COURSE GUIDE

PHL 214
PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

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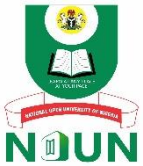

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INTRODUCTION

The Course **Philosophy of Language** (**PHI 214**) is a one semester, three credit unit course. It is made up of 24 units which presents the definition of the philosophy of language, it historical development (through the ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary periods of philosophy), meaning and it dimensions/theories, the language of thought, private language argument and metaphors.

The course is a compulsory pre-requisite for philosophy students. The course guide gives a brief description of the course content, expected knowledge, the course material, and the way to use them. Tutor-marked Assignment is found in a separate file, which will be sent to you later. There are also periodic tutorials that are linked to the course.

COURSE AIM

The major aim of this course is to focus on language from a philosophical point of view and to articulate the various philosophical issue in the discourse on language. To achieve this aim, the course is guided by the following broad objectives:

a. Meaning of the Philosophy of language
b. The dimensions and theories of meaning
c. Isolating and attempting to various issues in the philosophy of language.

In addition, to the broad objectives above, each unit has specific objectives. The unit objectives are always at the beginning of the unit. You should read them before you start working through the unit. You may want to refer to them during your study of the unit to check on your progress. You should also look at the unit objectives after completing a unit. In this process you would be sure to have done that which is required of you. The unit objectivesare to:

a. Identify the connections between philosophy and language as areas of human study.
b. Trace the historical development of the philosophical concerns with language through the various periods of the development of philosophy.
c. Itemise the various dimensions of meaning, bearing in mind that meaning is a major concern in the philosophy of language.
d. Enumerate the various theories of meaning in the philosophy of language.
e. Discuss the reference theory of meaning as a theory that enjoys popular attention in the philosophy of language.
f. Know the arguments for private language as it interests philosophers within thecontext of language.

g. Explain the idea of the language of thought in the philosophy of language.
h. Show how metaphors constitutes a problem in the philosophy of language.
i. Articulate the African perspective to the Philosophy of Language.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN FROM THIS COURSE

The overall aim of this course is to consider language from a philosophical point of view. This is the overriding aim of this course. This point is very vital because language is the concern of various disciplines. Nowadays, there are several approaches to language. They partially overlap, although each of it otherwise focuses its attention on slightly different aspect of language or studies it with different method (Slavkovský & Kutáš, 2013: 15). Some of these disciplines include: linguistics, literature, cognitive linguistics, neurolinguistics, psycholinguistics, evolutionary linguistics, comparative linguistics, sociolinguistics, computer linguistics, and a host of others. All of these raise concerns about language, but it is philosophy that tries to harmonise and to look at all of the concerns of these disciplines together and to come up with a comprehensive understanding of the reality of language. Philosophy of language will equip you with this comprehensive understanding.

WORKING THROUGH THIS COURSE

The course contains six (6) modules of twenty four (24) units which focuses on key issues in the development of the Philosophy of Language. You should painstakingly go through all the units in this course, taking note of the essential concepts introduced to you. You should also do the Self-Assessment Exercises and the Tutor-Marked Assignments. For you to derive maximum benefit from the course, you should consult as many of the references/suggestions for further reading given at the end of each unit.

COURSE MATERIALS

Your course materials include: the study units in the course, the recommended textbooks and the exercises/assignments provided in each unit.

STUDY UNITS

There are nine (9) modules and nineteen (19) study units in the course. These are:

REFERENCES/BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING

The following books are recommended for the course:

a. Slavkovský, R. A. & Kutáš, M. (2013). *Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*.Tranava: European Social Fund and the Slovak Ministry of Education.
b. Lycan, W. G. (2008). *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction*. SecondEdition. New York: Routledge.
c. Tanesini, A. (2007). *Philosophy of Language A–Z.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh UniversityPress.
d. Hale, B. & Wright, C. (eds.) (1997). *Blackwell Companion to the Philosophy ofLanguage*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
e. Tugendhat, E. (1982). *Traditional and Analytic Philosophy: Lectures on thePhilosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
f. Sainsbury, R. M. (2002). *Departing from Frege: Essays in the Philosophy ofLanguage*. London and New York: Routledge.

ASSIGNMENT FILE

The details of assignment that you are expected to submit to your tutor for marking will be communicated to you. These assignments will count towards your final mark in this course. Necessary information about the assignment is contained in the Assessment File and in the Course Guide.

PRESENTATION FILE

The presentation schedule included in your course materials gives you the important dates for the completion of tutor-marked assignments and the dates to attend tutorials. Remember, you are required to submit all your assignments by the due dates. You should guard again falling behind your work.

ASSESSMENT

There are two segments of assessment. They are: Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA) and a written examination. You are expected to submit your assignment to your tutor as at when due for 30% of your total course mark. While a final three hour examination accounts for 70% of your total course work.

TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

There are twenty one (21) tutor-marked assignments in this course that you are expected to submit to your tutor. The best four (i.e. the highest four among them) will be counted. The total mark for the best four assignment will be 30% of your total score.

The assignment questions for the course are contained in the assignment file. You should be able to complete your assignments from the information and material contained in your textbooks, reading and study units. However, you are advised to use other references to broaden your viewpoint and provide a deeper understanding of the subject.

When you have completed each assignment, send it along with tutor-marked assignment (TMA) to your tutor. Make sure that each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline given in the assignment file. If you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor before the assignment is due to discuss the possibility of an extension.

FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING

The final examination for PHI 214 (Philosophy of Language) will be three-hour duration valued at 70% of the total grade. The exam will reflect the type of question for self-testing, practice questions and tutor marked assignments and will cover the entire course.

You are advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for the examination. You will find it useful to review your tutor marked assignments and the comments of your tutor on them before the final examination.

COURSE MARKING SCHEME

The table below shows how the actual course score is broken down.

Assessment	**Marks**
Assignments 1-21	Twenty five assignments, best four of the assignments countas 30% of the course marks.
Final examination	70% of overall course marks
Total	100% of total course work

COURSE OVERVIEW

The table below brings the units together along with the number of weeks you should take to complete them, and the assignment that go with them.

