II* London and New York: CUP

O'Grady M (1997). 'Semantics: the analysis of meaning'. In O'Grady W, M. Dobrovolsky & F. Katamba (Eds.). (1997) *Contemporary Linguistics: An Introduction*. New York and London: Addison Wesley Longman Limited
Palmer F.R. (1996). *Semantics*: *Second Edition* Cambridge: CUP
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Taiwo, O. (forthcoming). *Introductory Semantics and Pragmatics for Nigerian Students*

MODULE 2 SENTENCE RELATIONS AND TRUTH

Semantics as a subject has been of concern to other disciplines apart from linguistics. One of such disciplines is philosophy. The general aim of this module is to provide you with an in-depth understanding of how philosophy, and most importantly the sub-field of logic, has contributed to the study of meaning. There is no doubt that linguistics has gained a great deal from philosophy, though its aims and interests are different from those of the linguist so also its approach to semantics and delimitation of the subject have often been different. The area that has interested linguists most in philosophy is that of logic. In module four (4) of ENG 331: *Introduction to Semantics*, you were introduced to logic with the brief discussion of logical conectives and propositional logic. You may need to revise that module to remind yourself of these topics.

In this module, which is made up of four units, you will learn more closely about connectives and logical quantifiers. I shall also explain the truth relations in entailment and presupposition. Logic is basically about reasoning. It seeks to device procedures for distinguishing valid chains of inference from invalid ones. In order words, the mission of logic is to investigate and understand the nature of valid reasoning and valid reasoning is that which leads from true premises to true conclusions. You will study these topics as listed below:

Unit 1: Meaning and Logic
Unit 2: Propositional Logic
Unit 3: Entailment
Unit 4: Presupposition

UNIT 1 MEANING AND LOGIC

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The mission of logic is to investigate and understand the nature of valid reasoning and valid reasoning is that which leads from true premises to true conclusions. Logic is basically about reasoning. It seeks to device procedures for distinguishing valid chains of inference from invalid ones. This unit is the first among four of this module. In this unit you will learn about proposition and how logic identifies and discusses truth.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After you have studied this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the term proposition
- differentiate between a sentence and a proposition
- analyse the truth of statements

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Proposition

A proposition is something said about something. A proposition can be true or false and can be the premise or conclusion of a chain of inference. Propositions are not the same as sentences, though sentences can express propositions. Let us consider the sentences below:

1 a It's Sunday today.
  b I love poems.
  c Maiduguri is far from here.

To decide whether the propositions the sentences above express are true or false, we have to know when the sentence in (1a) was said, who utters (1b) and the place of utterance of (1c). In other words, (1a) expresses different propositions depending on which day it is uttered. The meaning of (1b) remains the same, but different propositions are expressed depending on who utters it. *Today* (1a), *I* (1b) and *here* (1c) are known as indexical expressions because what they refer to depends on the circumstances in which they are said.

Following our discussion so far, we can say that a proposition is a sentence supplemented by information about the reference of any indexical expressions it contains. But this should exclude sentences such as imperatives, questions, performatives and wishes.

To say that a proposition is true (or false) depends on whether what is being said corresponds (or doesn't correspond) with reality, with the way things are in the real world. In order words, statements have a truth value; this truth value depends upon a correspondence to facts, different ways of connecting statements have different effects on the truth value of the compounds produced.

3.2. Valid Arguments

The beginnings of logic lie in a search for the principles of valid argument and inference like the following statement which has three parts, the first two parts prove that the third is true.

2. (a) If Ruth closed her shop early, then she is in the church.
   (b) Ruth closed her shop early.
   ____
   (c) Ruth is in the Church.

The example above is known as Aristotle's modus ponens. It is a type of argument in three steps. Steps a and b are called the premises while step c is the conclusion. If steps a and b are true then step c is also guaranteed to be true. The horizontal line is used traditionally to separate the premises from the conclusion. Apart from modus ponens, other rules of valid inference include modus tollens which is the example in (3) below.

3. (a) If Ruth has arrived, then she is in the Church.
   (b) Ruth is not in the Church.
   (c) Ruth has not arrived.

4. (a) If Ruth is in the Church, then she is reading the Bible.
   (b) If Ruth is reading the Bible, then she is reading the book of Psalm.
   (c) If Ruth is in the Church, then she is reading the book of Psalm.

5. (a) Ruth is in the Church or she is in the shop.
   (b) Ruth isn't in the Church.
   (c) Ruth is in the shop.

The statements in (4) exemplify Hypothetical Syllogism while those in (5) exemplify disjunctive syllogism.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Examine the examples given from (1) to (5) above, look for similar examples where you can give the premises and the conclusion.

3.3. Logic and Truth

A part of the study of logic is a concern for the truth of statements and whether truth is preserved or lost by putting sentences into different patterns. Truth means a correspondence with facts or covert descriptions of state of affairs in the world. The truth is mostly based on practical experiences, not on ideas or it is said to depend on something that may happen in the future. Hence truth is said to be empirical or contingent, because we have to have some access to the facts of the world to know whether a statement is true or not. For instance, in considering the sentence below:

6. My great grandfather was the first man to settle in Ibadan

its truth or otherwise depends on facts about the speaker's father's life. If his father did settled in Ibadan and was the first man to do so, then, the sentence is true; otherwise it is false. In the same way the empirical truth of the statement

7. Abuja is the capital of Nigeria.

depends upon the facts that there is a nation called Nigeria and Abuja is its capital city.

The truth value of a sentence is whether the sentence is true or false and the truth conditions are the facts that would have to obtain in reality to make a sentence true of false. An example of a linguistic effect on truth value is in negating a sentence. If we have a sentence like (8a) below, adding a *not* will reverse its truth value as in (8b).

8. (a) The house has been bought.
   (b) The house has not been bought.

If **a** is true then **b** is false; also if **a** is false then **b** is true.

4.0 CONCLUSION

A proposition is a sentence supplemented by information about the reference of any indexical expressions it contains. If you say that a proposition is true (or false) you have to know whether what you saying corresponds (or doesn't correspond) with reality, with the way things are in the real world. A part of the study of logic is a concern for the truth of statements. The truth is mostly based on practical experiences, you have to have some access to the facts of the world to know whether a statement is true or not.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt about proposition. You read that there is a difference between a proposition and a sentence. I used examples for you to be able to defferentiate between the two. You also learnt about the truth value and true conditions of a sentence; these have to do with whether the sentence is true or false and the facts that would have to obtain in reality to make a sentence true of false. I shall continue our discussion on logic in the next unit (Unit 2) by explaining how logicians employ logical symbols in propositional logic.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

In not more than 2 pages each, explain with the aid of three examples, each of the following:

i. Proposition
ii. Truth of statements

7.0 REFERNCES/FURTHER READING

Goddard, C. (1998). *Semantic Analysis: A Practical Introduction* Oxford: OUP
Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics: Volumes I&II* London and New York: CUP
Palmer F.R. (1996). *Semantics*: *Second Edition* Cambridge: CUP

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UNIT 2 PROPOSITIONAL LOGIC

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you learnt about proposition and the true value of sentences, in this unit, you are going to learn how logicians make use of logical connectives and quantifiers in propositional logic.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain logical conectives and quantifiers
- employ these conectives and quantifiers in logic

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1. Connectives and Quantifiers

Towards the end of our discussion in unit 1, you learnt that the truth value of a sentence has to do with whether the sentence is true or false and the truth conditions are the facts that would have to obtain in reality to make a sentence true of false. I gave the example repeated in (1a), in which the addition of *not* to it as in (1b), will reverse its truth value.

1. (a) The house has been bought.
   (b) The house has not been bought.

In that unit, you learnt that in negating a sentence as in (1a), it means that if **a** is true then **b** is false; also if **a** is false then **b** is true.

Logicians use a schema known as *logical forms* to show that the relationship as described above works for any statement. These are known as conectives and quantifiers. Connectives are intended to represent types of logical connections between propositions. These connectives are listed below:

&	or	**Λ**	conjunction ('and')
		V	disjunction (inclusive 'or')
		$\mathbf{V_e}$	disjunction (exclusive 'or')
¬	or	**~**	negation ('not')
⊃	or	→	implication ('if… then')
↔	or	≡	equivalence/bi-conditional ('if and only if… then')

Another logical term which is often used in linguistics is quantifier. A quantifier means any word which says how many or how much of something is being referred to. Quantifiers cannot refer to anything by themselves. Two basic quantifiers are recognized in logic. They are:

∀ the ***'universal quantifier'***: which means roughly *all*
∃ the ***'existential quantifier'***: which means roughly *(there are) some* or *(there is) a*

These connectives are important to logicians because they have a predictable effect on the truth conditions as well as for the establishment of valid arguments and correct inductive reasoning in which known facts are used to produce general principles. I shall now go ahead to discuss how these connectives and quantifiers are employed in propositional logic.

3.2. Propositional Logic

The study of the truth effects of connectives is called propositional logic. Here, we are concerned with the relations that hold between sentences or statements, especially relations involving complex sentences irrespective of the internal structure of the sentences themselves.

The use of the connective ¬ or ~ negation ('not')

As stated earlier, logical form used by logicians comprises a lower-case letter (**p, q, r**, etc.) which stands for the statement and connectives listed above. So the logical forms for the statements in (1a and b), repeated below, are (2a and b) respectively.

1. (a) The house has been bought.
   (b) The house has not been bought.

2. (a) **p**
   (b) **~p**

The effect of negation on the truth value of a statement can be shown by a truth table in (3)

3.

p	**~p**
True	False
False	True

The table above shows that when **p** is true, **~p** is false; when **p** is false, **~p** is true. This is a brief and clear way of describing the truth effect of negation.

The use of the connective & or Λ conjunction ('and')

The truth value of a compound formed by using *and* to join two statements is predictable from the truth of the constituent statements. For example:

4. (a) The car has broken down.
   (b) The mechanic is on his way.
   (c) The car has broken down and the mechanic is on his way.

If (4a) and (4b) above are true, then compound (4c) is also true. If however, either of (4a) or (4b) is false then the compound will be false. We show this in the true table for ***and*** below.

5.

p	q	p Λ q
True	True	True
True	False	False
False	True	False
False	False	False

The table in (5) tells us that only when the two statements connected by **Λ** are true will the compound be true. This is to say that the compound statement in (4c) will be false if the car has broken down but the mechanic is not on his way. It will also be false if the mechanic is on his way but the car has not broken down. Most obviously of all, (5c) is false if there is no faulty car and no mechanic on the way.

The use of the connective   V   disjunction (inclusive 'or')

The logical connective **V** is employed for the disjunction ***inclusive 'or'*** in the example below.

6. You can take the test or write the assignment

The truth table for the sentence in (6) is given below.

7.

p	q	p V q
True	True	True
True	False	True
False	True	True
False	False	False

As table (7) reveals, a compound created with the logical connective **V** is true if one or both of the constituents' sentences is true. The compound sentence (6) is true if either ***you***

can take the test or ***you can write the assignment*** – is true or both are true. The compound sentence is only false if both are false.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Look for your own examples of similar sentences you have come across in this unit and give a truth table for examples.

The use of the connective $\mathbf{V_e}$ disjunction (exclusive 'or')

The disjunction ***exclusive 'or'*** occurs in the compound sentence in (8) below.

8. You must pass this course or repeat the class

The disjunction ***exclusive 'or'*** is represented with the logical connective $\mathbf{V_e}$. This connective has the truth table in (9).

9.

p	**q**	**p $\mathbf{V_e}$ q**
True	True	False
True	False	True
False	True	True
False	False	False

From the table in (9) we can see that **p $\mathbf{V_e}$ q** is only true if one of its disjuncts is true. Thus the sentence in (8) says that if you pass the course you will not repeat the class, but if you didn't pass the course you will repeat the class. The exclusive 'or' seems to have an implicit quantification of but not both. Hence you cannot pass the course and also repeat the class, so also you cannot fail the course and do not repeat the class.

The use of the connective → implication ('if… then')

The ***if… then*** conditional sentence is represented with the symbol → known as ***material implication***. An example is the sentence in (10).

10. If he comes then I'll call you.

The ***if-clause*** is the antecedent while ***then-clause*** is the consequent. The material implication connective $\rightarrow$ has the truth table in (11).

11.

p	**q**	**p $\rightarrow$ q**
True	True	True
True	False	False
False	True	True
False	False	True

The table in (11) shows that the conditional sentence**, p $\rightarrow$ q** is only false when **p** (the antecedent) is true and **q** (the consequent) is false. What this means is that the conditional sentence in (10) will only be false if he comes and I do not call you, that is **p** is the true and **q** is false. If he doesn't come, **p** is false, the conditional claim cannot be invalidated by whatever I do: whether I call you, **q** is true or I do not call you, **q** is false. What this is saying is that **p** is a sufficient condition for **q**: his coming/arrival will cause me to call you, but **p** is not a necessary condition for **q** because other things might make me call you.

The use of the connective $\leftrightarrow$ or $\equiv$ equivalence/bi-conditional (‘if and only if… then’)

The last connective we shall discus is the ***bi-conditional*** which is represented by the symbol $\equiv$ or $\leftrightarrow$**.** This connective corresponds to the English words ***if and only if*** as in the example in (12).

12. He'll resign if and only if (iff) he's forced to

The bi-conditional connective has the truth table in (13).

13.

p	**q**	**p $\equiv$ q**
True	True	True
True	False	False
False	True	False
False	False	True

The table in (13) shows that a statement **p ≡ q** is true when **p** and **q** have the same truth value. It is called bi-conditional because the name reflects the fact that the **p ≡ q** is equivalent to the compound expression **(p → q Λ q → p)** which we can paraphrase as if **p** then **q** and if **q** then **p**. If the clause order in 19 is reversed and we as is the case in (14) below,

14. If and only if he's forced to, he'll resign

where ***if and only if he's forced to*** is **p** and the consequent ***he'll resign*** as **q**, then we can case that **p** is a necessary condition for **q**, i.e. **p** is the only possible cause for **q**.

Truth table for valid inferences

We can possibly use the symbols we discussed above to represent the types of valid inference. The examples are given below with their truth tables.

Modus ponens

15 (a) If Ruth closed he shop early, then she is in the Church
(b) Ruth closed her shop early
(c) Ruth is in the Church

16.
$$\frac{\begin{array}{l} p \rightarrow q \\ p \end{array}}{q}$$

Modus tollens

17. (a) If Ruth has arrived, then she is in the Church
(b) Ruth is not in the Church
(c) Ruth has not arrived

18.
$$\frac{\begin{array}{l} p \rightarrow q \\ \sim q \end{array}}{\sim p}$$

Hypothetical syllogism

19. (a) If Ruth is in the Church, then she is reading the Bible
    (b) If Ruth is reading the Bible, then she is reading the book of Psalm
    (c) If Ruth is in the Church, then she is reading the book of Psalm

20.
$$\begin{array}{l} \mathbf{p \rightarrow q} \\ \underline{\mathbf{q \rightarrow r}} \\ \mathbf{p \rightarrow r} \end{array}$$

Disjunctive Syllogism

21. (a) Ruth is in the Church or she is in the shop
    (b) Ruth isn't in the Church
    (c) Ruth is in the shop

22.
$$\begin{array}{l} \mathbf{p \ \ V \ q} \\ \underline{\mathbf{\sim p \qquad}} \\ \mathbf{q} \end{array}$$

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Examine the sentences and the truth tables you studied from from examples (8) to (22), look for similar sentences and give their truth tables.

4.0 CONCLUSION

You should familiarize yourself with the connectives discussed in this unit because these connectives are important to logicians in that they have a predictable effect on the truth conditions as well as for the establishment of valid arguments and correct inductive reasoning in which known facts are used to produce general principles.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you learnt how to use connectives. These are

&	or	**Λ**	conjunction (‘and’)
		V	disjunction (inclusive ‘or’)
		$\mathbf{V_e}$	disjunction (exclusive ‘or’)
¬	or	**~**	negation (‘not’)
⊃	or	→	implication (‘if… then’)
↔	or	≡	equivalence/bi-conditional (‘if and only if… then’)

You came across sentences which were used to illustrate how the various connectives could be used and you also studied how truth tables for each of the connectives were drawn up. In the next unit, we shall continue the discussion on logic by examining the truth relations in entailment.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

In not more than 1½ pages each, draw appropriate truth tables for each of the following logical connectives: **Λ, V, $\mathbf{V_e}$, ~, →,** ≡.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Goddard, C. (1998). *Semantic Analysis: A Practical Introduction.* Oxford: OUP
Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics: Volumes I&II* London and New York: CUP
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Taiwo, O. (forthcoming). *Introductory Semantics and Pragmatics for Nigerian Students*

UNIT 3 ENTAILMENT

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is a continuation of our discussion on logic and how logicians look at meaning. In the last unit, you learnt how connectives are employed in propositional logic. In this unit, you will learn the truth relations in entailment and other semantic relations such as synonymy, antonymy and contradiction.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of this unit is for you to be able to examine the truth relations in entailment and other semantic relations such as synonymy, antonymy and contradiction.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1. Entailment and Truth

It is possible to examine the truth relations in entailment. Entailment is a relation in which the truth of one sentence necessarily implies the truth of another. It refers to the relationship of inclusion existing between two entities or two parts of a construction where the truth of the second necessarily follows from the truth of the first. Let us examine the relationship between the two sentences below.

1. (a) The thug assassinated the honourable.
   (b) The honourable died.

We assume that the same individual is denoted by ***the honourable*** in the two sentences above. If somebody tells you the first sentence (1a) and you believe it, then you know the second sentence, (1b) without being told anymore. In order words, it is impossible to assert (1a) and deny (1b). You do not have to reason to get from (1a) to (1b), you know (1b) instantaneously because of your knowledge of English. Hence, entailment is not an inference in the normal sense. Let me state the relationship between the sentences in (1) more clearly with a truth-based definition of entailment given in (2) below.

2. **Entailment defined by truth.**

A sentence **p** entails a sentence **q** when the truth of the first (**p**) guarantees the truth of the secured (**q**), and the falsity of the secured (**q**) guarantees the falsity of the first (**p**).

I shall go ahead to apply this definition to our examples in (1) as follows:

3. Step 1: If **p** (***The thug assassinated the honourable***) is true, is **q** (***The honourable died***) true? Yes.

Step 2: If **q** (***The honourable died***) is false, is **p** (***The thug assassinated the honourable***) also false? Yes.

Step 3: Then **p** entails **q**. Note, if **p** is false then we can't say anything about **q**; it can be either true or false.

Let show you the relation described above in a truth table. I still maintain the symbols **p** and **q** for our two sentences and use true and false as appropriate but I will add the arrows (→ and ←) to show the direction of a relation ***'when … then'***.

4. **Composite truth table for entailment**

p		**q**
True	→	True
False	→	True or False
False	←	False
True or False	←	True

The table is read thus:

When **p** is true, **q** is true, when **p** is false, **q** can either be true or false, when **q** is false, **p** is false, when **q** is true, **p** can either be true or false.

From table (4) you can see that only the truth of the entailing sentence or the falsity of the entailed sentence has consequences for the other. When **p** is false, **q** can be either true or false; if all you were told was that the thug didn't assassinate the honourable, you wouldn't know whether the honourable was dead or alive. When **q** is true, **p** can be either true or false; if you just know that the honourable is died, that doesn't tell you anything about whether the thug assassinated him or not. We can say that **p** entails **q** when an argument that takes **p** as a premise and **q** as a conclusion must be valid. We can say that:

The thug assassinated the honourable
∴ The honourable died

is valid.

Note that an entailment relation is given by linguistic structure as we do not have to look at the fact in the world to deduce the entailed sentence from the entailing sentence. The source for entailment is lexical as our example (1) shows the relationship of entailment between ***assassinate*** and ***die*** because the meaning of ***assassinate*** contains the meaning of ***die*** in some sense.

The source for entailment can also be syntactic, for example, passive and active versions of the same sentence will entail one another.