S/N	Title of Work	Week's Activity	Assessment (end of unit)
	Course Guide		
1.	Definition of Language and Characteristics ofLanguage	1	Assignment 1
2.	Definition of Philosophy and Characteristics ofPhilosophy	2	Assignment 2
3.	Philosophy of Language in Perspective	3	Assignment 3
4.	Ancient and Medieval Philosophy of Language	4	Assignment 4
5.	Modern and Contemporary Philosophy of Language	5	Assignment 5
6.	Connotative Dimension of Meaning	6	Assignment 6
7.	Denotative Dimension of Meaning	7	Assignment 7
8.	Sense Relations	8	Assignment 8
9.	Lexical and Grammatical Dimensions of Meaning	9	Assignment 9
10.	Reference Theory of Meaning	10	Assignment 10
11.	Sense and Reference	11	Assignment 11
12.	Reference and Indexicality	12	Assignment 12
13.	Use Theories of Meaning	13	Assignment 13
14.	Psychological Theories of Meaning	14	Assignment 14
15.	Verificationism	15	Assignment 15
16.	Truth-Conditional Theory	16	Assignment 16
17.	Hermeneutic theory of Meaning	17	Assignment 17
18.	Language of Thought as Presented by Jerry Fodor	18	Assignment 18
19.	Arguments for Language of Thought	19	Assignment 19
20.	Objections to the Arguments for the Language ofThought	20	Assignment 20
21.	What Private Language Is	21	Assignment 21
22.	Ludwig Wittgenstein's Classic Statement of theArgument	22	Assignment 22
23.	Saul Kripke's Re-statement of The Argument	23	Assignment 23
24.	Metaphors	24	Assignment 24

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS COURSE

Study units replace the Lecturer in distance learning. This enables the students to read, study and work through the study materials with ease. This study is structures in such a way that learning is made easier for the student who studies and cross checks what he/she studies through assignments and suggested textbooks.

TUTOR AND TUTORIALS

There are eight hours of materials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, time and locations of these tutorials along with the names and necessary information about your tutor and the tutorial group.

Your tutor will read, mark and comment on your assignment and will be of assistance to you where necessary. All necessary information about your tutor will be made available to you.

SUMMARY

Philosophy of Language exposes students to the rudiments of thinking about language and all the issues raised by philosophers of language as well as how these issues have been deal with.

MAIN COURSE

CONTENTS

MODULE 1 PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE IN PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION

This module is made up of five (5) study units. The first addresses the definition of language and the second addresses the characteristics of language. Units three and four focuses on defining philosophy and its characteristics. The last unit puts the two understanding together to arrive a definition of the Philosophy of Language that will guide this course.

UNIT 1 DEFINITION OF LANGUAGE

Unit Structure

1.1 Introduction

This unit presents the meaning, etymology and development of the concept of language. It begins with an overview of the term language, continues with the various language combinations in the making of the term and ending with the various assumptions about the origin of language as human reality.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the meaning of language
- enumerate the etymology of the term
- describe the various assumptions about the origin of language.

1.3 Meaning of Language

The study of language belongs properly to the area of studies called linguistics. Linguistics has language as its proper object of study. Within linguistics, various meanings of language have emerged. *Routledge Dictionary of Languages and Linguistics* sees language as a "vehicle for the expression or exchanging of thoughts, concepts, knowledge, and information as well as the fixing and transmission of experience and knowledge" (Bussmann, 2006: 267). The essence of language as communication tool has been to the definition of language. Edward Sapir, one of those to give the earliest technical definition of language considers it as "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols" (Sapir, 1921: 8). The symbols produced "are, in the first instance, auditory; thus, language is primarily a matter of speech as opposed to, say, sign language" (Poole, 2000: 5). Similarly, Crystal (1989: 251) sees language as "human vocal noise (…) used systematically and conventionally by a community for purpose of communication." From all of these, we sum up the definition of language as a "form of human communication by means of a system of symbols principally transmitted by vocal cords" (Poole, 2000: 5). By this definition, language is about communication. But this communicative essence is further limited by the fact that it refers to human speech capacity. It is also important to note that language "is based on cognitive processes, subject to societal factors and subject to historical change and development" (Bussmann, 2006: 267).

Etymologically, the word language also has a collection of meanings. Its root is in the Latin word *Lingua*. This word carries the sense of 'tongue' or 'speech' in Latin. From Latin, the word was adopted as *Langage* in Old French language. In Old French, the word carries the sense of 'speech', 'word' or 'oratory'. It from this Old French form that the word was adopted in Middle English as 'Language'. In all these linguistic variations of the word, the senses seem to largely stable. The idea of 'speech' or 'spoken word' seem to permeate all of the senses. This sense

of speech is still what inherently determines the meaning of the word even in contemporary usage.

As a key concept of human existence, scholars have also tried to theorise on the possible origin of the reality of language. While some make reference to the Tower of Babel incident in the Old Testament Book of Genesis in the Christian Bible (Hiebert, 2007: 29-58), others have tried to make a reasoned and sustained inquiry into the origin of the reality of language.

Within the context of efforts at reason inquiries about the origin of language, Ulbaek (1998) identified some underlying assumptions with regard to the origin of language. These include:

1. Continuity theories: These have the assumption that language exhibits so much complexity to imagine it emerged from a single source in its developed form. There must be dome form of evolution from a pre-linguistic form.
2. Discontinuity theories: These assume that language is too special to man and as such must have appeared quite suddenly in the process of human evolution.
3. Some approaches assume that language is genetically encoded in man. That is, it is part of man's fundamental make up.
4. Some others insist that language is a cultural system that man acquires through social interactions.

In addition to all these, a good number of hypotheses have been developed by Müller (1996) with regard to the origin of language. As these positions have been rightly called, they are just assumptions or hypotheses. Though there has been no clear answer to the question of the origin of the reality of human language, attempts are still ongoing.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. The study of language belongs properly to the area of studies known as_____ Lingua

2. What is language?

3. Mention any two underlying assumptions with regards to the origin of language as identified by Ulbeak.

Conclusion

This study unit addressed the question of what language is. It is clear that language has been variously defined, but the underlying idea in the definition of language is that it is a vehicle of communication. Also, the origin of language has been controversial and has been a subject of continued debate.

1.4 Summary

This unit introduced students to the concept of language and the various definitions in linguistics. It also laid emphasis on communication as the unifying element of the various definitions of language. Students were also exposed to the etymological development of the word language. The various assumptions that are related to the origin of language were also considered.

1.5 References/Further Reading

Bussmann, H. (2006). *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics.* Translated and edited by Gregory Trauth and Kerstin Kazzazi. London: Routledge.

Crystal, D. (1989). *Linguistics*. United Kingdom: Pelican Books.

Hiebert, T. (2007). "The Tower of Babel and Origin of the World's Cultures." *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Vol. 126. No. 1: pp. 29-58.

Müller, F. M. (1996). "The Theoretical Stage and the Origin of Language." In *The Origin of Language*. Edited by R. Harris. Bristol: Thoemmes Press, pp. 7-41.

Sapir, E. (1921). *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*. Harcourt: Brace and Wood.

Ulbaek, I. (1998). "The Origin of Language and Cognition." In *Approaches to the Evolution of Language*. Edited by James Hurfor, Michael Studdert-Kennedy, Chris night. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

1.6 Possible Answer to the Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. Lingua
2. Language can be defined as a form of human communication by means of a system of symbols principally transmitted by vocal cords.
3. Continuity theory and Discontinuity theory

UNIT 2 CHARACTERISTICS OF LANGUAGE

Unit Structure

2.1 Introduction

This unit focuses on the various characteristics of language. Some of this include: cultural transmission, arbitrariness, discreteness, displacement, productivity, duality patterning.

2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Articulate the characteristics of language
- Enumerate cultural transmission, arbitrariness, discreteness as features of language
- Itemise displacement, productivity and duality patterning as also features of human language.

The characteristics here are discussed based on the ideas of Hackett (1960), Aitchison (2007) and Yule (2005). Hackett's list encompasses characteristics for both human and animal communication. Since the focus here is on human language, attention will be payed particularly to these features as they relate to human language.

2.3 Cultural transmission

Language is the means by which humans are able to teach the upcoming generation all that they have learnt to date. If we did not have the ability to use language then it would be largely impossible to transmit our knowledge and experiences to the next generation of humans and each successive generation would have to start afresh. However, because we have language, we are able to communicate necessary knowledge and social norms of behaviour to the successive generation. One of the most obvious examples of this is the formal teaching in our schools, the majority of which is undertaken using spoken language. The child who sits on a parent's lap and listens to stories of family traditions and events is also learning through language. This property of language is referred to as **cultural transmission**. The language of a particular society, therefore, forms part of the culture of that society.

2.4 Arbitrariness and Human Language

By the arbitrariness of language, we mean: there is no inherent or logical relation or similarity between any given feature of language and its meaning. That is, there is no direct, necessary connection between the nature of things or ideas and language. Language is arbitrary in the sense that there is no inherent relation between the words of a language and their meanings or the ideas conveyed by them. That is, there is an arbitrary relationship between a signal and its meaning. The signal is related to the meaning by convention or by instinct but has no inherent relationship with the meaning. There is no reason why a female adult human being be called a woman in English, aurat in Urdu, Zen in Persian and Femine in French. The choice of a word selected to mean a particular thing or idea is purely arbitrary but once a word is selected for a particular referent, it comes to stay as such. It may be noted that had language not been arbitrary, there would have been only one language in the world.

Arbitrariness is a useful property because it increases the **flexibility of language**. The flexibility arises because language is not constrained by the need to match the form of a word and its meaning. Because of this it is possible to construct an almost infinite number of words from a limited set of speech sounds.

Having made the point that linguistic symbols are arbitrary, there are some English words that appear to be less arbitrary than others. These are **onomatopoeic words**: words that imitate the sound associated with an object or an action. For example, in the utterance *the bees were buzzing* the word *buzzing* sounds similar to the noise bees make. Other

examples include *hiss* and *rasp*. The features of such words are often exploited in the writing of poetry.

2.5 Discreteness of Human Language

Language can be said to be built up from discrete units (e.g., phonemes in human language). Exchanging such discrete units causes a change in the meaning of a signal. This is an abrupt change, rather than a continuous change of meaning. The sounds used in language are meaningfully distinct. The fact that the pronunciation of the forms back and back leads to a distinction in meaning can only be due to the difference between the "p" and "b" sounds in English. Each sound in the language is treated as discrete.

2.6 Displacement

Language has the power of displacement either in space or time. Language can be used to refer to real or imagined matters in the past, present or future. It can even be used to talk about language itself. Of course, bees communicate the fact that they have found nectar, but they must do immediately on returning to their hive. A man dreams of his future but an animal never dreams. Communicating about things or events that are distant in time or space. So, for example, we can refer to our new car even though it is not actually in front of us. Similarly, we can discuss last night's football game even though it has passed. This property of languageis known as **displacement**.

2.7 Creativity and Productivity as Features of Human Language

Human language provides opportunities to send the message that has never been sent before and to understand novel messages. It also suggests that number of sentences in language islimitless. Any speaker can construct a sentence that has never been constructed before. It isthis feature of language that is referred to as productivity or creativity of language. Thissuggests that human language is an open system. We can produce potentially an infinite number of different messages by combining the elements differently. A gibbon call system lacks productivity, for gibbons draw all their calls from a fixed repertoire which is rapidly spent and which disallows any possibility of novelty. Likewise, the communicative systems of all animals are non-productive. Every human language has an unlimited number of sentences. In this sense, language is said to be **stimulus free** and this explains why humans are able to use language creatively. Language is, therefore, flexible. This fact that language is stimulus-free and that it is flexible leads to the notion of **productivity**, i.e. that language an be used to

construct an infinite set of new and meaningful utterances. These utterances are novel in that they may never have been spoken before and yet they are meaningful and readily interpretableby other people.