5. Délé bought the book.
6. The book was bought by Délé.

Sentence (5) entails (6), sentence (6) entails (5).

In fact, the relationship of entailment allows us to define paraphrases. Thus paraphrases are defined as sentences which have the same set of entailments or which mutually entail each other.

3.2. Truth Relations and other Semantic Relations

Now that we have been able to apply truth-based definition to capture our basic intuitions about entailment, let us can go further to characterise other semantic relations such as synonymy, antonymy and contradiction in terms of truth relations.

The table in (7) characterizes synonymy.

7. **Composite truth table for synonymy**

p		**q**
True	→	True
False	→	False
True	←	True
False	←	False

The table simply says that **p** and **q** always have the same value. If **p** describes a situation so will **q,** and vice versa. If **p** incorrectly describes a situation so will **q,** and vice versa. This correctly applies to **own** and **belong** in the examples below.

8a.The car belongs to Ore-ọfẹ.
b. Ore-ọfẹ owns the car.

The table in (9) characterizes antonymy.

9. **Composite truth table for antonymy**

p		**q**
True	→	False
False	→	True
True	←	False
False	←	True

p and **q,** as shown in table (9), always have opposite or reverse value. If **p** describes a situation, **q** describes the opposite or reverse of the situation and vice versa. We can explicate this with **pass** and **fail** in the examples below.

10a. He passed the test.
b. He failed the test.

Note, however, that this can only apply to simple or binary antonymy.

Contradiction would have the same truth table as given for simple or binary antonymy above.

11. **Truth table for contradiction**

p		q
True	→	False
False	→	True
True	←	False
False	←	True

The simplest examples of contradiction involve negation as shown in (12a &b) below.

12a. Délé bought the house.
b. Délé did not buy the house.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Look for similar sentences as given in this unit. Identify their semantic relations and draw up composite truth tables for them.

4.0 COCLUSION

Truth relations could be employed to semantic relations such as entailment, antonymy, synonymy and contradiction. Logicians are able to draw up truth tables for these semantic relations. In doing this, as you have learnt in this unit, it becomes clearer to understand and explain these semantic relations.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt how logic could be used in the discussion of semantic relations such as entailment, synonymy, antonymy and contradiction. This is done by the use of truth tables to drive these truth relations. In the next unit, we shall examine how logic and especially, truth relations could be used in describing or explaining presupposition.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

What is a composite truth table? Explain in not more that one (1) page. In not more than three (3) pages, draw a composite truth table of the following semantic relations: entailment, synonymy and contradiction.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Goddard, C. (1998). *Semantic Analysis: A Practical Introduction.* Oxford: OUP
Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics: Volumes I&II* London and New York: CUP
Palmer, F.R. (1996). *Semantics*: *Second Edition* Cambridge: CUP
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Taiwo, O. (forthcoming). *Introductory Semantics and Pragmatics for Nigerian Students*

UNIT 4 PRESUPPOSITION

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This is the last of the four units in this module where you have learnt about how logic is employ in the study of meaning. In the last unit, you learnt the logic approach to entailment, synonymy, antonymy and contradiction. In this unit, you will come across presupposition. You will read about how logic is used in the study of presupposition as well as the pragmatic approach to the topic.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- employ logic in the discussion of presupposition
- explain the pragmatic approach to presupposition
- look at presupposition and context

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1. Presupposition

Semantics is said to deal with conventional meaning, those aspect of meaning which do not seem to vary much from context to context. Pragmatics deals with aspects of individual usage and context-dependent meaning. Presupposition seems to lie at the borderline between semantics and pragmatics. The semantic discussion of presupposition is like entailment, a relationship involving reasoning and which seems to be free of contextual effects. The pragmatic analysis sees presupposition as sensitive to facts about the context of utterance. Following Saeed (2007), we shall discuss these two types of approach to presupposition, the semantic approach and the pragmatic approach.

3.2. The semantic approach to presupposition

The semantic approach to presupposition views sentences as external objects. Rather than worry much about the process of producing sentences or 'the individuality of the speaker or writer and the audience', meaning is seen as an attribute of sentences and not something constructed by the participants. The focus of the approach is to relate a sentence-object to other sentence-objects and to the world (Saeed 2007:102). Let us examine the sentence in (1) and its presupposition in (2) to show this approach.

1. Shalom's sister has gone to Badagry.
2. Shalom has a sister.

If you want to identify a semantic relationship between the two sentences, you can adopt the truth relation. In doing this, you might reason as in (3) and set up the truth table in (4).

3. **Presupposition as a truth relation**

Step 1: If **p** (the presupposing sentence) is true,
then **q** (the presupposed sentence) is true.
Step 2: If **p** is false, then **q** is still true.
Step 3: If **q** is true, **p** could be either true or false.

4. **A truth table for presupposition**

p	q
True	→True
False	→True
True or False	←True

Let me explain the true relation in (3), as well as the truth table in (4), using our sentence (1) and its presupposition in (2). If it is true that Shalom's sister had gone to Badagry, it must be true that Shalom has a sister. Similarly, if it is false that Shalom's sister has gone to Badagry, (if, for example, she is in Ibadan), the presupposition that Shalom has a sister still survives. Finally, if it is true that Shalom has a sister, it doesn't tell us anything about whether she (the sister) has gone to Badagry or not; we don't know.

Because presupposition is viewed as a truth relation, which is the semantic approach to presupposition, you are able to set up a truth table like (4). The truth table helps us to capture an important difference between entailment and presupposition. If we negate an entailing sentence, then the entailment fails; but negating a presupposing sentence allows presupposition to survive. Let us examine the entailment pair in (5).

5a. Lydia saw her brother today.
b. Lydia saw someone today.

If we negate (5a) to form (6a), then it no longer entails (5b), which we repeat as (6b).

6a. Lydia didn't see her brother today.
b. Lydia saw someone today.

While (5b) automatically follows from (5a), if Lydia saw her brother today, it follows automatically that she saw someone today. However, this is not the case in (6) as (6b) does not follow automatically from (6a) because if Lydia didn't see her brother today, it might be true that she saw someone, it might also be true that she didn't see anyone. If we compare this with the presupposition pair:

7a. The Ọrangun (Ọba) of Oke-Ila is in Ibadan.
b. There is an Ọrangun (Ọba) of Oke-Ila.

If we negate (7a) to form (8a) the resulting sentence still has the presupposition in (8b):

8a. The Ọrangun (Ọba) of Oke-Ila isn't in Ibadan.
b. There is an Ọrangun (Ọba) of Oke-Ila.

So negating the presupposing sentence does not affect the presupposition, whereas, as we saw in (6a) and (6b), negating an entailing sentence destroys the entailment. The semantic approach that views presupposition as a truth relation allows us to capture one difference between the behaviour of presupposition and entailment under negation.

3.3. The pragmatic approach to presupposition

The pragmatic approach views sentences as the utterances of individuals engaged in communication act. The aim of this approach is to examine the strategies that speakers and hearers use to communicate with one another. This approach possibly looks at communication from the speaker's viewpoints in which case we talk about presupposition as part of the task of packaging utterance; it is also possible to look at communication from the listener's viewpoint and see presupposition as one of the various inferences that the listener might make on the basis of what the speaker has just said. This is also known as the interactional view of presupposition. We shall still use our example (1) repeated below as (9), and sketch an idea of how this approach might work for it.

(9). Shalom's sister has gone to Badagry.

The pragmatic approach views presupposition as on aspect of a speaker's strategy of organizing information for maximum clarity for the listener. Let us say that the intent of the speaker in (9) is to let the listener know that a particular individual has gone to Badagry. The way he does this will depend on what he thinks his listener knows, that is the listener's background knowledge. If he thinks the listener knows Shalom but not her sister, we can see the way the speaker's use of (9) in the ordering of the assertions in (10) and (11) below:

10. Assertion 1: Shalom has a sister X.
11. Assertion 2: X has gone to Badagry.

Looking at the utterance in (9), the speaker did not emphasis the first assertion; it is downgraded or put in the background. This is why it is placed in a noun phrase [Shalom's sister]. However, the speaker highlighted the second assertion hence it has the main verb. Why should one assertion be highlighted or foregrounded and one backgrounded or downgraded? The answer is that the speaker's intentions and his guesses about the knowledge held by the participants would be the reason for this. If for instance, the speaker is aware or might even judge that the listener knows the first assertion in (10) while that of (11) is new information; hence it has to be highlighted or foregrounded. But in (9), it is possible that the speaker decides to include old information (10) to help the listener to identify the individual that the new information is about. It is also possible that someone can use (9) even if the listener does not know that Shalom has a sister, in which case, the two assertions (10) and (11) are both new information, but the speaker just decided to rank them in a particular order.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Study the example we used for illustration between the two approaches to presupposition. Look for your own example and see if you can use both the semantic and pragmatic approaches to discuss it.

3.4. Presupposition and context

Presuposition behaviour seems often to be sensitive to context. As we have discussed earlier, this is one problem for a simple truth-based account of presupposition. We noted that a given sentence always produces the same set of entailments, but it seems that this is not true of presuppositions. The type of presupposition given below, triggered by time adverbial clauses can be considered.

12a. She cried before she finished her thesis.
b. She finished her thesis.

(12a) presupposes (12b). But if the verb **cried** is changed, presupposition is no longer produced.

13a. She died before she finished her thesis.
b. She finished her thesis.

(13a) no longer presupposes (13b). It can be argued that in (13) the presupposition is blocked or cancelled by our general knowledge of the world. This is because we know that dead people do not normally complete unfinished theses. Saeed (2007:107) refers to this as defeasibility, i.e. the cancelling of presuppositions. If the context of knowledge determines if presuppositions arise or not, then we should account for them with reference to what the participants know, as in an interactional approach, rather than an account limited to formal relations between sentences. Our discussion on the topic is not exhausted, you will still learn more on it in Module 3 where we focus on Pragmatics.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

You have learnt from this last sub-section that presupposition could be blocked or cancelled. Look for other sentences which could be used to illustrate this phenomenon.

4.0 CONCLUSION

True relations as well as truth table could be used in the discussion of presupposition. This is done to bring out the difference between presupposition and entailment. But you should remember that presupposition could also be discussed from the pragmatic approach, this we have done in this unit.

5.0 SUMMARY

Presupposition was the focus of this unit. You have learnt how both semantics and pragmatics could be used to discuss it. The semantic discussion of presupposition is like entailment, a relationship involving reasoning and which seems to be free of contextual effects. It views presupposition as a truth relation that allows us to capture one difference between the behaviour of presupposition and entailment under negation. The pragmatic analysis sees presupposition as sensitive to facts about the context of utterance where context of knowledge determines if presuppositions arise or not. The discussion of presupposition has introduced you indirectly to pragmatics, therefore, the next module, Module 3, shall focus on this sub-field of Linguistics.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. In not more than 2 pages, discuss presupposition as a truth relation.
2. The pragmatic analysis sees presupposition as sensitive to facts about the context of utterance where context of knowledge determines if presuppositions arise or not. Discuss in not more than three (3) pages.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Goddard, C. (1998). *Semantic Analysis: A Practical Introduction.* Oxford: OUP
Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics: Volumes I&II* London and New York: CUP
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MODULE 3 MEANING AND CONTEXT I

The general aim of this module and the next one is to provide you with an in-depth understanding of Pragmatics. According to Charles W. Morris, pragmatics tries to understand the relationship between signs and their users, while semantics tends to focus on the actual objects or ideas to which a word refers, and syntax examines relationships among signs or symbols. Semantics is the literal meaning of an idea whereas pragmatics is the implied meaning of the given idea.

You have learnt how syntactic structure provides part of the information needed to determine the meaning of a sentence. However, you need to know other necessary information needed to determine sentence meaning. Some of these are the speaker's and addressee's background attitudes and beliefs, their understanding of the context in which a sentence is uttered, and their knowledge of how language can be used to inform, to persuade, to mislead, and so forth. The study of how extra-linguistic factors affect interpretation of utterances is known as Pragmatics.

Pragmatics is a systematic way of explaining language use in context. It seeks to explain aspects of meaning which cannot be found in the plain sense of words or structures, as explained by semantics. As a discipline within language science, its roots lie in the work of (Herbert) Paul Grice on conversational implicature and the cooperative principle, and on the work of Stephen Levinson, Penelope Brown and Geoffrey Leech on politeness.

The areas of interest which you will study in this module are the following:

- **Deixis:** Deixis concerns the ways in which languages encode features of the context of utterance and thus also concerns ways in which the interpretation of utterances depends on the analysis of that context of utterance.

- **Presupposition:** Presupposition refers to the logical meaning of a sentence or meanings logically associated with or entailed by a sentence. It is what is taken for granted in the utterance. *"I saw the pulpit in the church"* presupposes that the pulpit is in the church.

- **Performative/Speech act theory:** Perfomative implies that by each utterance a speaker not only says something but also does certain things such as giving information, stating a fact or hinting an attitude. This is borne out of the fact that many utterances (things people say) are equivalent to actions.

- **Politeness** is generally understood as respect and consideration for other people, ease and gracefulness of manners; desire to please others by anticipating their wants and wishes. In the wider, cross-cultural meaning we can perceive politeness as a set of rules, or strategies that are culturally-specific, ritualized in communication that tends to harmonize communication and avoid conflicts.

You will study these topics as listed below:

Unit 1: Deixis
Unit 2: Speech Act Theory
Unit 3: Indirect Speech Act
Unit 4: Politeness I
Unit 5: Politeness II

UNIT 1 DEIXIS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

You must have read the introductory comments in Module 3 (this module). This unit is the first among four of this module. The main thrust of the unit is to discuss deixis, words or expressions whose meanings depend on who says them, where they are, who they are talking to; and to elaborate more on presupposition.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After you have studied this unit, you should be able to do the following:

- Define with adequate illustration what Pragmatics is all about
- Discuss the focus of Pragmatics
- Explain vividly the terms deixis
- Give a pragmatic discussion of presupposition

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1. Definition of Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics which studies the ways in which context contributes to meaning. It studies how the transmission of meaning depends not only on the linguistic knowledge (e.g. grammar, lexicon etc.) of the speaker and listener, but also on the context of the utterance, knowledge about the status of those involved, the inferred intent of the speaker, and so on. Pragmatics is the study of how people comprehend and produce a communicative act or speech act in a concrete speech situation usually a conversation. It distinguishes two intents or meanings in each utterance or communicative act of verbal communication. These are the **informative intent** or **the sentence meaning** and **the communicative intent** or **speaker meaning** (Leech 1983). Pragmatics studies the factors that govern our choice of language in social interaction and the effects of our choice on others (David Crystal in Moore 2001:1). Pragmatics explains how language users are able to overcome apparent ambiguity, since meaning relies on the manner, place, time etc. of an utterance. The ability to understand another speaker's intended meaning is called *pragmatic competence*.

The illustration below in a football match[1], depicts how pragmatics works.
It sometimes happens that a team-mate will shout at me: **"Man on!"** Semantic analysis can only go so far with this phrase.

- For example, it can elicit different lexical meanings of the noun "man" (mankind or the human race, an individual person, a male person specifically) and the preposition "on" (on top of, above, or other relationships as in "on fire", "on heat", "on duty", "on the fiddle" or "on the telly").
- And it can also explain structural meaning, and account for the way this phrase works in longer sequences such as the "first <u>man on</u> the moon", "a <u>man on</u> the run" or "the <u>man on</u> top of the Cocoa House".

None of these explains the meaning in the context of the football game. This is very complex, but perhaps includes at least the following elements:

- My team-mate has seen another player's movement, and thinks that I have either not seen it, or have not responded to it appropriately.
- My team-mate wants me to know that I am likely to be tackled or impeded in some way.
- My team-mate wants me to respond appropriately, as by shielding the ball, passing it to an unmarked player, laying it off for another team-mate and so on.
- My team-mate has an immediate concern for me, but this is really subordinated to a more far-sighted desire for me, as a player on his team, to protect the ball or retain possession, as this will make our team more likely to gain an advantage.
- My team-mate understands that my opponent will also hear the warning, but thinks that his hearing it will not harm our team's chances as much as my not being aware of the approaching player.
- My team-mate foresees that I may rebuke him (and the other players on our team collectively) if no-one, from a better vantage point, alerts me to the danger.

[1] The illustration is adapted from Moore, Andrew. 2001. *Pragmatics.* http://www.shunsley.eril.net/armoore/

If this is right (or even part of it), it is clear that my team-mate could not, in the time available, (that is, before the opponent tackles me) communicate this information in the explicit manner above. But it also relies on my knowing the methods of language interchange in football. **Man on** is an established form of warning. For all I know, professional players may have their own covert forms, as when they signal a routine at a free kick, corner or throw-in, by calling a number or other code word. Also, though my team-mate is giving me information, in the context of the game, he is chiefly concerned about my taking the right action. If response to the alert becomes like a conditioned reflex (I hear the warning and at once lay the ball off or pass), then my contribution to the team effort will be improved.

3.2. Focus of Pragmatics

Some of the areas handled in pragmatics which semantics overlooks are the study of the speaker's meaning, not focusing on the phonetic or grammatical form of an utterance, but instead on what the speaker's intentions and beliefs are, the study of the meaning in context, and the influence that a given context can have on the message. This requires knowledge of the speaker's identities, and the place and time of the utterance. Others include the study of the things that are communicated in an utterance even though they are not explicitly expressed, the study of relative distance, both social and physical, between speakers in order to understand what determines the choice of what is said and what is not said as well as the study of what is not meant, as opposed to the intended meaning, i.e. that which is unsaid and unintended, or unintentional.

These areas of interest can be discussed under the following:

- **Deixis** concerns the ways in which languages encode features of the context of utterance and thus also concerns ways in which the interpretation of utterances depends on the analysis of that context of utterance.

- **Presupposition** refers to the logical meaning of a sentence or meanings logically associated with or entailed by a sentence. It is what is taken for granted in the utterance. *"I saw the pulpit in the church"* presupposes that the pulpit is in the church.

- **Performative** implies that by each utterance a speaker not only says something but also does certain things such as giving information, stating a fact or hinting an attitude. This is borne out of the fact that many utterances (things people say) are equivalent to actions.

- **Implicature**: This refers to an indirect or implicit meaning of an utterance derived from context that is not present from its conventional use. In order words, implicatures refer to the things that are communicated even though they are not explicitly expressed. This is also known as *conversational implicature.* This has to do with hearers manage to work out the complete message when speakers mean more than they say.

- **Cooperative Principle** which assumes that interactants cooperate in the conversation by contributing to the ongoing speech event hence speakers shape their utterances so that they are understood by hearers;

- **The Politeness Principle** that maintains that interlocutors behave politely to one another, since people respect each other's face.

In this unit, you will learn deixis and more on a pragmatic discussion of presupposition. Now, let's discuss deixis.

3.4. Deixis

The term deixis comes from the Greek *deiktikos* "able to show". This is related to Greek *dèiknymi* meaning "explain" or "prove". Deixis concerns the ways in which languages encode features of the context of utterance and thus also concerns ways in which the interpretation of utterances depends on the analysis of that context of utterance. 'Deixis' is the noun corresponding to the adjective 'deictic'.

A word which points to, or indicates, what it refers to is termed deictic. Common deictic words in English are the demonstratives *this*, *that*, *these* and *those*; the place adverbs *here* and *there*; and the time adverbs *now* and *then*. Deictics shift their reference according to the context in which they are used. For example, the meaning of *I'll meet you there this evening* is not clear, unless we know from the context (either from what has been said, or from the situation outside language) which place is meant by *there* and which evening is meant by *this evening*.

Deixis are words or expressions whose meanings depend on who says them, where they are, who they are talking to, etc. In all languages, there are many words and expressions whose reference rely entirely on the circumstances of the utterance and can only be understood in light of these circumstances. In other words, all languages have forms which use and interpretation depend on the location of the speaker and/or addressee within a particular setting. Misinterpretation of deixis can lead to miscommunication.

Deixis is often and best described as verbal pointing, that is to say pointing by means of language. The linguistic forms of this pointing are called deictic expressions, deictic markers or deictic words. Deictic expressions include such lexemes as:

- Personal or possessive pronouns (I/you/mine/yours),
- Demonstrative pronouns (this/that),
- (Spatial/temporal) adverbs (here/there/now),
- Other pro-forms (so/do),
- Personal or possessive adjectives (my/your),
- Demonstrative adjectives (this/that).

Deixis refers to the world outside a text. Reference to the context surrounding an utterance is often referred to as primary deixis, exophoric deixis or simply deixis alone. Primary deixis is used to point to a situation outside a text (situational deixis) or to the speaker's and hearer's (shared) knowledge of the world (knowledge deixis). Contextual use of deictic expressions is known as secondary deixis, textual deixis or endophoric deixis. Such expressions can refer either backwards or forwards to other elements in a text:

- Anaphoric deixis is backward pointing, and is the norm in English texts. Examples include demonstrative pronouns: such, said, similar, (the) same.
- Cataphoric deixis is forward pointing. Examples include: the following, certain, some ("the speaker raised some objections..."), this ("Let me say this..."), these, several.

Personal Deixis

Person deixis are expressions which require pragmatic information in order for the listener to make a referential connection and understand what is meant. First and second person pronouns such as

my		mine
we	us	ours
you	your	yours

are always deictic because they are free pronouns and their reference is entirely dependent on context. Let us consider the expressions below where some of these personal pronouns occur.

We came to **your** house last week but met **your** absence.
My God shall supply all **our** needs according to His riches in glory.
You refused to talk to any of **us**.

Person deixis (i.e. personal pronouns) are written in bold in the sentences above. Their meanings cannot be determined out of context. You must know who the speaker and listener are in order to interpret them. Expressions such as *this person, that man, these women, those children,* are deictic as well.

English does not use personal deixis to indicate relative social status in the same way that other languages do (such as those with honorific pronouns in the Yoruba language or the *tous/vous* in French). But the pronoun *we* has a potential for ambiguity, i.e. between exclusive we (excludes the hearer) and the hearer-including (inclusive) we. This means that 'we' could mean either the speaker plus addressee as in *we are late, let us go* or it could mean the speaker plus some person other than the addressee as in *we came to your house last week* where "your" is the addressee.

Time or Temporal Deixis

The following examples are all deictic expressions of time:

now	then	tomorrow
that time		
this time	seven days ago	
last week	next April	
two weeks from now		

In order to understand what specific times such expressions refer to, we need to know when the utterance was said. For example, *next week* has a different reference when uttered today than a month from today. If you found an advertising leaflet on the street that said "BIG SALE NEXT WEEK" with no date given, you will not know whether the sale had already taken place. We can treat temporal events as things that move towards us (into view) or away from us (out of view). For instance, we speak of *the coming year* or *the approaching year*. This may stem from our perception of things (like weather storms) which we see approaching both spatially and in time. We treat the near or immediate future as being close to utterance time by using the proximal deictic expression *this* alone, as in *"this weekend"* or *"this evening"* (said earlier in the day).

Place Deixis

Expressions below are examples of place deixis. They too require contextual information about the place of the utterance.

here in *Come **here***
there in *It is not **there***
this place in *Who is in **this place***
that place in ***That place** will be mended soon*
t**hose** huts over there in ***Those huts over there**must be burnt down*
this city in *I've not seen him in **this city***
these houses in *The company is interested in **these houses***

Spatial Deixis

Spatial deixis are forms whose use and interpretation depend on the location of the speaker and/or addressee within a particular setting. These forms are exemplified in English by words such as *this* and *here* versus *that* and *there. This* and *here* are used to express the proximity to the speaker while *that* and *there* express the proximity to the addressee and/or distance from the speaker. For instance, if Òjó and Olú are sitting across each other at a table, each would refer to a plate directly in front of him as *this plate* and to a plate in front of the other person or a plate distant from both as *that plate.* Without an understanding of how the setting in which a sentence is used is uttered can influence the choice of words such as *this* and *that*, it would be impossible for speakers of English to use or interpret these forms correctly.

The use of proximal and distal expressions in spatial deixis is confused by deictic projection. This is the speaker's ability to project himself or herself into a location at which he or she is not yet present. A familiar example is the use of *here* on telephone answering machines ("I'm not here at the moment..."). My *here* is this room in Ibadan, while yours may be this school in Lagos, this flat in Port Harcourt or this university in Jos.

Directional Deixis

Directional deixis are deixis which relate to the direction in which something is pointing or moving. Terms such as

before	behind
left	right
front	back

are also deictics insofar as you need to know which way the speaker is facing as we have in the sentences below.

The house is ***behind*** you.
The new building is at the ***left.***
When you get you to the junction, turn to your ***right.***
Sit at the ***back.***

SELF ASSESSMENT TEST

Look for examples of the deixis discussed so far in your language apart from the English examples given. Are there corresponding ones in your language? Which one do you have in your language that are not in English?

3.5. Presupposition

Presupposition refers to the logical meaning of a sentence or meanings logically associated with or entailed by a sentence. It is what is taken for granted in the utterance. For instance, the expression *"I saw the pulpit in the church"* presupposes that the pulpit is in the church.

Intuitions about what is said are accompanied by intuitions about what is not said, but merely presupposed. If Deborah says,

> The Ọba (king) of Ibadan has several wives.

she does not *say* that there is an Ọba (king) of Ibadan, but she *presupposes* that there is. Let us also consider these sentences also said by Deborah.

2. Tayọ knows the road is bad.
3. Ọbasanjọ regreted invading Ijawland.
4. Akala resumed govering Ọyọ state.

In saying (2), Deborah would not say, but merely presuppose, that the road is bad. In saying (3) she would presuppose that Obasanjo invaded Ijawland, and in (4) she would presuppose that Akala had governed Ọyọ state, and then stopped doing so for a period of time, possibly rather short.

Presupposition is both a semantic phenomenon and a pragmatic phenomenon. For instance, the negation of each of (1)-(4) would have the same presupposition.

Semantic approaches to presupposition encounter some tricky problems, the most important of which is "the projection problem." If presupposition is semantic, then it seems the presuppositions of complex sentences should be a function of the presuppositions of the simple sentences that make them up, but it is at least not obvious that this is so. Consider, for example,

5. The Ọba has a slave.
6. The Ọba's slave is bald.
7. If the Ọba has a slave, the Ọba's slave is bald.

(5) presupposes that there is an Ọba, (6) that there is an Ọba and that the Ọba has a slave. (7) contains both (5) and (6). It seems to inherit the presupposition of (5) but not of (6); that is, (7) presupposes that there is an Ọba, but not that he has a slave. A correct theory of just how presuppositions are inherited from simple to complex sentences would solve the projection problem, and doing so seems to be required for a semantic account of presupposition.

There is no conflict between the semantic and pragmatic concepts of presupposition; they are explications of related but different ideas. In general, any semantic presupposition of a proposition expressed in a given context will be a pragmatic presupposition of the people in the context, but the converse clearly does not hold.

To presuppose a proposition in the pragmatic sense is to take its truth for granted, and to assume that others involved in the context do the same. The set of all the presuppositions made by a person in a given context determines a class of possible worlds, the ones consistent with all the presuppositions. When we make assertions, there is a natural division into what the speaker presupposes and what the speaker says. If Toyin says,

> The Dean of the faculty has charming daughters,

she presupposes that there is a unique dean of the faculty, and says that his daughters are charming. In the ordinary case, the presupposition would be shared by the conversational participants, but not everyone would already know, or believe, what Toyin says about him. The presuppositions that are shared are the *common ground*, which is an important part of the context of an utterance. Toyin's assertion is an attempt to *add* to the common ground that additional content that the dean's daughters are charming. Of course, someone may deny that this is so, in which case it wouldn't become part of the common ground. Nevertheless, we can conceptualize the meaning of a sentence, or a central part of the meaning of a sentence, in terms of the change a use of it attempts to make to the common ground.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Pragmatics studies the ways in which context contributes to meaning. That is, how the transmission of meaning depends not only on the linguistic knowledge (e.g. grammar, lexicon etc.) of the speaker and listener, but also on the context of the utterance, knowledge about the status of those involved, the inferred intent of the speaker, and so on. Deixis, one of the focus of pragmatics, concerns the ways in which languages encode features of the context of utterance. Deixis are words or expressions whose meanings depend on who says them, where they are, who they are talking to, etc. In all languages, there are many words and expressions whose reference rely entirely on the circumstances of the utterance and can only be understood in light of these circumstances. In other words, all languages have forms which use and interpretation depend on the location of the speaker and/or addressee within a particular setting. Misinterpretation of deixis can lead to miscommunication.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, I discussed the subfield of linguistics known as Pragmatics. A subfield which studies the ways in which context contributes to meaning, that is the factors that govern our choice of language in social interaction and the effects of our choice on others. I focused on Deixis, words or expressions whose meanings depend on who says them, where they are, who they are talking to, etc. You learnt about are personal deixis which are expressions which require pragmatic information in order for the listener to make a referential connection and understand what is meant. First and second person pronouns such as *my, mine, us, us, ours, you, your, yours* are examples of personal deixis. Place deixis such as *here, there, this place, that place, these houses,* which require contextual information about the place of the utterance. Other deixis I discussed are spatial deixis and directional deixis. I shall continue my discussion of pragmatics in the next unit where you will learn about perfomatives and conversational implicature.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. In not more than one and half (1½) pages, explain the subfield of linguistics known as pragmatics.
2. In 3 pages, discuss the various types of deixis in the English language.

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UNIT 2 SPEECH ACT THEORY

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit unit, you will learn more on pramatics. In the last unit, (Unit 1).you learnt about deixis: words or expressions whose meanings depend on who says them, where they are, who they are talking to, etc., now I shall discuss how words are used to perform action known as perfomatives.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After you have studied this unit, you should be able to

- explain how words perform actions such locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act.
- draw a distinction between what words mean, what the speaker literally says when using them, and what the speaker means or intends to communicate by using words.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

Speech acts are acts done in the process of speaking. It brings about what is called *phatic communion* among people in a community. A speech act is a minimal functional unit in human communication. The utterances we use in conversation enable us to do these kinds of things because conversation itself is the bedrock of discourse. Speech Act Theory attempts to explain how speakers use language to accomplish intended actions and how hearers infer intended meaning from what is said. Although speech act studies are now considered a sub-discipline of cross-cultural pragmatics, they actually take their origin in the philosophy of language. Philosophers like Austin (1962), Grice (1975), and Searle (1965, 1969, 1975) offered basic insight into this new theory of linguistic communication based on the assumption that

> the minimal units of human communication are not linguistic expressions, but rather the performance of certain kinds of acts, such as making statements, asking questions, giving directions, apologizing, thanking, and so on. (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989:2)

3.1. Performative

In a series of William James lectures which were subsequently published under the title *How To Do Things With Words* in 1962, the Oxford philosopher J. L. Austin discusses what he calls the descriptive fallacy (Austin 1962:3). This is the view that a declarative sentence is always used to describe some state of affairs, some fact, which it must do truly or falsely. He points out that there are many declarative sentences which do not describe, report, or state anything, and of which it makes no sense to ask whether they are true or false. The utterance of such sentences is, or is part of, the doing of some action—an action which would not normally be described as simply saying something. Austin (1962: 5) gives a number of examples: *I do,* as uttered as part of a marriage ceremony; *I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth*, as uttered by the appropriate person while smashing a bottle against the stem of the ship in question; *I give and bequeath my watch to my brother*, as written in a will; *I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow*. To utter such sentences in the appropriate circumstances is not to describe what you are doing: it *is* doing it, or part of doing it, and Austin calls such utterances performatives or performative utterances, distinguishing them from constatives or constative utterances which are used to state a fact or describe a state of affairs. Only constatives can be true or false; performatives are happy or unhappy. Austin also expresses this by saying that the two types of utterance seem to have value on different dimensions; the constatives have value on the truth/falsity dimension; performatives have value on the happiness/unhappiness dimension.

A performative is doing something by speaking. A performative is a type of utterance characterized by two distinctive features:

- It is not truth-evaluable (i.e. it is neither true nor false).
- Its uttering performs an action rather than simply describing one.

However, a performative utterance must also conform to a set of felicity conditions. Some examples of performatives are given below.

- “I hereby pronounce you man and wife.”
- “I accept your apology.”

- “This meeting is now adjourned.”
- “I name this child Lydia.”
- “With this ring, I thee wed.”

Performatives are actions and, as such, are not true or false, but ‘**felicitous**’ i.e. words that are well chosen, very suitable, or words that give good results; or ‘**infelicitous**’, depending on whether or not they successfully perform the action in question. In particular, performative utterances to be felicitous must invoke an existing convention and be invoked in the right circumstances. In order word, whether the speaker in fact has the social or legal (or other kind of) standing to accomplish the act depends on some things beyond the mere speaking of the words.

The criterion for a happy, or **felicitous,** performative is that the circumstances in which it is uttered should be **appropriate:** certain **felicity conditions** must obtain. If a performative is unhappy, or **infelicitous,** something has gone wrong in the connection between the utterance and the circumstances in which it is uttered.

There are four main types of condition for the happy functioning of a performative (Austin 1962:14–15):

1. It must be a commonly accepted convention that the uttering of particular words by particular people in particular circumstances will produce a particular effect.

2. All participants in this conventional procedure must carry out the procedure correctly and completely.

3. If the convention is that the participants in the procedure must have certain thoughts, feelings, and intentions, then the participants must in fact have those thoughts, feeling, and intentions.

4. If the convention is that any participant in the procedure binds her/himself to behave subsequently in a certain way, then s/he must in fact behave subsequently in that way.

If any of these criteria is unfulfilled, the performative will be unhappy in one of two ways, depending on which of the criteria is not fulfilled. If we sin against either 1 or 2, the conventional act is *not* achieved: a person who is already married may go through another marriage ceremony, but this second marriage will be null and void because its circumstances were faulty (1). Or, a couple may go through all of the marriage ceremony except signing the register; the marriage will then be null and void because the ceremony was not carried out completely (2). Cases like these, in which the act is *not* achieved, are called **misfires**. If we sin against 3 and 4, then the conventional act *is* achieved, but the procedure will have been abused. A person may say *I congratulate you* or *I condole with*

you without having the appropriate feelings of joy/sadness for the addressee; or s/he may say *I promise to be there* without having any intention of being there. In such cases, the act will be insincere (3). Or, a person may say *I welcome you* and then proceed to treat the addressee as an unwelcome intruder, in which case s/he will have breached the commitment inherent in the greeting to subsequently behave in a certain manner (4). Both types of case are called **abuses:** the act *is* achieved, but the procedure has been abused.
So the connection between performatives and constatives is that for a performance to be happy, certain constatives must be true (ibid., p. 45): for *I congratulate you* to be happy, *I feel pleased for you* must be true.

To decide whether something is or is not a performative, one way is by testing whether 'saying so makes it so'. We can do this by inserting **hereby**. If I say *I promise,* I hereby promise, whereas if I say *I walk,* I do not hereby walk. A possible test for performatives is therefore the **hereby-test**. In the case of performatives it is always possible to insert *hereby: I bequeath—I hereby bequeath; passengers are warned—passengers are hereby warned.* In a constative, it is not appropriate to insert *hereby: I walk—*I hereby walk; I am being watched—*I am hereby being watched*.

The study of performatives led to the hypothesis of Speech Act theory that holds that a speech event embodies three acts: a locutionary act, an illocutionary act and a perlocutionary act.

3.1.1. Locutionary acts

Locutionary acts are simply the speech acts that have taken place, that is, an act of saying something. Saying something can also be viewed from three different perspectives:

- the phonetic act: the act of producing some sounds;
- the phatic act: the act of uttering some words pertaining to the vocabulary of a certain language organized according to the rules of its grammar;
- the rhetic act: the act of using those words with a certain sense and reference.

A locutionary act is the act of saying, producing meaningful sounds, words with certain reference.

3.1.2. Illocutionary acts

An illocutionary act can be said to be a non-linguistic act performed through a linguistic or locutionary act. A hearer listening to an utterance made by a speaker perceives him (the speaker) to be doing certain things with the utterance(s). The speaker might be asserting, predicting, confirming, informing the listener of something, questioning, requesting, advising, greeting, apologizing, congratulating, baptizing someone etc. Hence in making an utterance, a speaker is seen to have performed **an act.** This act is an **illocutionary act.** A force normally accompanies the act, which is also called **illocutionary force.**

Illocutionary acts are the real actions which are performed by the utterance, where saying equals doing, as in betting, plighting one's troth, welcoming and warning. In the case of illocutionary acts we succeed in doing what we are trying to do by getting our audience to recognize what we are trying to do. But the effect on the hearer is not a belief or a response; it consists simply in the hearer understanding the utterance of the speaker. As it has developed, speech act theory has been almost entirely devoted to study of the illocutionary level.

The illocutionary level has been classified into five categories: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations or declaratives.

- **Representatives:** here the speaker asserts a proposition to be true, using such verbs as: affirm, believe, conclude, deny, report.
- **Directives:** here the speaker tries to make the hearer do something, with such words as: ask, beg, challenge, command, dare, invite, insist, request.
- **Commissives:** here the speaker commits himself (or herself) to a (future) course of action, with verbs such as: guarantee, pledge, promise, swear, vow, undertake, warrant.
- **Expressives:** the speaker expresses an attitude to or about a state of affairs, using such verbs as: apologize, appreciate, congratulate, deplore, detest, regret, thank, welcome.
- **Declaratives:** the speaker alters the external status or condition of an object or situation, solely by making the utterance: I now pronounce you man and wife, I sentence you to be hanged by the neck until you are dead, I name this ship...

3.1.3. Perlocutionary acts

Perlocutionary acts are the effects of the utterance on the listener. *By* saying something one gets some intended or unintended effects in the audience. For example someone who accepts pledge of marriage, is welcomed or warned. This is the *perlocutionary* level. The consequential effects we normally produce upon the feelings, thoughts or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons.

When an utterance is made by a speaker to a hearer, what happens? What is the effect of that utterance on the hearer on that occasion? For example, if Janet says to Joy:

"See a snake behind you"!

And this brings about fright on the part of Joy; a perlocutionary act has taken place. Perlocutionary act therefore, results from a language user's utterance and a product of the hearer's interpretation. It could be the intended or unintended consequence of a reaction to what is said. Here is yet another example. In reaction to the statement:

"I won't give you the toy"!

From a mother to a child, the child might begin to cry. The child's cry is the perlocutionary act, a consequence of the child's interpretation of the mother's act of stating.

Kempson (1975:51) puts the distinction among the three speech act types succinctly thus:

> Speaker utters sentences with a particular meaning (locutionary) and with a particular force (illocutionary act) in order to achieve a certain effect (perlocutionary act) on the hearer.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Form the discussion so far, are you able to indentify perfomatives and declarative sentences? List some of them.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The minimal units of human communication are not linguistic expressions, but rather the performance of certain kinds of acts, such as making statements, asking questions, giving directions, apologizing, thanking, and so on. This is known as Speech Act Theory. The attempt to explain how speakers use language to accomplish intended actions and how hearers infer intended meaning from what is said. The distinction among the three speech act types can be put thus: a speaker utters sentences with a particular meaning (locutionary) and with a particular force (illocutionary act) in order to achieve a certain effect (perlocutionary act) on the hearer.

5.0 SUMMARY

Speech acts are acts done in the process of speaking. The utterances we use in conversation enable us to do these kinds of things because conversation itself is the bedrock of discourse.This is what Austin referred to as perfomatives. In this unit, you learnt how speech event embodies three acts: a locutionary act (the speech acts that have taken place, that is, an act of saying something), an illocutionary act (the real actions performed by the utterance), and a perlocutionary act (the effects of the utterance on the listener). In the next unit, you will learn indirect speech acts. These are situations where what seems to be a conventional association between a sentence type/form and an illocutionary force is overridden.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

In not more than two (2) pages, explain perfomative utterances.
With at least five (5) sentences, make a distinction between illocutionary act and perlocutionary act.