2.8 Duality Patterning

Language is organized in two levels. This property is called ‘duality# or double articulation. One level is when we produce individual sounds like ‘n, t, d, I’. In another level we produce these sounds in a particular combination “bin, tip” and we are producing a meaning that is different from other combination of these sounds. At one level we have distinct sound and at another level we have distinct meaning. With a limited set of distinct sounds we are capable of producing a very large number of sound combinations which are distinct in meaning. Phonemes are meaningless in isolation but they become meaningful only when they are combined with other phonemes.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES

1. Mention the six core features of language.
2. What do you understand by the displacement of language?
3. How does cultural transmission relate to the features of human language?

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are numerous features of language as a means of communication. But with regard to human language, the following features are distinctive: cultural transmission, arbitrariness, discreteness, displacement, creativity and duality patterning.

2.9 Summary

In all of the foregoing, the focus has been on articulating the features of language a human reality. This was done bearing in mind the fact that animals communicate as well, but that human language is a far more complex and nuanced means of communication. These features are considered with a view demarcating the realm and the specific focus of the philosophy of language.

2.10 Reference/Further Reading

Aitchison, J. (2007) *The Articulate Mammal: An Introduction to Psycholinguistics (5 rev edn)* London: Routledge.

Hockett, C. (1960). "The Origin of Speech". *Scientific American*, Vol. 203, no. 3, September.88-97.

Yule, G. (2005) *The Study of Language (3 rev edn)* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2.11 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. (a.) Cultural transmission
(b.) Arbitrariness of human language
(c.) Discreteness of human language
(d.) Displacement of human language
(e.) Creativity and productivity
(f.) Duality patterning

2 By the displacement of language, it is meant that language has the power of displacement either in space or time. In other words, language can be used to refer to real or imagined matters in the past, present or future.

3 Simply put, we can say that language is the means by which humans are able to teach the upcoming generation all that they have learnt to date.

UNIT 3 DEFINITION OF PHILOSOPHY

Unit Structure

3.1 Introduction

This unit focuses on the second major element in the title of this course; philosophy. The basic aim of this section is define philosophy.

3.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Give the etymological sense of philosophy
- State the common sense of philosophy
- Provide the professional sense of philosophy
- Itemise the modes of philosophy

3.3 The Etymology of Philosophy

There are various senses of philosophy. These include the etymological sense, the common sense and the professional senses of philosophy. This section focuses on the etymology of philosophy. The word philosophy is a coinage from two Greek words. It is coined out of *Philos* meaning ‘love’ and *Sophia* meaning ‘wisdom’. In ancient times a lover of wisdom could be related to any area where intelligence was expressed. This could be in business, politics, human relations, or carpentry and other skills. Philosophy had a "wholeness" approach to life in antiquity. This definition suggests a kind of close love and affinity with wisdom. The philosopher is one who desires wisdom. Also, the world *philos* in Greek “refers … to a special kind of love found in close

friendship. Hence, the philosopher could also be charaterised as the 'friend of wisdom'" (**Haaga, 2014: 4**). A fraternal kind of affinity exists between the philosopher and wisdom and for this reason some opine that philosophy is an activity rather than a subject. We do it rather than learn it. Thus, just like we do not learn friendship, but we do it; so too philosophy is not learnt but is engaged in by the philosopher.

3.4 Common sense of philosophy

Closely connected to the understanding expounded above is the understanding that philosophy is a way of life. It is a set of views or beliefs about life and the universe and these are often held uncritically. By this, philosophy is more of an informal activity; it is more of a 'having' than a 'doing'. In practical life, we often hear people say, 'my philosophy is' this or that, he or she is referring to an informal personal attitude to whatever topic is being discussed (Haaga, 2014: 4). This sense of a 'having' is the informal sense of philosophy, but philosophy goes beyond this informal sense that of a 'doing'. This informal sense of a mere 'having' is not sufficient for adequately understanding the essence of philosophy. This is because to philososphise (or the doing of philosophy) is "not merely to read and know philosophy; there are skills of argumentation to be mastered, techniques of analysis to be employed, and a body of material to be appropriated such that we can become able to think philosophically" (Haaga, 2014: 6). This brings to yet another sense of the term philosophy; philosophy as a professional engagement.

3.5 Professional Sense of Philosophy

From this professional stand point, philosophy can be defined either as "a reflection upon the varieties of human experience" or as "the rational, methodical, and systematic consideration of those topics that are of greatest concern to man" (Ridling, 2001: xxvii).Vague and indefinite as such definitions are, they do suggest two important facts about philosophizing:

(1) That it is a reflective, or meditative, activity and (2) that it has no explicitly designated subject matter of its own but is a method or type of mental operation (like science or like history) that can take any area or subject matter or type of experience as its object. Thus, although there are a few single-term divisions of philosophy of long standing – such as logic, ethics, epistemology (the theory of knowledge), or metaphysics (theory of the nature of Being) – its divisions are probably best expressed by phrases that contain the preposition "of" – such as philosophy of nature, philosophy of mind, philosophy of law, or philosophy of art (Ridling, 2001: xxvii). It from this standpoint the discipline of philosophy is organized as an area of study. When one

studies philosophy as a course, one is interested in the various areas into which philosophy applies and these become the various sub-disciplines of attention.

3.6 Modes of Philosophy

From the professional sense identified above, two basic modes of doing philosophy emerge. These are: the crucial and speculative modes. To these, a third can be added, the analytic mode. From the critical point of view, Quinton's definition is very instructive. For Quinton, "the shortest definition…is that philosophy is thinking about thinking" (2005: 702). This definition, in the main, emphasizes the 'second-order' character of philosophy. It is a "reflective thought about particular kinds of thinking—formation of beliefs, claims to knowledge—about the world or large parts of it" (Quinton, 2005: 702). Here philosophy is more of a critical engagement with various modes of thought or facets of reality. This captures more of the disposition that understands philosophy as 'critical thinking'. Also within the context of this definition we can also understand that, "philosophy has no explicitly designated subject matter of its own but is a method or type of mental operation that can take any area or type of experience as its object" (Riddling, 2001: 28). By this, philosophy infuses its critical disposition into any discipline with a view to reconstructing the self-understanding of such a discipline and of philosophy itself.