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UNIT 3 INDIRECT SPEECH ACT

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is a continuation of what you learnt in unit 2. It explores indirect speech act which is an extension of speech act theory. In this unit, you will learn that if there is an indirect relationship between the structure and the function the structure is performing, the structure is an indirect speech act.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After you have studied this unit, you should be able to:

- identify indirect speech acts
- make a distinction between direct and indirect speect acts
- state why people subscribe to indirect speech acts

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

INDIRECT SPEECH ACT

Speech act is a function of language that shows that part of the meaning of an utterance is its intended social function. Indirect speech act arose as a result of the problems of matching speech acts with sentence types. These problems include how to cope with cases where what seems to be a conventional association between a sentence type/form and an illocutionary force is overridden and difficulties in identifying sentence types.

The conventionally expected function in sentence type is called direct speech act while the extra actual function is termed indirect speech act.

Speech act types can also be distinguished on the basis of structure. If there is a correlation between the structure and the function the structure is performing, if both correspond then the speech act is **direct.** Consider the following examples:

- You put on a white helmet. (declarative)
- Do you put on white helmet? (interrogative)
- Put on a white helmet! (imperative)

The above utterances are direct speech acts because there is a direct relationship between their structures and their functions. If there is an indirect relationship between a structure and function, an indirect speech acts results.

An indirect speech acts is also a way of not saying exactly what you mean and expecting the addressee or your listener to guess or infer the meaning of your statement. It is saying one thing while you mean another. Searle (1979) also developed the notion of indirect speech acts in the following words:

> In indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and nonlinguistic, together with the general power rationality and inference on the part of the hearer. To be more specific, the apparatus necessary to explain the indirect part of indirect speech acts include a theory of speech acts and certain general principles of cooperatives conversation

Here are some examples:

Olu: The door-bell is ringing.
Aina: I'm in the bath.
Olu: Okay, I'll go.

Olu's first utterance is to be interpreted as a directive to Aina "answer the door". Aina's utterance counts as a statement explaining why she can't answer the door (I'm in the bath), at the same time implying that Olu should answer the door. Olu's second utterance shows that he has inferred the implied request and will comply with it. Notice that neither participant has specific reference to answering the door.

You left the door open

If you say this sentence to someone who has just come into your room (and it is pretty cold outside) you would probably be understood to have made not a statement but a request. You are requesting, indirectly that the person close the door. Used in this way, it is another example of an indirect speech act.

Did you come by your car to the faculty?
Direct act- Question
Indirect act- Request—I want a lift.

Don't make me laugh
Direct act—Statement
Indirect act--Directive

We regret that we are unable to accede to your request
Direct act—Statement
Indirect act—Rejection

Why not think about Lagos for this weekend?
Direct act- Question
Indirect act- Suggestion

Can I see you for a second?
Direct act- Question
Indirect act- Request

Aren't you going to return that book to the library?
Direct act—Question
Indirect act—Directive

Be serious!
Direct act—Statement
Indirect act—Warning

Boy: Can I get to know you better?
Direct act—Question
Indirect act—Proposal
Girl: Oh, I am sorry. I am with someone.
Direct act—Statement
Indirect act—Rejection

3.2. Indirect Speech Acts and Politeness

Politeness plays an important role because it is seems to be one of the major reasons behind indirect speech especially in giving directives. A fundamental rule of politeness (deriving from a need to preserve addressee's "face") is: *Don't impose*. Requests are, by definition, impositions, and the clash that they present with the rule of politeness is in need of resolution. The direct imposition can be ameliorated by avoiding a direct demand and instead asking whether the addressee is willing to or capable of carrying out the act.

This gives the addressee the technical option of not carrying out the implied request without losing face. In the field of indirect illocutionary acts, the area of directives is the most useful to study because ordinary conversational requirements of politeness normally make it awkward to issue flat imperative statements (e.g. *leave the room*) or explicit performatives (e.g. *I order you to leave the room*) and we, therefore, seek to find indirect means to our illocutionary ends. *(I wonder if you would mind leaving the room)*. In directives, politeness is the chief motivation for indirectness.

More so, politeness is used to save face. Saeed (2003) defines face as the public self image that every member of a society wants to claim for himself. There two components of face.

- **Positive face:** represents an individual's desire to seem worthy and deserving of approval
- **Negative face:** represents an individual's desire to be autonomous and unimpeded by others.

Mutual self interest requires that conversational participants maintain both their face and that of their interactors. Verbal interactions are potential threats to face. For instance, threats to negative face are (a) orders (b) requests (c) suggestion (d) advice. Threats to positive face which potentially lowers an individual's self and social esteem include (a) expressions of disapproval, (b) disagreements, (c) accusations and (d) interruptions.
Speakers can threaten their own face by their words. Self-threat to positive face include apologies and confessions. Politeness serve to diminish such potential threats in order to balance once own face and others in a continual interaction. Speakers weaken such threat by the use of politeness or tact in the form indirect speech act. For instance, negative indirectives help to diminish the threat of orders as in the first of the two utterances below:

A: **Open the windows.**
B: **It's very hot in here.**

The second utterance involves giving an explanation for the request instead of making a direct request as in (a).
Positive indirectness weakens the threat provided by disagreements, interruptions etc. For example prefixing it with apologies as in

I'm sorry but you are wrong

rather than

You are wrong

I have to say that I don't agree.

rather than

I don't agree

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Give examples of utterances and explain how they could be interpreted as either direct speech acts or indirect speech acts.

4.0 CONCLUSION

An indirect speech acts is a way of not saying exactly what you mean and expecting the addressee or your listener to guess or infer the meaning of your statement. It is saying one thing while you mean another. Because you want to avoid direct impositon, you make use of indirect speech act in order to be polite.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have studtied the differences between direct speech acts and indirect speech acts, you have also learnt the reasons behind the employment of indirect speech acts in discourse. You also saw briefly, the role of politeness in the use of indirect speech acts. In the next unit, I shall discuss in politeness in detail.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

An indirect speech acts is a way of not saying exactly what you mean and expecting the addressee or your listener to guess or infer the meaning of your statement.
With the aid of ten (10) sentences, explain the above quotation.

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UNIT 4 POLITENESS I

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit and the next, you will study Politeness. Politeness is the ability to speak or behave in a way that is correct for the social situation you are in, and showing that you are careful to consider other people's needs and feelings. In this unit, you will learn that Politeness is the exercise of language choice to create a context intended to match addressee's notion of how he or she should be addressed.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After you have studied this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain vividly what Politeness is all about
- Discuss the concept of *face*
- Show the difference between negative face and positive face

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1. Politeness

Politeness is generally understood as respect and consideration for other people, ease and gracefulness of manners; desire to please others by anticipating their wants and wishes. In the wider, cross-cultural meaning we can perceive politeness as a set of rules, or strategies that are culturally-specific, ritualized in communication that tends to harmonize communication and avoid conflicts.

Politeness is the ability to speak or behave in a way that is correct for the social situation you are in, and showing that you are careful to consider other people's needs and feelings. Geoff Leech defines politeness as forms of behaviour that establish and maintain comity. That is the ability of participants in a social interaction to engage in interaction in an atmosphere of relative harmony.

Politeness theory was first formulated in 1987 by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson. One of the central themes on politeness has been the universality versus cultural relativity of the notion of politeness, and at the heart of this discussion have been Brown & Levinson's use of the term face and the conceptualization of politeness as a set of rational strategies to soften the potentially unwelcome effects of face-threatening. The notion of face has been in use as a metaphor in different cultures of the world for a very long time. It has metaphorically referred to individual qualities and/or abstract entities such as honor, respect, esteem and the self. Politeness theory is the theory that accounts for the redressing of the affronts to face posed by face-threatening acts to addressees. It is the expression of the speakers' intention to avert face threats carried by certain face threatening acts towards another. It is also defined as a battery of social skills whose goal is to ensure everyone feels affirmed in a social interaction.

Politeness is not just about showing some compliments, it is rather the exercise of language choice to create a context intended to match addressee's notion of how he or she should be addressed. Among the aspects of context that are particularly determined by language choice in the domain of politeness are the power-distance relationship of the interactants and the extent to which a speaker imposes on or requires something of their addressee. Thus being "polite" is simply a way a speaker implicates a context that matches the one assumed by the hearer (Grundy, 2000:144-5). This we do by applying some great deal of linguistic politeness as a rule for ensuring the appropriate etiquette or conduct. Look at the example below showing expressions of politeness phenomena:

Speaker A: Could you possibly pick up that pen for me please.
Speaker B: Pick up that pen for me.

As we can see in the above examples, politeness principle does not always encourage economy of words as we observed in the case of pragmatic presupposition, rather the speaker of (A) adopts politeness strategy as long as it satisfies his intention and needs. That is not to say, however, that there are no situations where (A) will be the most appropriate.

Polite utterances often encode the relationship between the speaker and hearer. In the above example, (A) may be my way of asking an adult student who came to see me in my office to pick up a pen for me. But if my child were to be in my office (B) will indeed be appropriate without his feeling upset. According to Grundy (2000), if we do not see the relationship between us and the persons who address us as they do, we may be upset by the strategies they use, since these strategies imply the kind of relationship we have with them, thus linguistic politeness is "the function of language to imply the most appropriate speaker-addressee relationship" (2000:147).

3.2. Politeness and Face

The concept of *face* in Pragmatics refers to someone's self-image. Your *face*, therefore, is your emotional and social sense of self-worth that you expect someone else to recognise (Yule, 1996). If anyone says something to you that constitutes a threat to your self-image, that is called *face-threatening act*. If someone tells you:

(I): Leave the road!

And another tells you:

(II): Could you please, move a little bit to your right.

The first person (I) speaks to you as if she/he has some authority or social power over you. If he doesn't really have that power, she/he is indeed threatening your face. The other person who adopts an indirect speech act (in form of a question) removes the face threatening act, thus making his request less threatening. This other person that removes your tendency to feel threatened has performed a face-saving act. This face- saving strategy constitutes politeness. *Face* is the public self-image that every adult tries to project.

3.3. Negative Face and Positive Face

We have both the negative face and positive face.
Negative face: Your negative face is your need to be independent and free of any form of imposition. It is defined as *the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others* (i.e. the freedom of action and freedom from imposition)

Positive face: Your positive face is your need to be well treated, to belong, to be a member of the group means, that is the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some other executors. Positive face implies the desires to be liked, admired, ratified and related to positively and by implication, one would threaten positive face by ignoring it.

We can draw the line between Positive face and Negative face by saying that Positive face refers to one's self esteem, while Negative face refers to one's freedom to act. Positive face is the individual's desire that her/his wants be appreciated in social interaction, and negative face is the individual's desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition. They are both the basic wants needed in any social interaction for cooperation among the participants.

A face-saving act that recognises another person's negative face will be concerned about his need not to be imposed, harassed or insulted. Thus the need to use such expressions as

> ***I'm sorry to bother you****…*
> ***I just couldn't help asking if****…*
> ***I know you're busy but****…* etc.

A face-saving act that emphasises a person's positive face will show solidarity and be mindful of a common goal, tendency or a common weakness. For instance if someone tells you:

> ***O! You're very kind****.*

And in response you say:

> ***Thanks, but I'm not as kind as you are****.*

You are being polite by applying a positive face-saving act, implying that you are not in any way better.

Simple words with basic meanings such as ***please*** can be a source of misunderstanding if used inappropriately, and make you sound impolite or unfreindly. For example, if you say

> **Will you please sit down?**

it can sound as if you are talking to a naught child, particularly if you sress the **'please'**. The usual way to ask someone to sit down is to say

> **Have your seat!**

or just say **Please!** and indicate with your hand that you want the other person to sit down.

When you speak or write to someone, the words or expressions you choose show your feelings about what you are saying. You can, for example, use **freedom fighter** when you think that someone is fighting against an unfair government and you approve of their actions. If you disapprove, you would call this person a **terrorist.**

There are situations when you may want to use strong words that will emphasize what you are saying. For example, several adjectives can be used to talk about **anger.**

Whichever word you use will show how angry you think someone is: **angry** is not as strong as **furious,** and **fuming** and **livid** are much stronger than **furious.**

If you say something is **nice** or **good,** you express a very mild degree of appreciation. But if you say that it is **fantastic** or **brilliant**, you express a strong positive feeling.

If you want to be careful and deplomatic, you can use words or expressions that will show that you want to be polite. If, for example, you don't have a particular opinion on something or a desire to do something, it is better to say **I don't mind** rather than **I don't care** which can be perceived as rude.

Similarly, instead of saying directly that you do not want to do something, it is often better to say that you are **not keen on doing something.**
When you are making a statement or expressing an idea, you will very often **modify** what you are saying by using adverbials that express a degree of certainty or uncertainty. For example, if you say

I'll **probably** go to the party.

it means that you are not entirely sure that you will, and you want your listener to be aware of your uncertainty. If you say

I'll **definitely** go to the party.

you want your listener to know that you are certain to go to the party. You can also use **must** when you are saying you are certain that something is true.

You **must** be tired after all your hard work.
They **must** have left by now.

If you want to say that you are certain that something is not true, you use **can't**. 'Must' is not appropriate in this situation.

You **can't** be tired – you've only been working for an hour.
They **can't** have left yet.

You use **will** when you are saying that something will definitely happen. You can also use **will** when you are talking about something that is always true.

I **will** be 25 next year.
Oil **will** float on water.

The usual way to advice someone is to say **you should… or you ought to…**

My tooth hurts.
You should see a Dentist.

Our cat's really fat.
You shouldn't give him so much food then.

I'm really stressed out.
You ought to try and relax more.

If you want to make it clear that it is only your opinion or suggestion, you can say

If I were you I'd… or
I think the best thing is to…

or you can put your advice in the form of a question and say

Why don't you…? or
Have you thought of/considered…?

The car's really hard to start in the morning.
If I were you I'd call a mechanic.

I'm really worried about my partner.
Why don't you talk to your Pastor about it?

With people you know very well, you can use much more direct expressions.

I'm thinking of contesting the election.
Don't do it!

I'm going to give up my course.
You mustn't do that!

If you are advising someone based on your own personal experience, you often begin or end your advice with **take** it from me, or **take my advice**.

Dating someone you work with is not always
a good idea. **Take it from me**!

People should stop using their cars and start using public transport.
I agree. The roads are too crowded as it is.

I think we've waited long enough.
You're right. Let's go home.

The most important thing is quality.
Good point. (= used in discussions).

That meeting was so boring.
I know. I thought it would never end.

If people do the same work, they should get paid the same money.
Absolutely/Exactly/I couldn't agree more!

It's a bit hot today, isn't it?
You're telling me! (= informal)

You should go and apologize to her.
I suppose so, but it's not going to be easy.

He has his good points.
I guess so, but he keeps them well hidden.

It's really expensive to fly to Abuja.
No, it isn't. It's really cheap.

Women are much tidier than men.
That's not right. Some men are incredibly tidy.

It's always better to travel alone.
That's not always **true**. Sometimes it can be really boring.

It's supposed to be a brilliant film.
That's not what I've heard.
(= used when saying what other people have told you).

Too much money has been wasted
I really don't/can't accept that on project development.

Just saying 'no' or 'that's not true' can sound very direct, especially when speaking to people you do not know well. If you say

I'm not so sure or
Are you quite sure (**about that**)?

you avoid contradicting what the other person is saying and you sound more polite.

If you disagree with part of what someone is saying, or you think that another thing is far more important, you say

I take/see your point, **but…** or
Point taken but…

Cheap food means that everyone can afford to eat well.
I take/see your point, but what about the long-term effects on the environment?

If you disagree strongly with someone you know well, you can use direct informal expressions.

I'm so fat.
Nonsense! You're not fat at all.

It's all your fault!
No way! It was nothing to do with me.

The journey shouldn't take more than an hour.
You can't be serious! It's at least two hours

If you use these expressions with people you do not know well, you will often sound very aggressive and rude.

The usual way to apologize is to say **I'm sorry** or just **sorry**. If you are apologizing for something serious, you can say **I'm really sorry**, **I'm awfully terribly sorry**, or **I'm so sorry**.

Sorry I'm late – the traffic was terrible!
I'm so sorry about the vase. I'll pay for a new one.

In official situations, for example when addressing customers and the public in official announcements, or in formal letters, people say:

We would like to apologize for the delay to your train.
My apologies for not replying earlier.

When apologizing for something not very serious, for example when you have accidentally bumped into someone, you can say **Excuse me** or **I beg your pardon**.

Excuse me! I don't realize I was standing on your foot!
'That's my seat!' 'Oh, **I beg your pardon**!'

If someone apologizes, you can say

That's OK, **That's all right**, or
Don't worry about it

to show that you are not bothered by what has happened. In informal English you can also say

No problem, or
it's no big deal.

The usual way to ask permission is to say

Can I…? May I…?

Ths is more polite and a little more formal.

Can I go home?
May I ask you a question?

In an informal setting, you can say

Is it all right/OK if I…?

Is it all right/OK if I bring a friend?

If you do not know the other person well, or if you think they are likely to refuse, you usually use more indirect expressions, for example

Do you mind if I…? or
Would you mind if I…?

Do you mind if I join you?
Would you mind if I looked at the letter?
Would it be OK if I left early?

The simplest way of giving permission is to say **Yes**. People often use other words instead, for example **of course**, **sure**, and **go ahead**. In more formal English, people say **certainly** and **by all means**.

Can I borrow your paper?
Of course/**sure**.

Is it all right if I keep this photo?
Yes, that's fine.

Do you mind if I smoke?
Go ahead.

May I ask you a question?
Please do!

Could we have a copy of the article? **Certainly**/**By all means**.

When refusing permission, just saying '*no*' can seem very direct. People often say **sorry** or **I'm afraid**… and then give a reason.

Is it all right if I keep this photo?
Sorry, but I only have one copy.

May I look at the files myself?
I'm afraid that won't be possible.

Do you mind if I smoke?
I'd rather you didn't.

If you are asking for something straightforward and not difficult to do, you can be more direct and use expressions such as

Can you…?,
Could you…?
Will you…?,

Could you tell me her name?
Will you help me with these bags?

If you are talking to someone you do not know well, or if you want to ask for something that might be difficult for the other person to do, you usually use more indirect expressions.

Would you mind waiting outside?
Do you think you could come back later?

I wonder if you could (**possibly**) do some work for me this weekend?

When asking for things in restaurants and bars, people usually say:

I'll have a bottle of red wine.
Can I have the bill, please?

If you know the person well, you can be informal.

How about a game of tennis?
What about dinner tomorrow night?
Do you fancy a bottle of beer?

If you do not know the person well, or if you think they may refuse, it is often safer to use a more polite expression.

Would you like to come out for a drink some time?
I was wondering if you'd like to join us for dinner.
I hope you don't mind my asking, but is this your newspaper?

If you want to accept an invitation, you could respond in any of the following ways:

Do you want to come over for a meal on Friday?
Sure.

How about a drink after work?
OK/I'd be delighted. What time?

Would you like to go out with us some time?
Yes, I'd like that very much.

Would you like to see a film?
I'd love to.

If you want to reject an invitation, you should not be too direct so as not be offensive, you could use any of the following:

I'm sorry....
I'm afraid...
Thanks for asking, but....

Do you want to go browsing tonight?
I'm sorry, I've got to work.

How about a drink?
I'm afraid I can't. I'm too busy right now
.
Would you like to come to a party this weekend?
Thanks for asking, but we're going away on holiday.

The appropriate language use that shows politeness varies among cultures. Many times what some cultures consider as impolite may not be impolite to some. For instance in Yoruba culture, it will be impolite for a child to say to his parent, *"come on Dad,"* or *"don't be silly mum."* This will indeed be viewed as face-threatening or outright insult. But this is not the case in some European cultures. Interpreting how interactants communicate is actually a matter of pragmatics – being able to interpret what is intended, rather than what is said.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

From the various illustrations in the text, are you able to identify utterances that show politeness? If not, you should study this unit again.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Polite utterances often encode the relationship between the speaker and hearer. Politeness is not just about showing some compliments, it is rather the exercise of language choice to create a context intended to match addressee's notion of how he or she should be addressed. Among the aspects of context that are particularly determined by language choice in the domain of politeness are the power-distance relationship of the interactants and the extent to which a speaker imposes on or requires something of their addressee.

5.0. SUMMARY

In this unit, you learnt what Politeness is all about, you also studied the concept of *face* and the differences between negative face and positive face. I gave a lot of illustrations to show you how to be polite and identify polite utterances. It is possible to damage the face of the addressee or the speaker by acting in opposition to the wants and desires of the other through verbal or non-verbal forms of communication. In the next unit, we shall continue our discussion on politeness as you learn what is known as *face threatening acts.*

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

In not more than two (2) pages, explain with appropriate examples the term politeness.

What is the relationship between politeness and face? Explain in not more than two pages.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 5 POLITENESS II

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This is the second part of what you learnt in unit 4. In this unit, you are going to learn how to avoid acts that can damage the face. Politeness strategies for maintaining one's face, the maxims proposed by Leech in explaining how politeness operates in conversational exchanges and honorific pronouns employed among the Yoruba people in South West, Nigeria.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are that you should be able discuss the following, after you have studied the unit:

- how to avoid acts that can damage the face.
- Politeness strategies for maintaining one's face,
- the maxims proposed by Leech in explaining how politeness operates in conversational exchanges, and
- honorific pronouns employed among the Yoruba people

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1. Face Threatening Acts

A face threatening act is an act that innately damages the face of the addressee or the speaker by acting in opposition to the wants and desires of the other through verbal or non-verbal forms of communication. The face is understood as something that is emotionally invested, and that can be not only lost, but also maintained or enhanced. Politeness theory assumes that most speech acts, for example requests, offers and compliments, inherently threaten either the hearer's or the speaker's face-wants, and that **politeness** is involved in redressing those face threatening acts (**FTA**).

3.2. Negative face threatening acts

Negative face is threatened when an individual does not avoid or intend to avoid the obstruction of their interlocutor's freedom action. This can cause damage to either the speaker or the hearer, and makes one of the interlocutors submit their will to the other. Freedom of choice and action are impeded when negative face is threatened.

Damage to the hearer

- An act that affirms or denies a future act of the hearer creates pressure on the hearer to either perform or not perform the act. **Examples**: orders, requests, suggestions, advice, reminding, threats, or warnings.
- An act that expresses the speaker's sentiments of the hearer or the hearer's belongings. **Examples:** compliments, expressions of envy or admiration, or expression of strong negative emotion toward the hearer (e.g. hatred, anger, lust)
- An act that expresses some positive future act of the speaker toward the hearer. In doing so, pressure has been put on the hearer to accept or reject the act and possibly incur a debt. **Examples**: offers, and promises.
-

Damage to the speaker

- An act that shows that the speaker is succumbing to the power of the hearer. expressing thanks; accepting a thank you or apology; excuses; accepting of offers

3.2.2. Positive face-threatening acts

Positive face is threatened when the speaker or the hearer does not care about their interactor's feelings, wants, or does not want what the other wants. It can as well cause damage to the speaker or the hearer. When an individual is forced to be separated from others so that their well-being is treated less importantly, positive face is threatened.

Damage to the hearer

- An act that expresses the speaker's negative assessment of the hearer's positive face or an element of his/her positive face. This disapproval can be displayed in two ways. One is for the speaker to directly or indirectly indicates that he dislikes some aspect of the hearer's possessions, desires, or personal attributes. The other approach is for him to express disapproval by stating or implying that the hearer is wrong, irrational, or misguided. **Examples:** expressions of disapproval (e.g. insults, accusations, complaints, contradictions, disagreements, or challenges)

- An act that expresses the speaker's indifference toward the addressee's positive face. The addressee might be embarrassed for or fear the speaker. **Examples:** excessively emotional expressions
- The speaker indicates that he doesn't have the same values or fears as the hearer **Examples**: disrespect, mention of topics which are inappropriate in general or in context.
- The speaker indicates that he is willing to disregard the emotional well-being of the hearer. **Examples**: belittling or boasting.

Damage to the speaker

- An act that shows that the speaker is in some sense wrong, and unable to control himself.
- Apologies: In this act, a speaker is damaging g his own face by admitting that he regrets one of his previous acts.
- Acceptance of a compliment
- Inability to control one's physical self
- Inability to control one's emotional self
- Self humiliation
- Confessions

3.3. Lingustic encoding of politeness strategies

These are politeness strategies for maintaining one's face:

- Indirectness
- Avoidance of confrontation
- Avoidance of strong criticism
- Suppression of negative emotions

3.3.1. Indirectness

The first strategy is indirectness. Being direct and assertive are to be avoided because it could be interpreted as a threat to the self-esteem of the addressee. Someone who is too direct and is not considerate of another's esteem could be considered as 'not giving face' or 'not keeping face'. The indirect approach may appear in the form of hints, beating around the bush, or jokes. This approach allows the persons in an interaction to accommodate each other or to withdraw without losing face. For example, direct refusals of a request may be taken as showing inconsiderateness or disrespect. Thus, when one is not willing to do what is requested, one may say, "***I am sorry I will not be free at that time***" or not say anything at all. The requester will then get the hint.

3.3.2. Avoidance of confrontation

Another politeness strategy in social interaction that is related to indirectness is the avoidance of confrontation. *'to confront face*' aptly describes someone who is confrontational. Thus, to avoid the *"I win, you lose"* situation, one who is displeased with another or has a conflict with another may do a few things:

- keep silent about the situation
- avoid the party in conflict altogether
- express his feelings to a third party as a way of releasing his emotional tension, or
- attempt to resolve the conflict by using mediation through the third party in order to avoid the loss of face for the two negotiating parties.

3.3.3. Avoidance of strong criticism

Avoidance of strong criticism is also keenly observed. Even in academic settings where intellectual criticism has a legitimate place, it is still necessary to tone down one's criticisms of ideas by using general and vaguely stated terms because "*it is very difficult to dissociate one's ideas and opinions from the '**ego**' self".* In other words, rejection of one's ideas is taken as rejection of the person holding those ideas. It is, therefore, extremely important not to humiliate someone in public.

3.3.4. Suppression of negative emotions

For interactions to be smooth and void of overt conflicts, it is important that there be suppression of negative emotions. The value of self-control, of being calm and collected is important for maintaining smooth interpersonal interaction. One who is and is able to be polite even while seething on the inside is regarded as a person of strength. Again, the point is to maintain a smooth and harmonious relationship and not make oneself or the other lose face.

3.4. The Politeness Principle

The politeness principle is a series of maxims, which Leech has proposed as a way of explaining how politeness operates in conversational exchanges. Each maxim is accompanied by a sub-maxim (between square brackets), which is of less importance. These support the idea that negative politeness (avoidance of discord) is more important than positive politeness (seeking concord).

- **Tact maxim:** minimize cost to other; [maximize benefit to other]
- **Generosity maxim**: minimize benefit to self; [maximize cost to self]
- **Approbation maxim**: minimize dispraise of other; [maximize praise of other]
- **Modesty maxim**: minimize praise of self; [maximize dispraise of self]
- **Agreement maxim**: minimize disagreement between self and other; [maximize agreement between self and other]

- **Sympathy maxim**: minimize antipathy between self and other; [maximize sympathy between self and other]

3.5. Honorific pronouns

In the Yoruba language, the plural forms for ‘you’ (the second person personal pronoun) may be used as a marker of politeness or deference, and for superiors. The singular forms are, however, employed to equals or inferiors as well as to express solidarity or itimacy. When pronouns are used in this way, they are referred to as **honorific pronouns.** The pronouns are given below:

Ìwọ/Ẹ̀yin; Òun/Àwọn *(long pronouns)*
O/Ẹ; Ó/Wọ́n *(short subject pronouns)*
ẹ/wọn; v/yín *(short object pronouns)*
tirẹ̀/tiwọn; tìrẹ/tiyín *(possessive pronouns)*

In each of the pairs of pronouns above, the second is the honorific pronoun. The *v/yín* pair, *v* is any vowel depending on the last vowel of the verb.

Languages such as French and German also have pronouns with similar use According to (Moore 2001: 9-10), the French “tu/vous”, German “du/Sie” are different forms for “you”. They ‘originally . . . indicated number (“vous” and “Sie”) used for plural forms, but now show different levels of formality, with “tu” and “du” being more familiar, “vous” and “Sie” more polite’

Status and attitude are also expressed through titles. It will amount to impolite if you fail to recognize someone’s title or titles especially in a formal setting. Titles are such things as Professor, Dr (Doctor), Sir, Fr. (Father), Mr (Mister), Mrs, Miss, Madam, Rabbi, Sr. (Sister), Engineer (Engr.), (High) Chief, Pastor, Deacon, Prophet, Alhaji, Pa, Alàgbà, (Elder), Senator, Honourable, etc.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Do you know how to avoid face threatening acts? If not, you should study this unit again to familiarise yourself with them.

4.0 CONCLUSION

A face threatening act is an act that innately damages the face of the addressee or the speaker by acting in opposition to the wants and desires of the other through verbal or non-verbal forms of communication. Politeness theory assumes that most speech acts, for example requests, offers and compliments, inherently threaten either the hearer’s or the speaker’s face-wants, and that **politeness** is involved in redressing those face threatening acts (**FTA**). These are politeness strategies for maintaining one’s face are, indirectness, avoidance of confrontation, avoidance of strong criticism and the suppression of negative emotions

5.0. SUMMARY

In this unit, you learnt how to avoid both negative and positive face threatening acts, politeness strategies for maintaining one's face, the maxims proposed by Leech in explaining how politeness operates in conversational exchanges and honorific pronouns employed among the Yoruba people in South West, Nigeria.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

In not more than three (3) pages, explain with appropriate examples face threathenind acts (FTAs).
What are the strategies that can be employed in maitaining one's face? Explain them in not more than two pages.

7.0 REFERENCES/FOR FURTHER READING

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MODULE 4 MEANING AND CONTEXT II

In Module 3, you learnt about Pragmatics, a systematic way of explaining language use in context, which seeks to explain aspects of meaning which cannot be found in the plain sense of words or structures, as explained by semantics. In this Module, I shall continue my discussion on Pragmatics, you will learn how to interpret the additional information which the speaker is passing but not part of what he/she has said. Tnis is known as Conversational Implicature. In other words, Implicature is a component of speakers meaning that constitutes aspects of what is meant without necessarily being part of what is said. Implicature is simply what is meant but not said. Apart from this, you will also study what Paul Grice calls the Cooperative Principle. He says that the success of a conversation depends upon the various speakers' approach to the interaction. Speakers shape their utterances to be understood by hearers, in ordinary conversation, speakers and hearers share a cooperative principle. This is the way in which people try to make conversations work. This Principle assumes that interactants cooperate in the conversation by contributing to the ongoing speech event. You will also learn about knowledge as context. Context Knowledge is the knowledge about which of the features present in a given communicative situation are relevant as context-determining factors. These are the factors that determine what possible actions are in a given context and how actions are to be interpreted.

The topis briefly discussed above will be explainedin the four units of this module. You will study them as listed below:

Unit 1: Conversational Implicature
Unit 2: Cooperative Principle I
Unit 3: Cooperative Principle II
Unit 4: Knowledge as Context

UNIT 1 CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

It is always common to hear people argue over what is meant and what is implied. This means that there is different between what speakers say and what hearers interpret. The success of communication depends on how well the meaning intended by the speaker and the implicature of the listener converge. This is possible when participants in communication obey principles of conversational implicature. In this unit, you will learn about conversational implicature and its charateristics.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, after you might have studied it, you are expected to be explain the different between what speakers say and what hearers interpret and the three characteristics of conversational implicature

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1. Conversational Implicature

It is always common to hear people argue over what is meant and what is implied. This means that there is different between what speakers say and what hearers interpret. In a nutshell, the success of communication depends on how well the meaning intended by the speaker and the implicature of the listener converge. This is possible when participants in communication obey principles of conversational implicature.

Implicature is a component of speakers meaning that constitutes aspects of what is meant without necessarily being part of what is said. Implicature is simply what is meant but not said. With the above definitions, it is obvious that speakers always meant more than what they said. Implicature is therefore additional information which the speaker is passing but not part of what he/she has said. Implicature is the process through which speakers include meaning beyond literal message in an utterance.

Herbert Paul Grice (1913-1988) emphasized the distinction between what words mean, what the speaker literally says when using them, and what the speaker means or intends to communicate by using those words, which often goes considerably beyond what is said - how hearers manage to work out the complete message when speakers mean more than they say. Some examples of what Grice meant by conversational implicature are given below.

Have you got any cash on you?

Here the speaker really wants the hearer to understand the meaning:

Can you lend me some money?
I don't have much on me.

I ask you to lunch and you reply,

I have a one o'clock class I'm not prepared for.

You have conveyed to me that you will not be coming to lunch, although you haven't literally said so. You intend for me to figure out that by indicating a reason for not coming to lunch (the need to prepare your class) you intend to convey that you are not coming to lunch for that reason.

A and B are talking about a mutual friend, C, who is now working in a bank. A asks B how C is getting on in his job, and B replies:

Oh quite well, I think; he likes his colleagues,
and he hasn't been to prison yet.

What did B say by uttering *"he hasn't been to prison yet"?* Roughly, all he literally said of C was that he hasn't been to prison up to the time of utterance. This is what the conventional sentence meaning plus contextual processes of disambiguation provide. But, normally, B would have **implicated** more than this: that C is the sort of person likely to yield to the temptation provided by his occupation (Grice 1989:24).

The conversational implicature is a message that is not found in the plain sense of the sentence. The speaker implies it. The hearer is able to infer (work out, read between the lines) this message in the utterance, by appealing to the rules governing successful conversational interaction. Grice proposed that implicatures can be calculated by understanding three things:

- The usual linguistic meaning of what is said.
- Contextual information (shared or general knowledge).
- The assumption that the speaker is obeying what Grice calls the cooperative principle.

What someone says is determined by the conventional meaning of the sentence uttered and contextual processes of disambiguation and reference fixing; what he implicates is associated with the existence to some rational principles and maxims governing conversation. What is said has been widely identified with the literal content of the utterance; what is implicated, the implicature, with the non-literal, what it is (intentionally) communicated, but not said, by the speaker. Conversational implicature may mean additional information which may be deducible from an utterance outside of its entailment. Let us examine this mini conversation

A. Where is Ṣọla?
B. There is a yellow car at the faculty.

If Sọla has yellow car and 'A' knows that Sola has a car, the response will then implied that Sola is at the faculty.

Conversational implicature means what the speaker implies in his/her utterance which the hearer is able to deduce. Conversational implicature are pragmatic inference. Unlike entailment and presupposition, conversational implicatures are not tied to the particular words and phrases in an utterance but arise instead from contextual factors and the understanding that conventions are observed in conversation.

3. 2. Characteristics of Conversational Implicature

Conversational implicatures have the following characteristics or properties:

- **Calculability:** conversational implicatures are calculable, that is, inferable from, among other things, the cooperative principle and the conversational maxims. According to Grice, the 'calculation' of conversational implicatures is grounded on common knowledge of what the speaker has said (or better, the fact that he has said it), the linguistic and extra linguistic context of the utterance, general background information, and the consideration of Cooperative Principle (CP). In conversational implicature, listeners are able to identify the implicature in a conversation. Listeners, know automatically what the speaker implicates
- **Cancelability:** A speaker can cancel conversational implicature by giving additional information. This information will make the conversation more explicit and thereby cancel the implicature, in other words conversational inplicatures are cancelable either explicitly (adding something like "but I did not meant that") or contextually, by changing the context,

  Sola: Are you coming to the party?

Bola: You know I'm really busy but I'll come**.**

The additional information *(but I'll come)* in the above example cancelled the implicature.

and

- **Non-detachability:** In conversational implicature, the same implicature will be achieved if the speaker decided to say the same thing in different way. Implicatures are non-detachable; there is no way of saying the same thing that would not carry the implicature.

  Sola: are you coming to the party?

  Bola: You know I'm really busy**.**

  Bola: I have too much work to do.

  The pragmatic implicature in the responses is still the same that Bola will not come.

The last two features, cancelability and non-detachability are known as the tests for the presence of an alleged implicature.

Grice discuss conversational implicature in respect of the co-operative principle (CP). Conversation works on the principle that participants co-operate with each other in the interaction. When people communicate, they try to be cooperative by obeying some cooperative principles. This principle demand that they make their conversation contribution such as is required.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Are you able to identify what are implied in the examples you came across in this unit? If not you must re-read the unit and study the examples again.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Conversational implicature is a message that is not found in the plain sense of the sentence. The speaker implies it. The hearer is able to infer (work out, read between the lines) this message in the utterance, by appealing to the rules governing successful conversational interaction. Implicatures can be calculated by understanding three things:

- The usual linguistic meaning of what is said.
- Contextual information (shared or general knowledge).
- The assumption that the speaker is obeying what Grice calls the cooperative principle.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you learnt about conversational implicature. However, conversation works on the principle that participants co-operate with each other in the interaction. When people communicate, they try to be cooperative by obeying some cooperative principles. This principle demand that they make their conversation contribution such as is required. In the next two units, you will learn about the cooperative principle

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

What is conversational implicature? Explain in not more than four (4) pages. Discuss briefly, in not more than two pages, the three charateristics of conversational implicature.

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UNIT 2 THE COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE I

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, unit 1, you learnt that conversation works on the principle that participants co-operate with each other in the interaction. When people communicate, they try to be cooperative by obeying some cooperative principles. I shall ahead in this unit to discuss the cooperative principle introduced by Herbert Paul Grice. You will also learn about the four maxims of conversation.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After you might have studied this unit, you should be able to:

- explain what the cooperative principle is all about
- discuss vividly the four maxims of conversation

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1. The Cooperative Principle (CP)

The cooperative principle was first introduced by Herbert Paul GRICE (1913-1988) in 1975. According to Grice, our talk exchanges do not normally consist of succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them to some extent a common set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction. This initial direction may be fixed from the start by an initial proposal of a question for discussion, or it may be so indefinite as to leave very considerable latitude to the participants as is the case in casual conversations.

The success of a conversation depends upon the various speakers' approach to the interaction. Speakers shape their utterances to be understood by hearers. Paul Grice proposes that in ordinary conversation, speakers and hearers share a cooperative principle. This is the way in which people try to make conversations work, sometimes called **the cooperative principle**. This Principle assumes that interactants cooperate in the conversation by contributing to the ongoing speech event.

> Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged (Grice 1989:26).

Grice's suggestion above indicates a belief in an underlying set of assumptions guiding language use in conversation. Levinson (1983:101) suggests that "these assumptions stem from basic rational considerations for the efficient and effective use of language to further cooperative ends."

The following text, taken from Usenbo 2013, illustrates Grice's expectations about conversations, language use and the direction of talk exchanges. Transcript of Channel Television 'Sunrise' interview aired on 12/03/2013. The participants in this conversation had been discussing upcoming recruitment into the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Commission (NSCDC) and employment racketeering in government establishments.

Interviewer 1: What is the website of NSCDC?
Respondent: The website of NSCDC (pause) yes, will be made known. You see, I cannot categorically tell you one now. Because, the one we are...
Interviewer 1: Do you have multiple websites?
Respondent: The one that we are going to make use of, I am not the one that is going to create it.
Interviewer 1: No, the question is what is your website?
Respondent: Wait! The one that we are going to make use of is going to be made known by *my oga at the top.* (my superior/boss) Yes! I can't announce one now, and *my oga* (superior/boss) will say it is another one.
Interviewer 2: So, the NSCDC has multiple websites?
Respondent: No. we we we cannot have multiple websites. But the one that (coughs)...we are going to... (coughs...)
Interviewer 2: No, not the one for employment.