Intimately connected to this critical philosophy is speculative philosophy. For C.D Broad, the object of this speculative philosophy is to "take over the results of the various sciences, to addto them the results of the religious and ethical experiences of mankind, and then to reflect upon the whole. The hope is that, by this means, we may be able to reach some general conclusions as to the nature of the universe, and our position and prospect in it" (Quoted in Haaga, 2014: 5). Though there are dangers in this kind of aspiration of building world views, it is equally dangerous to stick to fragments of human experience. This constitutes the true essence of philosophy for Aja. In his estimation, the attempt to harmonise the results from the other disciplines makes the task of the philosopher "an editor's job, and the paper which he must endeavour to bring out is the journal of the universe" (12). Thus, the need for building a consistent and complete picture of the whole of reality is central to what makes the speculative attitude germane to the essence of philosophy.

From the analytic point of view, philosophy is accomplished when language analysis is successful. The analysis-of-language-emphasis rejected metaphysics and accepted the simple, but useful modern standard of scientific verification. Their central thesis is that only truths

of logic and empirically verifiable statements are meaningful. That is, if you can validate or reproduce an experiment or whatever, you can say it is true. If there is no way to reproduce or validate the experiment in the context of science, there was then no claim for truth. The conclusion reached by analytic philosophers is that anything not verifiable is nonsense. All of the systems of the past that go beyond verification are to be rejected as nonsense. This means that the realm of values, religion, aesthetics, and much of philosophy is regarded only as emotive statements.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

1. Mention the various senses of philosophy.
2. Explain the etymological sense of philosophy.
3. In the professional sense of the study of philosophy, three modes abound, define philosophy as a subject of critical thinking as observed by Quinton.

Conclusion

From this section it clear that philosophy is hard to define. But the working understanding is that which considers it as a reflection upon the varieties of human experience or as the rational, methodical, and systematic consideration of those topics that are of greatest concern to man. In this form, philosophy can take the modes of being critical, speculative or analytic.

3.7 Summary

In this section, the focus has been on articulating the definition of philosophy. This was done from three points of view. These are: the etymological sense, the common sense and the professional sense. This professional sense is obviously the point of view from which the course in philosophy is structured. In its professional expression, philosophy takes three different modes. These are: the critical, speculative and analytic modes. All of these geared at giving an understanding of philosophy from which the philosophy of language can be understood.

3.8 Reference/Further Reading

Ridling, Z. (2001). *Philosophy Then and Now: A Look Back at 26 Centuries of Ideas That Have Shaped Our Thinking*. Access Foundation.

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3.9 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercises 3

1. (a.) Etymological sense
   (b.) Common sense
   (c.) Professional sense

2. Philosophy is a conglomeration of two Greek words, 'philos' meaning love and 'sophia' meaning wisdom. Thus, etymologically, a philosopher refers to a lover of wisdom.

3. Philosophy refers to reflective thought about particular kinds of thinking, formation of beliefs, claims to knowledge about the world or large parts of it.

UNIT 4 CHARACTERISTICS OF PHILOSOPHY

Unit Structure

4.1 Introduction

This unit is a continuation of the preceding unit. It focuses still on defining philosophy, but is does this from the perspective of identifying the characteristics of philosophy. The basic aim of this section is to continue the definition of philosophy by identifying its characteristics.

4.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the idea of philosophy as thriving on questions.
- Understand the idea that philosophy is attuned to extra-observational answers
- Know that philosophy is ultimately the search for wisdom
- Appreciate the fact that philosophy is an intellectual and an intermediateenterprise.

4.3 Philosophy Thrives on Questions

One of the unique characteristics of philosophy is that, “it is done just by asking questions, arguing, trying out ideas and thinking of possible arguments against them, and wondering how our concepts really work” (Nagel, 1987: 4). It has no particular method like the scicens and distortive approach. This position becomes more sensible when it is understood that, the main concern of philosophy is to question and understand very common ideas that all of us use every day without

thinking about them. A historian may ask what happened at some time in the past, but a philosopher will ask, 'What is time?' A mathematician may investigate the relations among numbers, but a philosopher will ask, 'What is a number?' A physicist will askwhat atoms are made of or what explains gravity, but a philosopher will ask how we can know there is anything outside of our own minds. A psychologist may investigate how children learn a language, but a philosopher will ask, 'What makes a word mean anything?' Anyone can ask whether it's wrong to sneak into a movie without paying, but a philosopher will ask, 'What makes an action right or wrong?' (Nagel, 1987: 5). On the basis of this centrality of the question to philosophy, some opinions are that "Its questions are more essential than its answers, and every answer becomes a new question" (Jaspers, 1951: 6).

4.4 Philosophy is attuned to Extra-Observational Answers

Although, philosophy thrives one questions, it is also obvious that other disciplines ask questions as well. It is the nature of the questions asked by philosophy that stands it out from other questions and kinds of disciplines. The questions asked in philosophy are largely attuned to extra-observational answers. That is, the questions raised by philosophy cannot just be answered by evidences from observation. It, most times, requires extra justification, beyond mere observation. Barcalow (2001: 3) is of the opinion that, many people say that the difference between philosophical and nonphilosophical questions is that we can answer nonphilosophical questions fairly decisively by examining the evidence of the senses. For example, sensory evidence will tell us with a high degree of certainty how long lions generally live. Even in cases where there's controversy, for example, over whether there's intelligent life beyond our solar system or why Julius Caesar was assassinated, in principle thequestion could be answered with a high degree of certainty if we accumulated enough observational (empirical) evidence. On the other hand, with philosophical questions, although observational evidence is by no means irrelevant, observation can never provide enough evidence to show with certainty which answer is correct. This goes to show the very nature of philosophical questions and this difference is based on the fact that philosophy requires more than mere observation to answer its questions.