Interviewer 1: It is not the one for employment. What is your website now? The one you use normally as your official website.
Interviewer 2: If you want to know about NSCDC, what website do you go to?
Respondent: Okay, if you want to know about NSCDC now. The website is www.nscdc (coughs) yes. So, that's all
Interview 2: www.nscdc
Interviewer 1: That's it?

From the foregoing, one can say that the interviewee is being uncooperative in this conversation. This is so because he has failed to make the required conversational contribution. Secondly, he has ignored the direction of the talk exchange by focusing on previously discussed issue of employment rather than the current direction of the discourse which is the virtual address of his establishment. Lastly, the final question (that's it?) shows that the cooperative principle was totally ignored by the respondent, as the question posed initially by interviewer 1 remained unanswered at the end of interview.

3.2. Grice's Maxim of conversation

The cooperative principle is expounded in four basic principles of conversation. These principles are also referred to in the literature as Grice's maxims of conversation. They include the following;

- The Maxim of Quality
- The Maxim of Quantity
- The Maxim of Relevance
- The Maxim of Manner

The maxim of Quality

Try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically:

- Do not say what you believe to be false.
- Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Let us look at these scenarios for illustration

I

Chukwudi: Jim, do you know where the first storey building in Nigeria is?
Babajide: It's Badagry

II

Esosa: Mummy, if I leave stones in the hearth they

will soften, won't they?
Ekiomado: Uh-huh! And if you bleach the coals, they will become white.

The first scenario (I) above shows complete observance of the maxims of quality. The answer is not false, and there is evidence to corroborate this. On the contrary, the second, (II), shows that Ekiomado's response flouts the first maxim of quality.

The maxim of Quantity

- Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of exchange.
- Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

III: Text taken from *Arrow of God* (Achebe 1980:160)
Ezeugo: Oduche!
Oduche: Eeh!
Ezeugo: Come out here!
(Oduche comes out from his mother's hut)
Ezeugo: What is all this noise about?
Oduche: Ask Ojiugo and her mother.
Ezeugo: I am asking you. And don't tell me to ask another or a dog will lick your eyes this morning. When did you people learn to fling words in my face?

In this conversation between Ezeugo and Oduche, one can see that Oduche is being uncooperative. His response to Ezeugo's question violates the first maxim of quantity as it is not as informative as Ezeugo requires.

IV: Text taken from Hubbard (2000:254-255)
(A and B have been talking about soccer)
A: What are you doing on Sunday?
B: Man, I am supposed to be doing a few jobs around the house.
A: Couldn't you come with us to the match?
B: I am afraid that if I don't paint the bedrooms this Sunday, Nonhlanhlan is going to murder me.
A: Okay.

From speaker B's first response to A's questions, one can observe a perfect example of the maxims of quantity. However, from the second response – *I am afraid that if I don't paint the bedrooms this Sunday, Nonhlanhlan is going to murder me* – one can observe a violation of the maxim of quantity.

The maxim of Relevance

- Make your contributions relevant.

V: Text taken from *The Lion and The Jewel* (Soyinka 1963:7)

Sidi: But my bride price must be first paid. Sidi will not make herself a cheap bowl for the village spit.
Lakunle: On my head let fall their scorn.
Sidi: They will say I was no virgin
Lakunle: A savage custom, barbaric, outdated, rejected, denounced, <u>accursed</u> <u>excommunicated</u>, archaic, degrading, retrogressive, <u>remarkable</u>, <u>unpalatable</u>.
Sidi: Is the bag empty? Why did you stop?

The underlined words in Lakunle's response violate the maxim of relevance. Although, some of the terms are derogatory, they are not relevant for describing concepts like customs. This is even more apparent from the fact that Lakunle appears to be contradicting himself. For example; is Sidi's custom remarkably unpalatable or unpalatably remarkable?

The maxim of Manner

Be perspicuous, and specifically:

- Avoid obscurity
- Avoid ambiguity
- Be brief
- Be orderly

VI: Text taken from *The Lion and The Jewel* Soyinka (1963:6)

Sidi: If the snail finds splinters in his shell, he changes house.
Why do you stay?
Lakunle: Faith, because I have faith. Oh Sidi, vow to me your own undying love. And I will scorn the jibes of these bush minds who know no better. Swear, Sidi. Swear you will be my wife and I will stand against earth, heaven and the nine hells...

The above example shows a clear violation of the maxim of manner. Lakunle in his response to Sidi's question violates the third maxim of manner i.e. be brief.

VII
Ali: Will you come to the hostel with me
Simbi: I have to go and pick up groceries at the market

From example (VII), one can observe that Simbi does not provide a direct answer to Ali's question. Instead, she makes an allusion to the fact that she would not be available to accompany Ali. This type of response violates the first maxim of manner – avoid obscurity.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Examine the various illustrations in this unit, are you able to use them to explain the cooperative principle and the maxims of conversation? If not, you should study the unit again to understand the illustrations.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The success of a conversation depends upon the various speakers' approach to the interaction. Speakers shape their utterances to be understood by hearers. The Cooperative Principle assumes that interactants cooperate in the conversation by contributing to the ongoing speech event. This is done through four basic principles of conversation namely: the Maxim of Quality,the Maxim of Quantity, the Maxim of Relevance, and the Maxim of Manner.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you learnt about the cooperative principle which says that you should make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. It is possible to break the maxims of conversation discussed above. In the next unit, which is a continuation of this, you will learn among other things, how the maxims are being broken in conversation.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Explain in not more than three pages, the cooperative principle. Discuss with illustrations, the four maxims of conversation. You discussion must not be more than two and a half pages.

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UNIT 3 THE COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE II

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is a continuation of what you learnt in unit 2. You will learn more about the cooperative principle. I shall discuss the following topics in this unit: breaking the maxims of conversation, the relevance of the cooperative principle and some criticisms of the principle.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are that you should be able to explain and discuss the following:

- breaking the maxims of conversation
- relevance of the cooperative principle
- criticisms of the cooperative principle

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1. Breaking the maxims of conversation

Grice (1975) identifies four ways through which the maxims of conversation might be broken. These ways include;

- Flouting a maxim
- Violating a maxim
- Opting out of a maxim
- Clashes with other maxims

Violating a Maxim
A speaker may violate a maxim by quietly or modestly saying something that is misleading or false. For example; when people are asked the question *how are you?* The default response is *I am fine, thank you.* This response may be true sometimes, but even when the hearer is hungry, or tired the response usually remains the same. Thus, saying *I am fine* when one is not, violates the first maxim of Quality.

Opting out of a Maxim
A participant in a discourse may opt out of the Cooperative Principle or one of the maxims of conversation by indicating that he/she no longer wishes to cooperate in the way the maxims require. For example, in response to a question, a participant might say *my lips are sealed*, or *that is confidential.* Responses like these indicate that the participant is unwilling to give the required information, and is thus opting out of the maxim of Quantity.

Clash with other Maxims
A third way in which Grice's maxims of conversation can be broken is when there is a clash between the maxims. For example, a person may be unable to make his/her contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of exchange (the first maxim of Quantity) without saying something for which he/she has lacks adequate evidence (the second maxim of quality).

Flouting a Maxim
An individual may flout a maxim by deliberately refusing to fulfill its conditions. Flouting is based on the following assumptions.

- A speaker is not trying to mislead (i.e. violating a maxim) the hearer.
- He/she is not opting out of the cooperative principle or its maxims.
- He/she is able to fulfil the conditions without clashing with other maxims.

Flouting a maxim in order to exploit it
Apart from these assumptions, flouting has also been described as the speaker's conscious attempt to bring something to the notice of the hearer. Flouting in this instance is referred to as ***exploitation***. Unlike someone who is simply violating a maxim, someone who is exploiting a maxim expects the listener to notice. For example, a speaker may flout the first Maxim of Quality to point out a false assumption. The conversation below illustrates the concept of maxim exploitation.

Esosa: Mummy, if I leave stones in the hearth they will soften, won't they?

Ekiomado: Uh-huh! And if you bleach the coals, they will become white.

3.2. Relevance of the Cooperative Principle

The cooperative principle has been described as the theoretical framework for effective communication. Osisanwo (2008:96) states that “the cooperative principle and the maxims of conversation clearly spell out how conversations can run smoothly.” Besides creating guidelines for conversation, how relevant is this principle to the theory of language?

> The central importance of the cooperative principle is that it elaborates a general theory of meaning and comprehension through successful and efficient exchange of information. Thus, hearers assume that the maxims of Quality, Quantity, Relevance and Manner are being observed in a conversation, or that there is a good reason why some particular maxim has been broken. (Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet 2000:241-242)

The cooperative principle is indeed relevant to the theory of language, but as suggested in the last line of the quotation above there may be instances where this principle and its maxims are totally ignored. Are such instances of language use meaningless? Or is communication in such situations less effective than situations where the cooperative principle is strictly followed? According to Grice (1975:45) “the specific expectations or presumptions connected with at least some of these maxims have their analogues in the spheres of transaction that are not talk exchanges.” Thus, strict adherence to the cooperative principle does not necessarily translate into greater meaningfulness.

3.3. Criticisms of the Cooperative Principle

Criticisms of the co-operative principle can be grouped into three main issues: interpretation, practicability and universal applicability.

Firstly, Grice’s cooperative principle has been described as a culture specific. The argument is that cooperative conversation, like other social behaviours, is culturally determined. Therefore, the Cooperative Principle cannot be universally applied due to cultural differences. Keenan (1976, cited in Leech, 1983) claims that the Malagasy for example, follow a completely opposite Cooperative Principle in order to achieve conversational cooperation. In their culture, speakers are reluctant to share information and flout the Maxim of Quantity by avoiding direct questions and replying in incomplete answers. This is because having information is a form of prestige. However, others like Harnish (1976:340) have argued that Malagasy can be viewed as a less cooperative communication system since the Malagasy speakers value the prestige of information ownership rather than information sharing.

Similarly, Levinson (1983:102) remarks that the Gricean standards for conversation are utopian. “To this view of communication there is an immediate objection: the view may describe a philosopher’s paradise, but no one actually speaks like that the whole time!”

Secondly, critics argue that the Cooperative Principle is unrealistic because of the constraints arising from strict adherence to some of the maxims of conversation. An example of these constraints is the maxim of quality which eliminates the possibility of uncertainty. Now, if people are always sure of the things they, why do languages have words that indicate uncertainty (e.g. maybe, perhaps etc.). Another example is the maxim of quantity which assumes that all conversations are informative. Larkin and O'Malley (1973, cited in Leech, 1983) claim that conversational constraints such as those of the Cooperative Principle do not work because the majority of declarative sentences do not have an information-bearing function. Take for example the following English sentence.

War is war.

One cannot help but wonder about the information contained in this statement. Also, certain kinds of conversation are used primarily for entertainment rather than information. For instance, comedy and other humorous forms of conversation typically do not serve informative purposes.

Lastly, the cooperative principle as explicated in the Maxims of Conversation can easily be misinterpreted as a guideline for etiquette, instructing speakers on how to be moral, polite communicators. The reason for this wrong interpretation is the manner in which the maxims are written. For example, each of the maxims is phrased as an instruction to do this/that, or as an injunction to be this/that. However, Grice's Maxims, despite their wording, are merely descriptions of the common traits of communication. Saeed (2009:213) explains that Grice's maxims are not linguistic rules like phonological or morphological rules which people have to obey to speak a language.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Can you explain how the maxims of conversation could be broken? If not, you should study this unit again and make sure you are able to give illustrations on how they could be broken.

4.0 CONCLUSION

You have studied four ways through which the maxims of conversation might be broken. The four ways discussed are flouting a maxim, violating a maxim, opting out of a maxim and clashing with other maxims. We also looked at criticisms of the co-operative principle which are grouped under these three headings: interpretation, practicability and universal applicability. However, you learnt that the principle is relevant to the theory of language. The principle was considered important to the theory of language because of its comprehensive view of meaning and comprehension.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit concluded our discussion on the cooperative principle. In this concluding part you learnt that the central importance of the cooperative principle is that it elaborates a general theory of meaning and comprehension through successful and efficient exchange of information.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Explain with ample examples how the maxims of conversation might be broken. What are the criticisms of the cooperative principle? Discuss them in not more than three pages.

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UNIT 4 KNOWLEDGE AS CONTEXT

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics is concerned with how utterances which have meanings are understood or interpreted in context of situation and how context influences the way people understand and interpret utterances. In this unit, you will learn that the knowledge we have can serve as the context to interpret utterances and discourse.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After you have read and studied this unit, you should be able to:

- understand and discuss knowledge and some types of knowledge that relevant to our study, such as linguistic knowledge, discourse knowledge, speech act knowledge, etc.,
- define and explain context and the various types of context like physical context, epistemic context, social context, etc.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3. 1. Knowledge

Knowledge is the understanding of information about a subject which has been obtained by experience or study, or which is either in a person's mind or possessed by people generally. Some types of knowledge that are relevant to this study are:

- **Linguistic Knowledge**: This is the knowledge about the rules and items of one or more languages at the phonological, lexical and morphosyntactic levels. This knowledge, which provides the tools by means of which speech acts are performed and internally modified, includes a specification of the communicative potential (including connotative and denotative meaning) of elements and structures.

- **Speech Act Knowledge**: Knowledge about what are possible verbal acts within a given socio-cultural community and its institutions, and what their constituting conditions are.
- **Discourse Knowledge**: Knowledge about the sequential and interactional characteristics of speech acts. This type of declarative knowledge comprises knowledge of how to establish coherence in discourse, including knowledge of what is possible second pair part in an adjacency pair.
- **Socio-cultural Knowledge**: Knowledge about social values, norms, institutions, possible socially relevant relations between individuals, patterns of behaviour in a given society.
- **Context Knowledge**: Knowledge about which of the features present in a given communicative situation are relevant as context-determining factors. These are the factors that determine what possible actions are in a given context and how actions are to be interpreted.
- **Knowledge of the World**: Knowledge about facts, objects, relations, etc. in the world.

3. 2. Context

Matthew (2007) describes context as any relevant features of a setting in which a form appears or might appear. In philosophy, a collection of views which describes and emphasizes the context in which an action, utterance, or expression occurs is referred to as contexualism. It argues that, in some important respect, the action, utterance, or expression can only be understood relative to that context. The context principle in the philosophy of language is a form of semantic holism holding that a philosopher should *'never ... ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition".*

The term context refers to the situation in which something happens and that helps you to understand it. Context is one of the aspects of the study of pragmatics. It has very significant role to play in understanding and interpreting the meaning of language. Very often we have to depend on context in understanding or interpreting utterances in communication. Let us look at this Igbo sentence.

> *Ana m aga akwuụ́kwọ́ echi maka na anyi nwere uleechi*
> "I am going to school tomorrow because we have an examination tomorrow".

To properly understand this utterance in this sentence, we have to properly understand the context in which it is uttered. This is because the context will help us to know who made the utterance, to whom and when. If the utterance is made by a student, it means that he will be writing an examination tomorrow, whereas, if it is made by a lecturer, it then means that he will be examining or supervising some students who will be writing an examination tomorrow.

3. 2. 1. Types of Context

- **Physical Context**: We can think of this in terms of where the conversation is taking place, what objects are present, what actions are occurring and so forth.
- **Epistemic Context**: The epistemic context refers to what speakers know about the world. For example, what background knowledge is shared by the speakers is crucially part of one's epistemic knowledge when one has a conversation with someone else?
- **Linguistic Context**: The linguistic context refers to what has been said already in the utterance. For instance, '*Lydia*' is the antecedent of 'she' in the example below and therefore serves as its linguistic context.

  Lydia is a God fearing lady. She is one of the leaders in the welfare unit of our fellowship.

- **Social Context**: The social context refers to the social relationship among speakers and hearers.

Scenario

Two people came into a library and were talking really loud. They sat at your table and continued their chatting. You looked up at them and said:

Excuse me, could you please speak up a bit more?

What contributes to our understanding of why the literal meaning of the utterance above (i.e. please speak up) departs so much from its intended meaning (i.e. shut up!)? You can consider some of the contextual properties of the utterance:

Physical: the conversation occurs in a library
Epistemic: libraries are quiet places
Linguistic: sarcastic tone of voice (intonation cues are linguistic)
Social context: you have the right to ask someone to be quiet in a place where people are supposed to be quiet, especially if their rule-breaking is injurious to the needs of others, which overrides the social norm of not giving orders to total strangers.

Contextual knowledge allows for the hearer to comprehend that the intended meaning is distinct from the literal meaning.
Saeed (2009) distinguishes between three sources for the knowledge a speaker has to estimate:

- that computable from the physical context.
- that available from what has already been said
- that available from background or common knowledge.

Let us use the knowledge gained from filling the deictic expression as in the example given below in discussing the first.

It is too hot here in the sun, let's take our drinks into the shade over there.

In the above utterance, the adverbs ***here*** and ***there*** pick out places according to their proximity to the location of the speaker. We can say so because if the speaker moves, the interpretation of the adverbs will change definitely. This is because when the speaker and the person he/she is speaking to move to the shade, they can then call the shade where they have moved to "*here*" and their original place where they are coming from '*there*'. That is their original place where they were before which is under the sun, they can then call that original place "there". The speaker can then say:

I'm glad we moved here, I was melting over there.

In effect in discussing knowledge computable from the physical context, we can make use of the knowledge gained from filling in the deictic expression as we have seen in the sentences or the utterances recorded above for that physical knowledge we can describe who is speaking to whom, the time and the location of the conversation.

The talk itself is regarded as a kind of context. This is the knowledge available from what has already been said. An example of this type of context is the interpretation of sentence fragments. For instance, in isolation fragments like ***'Chinwe did"*** or ***"Me too"*** cannot be interpreted. However, in the right conversational context, they can be meaningful as we have below.

Speaker A. Who moved these books?
Speaker B. Chinwe did.

Speaker A: I am going to Enugu with Mummy.
Spesker B: Me too.

The participants in this conversation will not have any difficulty in interpreting ***"Chinwe did"*** as ***"Chinwe moved these books"*** or ***"Me too"*** as meaning ***"I am going to Enugu with mummy"***. We can assert that the preceding discourse licenses these interpretations.

The topic of a discourse can also serve as a context itself. This topic is a form of knowledge which influences the way people interpret the meaning of what is subsequently heard by them. Consider these passages (from Saeed 2009).

A prisoner plans his escape

Rocky slowly got up from the mat, planning his escape. He hesitated a moment and thought. Things were not going well. What bothered him was being held, especially since the charge against him had been weak. He considered his present situation. The lock that held him was strong, but he thought he could break it.

A wrestler in a tight corner

Rocky slowly got up from the mat, planning his escape. He hesitated a moment and thought. Things were not going well. What bothered him was being held, especially since the charge against him had been weak. He considered his present situation. The lock that held him was strong, but he thought he could break it.

The title of the first passage informs the interpretation of Rocky as a prisoner while that of the second passage makes Rocky a wrestler.

Background knowledge is also regarded as a kind of context. This is the knowledge a speaker calculates that a hearer would have before which may be independent of a particular conversation by virtue of membership in a community. Consider this:

Speaker A: I have a headache.
Speaker B: Let me get you a drug.

The background knowledge speaker (b) has about people having a headache has led to the offer of a drug.

Background knowledge can also make indirect refusal or acceptance understandable. Consider this:

Speaker A: Will you follow me to the party at 7.00pm?
Speaker B: I don't go out at night.

We can differentiate between *communal common ground* and *personal common ground.* The former is the knowledge shared by co-members of communities while the latter is the knowledge two people share from their past experience of each other. This distinction follows from Stalnaker's (1974) use of the term **common ground** for the presupposition in a discourse. One importance of background knowledge is that it helps to remove ambiguity engendered by prepositional phrases between two speakers as we have below:

Speaker A: Chukwuma spanked the cat.
Speaker B: Chukwuma spanked the cat with the cane.