4.5 Philosophy is ultimately the search for Wisdom

Philosophy and wisdom are not synonyms, but wisdom is encompassed within philosophy.

Sophia is wisdom, and philosophy is the love of wisdom. The intellectual growth of people accumulates experiences. The whole of

these experiences is a form of personal knowledge and development. This is the definition of wisdom. A well-known anecdote to explain the difference between wisdom and philosophy, came when Lion king of the Fliacos asked Pythagoras his profession and he responded that he was not wise (sofos) but simply a philosopher (lover to wisdom, aspiring to it). He who is wise does not philosophize, for he is supposed to have discovered the mysteries of the world and knows them. However, a philosopher recognizes his own ignorance, and his constant aspiration is to attain wisdom. Socrates perfectly reflected the pursuit of his wisdom with the phrase known by everyone: 'I only know that I do not know anything'. The search purely for wisdom is one of the hallmarks of philosophy.

4.6 Philosophy is an Intellectual and Intermediate Speculation

From the beginning, philosophy characterizes as an intellectual and intermediate enterprise in understanding the social reality. It is intellectual to the extent that the intellect is the basic instrument for its operations. It relies on logical reasoning for accomplishing its tasks. It is intermediate, as Bertrand Russell views it, as something in-between theology and science. Like theology, it consists of speculations on matters as to which definite knowledge has so far, been unascertainable; like science, it appeals to human reason rather than to authority, weather that of tradition or that of revelation. As Russell argues all *definite* knowledge belonged to science, and all dogma as to what surpasses definite knowledge belonged to theology. All the questions of the most interest to speculative minds which are such that science cannot answer, and the confident answers of theologians which no longer seem so convincing as they did in earlier times belong to the realm of philosophy. Once firm and certain answers are established for these questions of interest to man, they move from philosophy into the realm of science. If the dogmas of religion begin to lose their appeal and come under doubt, they enter into the realm of philosophy. This intermediate role of philosophy is also part of what stands it out.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES 4

1. Mention any three characteristics of philosophy.
2. What do we mean when we say that philosophy thrives in questions?
3. As an intellectual and intermediate enterprise what do you understand philosophy to mean?

4.7 Summary

In this unit, the focus has been on identifying some of the key characteristics of philosophy. Four of them have been identified. These are: philosophy thrives on questions, philosophy is attuned to extra-observational answers, philosophy is ultimately the search for wisdom and philosophy is an intellectual and intermediate enterprise

Conclusion

All of the features identified above also constitute the essence of philosophy. Thus, defining philosophy from the etymological, common sense or professional sense, as well as identifying the modes of philosophy does not exhaust the whole essence of what philosophy. The characteristics of philosophy as itemised in this unit also contributes to a robust understandingof what is philosophy is.

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4.9 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercises 4

1. (a.) Philosophy thrives on questions
   (b.) Philosophy is ultimately the search of wisdom
   (c.) Philosophy is an intellectual and an intermediate enterprise

2 What is meant here is that one of the characteristics of philosophy is that it is done just by asking questions, arguing, trying out ideas and thinking of possible arguments against them, and wondering how our concepts really work.

3 Philosophy characterizes as an intellectual and intermediate enterprise in understanding the social reality. It is intellectual to the extent that the intellect is the basic instrument for its operations. It relies on logical reasoning for accomplishing its tasks. It is intermediate, as Bertrand Russell views it, as something in-between theology and science.

UNIT 5 PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

Unit Structure

5.1 Introduction

This unit focuses on examining the philosophy of language which, is the focus of this course. It does this by looking at what philosophy of language is in-itself. It continues by considering the relationship between philosophy of language and other disciplines and finally looks at the scope of the philosophy of language.

5.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Define philosophy of language/explain what philosophy of language is.
- Explain the relationship between philosophy and some disciplines
- Demarcate the scope of the philosophy of language

5.3 Defining Philosophy of Language

During the last century, concern for language managed to infiltrate almost every area of philosophy. This pervasive concern for language often makes it difficult to distinguish philosophy of language from general philosophy. In areas relating the philosophy of mind, the distinction is especially difficult to draw, because many philosophers who take the analogy between thinking and speaking seriously have blurred the distinction between language and mind. Despite this, those who use the term ‘philosophy of language’ typically use it to refer to work within the field of Anglo-American analytical philosophy and its

roots in German and Austrian philosophy of the early twentieth century. Philosophy of language refers to the reasoned inquiry into the nature, origins, and usage of language. “The philosophy of language is the field in which philosophical questions about language are discussed and where the concept of language, language ability and the language we speak are viewed philosophically” (Baykent, 2016: 13). As a field of study, the philosophy of language has been concerned with four central problems: the nature of meaning, language use, language cognition, and the relationship between language and reality (Kutas, 2013: 12). Interest in the philosophical study of language arose because, as “people started to use language and communicate with it, describe the world and ask questions, it was only a matter of time when the language itself becomes the subject of interest” (Kutas, 2013: 13). There is nothing left that we would not continuously try to grasp with language, therefore we begin to ask questions using language about the nature of language itself. This when the philosophy of language begins to get under way.

5.4 Philosophy of Language and Other Disciplines

Philosophy of language relates very closely with linguistics and its various sub-fields. This is because, as one investigates the very general questions that tend to initiate philosophical inquiry into language, you very soon find yourself led to more specific questions that can't be addressed without taking into account the structure and use of actual languages. As soon as a philosophical question about language becomes this specific, linguistic data and linguistic theories become relevant, and can often yield new insights and suggest unexpected avenues of philosophical exploration. Unlike linguistics, philosophy of language treats all languages as one and looks for what is common among them. Starting with the observation of language facts, linguistics focuses on the differences among the individual natural languages, contrary to philosophy of language whose target is what is similar in all of them. For instance, the argument that the common feature of all languages is that they share the distinction of subject and predicate is a matter of philosophy of language (Baykent, 2016:13). “Philosophy of language is the field in which philosophical questions about the structure of language, the meanings of terms and sentences, the relationship between language and world, language and thought, language use and communication through language are discussed” (İnan, 2013: 3).

Philosophy of language is also intimately related to logic. This relationship is at the syntactic level. Logic is an inquiry into the logical form of propositions which is the syntactic level of questioning language in philosophy. Logic displays a formal and artificial language which is often contrasted with human language. Philosophy of language also interacts with epistemology. In fact, it is more like a branch of *applied*

epistemology, for its main question is an epistemological question: how do we *know* what an utterance or a text means? We arrive at this knowledge through interpretation. In interpreting a text, we discover its meaning or, rather, its content. The question is how do we do it? It seems clear that some of the information we need to interpret a text is linguistic in nature. We need to be able to identify(at least some of) the words uttered and what they mean in the language they are uttered. This by no mean exhausts what is required to arrive at the meaning of a text, but this a fundamental requirement and to this extent, philosophy of language relates with epistemology. Metaphysics also interacts with the philosophy of language in a very intimate manner. Morris (2017: 1-26) insists that the ordinary language tradition had its origins, at least, in anti-realism about modality, and continued throughout its history to take an attitude to philosophy in general, and metaphysics in particular, which is hard to justify without that anti-realism - even if it is characteristic of the philosophers in this tradition that they did not generally attempt to justify it. Anti-realism is a metaphysical position. Burge (1992) also take time to discuss in a detailed manner the relationship between philosophy of language and mind (philosophy of mind). All of these an even more are some of the various disciplines with which philosophy of language interacts.

5.5 Scope of the Philosophy of Language

The philosophy of language also has its scope. Basically, the scope of the philosophy of language is often limited to the rise of analytic philosophy. The presumption is that, prior to this time, there was no sustained attention paid to the reality of language for its own sake. The 20th century turn towards linguistic philosophy "drew attention to solving philosophical problems through understanding the language we use to express them" (Baykent, 2013: 13). In spite of this dominant position, the scope of the philosophical questioning about the concept of language dates back to much earlier, to antiquity. When we look at the distinction between linguistic philosophy before and after the linguistic turn, it is clear that before the turn language was not the major topic of discussion for the philosophers. Rather, before the linguistic turn, language was a subject for discussion only if it was necessary when pursuing the answers for epistemological or ontological questions. Before Frege, no systematic theory of language could be seen for language was not at the heart of argument but was a secondary element for the purpose of finding support for another primary subject. For Plato, language was a subject to contemplate for understanding the nature of being that we talk about. For Ockham, language was a matter of discussing the nature of universals. For Descartes, it was important to understand the language ability of human beings so as to comment on the nature of humans. For Locke, the discussion about words was

essential for his theories about *episteme*. However, after the linguistic turn led by Frege and Russell at the beginning of the 20th century, language was at the focus of interest and became the primary subject of philosophical consideration for the sake of itself. The major aim happened to be the understanding of the concept of language, handling it in different dimensions like syntactic, semantic or pragmatic and inquiry about the human ability to use and develop language (Baykent, 2013: 13-14). The scope of the language discourse in philosophy as it spans from antiquity to all the polemics it had generated with the linguistic turn is the scope for this study.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

1. Define philosophy of language.
2. What is the relationship between philosophy of language and logic as a discipline?
3. What is Plato's understanding of language?

Conclusion

The three elements taken together give some hint as to what philosophy of language is in brief. The subsequent units will expatiate more on some of the core aspects of the philosophy of language.

5.6 Summary

The focus of this unit has been on defining the philosophy of language as a spring board into the full study of the course Philosophy of Language. In order to do this, what philosophy of language is in-itself was stated. Also, the relationship between philosophy of language and other disciplines was itemised. Lastly, the scope of the philosophy was also considered.

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5.7 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 5

1. Philosophy of language is the field in which philosophical questions about language are discussed and where the concept of language, language ability and the language we speak are viewed philosophically.

2. Logic is an inquiry into the logical form of propositions which is the syntactic level of questioning language in philosophy. Hence, logic displays a formal and artificial language which is often contrasted with human language.

3. Language was a subject to contemplate for understanding the nature of being that we talk about.

MODULE 2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF LANGAUGE

INTRODUCTION

This module focuses on the historical development of the Philosophy of Language. It will pay attention to how language issues have developed through the ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary periods of Philosophy.

UNIT 1 LANGUAGE IN ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

Unit Structure

1.1 Introduction

This unit has four basic sections and these sections discuss the basic theories of language in Ancient Philosophy. The chapter pays attention to the Pre-Socratic philosophy of language, Plato and Aristotle's theories and closed with a discussion of the Stoic contribution to the Philosophy of Language.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the Pre-Socratic contribution to the Philosophy of Language
- Present Plato's theory of Language

- Expose the tenets of Aristotle's theory of Language
- Highlight the Stoic contribution to the Philosophy of Language

1.3 Pre-Socratic Philosophy of Language

Barbosa (2015: 61) is of the opinion that "the philosophical reflection on language arises around of the question: does the language represents faithfully reality or deforms it?" Graffi (2010: 24) argues that some older Greeks philosophers, such as pre-Socratics, already took care of this problem, which thought is transmitted in a very fragmented way and generally do not come from an only text, but as aphorisms on the basis of which conjectures can still be made. According to Heraclitus of Ephesus (544-484 BC), the entire substance of the world is in a ceaseless process of change, whereas there is a natural link between names and things. The author admits that language is in the nature of things and it flows with them, while the name is a natural part of what is named. Thus Graffi (2010: 24) takes the views that, in Heraclitus (544-484 BC), the language provides a direct access to reality". However, Parmenides of Elea (530-460 BC) believes that whatever is, is; whatever is not, is not, and cannot come to be. Being or reality is eternal, unchangeable and uncreated. The language is equivalent of being and thinking, in which the being is the expression of thought. Graffi (2010, p. 24) argues that, in Parmenides (530-460 BC), "the one reality is that of being, intuited by mind, and language signs haven't any title to represent them". This philosophical debate began in the pre-Socratic Works, Parmenides and Heraclitus, including the texts that have survived, specially dedicated to language. The tradition of thinking about language as laid down by the Pre-Socratic Philosophers was eventually continued in the works of Plato and Aristotle.