The ambiguity in speaker B is in whether Chukwuma or the cat has the stick. But, speakers' background knowledge about people and cat in relation to stick resolves the ambiguity because of the background knowledge of speakers that the verb 'spank' requires a human subject.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

From the discussion in this unit, you should be able to explain these statements:

It is too hot here in the sun, let's take our drinks into the shade over there.
Chukwuma spanked the cat with the cane.

If not, you need to study this unit again and familiarize yourself with what the concepts I discuss in it.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Pragmatics is concerned with how utterances which have meanings are understood or interpreted in context of situation and how context influences the way people understand and interpret utterances. Our knowledge of situations and events is always employed in communication. You should be aware of this in your study of Pragmatics.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you learnt that knowledge is the understanding of information about a subject which has been obtained by experience or study. Some of the ways in doing this is to understand the rules and items of one or more languages at the phonological, lexical and morphosyntactic levels which is reffered to as linguistic knowledege, knowledge about social values, norms, institutions, possible socially relevant relations between individuals, patterns of behaviour in a given society and knowledge about which of the features present in a given communicative situation are relevant as context-determining factors. You also learnt that context refers to the situation in which something happens and that helps you to understand it. Following Saeed (2009), I discussed sources for the knowledge a speaker has to estimate, these are the knowledge computable from the physical context, that available from what has already been said and that available from background or common knowledge.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

With adequate illustrations, discuss how the knowledge we have can be the context to determine the interptretation we give to utterances. Your discussion and illustrations must not more that three (3) pages.

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MODULE 5 FORMAL SEMANTICS

The general aim of this module is to introduce you to some aspects of formal semantics. In unit 1, I shall discuss the nature of the relationship between concepts and general thought on one hand and that of thought and reality on the other. Concepts are the sense of words. When mental images which are abstract elements about a word are lexicalised, they become concepts (Saeed 2003). The nature of the relationship between concept and general thinking and reasoning has been an issue of controversy among scholars. You will learn about the two opposing views of linguistic relativity and language of thought.in the unit.

In second unit, I shall discuss Componential Analysis (CA), the idea which is based on the presumption that the meaning of a word is composed of semantic components. As a result, the essential features that form the meaning are elementary units in semantic level. In componential analysis, the meaning of a word is seen in terms of a number of components of meaning (semantic components). By this approach, a lexical word can be broken down into its "ultimate contrastive elements so that the lexical item in question can be distinguished from other lexical items in the same language". In other words, word meaning were broken down into semantic primitives or semantic features and their specifications.

Unit 3 is the last unit in this module. In this unit, which is titled **Translating English into a logical language,** I shall discuss how to translate English into a logical language, simple statements in predicate logic and qunatifiers in predicate logic. The arrangement of the module is stated below:

Unit 1: Words, Concepts and Thinking
Unit 2: Componential Analysis
Unit 3: Translating English into a Logical Metalanguage

UNIT 1 WORDS, CONCEPTS AND THINKING

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit. I discuss the nature of the relationship between concepts and general thought on one hand and that of thought and reality on the other. The discussion is based on the works of Saeed (2003 &2009), Kempson (1977) among others. Two major views exist with regards to the relationship between concepts and thought. You will learn about them in this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of your study of this unit, you are expected to be able to discuss the relationship between

- concepts and general thought
- thought and reality

Apart form the above, you should be able to explain the two major views with regard to the relationship between concepts and thought.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Concept and Thought

Concepts are the sense of words. When mental images which are abstract elements about a word are lexicalised, they become concepts (Saeed 2003). These elements could be non-visual (abstract) features. For instance the variable x could be regarded as a man on the following conditions:

> x is a man only and only if Q
> Where Q is a list of attributes like
> x is human
> x is adult
> x is male etc.

However, not all concepts are words since some concepts are described by phrases as in the example below where the italicised part is a phrase.

> On the shopping channel, I saw *a tool for compacting dead leaves into garden statuary*.

The nature of the relationship between concept and general thinking and reasoning has been an issue of controversy among scholars. Consequently, two opposing views exists which are:

- Linguistic Relativity and
- Language of Thought

3.1.1. Linguistic Relativity

Linguistic relativity, according to Saeed (2003: 41), is associated to Sapir (1949) and Whorf (1956). It is an idea that spread as a result of the common experience of people when dealing with different languages such as the difficulty of translating from one language to another. One usually encounters situations where a word in the source language does not have equivalence in the target language. For instance, Igbo does not have the word equivalent of such words as *aunty*, *cousin*, *nephew*, and *niece* etc as in English. Rather, they are expressed as a single lexical item- **nwanne** 'brother/sister'. It is only when one wants to specify the exact nature of the relationship that it could be done descriptively. The reason is that the Igbo see any of their blood relations as their brother/sister not minding the distance or closeness. Such disparities are found in other languages. According to Seed (2003:43), it is ideas such as this that led to the development of this hypothesis by scholars such as Boas (1966), Sapir (1949) and Whorf (1956).

Linguistic relativity developed from the idea of Franz Boaz who observed such language peculiarities as illustrated above as a result of which he described language as a mirror of thought. It developed further to the idea that people's thought are determined by the categories available to them in their language. He points out that what appears as a simple item in one language may be characterised by series of distinct phonetic groups. Giving example in Dakota language, he observes that the terms below were derived from a singular term, **xtaka** ‘to grip’

naxt’ka	to kick	
paxt’ka	to bind in bundles	
yaxta’ka	to bite	
ic’a’xtaka	to be near to	
boxta’ka	to pound	(Boaz 1966:22 in Saeed 2003:41)

The effect of this on the speakers was largely unconscious because the use of language is largely an automatic process which one do not normally pause to reflect on.

This reflection opened the debate as to what extent does the particular language we speak determine the way we think about the world. On this, Sapir proposed that the particular language we speak conditions our conceptualisation of the world. In other words, lexicalised concepts impose restriction on the possible ways of thinking. Sapir (1949) in Saeed (2003:42) observes as follows: “...the real world is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habit of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered representing the same social reality.” In his view, language is a guide to social reality. It is used to represent social reality. Therefore, knowing a language leads one to understand the world view of a group of people. In addition, language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.

Whorf, on the other hand, proposed that the way we think about the world is determined by our own culture and linguistic background. He notes that...

> we cut nature up, organise into concepts and ascribe significance as we do largely because we are parties to an agreement to organise it in this way . . . an agreement that holds through ones speech community and is codified in the patterns of language. (Whorf 1956:213-214 in Saeed 2003:41)

To justify this, he asserts that speech communities disintegrate nature, organise them into concepts and ascribe it significance as unconsciously agreed. Whenever one thinks of these concepts, he is limited to the significance of those concepts in his language. His observation is not restricted to word meaning but meanings derived from other aspects of grammar such as tense and aspect in verbs, notions of numbers and space in nouns.

These ideas could be exemplified with the following illustration from Igbo and Yoruba. In Igbo, *mmádụ̀* ‘human being’ is derived from two words as in

mmá ‘beauty’ + ńdụ̀ ‘life’ → mmádụ̀

After the elision of the homorganic nasal, it becomes *mmádụ̀*. The Igbo man sees human being as the beauty of life and therefore takes everything about it sacred. So each time the concept is mentioned, it carries with it all these understanding or thought. In addition, the Igbo do not have concepts for representing family relations such as *cousins, nephew, nieces* etc., as previously mentioned, but just ***nwáńnē*** 'brother/sister' ***Nwáńnē*** is also derived from two words as in

nwá 'child' + ńnē 'mother' → nwáńnē 'child of my mother'

This implies that the Igbo see everyone related to them no matter the distance as the *'child of their mother'*, in other words, they share a common ancestor. Concepts such as nephew, cousin, niece etc seems to constitute a barrier to this understanding.

In the Yoruba culture, ***Èṣù*** is an angel that assists God as a messanger to dicipline people. However, the Christian understanding of it differs. The Christians concept of ***Èṣù*** is the devil that brings all sorts of evil and calamity to the people. This is not the understanding in the Yoruba traditional religion.

3. 1. 2. Implications and criticisms

The implication of these claims is that it will be hard to develop a universal semantic theory. It shows that our own language predisposes us to see both reality and other languages through our own filter. It further reveals that it is always difficult to translate from one language to another.

Notwithstanding the reasons behind this view, it has been criticised by some linguists and those in cognitive science for the following reasons:

- They claim that there is no strict identification of language and thought. The reason is that there has been evidence of thinking without language as was discovered in human babies and primates such as monkeys, chimpanzees and gorillas. These are typical examples of creatures without language.
- Secondly, there are artists and scientists who claim that their ideas sometimes come from non linguistic images.
- Lastly, there has been evidence of visual thinking from subjects manipulating images mentally by rotating, scanning, zooming in and out and exhibiting a variety of mental processes which do not seem to involve language.

3. 1. 3. Language of thought

This view claims that though language and thought are related, they involve distinct levels of representation. The evidence mostly came from mental processes not involving language often used in cognitive processes which is part of the criticisms against linguistic relativity. This view maintains that cognitive processes do not employ language such as English, Arabic, Igbo or Yoruba but the use of a special computational system. The basic idea is that memory and processes such as reasoning seem to make use of a kind of propositional representation that does not have surface syntax of a spoken language such as those aforementioned.

The second argument for language of thought is that language underspecifies meaning. This is indirectly supported by research in semantics and pragmatics which reveals that meaning is richer than language in both ends. Speakers often imply rather than state explicitly what they mean while hearers fill out their own version of the intended meaning from the language presented to them. The dialogue below could be used to illustrate this.

(I) Speaker A: Come here.
Speaker B: (goes closer holding a paper) you called me.
Speaker A: (opens his hands) May I?
Speaker B: (hands over the paper to him). Have it, Dad.

(II) Speaker A: Shall we go and get some ice cream?
Speaker B: I'm on a diet.

In (I), the dialogue reveals that speaker A did not complete the two sentences he made but speaker B filled in the intended meaning. Speaker A assumed that speaker B has the knowledge of where speaker B is to come i.e. here in the first line. In the second line, speaker A also assumed that speaker B undertsood what *May I* implies of which speaker B filled in the intended meaning. In (II) Speaker A posed a question of which speaker B replies. Here speaker A might reasonably infer that speaker B's reply is a refusal or that speaker B's reply implies 'No'. This idea suggests that speakers are putting their thoughts into languages i.e. translating their thought into language rather than voicing their thought directly. It is used to support the idea that we think in a language of thought called **mentalese**. We now translate from **mentalese** to our own language when we want to speak. It is assumed based on this analogy that **mentalese** is a universal language of thought just like universal grammar.

3. 2. Thought and Reality

The nature of the relationship between thought and reality as viewed by scholars is controversial due to its many approaches. The abstract nature of the relationship attracts more of philosophers and psychologists to the field. This relationship pose questions such as: Does reality exist independently of the human mind? Can we perceive the world as it really is? etc. As a result, Saeed (2003: 44) notes that most linguists agree that only the language is the proper object of studying issues of mental representation (thought) and the existence of reality. However, discussion of the reality of the world and the nature of our mental representation should be left to other disciplines such as philosophy and psychology while effort is concentrated on the meaning relations between expressions within a language or compare meanings across language. This position has led to interests in describing semantic relations such as ambiguity, synonymy, contradiction, antonymy etc. In other words, linguists should be concerned on how the meaning of ***cat*** is related to words such as ***animal*** than to discuss what the mental concept of cat looks like or how it relates to the real cat running in the world. In addition, Twaddel (1935:57) in Hyman (1975:61) opposes the psychological analysis of linguistic items. According to him, we have no right to guess about the linguistic workings of an inaccessible mind because such linguistic processes are unobservable. Secondly, we can secure no advantage from such guesses.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Can you explain why languages like Igbo and Yoruba do have have concepts like the English Iuncle, nephew, aunty, cousin, etc,. If you can't, you should study this unit again for you to have a proper understanding of the issues I discussed in it.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The nature of the relationship between concept and general thinking and reasoning has been discussed in linguistic relativity and language of thought. Linguistic relativity developed from the idea of Franz Boaz who observed that language peculiarities are a mirror of thought, people's thought are determined by the categories available to them in their language. Language of thought claims that though language and thought are related, they involve distinct levels of representation. This view maintains that cognitive processes do not employ language such as English, Arabic, Igbo or Yoruba but the use of a special computational system. The basic idea is that memory and processes such as reasoning seem to make use of a kind of propositional representation that does not have surface syntax of a spoken language

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you learnt about the nature of the relationship of concept and thought and that of thought and reality. You came across the two major views advanced for concept and thought. These are linguistic relativity and the language of thought. Linguistic relativity holds that thought or conceptualisation of the world is conditioned by ones linguistic and cultural background. On the relationship of thought and reality, scholars are of the view that it is too abstract to be included in the scope of linguistic analysis and therefore, should be left to other disciplines. It is concluded here that each of the views advanced for the nature of these relationships is justified based on the evidence advanced for it.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the nature of the relationship between concepts and general thought on one hand and that of thought and reality on the other. Your discussion should not exceed four (4) pages.

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UNIT 2 COMPONENTIAL ANALYSIS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, I shall discuss Componential Analysis (CA), the idea which is based on the presumption that the meaning of a word is composed of semantic components. You will learn about rules of notation in CA, the linguistic procedures employed in CA such as naming, paraphrasing, defining and classifying, its contributions and limitations to the study of meaning.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the study is for you to fully understand how componential analysis works after you have studied this unit. Apart from this, you are also expected to:

- explain its contibutions to the study of meaning
- discuss its shortcomings or limitations

3.0 MAIN CONTENT: Componential Analysis

3. 1. Definition and History

The idea of Componential Analysis (CA) is based on the presumption that the meaning of a word is composed of semantic components. As a result, the essential features that form the meaning are elementary units in semantic level. Atchison (2003) opines that by componential analysis, it is possible to state the smallest indivisible units of lexis or minimal components. Componential analysis is particularly applicable to distinguishing the meanings of lexemes that are semantically related or in the same semantic domain. It is often seen as a process of breaking down the sense of a word into its minimal distinctive features; that is, into components which contrast with other components. Componential analysis refers to the description of the meaning of words through structural sets of semantic features, which are given as “present” or “absent” or indifferent with reference to feature. To describe the presence and absence of a feature, binary rules are used. According to Saeed (2009) the symbol (+) means that the feature is present while the symbol (-) means that the feature is absent.

Jackson (1996) states that structural semantics and componential analysis were patterned on the phonological methods of the Prague school which described sounds by determining the presence and absence of features. As a result, Saeed (2009) asserts that the method thus departs from the principle of compositionality.

In componential analysis, the meaning of a word is seen in terms of a number of components of meaning (semantic components). By this approach, a lexical word can be broken down into its “ultimate contrastive elements so that the lexical item in question can be distinguished from other lexical items in the same language”. In other words, word meaning were broken down into semantic primitives or semantic features and their specifications.

Componential analysis according to Udofot (1998) developed from the technique devised by American anthropologists and used to account for kinship terms and for comparing the vocabularies from different languages and cultures in the 1950s. Kinship terms are conventionality described in relation to a given person, technically termed by the Latin equivalent of the pronoun I: “ego”.There are some components needed to analyze the terms; they are gender and generation. For examples, “brother” and “sister” are the same generation while “father” and “mother” are one generation above (ascending generation) and ‘son” and ‘daughter” are one generation below (descending generation). We therefore, need two semantic components to distinguish the generation: ASCENDING and DESCENDING. Gender and generation are not sufficient in distinguishing the meanings, so we need another component to contrast, LINEAL (coming directly from a later generation of the same family as somebody) is proposed.

Below is the matrix which represents unique analysis of each term in the kinship system as in Jackson (1996).

A

Kinship Terms	[Male]	[Ascend]	[Descend]	[Lineal]
Father	+	+	-	+
Mother	-	+	-	+
Uncle	+	+	-	-
Aunt	-	+	-	+
Brother	+	-	-	+
Sister	-	-	-	+
Son	+	-	+	+
Daughter	-	-	+	+
Nephew	+	-	+	-
Cousin	+ / -	-	-	-

Table 1: The matrix of kinship terms (Jackson 1996)

Udofot (1998) observes that the analysis of meaning of a word in terms of its components is regarded as universal because it has to do with what obtains in all languages. For example, in the following groups:

B.	Man	Woman	Child
	Ram	Ewe	Lamb
	Bull	Cow	Calf

we observe that all the terms have sense relations which unite them. They are in paradigmatic as well as syntagmatic relationship. "Bull" and "Ram" have something in common which "Cow", "Ewe" and "Woman" do not have. The same holds for "Calf" "Child" and "Ram". Udofot points out that what the groups have in common constitute a sense component. A sense component can be defined as "an irreducible feature in terms of which the sense of lexical items can be analysed e.g. "girl" can be analyzed into the components (HUMAN, FEMALE, CHILD)", following this line of analysis, the meaning of "woman" can be seen in terms of the components (HUMAN, ADULT, FEMALE).

Sense components are often seen in binary contrasts in componential analysis by assigning the values + (plus) or – (minus) to the component. This is in accordance with Saeed (2009) mentioned above. The presence of a particular sense component often excludes the presence of the other. In this manner, the difference between "woman" and "girl" can be expressed in terms of the sense component (+ ADULT) or (- ADULT) whereas the difference between man/woman, ram/ewe, bull/cow can be expressed as (+ MALE) and (+ FEMALE).

As observed earlier, the idea that meaning can be handled in terms of sense components was first illustrated with the analysis of kinship terms. In this connection, Lounsbury

(1956: 158) in Udofot (1998) observes that in Spanish, sex is clearly marked with -*o* for Male and -*a* for Female as in these instances:

C.	tio:	Uncle	tia:	Aunt
	Hijo:	Son	hija:	Daughter
	Abuelo:	Grandfather	abuela:	Grandmother
	Hermano:	Brother	hermana:	Sister

Though, English has no markers of sex, with the exception of some feminine forms such as “baroness”, “hostess”, “niece” and “aunt”, semantics still attempts a classification with the use of sense components as can be seen in the following instances.

D.	Brother	Sister
	+HUMAN	+HUMAN
	+MALE	-MALE
	+SAME PARENTS	+SAME PARENTS

It is worthy of note that even though the words for ‘brother” and “sister” are different in Spanish the same sense components that describe these relationships in English can be used in Spanish, and they would be no doubt be comprehended as referring to similar kinship terms.

Udofot (1998) also asserts that analysis by components can equally be applied conveniently to many vocabulary items outside kinship and sex of living creatures. This can be observed in the words “come” and “go”, “take” and “bring” which can be analyzed in the following ways:

E.	Come	Go
	+MOVEMENT	+MOVEMENT
	+SPEAKER’S DIRECTION	-SPEAKER’S DIRECTION

F.	Take	Bring
	+GET	+GET
	+SPEAKER	-SPEAKER

However, this analysis is contrary to Palmer (1981) who says that componential analysis is applicable to kinship terms and sex since all societies distinguish between male and female and thus, (+ MALE) and (+ FEMALE) are universal components but that words such as “come” and “go” as well as “take” and “bring” cannot be so analyzed because it would be different to find names for the sense components that distinguish them in terms of “features that have any simple kind of physical reality”. In spite of this argument put forward by Palmer, Udofot (1998) insists that the analysis above shows that sense components like DIRECTION, MOVEMENT, POSSESSION and so on, have reality in almost every culture and they can be presented in ways that distinguish words from others as shown in (E and F) above following the rules of notation of componential analysis.

3. 2 Rules of Notation of Componential Analysis

In componential analysis, certain conventions govern the use of semantic features in expressing, or in the expression of the meaning of lexical items. For instance, capital letters are used for the contrastive semantic features, for example (+MALE). As a result, the appropriate semantic relations for the expression of the meaning of "man" would be (+HUMAN, +ADULT, +MALE) and not "human, adult, male". Nevertheless, there is no specific order in which these semantic features may occur. The implication of this is that the meaning of "boy" would be expressed thus: (+HUMAN, -ADULT, +MALE). Also, it can be equally expressed thus: (+MALE, +HUMAN, -ADULT). This implies that the manner or the order in which the semantic features arranged does not matter at all as long as the features are appropriately or adequately specified. That is, the most essential thing that matter is that all the contrastive semantic features for the expression of the meaning of the word or the lexical item have to be present.

The presence of two contrasting semantic features which express the meaning of the same word or the same lexical item is forbidden. For instance, in giving the definition or the meaning of "woman", the features (+HUMAN, +FEMALE, -MALE, +ADULT) are not acceptable. This is because any word or lexical item which has the referent (+MALE) is automatically (-FEMALE) and vice versa. In the same vein, redundant features are not acceptable when specifying the semantic features of a word or a lexical item. For instance, in giving the definitions or the meanings of the terms "man" or "woman" when the feature (+HUMAN) is already specified, the feature (+ANIMATE) is definitely redundant if it is equally specified. This is because every human being is animate.

3. 3. Linguistic Bases for Componential Analysis

According to Nida (1975), the actual linguistic procedures employed in componential analysis consist of four types. These are naming, paraphrasing, defining and classifying.

Naming

The process of naming is in certain respects similar to reference, even though the perspective is somewhat different. Reference is usually described as the relation established between linear unit and a referent, while naming is the specific act of designating a referent.

Paraphrasing

It is possible to spell out the distinctive features of any semantic unit by employing certain types of paraphrase, for instance, the term ‘uncle’ can be paraphrased into “my father’s brother or my mother’s brother”.

Defining

The process of defining would seem to be simply another form of paraphrase. However, defining is a highly specialized form of paraphrase used in actual language situations. Defining consists essentially in combining all the various specific paraphrases into a single statement based on the diagnostic components of the particular meaning in question. For instance, the term “uncle” may be defined as “the brother of one’s father or mother or the husband of one’s aunt”

Classifying

Classifying involves a triple procedure. These include:

- Lumping together those units which have certain features in common.
- Separating out those units which are distinct from one another, and
- Determining the basis for such groupings.

3. 4. Evaluation of Componential Analysis

3. 4. 1. Contributions to the Study of Meaning

It is observable that the use of semantic features in expressing the meaning of words or lexical items aids in bringing out the ways in which words are related. For instance, words that are synonymous share the same semantic features whereas those that are antonyms have contrastive semantic components. Moreover, componential analysis aids in bringing out the universality of some of the semantic features thereby helping in the interpretation of meaning across languages. This can be exemplified by the fact that the terms or the words ‘man’, ‘woman’, ‘boy’, ‘girl’, ‘child’ all have the same set of semantic features which define them in all languages and these semantic features are finite.

As observed in Jackson (2009), componential analysis plays a useful part in contributing to the description of meaning of lexemes. Some of these contributions are the following;

Understanding Synonymy

A pair of true synonyms will share the same set of semantic components. For example: "adult" and "grown-up" have the same components [+HUMAN] [+ADULT].

Establishing Degrees of Synonymy

This is applicable to looser synonymy where a pair of lexemes have some but not all semantic components in common. For instance, 'barn' and 'shed' would be looser synonyms. They share components [BUILDING], [STORAGE], but barn has additional component of [FARM] and perhaps that of [FOR CEREALS], [TUBERS], whereas 'shed' has perhaps the additional component [HOUSE].

Understanding Antonyms

A pair of antonyms usually shares all their components except one. For instance, 'man' and 'woman' share the components [-CONCRETE], [+ANIMATE], [+HUMAN], but they are contrasted by the component [+MALE].

Understanding the Sense Relation of Hyponymy

Hyponymy refers to the relation of inclusion of meaning for instance, the fact that the meaning of the word 'rat' is included in the meaning of rodent.

Useful for Translation

Componential analysis determines the essential features of meaning of lexical units, which is very useful in doing translation (Nida 1975).

3. 4. 2. Difficulties or Limitations of Componential Analysis

It is observable that componential analysis is laden with some limitations or difficulties. For example, componential analysis only defines word meaning and completely ignores sentence meaning. Udofot (1998) argues that even if words make up sentences and so sentences can be analyzed in terms of the components of the words which make up the sentence, there would still be problems. It would not only be cumbersome to give the semantic features of each word in the sentence (especially in complex and compound complex sentences) but also some sentences and expressions have meanings which are not directly derived from the meaning of the individual words that make them up. This is specifically true of idioms and figurative expressions. For instance, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to give the semantic features of each word in these sentences below as it really relates to the actual meaning of the sentences of the figurative expressions.

- It rained cats and dogs yesterday
- The political guru kicked the bucket last month.

As a result, the failure of componential analysis to address sentence meaning is a serious omission since human beings do not only use words but equally make use of sentences in their day-to-day communications.

Another limitation of componential analysis is that it makes use of binary opposites. This is done with the belief that all lexical items can be expressed using binary approach. However, it is observable that the binary approach can work in many cases but not in all cases. For example, the binary analysis would not be useful in analyzing structural words such as ‘in’, ‘for’, ‘up’, ‘and’.

It has also been observed that some words are difficult to categorize. For example, if one is to assign the features [+SOLID] [+LIQUID] to ‘porridge’ and ‘tar’ it would be difficult to determine which one of them is solid and which is liquid, and at what stage they can be considered to be solid or liquid.

Another problem encountered in componential analysis is that it does not state the maximum number of semantic features needed to fully define a word neither does it justify the choice of particular semantic features for defining certain items as against others.

It has also been observed that is not clear why the theory for instance, favours the use of the feature [+ADULT] rather than [+MATURE] and also why for instance, it favours the use of [-MALE] instead of [+FEMALE] in defining words such as ‘woman’ or ‘girl’.

A number of fundamental difficulties are involved in determining the diagnostic components of the meanings of some semantic units. These are some of such difficulties.

- **Lack of an adequate meta-language with which to describe some of the diversities.** For instance, it is difficult to speak of distinctions in colour, so that contiguous series such as ‘violet’, ‘blue’, ‘purple’, ‘green’, ‘yellow’, ‘orange’ and ‘red’ can be properly described in terms of diagnostic components. Another glaring examples involves the semantic domain of odours such as ‘smell’, ‘stench’ and ‘maladour’, or the semantic domain of noises such as ‘seperti cream’, ‘screech’, ‘speak’ and ‘squeal’.

- **Meaning which constitute a contiguous set**: The meaning of ‘even’ in contexts such as “even Paul loved Gloria”, “Paul loved Gloria”, and “Paul love Gloria even” is paralleled to some extents by only example “only Paul loved

Gloria", "Paul only loved Gloria", and "Paul loved only Gloria" – so the related meanings of "even", "only" and "just" are contiguous. As a result, one must look for other sets of contrasts to provide the basis for componential analysis.

- **Some terms primarily differ only in the degree of intensity**: There may be no absolute feature which marks the difference but by only a relative contrast. For instance, "toss" and "hurl" may be regarded as types of throwing, but the major difference is one of intensity; and accordingly one must reckon with a continuum on which there is no fixed boundary between the two. The speed at which a professional baseball player may toss a ball may be much faster than the speed at which some amateur ball players can hurl.

- **The meaning of certain terms exist in one's passive vocabulary**: One may, for instance have a general idea of the meanings of "”Saunter", "Stroll" and "Meander" as referring to ways of walking, but the fact that these terms are not in one's active vocabulary tends to make it difficult to determine how and to what extent such meanings differ.

- **The diversity of view-points, especially in describing spatial relations**: Here, one can give as an example that for a 'house' one can speak of 'behind' and in 'front of', since a 'house' is regarded as having 'a back' and 'a front'. However, when one speaks of 'behind a tree and in front of a tree', the spatial relation must be relative to the view point character or existing situation. Also the issue of 'time' involves similar difficulties.

- **The meaning of many Abstract Terms**: This involves a number of complications because of their potential syntagmatic relations to so many events and entities. For instance, a word such as 'cousy' may occur with a vast number of different semantic heads. For example, 'cousy meat' 'cousy person', 'cousy time', cousy deal', cousy weather' and so on. And none of which have anything to do with a 'house'.

- **A word can have different meaning in different fields**: The word 'competence' for instance, is used in linguistics, education, and psychology and in all these fields they define and use it in different way and contexts.

- **Deixis Terms**: The different meanings and use of 'there and here' and 'this and that' depend primarily on space and time.

- **Distinctions may be based on relations**: Rather than on physical features same aspects of complications have already been discussed in relation to the kinship terms, but meanings reflecting or reflected in such terms as 'friend' 'partner' 'colleague' and 'associate' are even more difficult to analyze.

- The componential analysis becomes more complex when the relation describe logical arrangements, as with it, though, because, in order to, and so on.

In spite of all these observable limitations of componential analysis, one can rightly assert that it is a useful theory of semantic analysis because its use of sense relations or components which cut across languages.

Besides, some of these limitations can be circumvented. For instance; the fact that the number of semantic features needed to define a particular word is not stated is not essentially a serious problem as long as the meaning of such a word can be comprehended. If for instance, three features are needed to define a word and two features are needed to define another word, the number of features is used or applied in the definition of the words are secondary as long as such words are adequately comprehended. Also, of important is the fact that the speaker may select the semantic components appropriate to the particular audience. This may really prove very effective than using certain or some features always.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Are you able to explain how componential analysis is employed in the study of meaning? Look for examples of words and break them down into their component parts. If you are unable to do this, you should study this unit again.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Componential Analysis is seen as a process of breaking down the sense of a word into its minimal distinctive features; that is, into components which contrast with other components. It refers to the description of the meaning of words through structural sets of semantic features, which are given as "present" or "absent" or indifferent with reference to feature. The analysis of meaning of a word in terms of its components is regarded as universal and the use of semantic features in expressing the meaning of words or lexical items aids in bringing out the ways in which words are related.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you learnt that componential analysis is useful in understanding synonymy and in establishing the degrees of synonymy, it is useful for translation, in understanding antonyms and the sense relation in hyponymy. However, some of its shortcomings are that it completely ignores sentence meaning and where it is employed in word meaning, it does not state the maximum number of semantic features needed to fully define a word neither does it justify the choice of particular semantic features for defining certain items as against others.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss, in not more than three pages and with adequate illustrations/examples, the contirbutions of Componential Analysis to the study of meaning..What are the limitations of CA in the study of meaning? In not more that three pages, explain them with adequate examples.

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UNIT 3 TRANSLATING ENGLISH INTO A LOGICAL METALANGUAGE

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Module 2, you learnt how logic could be applied to the understanding of meaning. You came across some logical terms in the process. In this unit, you will learn how to translate English into a logical language, simple statements in predicate logic and qunatifiers in predicate logic.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After you might have studied this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain how to translate English into a logical language
- Discuss simple statements in predicate logic
- Identify and know how to use the universal quantifier and the existential quantifier in English.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3. 1. Translating English into a Logical Language

It is possible to traslate from a sentence in an individual language like English into an expression in a universal language such as predicate logic. Predicate logic builds on the investigation of sentence connectives in propositional logic and goes on to investigate the internal sructure of sentences. (Saeed 2009:309). The discussion in this unit is taken from Saeed 2009.

In the study on propisitional logic in Module 2, Unit 2, you learnt about connectives and quantifiers. Connectives are intended to represent types of logical connections between propositions. These connectives are listed in the table below; the symbol for each connective is given, as well as an example of its syntax, i.e. how it combines with sentence constants **p, q,** etc., and an appropriate English equivalent.

Connectives in propositional logic

Connective	Syntax	English
¬ negation ('not')	**¬p**	It is not the case that **p**
Λ conjunction ('and')	**p Λ q**	**p** and **q**
V disjunction (inclusive 'or')	**p V q**	**p** and/or **q**
$\mathbf{V_e}$ disjunction (exclusive 'or')	**p** $\mathbf{V_e}$ **q**	**p** or **q** but not both
→ implication ('if… then')	**p → q**	if **p,** then **q**
≡ equivalence ('if and only if')	**p ≡ q**	**p** if and only if **q**

I shall now go ahead by using these connectives in our translations into predicate logic.

3. 2. Simple statements in predicate logic

In the simple statements below

1a. Joy is asleep.
b. Ben smokes.

we can identify a subject-predicate structure where the subject is a referring expression (*Joy, Ben*) and the predicate tells us something about the subject (*is asleep, smokes*). The predicate logic assigns different roles to these two elements: the predicate is treated as a skeletal function which requires the subject argument to be complete.

Letters are employed to represent both the predicate and the subject argument. A capital predicate letter is used to to represent the predicate while subject argument can be represented by a lower case letter usually chosen from *a* to *t* – called an individual constant. We can illustrate this with the sample statement in (1) above.

2. is asleep: *A*
smokes: *S*

The subject argument can be represented thus:

3. Joy: *j*
Ben: *b*

Following the convention that predicate logic forms begin with the predicate and followed by the subject constant, we assign the representations below to our simple statements in (1) above.

4. Joy is asleep: *A (j)*
   Ben smokes: *S (b)*

It is possible to leave the identity of the subject unspecified, we can do this by using variables instead of the individual constants. The variables are lower case letters from the end of the alphabelt: *w, x, y, z.*

5. *x* is asleep: *A (x)*
   y smokes: *S (y)*

The representations above are of intransitive sentences, hence the verbs take only one nominal. In transitive sentences, in (6) below, the verbs require more than one nominal.

6. Jane greets Debby.
   Margaret adores Paul.

The predicates above are identified as relations between the arguments and represented as follows:

7. Jane greets Debby: *G (j, d)*
   Margaret adores Paul: *A (m, p)*

8. Gerald is shorter than Micheal: *S (g, m)*

You should note that the order of constant terms after the predicate is significant. This is because it must mirror the structure of English sentences in that the subject comes before the object.

In a sentence with three nominals, known as three place relations, we have an example below with its translation.

9. George prefers Simeon to Philip: *P (g, s, p)*

We have, in the examples above, included the English sentence and the logical translation. It is possible to keep track of what the letters in the logical forms correspond to by providing a key, e.g.

10. *P (g, s, p)*

Key: P: prefer
g: George
p: Philip

We can reflect negative and compound sentences by making use of the connectives listed at the beginning of this unit.

11. Ruth doesn't smoke: $\neg S\ (r)$
Joy sings and Debby claps: $S\ (j) \wedge C\ (d)$
If Sam drinks, Jerry gets angry: $D\ (s) \rightarrow A\ (j)$

We can represent complex sentences containing relative clauses by viewing them as a form of conjunction, i.e. by using **Λ** as in (12).

12. Jonathan, who is a millionaire, is a politician: $M\ (j) \wedge P\ (j)$
Emile is a cat that doesn't purr: $C\ (e) \neg P(e)$
Tony admires Racheal, who is a gangster: $A\ (t.\ r) \wedge G\ (r)$

3. 3. Quantifiers in predicate logic

Quantifiers in logic are the universal quantifier and the existential quantifier. Their symbols are given below.

13. $\forall$ the *'universal quantifier'*: which means roughly *all*
$\exists$ the *'existential quantifier'*: which means roughly *(there are) some* or *(there is) a*

In English, quantifiers include words like *every, no, one, some, a few, a lot, most,* and *all.* They occur in the sentences below.

14a Every student knows the lecturer.
b. A few students know the lecturer.
c. Many students know the lecturer.
d. Most students know the lecturer.
e. All students know the lecturer.
f. No student know the lecturer.
g. Some student knows the lecturer.

The sample logical representation we have developed so far isn't able to reflect the ability to generalize statements over a set of individauls. Following Saeed (2009), statements containing quantifiers are divided into two sections:

- the quantifying expression which gives the range of the generalization, and

- the rest of the sentence (the generalization), which will have a place-holder element, for the quantified nominal.

We shall use the quantifier *all* and *every* in our logical representation. Both of these quantifiers are represented in predicate logic by the universal quantifier, symbolized as **∀.** Let us use (14a) repeated as (15) below as an example.

15. Every student knows the lecturer.

(15) is given the representation in (16a) which can be read as (16b).

16a. $\forall x\ (S\ (x) \rightarrow\ K\ (x, l)$
b. For every thing x, if x is a student then x knows the lecturer.

The universal quantifier establishes the range by fixing the value of x as every thing; the expression in parenthesis is the generalization. The generalization is an incomplete proposition, hence it is called an **open proposition.** Until the value of x is set for some individual(s), the expression cannot be true or false, the quantifier serves to set the value of x and close the proposition.

The quantifier phase (*Every student* in our example (15)) can be associated with different positions in the predicate. Let us compare (17a & b) below.

17a. Every student knows the lecturer: $\forall x\ (S\ (x) \rightarrow\ K\ (x, l)$
b. The lecturer knows every student: $\forall x\ (S\ (x) \rightarrow\ K\ (l, x)$

The relationship between the quantifier phrase and the rest of the formula is described in two ways:

- the quantifying expression is said to **bind** the variable in the predicate expression, and
- the predicate expression is said to be the scope of the quantifier.

3. 3. 1. The quantifier *some*

The quantifier **some** is represented in predicate logic by the **existential quanfitier,** symbolized as **∃.** We can translate our (14g), repeated as (18), as shown in (19a b).

18. Some student knows the lecturer.

19a, $\exists x\ (S\ (x)\ \boldsymbol{\Lambda}\ K\ (x, l)$
b. There is (at least) one thing x such that x is a student ans x knows the lecturer.

The existential quantifier can also be associated with different positions in the predicate:

20a. (At least) One student beat Uche: $\exists x\ (S\ (x)\ \Lambda\ \ B\ (x, u)$
b. Uche beat (at least) one student: $\exists x\ (S\ (x)\ \Lambda\ \ B\ (u, x)$

The existential quantifier is said to **bind** the variable and the predicate expression is described as the scope of the quantifier.

3. 3. 2. The determiner *no*

The English determiner **no** can be represented by a combination of the existential quantifier and negation. Therefore, the sentence in (21) will be given the representation in (22a) below, which can be read as (22b).

21. No student knows the lecturer.

22a. $\neg\exists x\ (S\ (x)\ \Lambda\ \ K\ (x, l)$
b. It is not the case that there is a thing x such that x is a student and x knows the lecturer. There is no x such that x is a student and x knows the lecturer.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Examine the examples in this unit; look for similar examples and discuss the as I did with the examples in this unit. If you are not able to discuss them appropriately, you should study the unit again until you are able to do so.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In translating English to a logical language, connectives, which are intended to represent types of logical connections between propositions, are employed. Quantifiers are also used in this connection.

5.0 SUMMARY

Now let me summarise the syntax of the predicate logic you learnt so far. The syntax includes the vocabulary of symbols in (23) below and the rules for the formulation of logical formulae in (24).

23. **The symbols of predicate logic**

Predicate letters:	A, B, C, ete.,
Individual constants:	a, b, c, etc.,
Individual variables:	x, y, z, etc.,
Truth-functional vsriables:	Λ, V, $V_{e,}$ $\neg$, $\rightarrow$, $\equiv$
Quantifiers:	$\forall$, $\exists$

24. **The rules for creating logical formulae**

a. Individual constants and variables are terms

b. If A is an n-place predicate and $t_i \ldots t_n$ are terms, then A $(t_i \ldots t_n)$ is a formula

c. If Φ is a formula, then $\neg\ \Phi$ is a formula

d. If Φ and ψ are formulae, then $(\Phi\ \Lambda\ \psi)$, $(\Phi\ V\ \psi)$, $(\Phi\ V_e\ \psi)$, $(\Phi \rightarrow \psi)$, $(\Phi \equiv \psi)$ are all formulae

e. If Φ is a formula, and x is a variable, then $\forall$ x Φ, and $\exists$ **x** Φ are formulae

(Saeed 2009:314)

Note that the outer parenthseis of a complete formula can be omitted, i.e. instead of a writing $(\Phi\ \Lambda\ \psi)$, we can write $\Phi\ \Lambda\ \psi$.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss in not more than four (4) pages, how connectives and quantifiers are employed in translating English into a logical language.

7.0 REFERENCES/FOR FURTHER READING

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