1.4 Plato's Theory of Language

In the *Cratylus*, the one dialogue Plato devoted exclusively to questions about language, he (c. 428–348 or 347 b.c.e.) contrasts two ways of explaining how words link with things. Is it purely a matter of 'convention and agreement,' so that 'whatever name you give to something is the right one'? Or are some words naturally suited to stand for certain given things? Superficially, Plato certainly seems to lend support to the latter, naturalist answer, exploring through usually fanciful etymology how words can be analyzed into significant elements Plato (427-347 BC) introduced the question about the correctness of names in this dialogue through Socrates. In the ensuing debate, Socrates examines two extremely opposing views. On the one hand, Hermogenes considers that the correctness of names (orthotês onomatôn) is purely a linguistic convention, suggesting that each

individual has the freedom to use words the way he want, even if they differ from one person to another. Similarly, cities can name the same object with different names, from Greek to Greek and Greek to barbarians. On the other hand, Cratylus believes that some names have a suitability by nature to named entities while other names do not, i.e., some names are part of the nature of the objects and originate in eternal and immutable principles, external to the man himself. In line with this, Socrates and Cratylus consider that most of the names can be analyzed etymologically within a smaller set of primary names. Thus, the correctness of names would be in the natural resemblance existing between its sounds and its object, that is, language is the exact representation of objects. At the end, Socrates finds that he cannot establish a clear position in favor of Hermogenes, who argues that the names are the result of a convention, nor in favor of Cratylus, which considers that the names are established according to the nature of things. In the *Cratylus*, Socrates explores the correctness of the names claiming that the etymology or original form of a word contains a description of the named thing. Based on this principle of correctness, Plato (427-347 BC) briefly outlines the notion of an ideal language in which the analysis of the names should mirror and reveal the branched structure of reality.

1.5 Aristotle's Theory of Language

Aristotle also continues the linguistic tradition of Plato, but he does that, he attempts a definition of what language is in relation to creatures in existence. Aristotle classifies the animals according to the difference of vocalization. Some animals are mute (ἄθσλα), some make a noise (ϛνθεηηθά), some have a voice (θσλήεληα), as for the animals having a voice, some use the speech (δηάιεθηνλ), the other have no speech (ἀγξάκκαηα). Voice (θσλὴ) is the sound (ϛόθνο) produced by a creature possessing a soul (ἐκϛύρνπ); for inanimate things (ἀϛύρσλ) never have a voice(νὐζὲλ θσλεῖ); they can only metaphorically be said to give a voice(θσλεῖλ), e.g., a flute or a lyre, and all the other inanimate things which have a musical compass, and tune, and modulation. Living creatures that have voice must use some special organs to produce "voice". Aristotle points out that since "voice" must transmit in the medium of air, so the living creatures, in order to emit "voice", must have some organs that can accommodate air, these organs are lung and throat which deal with breath. All the living creatures without lung and throat cannot produce "voice", but they can still make "sound" using other body parts. As for human beings, such "sound" is a kind of "noise" paddles".(*Historia Animalium* 535b3-13)(Aristotle, translated by A.L. PecK,1965). Further, not all the "sound" produced by the living creatures with soul, using their vocal organs such as lung and throat, is "voice". "Voice" is accompanied by some "imagination" (θαληαζίαο),

and is a sound meaning something. Aristotle points out that the cough is just a "sound", because it is just an air mass activity in the organ, which has not any meaning. In conclusion, "sound" must match three conditions to become "voice", first, speaker must be a living creature with soul. Secondly, speaker must use his special vocal organs such as lung and throat. Thirdly, such "sound" made must means something. Voice also differs from speech, for speech is articulated voice. To articulate voice, such creatures must have a tongue that moves freely and is capable of producing the consonants and vowels of the language. Hence, those animals which have no tongue, or a tongue which cannot move freely on its own, cannot produce speech (δηαιέγεηαη); though of course they may be able to produce sounds (ςνθεῖλ) by others parts of the body. (*Historia Animalium* 535a28-535b3) (Aristotle, translated by A.L. PecK, 1965). Only human beings have the capacity of moving from the level of voice to speech.

With regard to human language also, Aristotle was a conventionalist when it comes to what language is. A name is 'a spoken sound significant by convention.' But how do such spoken sounds link with the world? In *On Interpretation* (16a), Aristotle writes that, "Spoken sounds are symbols of affections in the soul, and written marks symbols of spoken sounds. But what these are in the first place signs of—affections of the soul—are the same for all; and what these affections are likenesses of—actual things—are also the same." Aristotle's semantic scheme, in which things are signified by words only through the intermediary of thoughts or mental images ("affections of the soul"), is underwritten by his psychology and metaphysics. Human beings know about the world through being affected by the forms that account for things being as they are: the heat of a hot stone, for instance, or the humanity that makes someone a human. Aristotle is therefore justified, to his own way of thinking, in supposing that although words vary from language to language, the mental signs they stand for are the same for all people and can correspond directly with the objects themselves. Aristotle's aim in thinking about language was not merely to look at the relation of naming-words to things, but to explain how words combine to form assertoric sentences, which can be true or false. *On Interpretation* studies the functions of nouns and verbs and the mechanism of predication in some detail, but Aristotle remains rather vague about how sentences as a whole link up with reality. In the *Categories* (14b) he talks of what makes a sentence true (what we might call a state-of-affairs) as a *pragma* —a vague word, meaning act, thing, or matter.

1.6 Stoic Philosophy of Language

With regard to human language, the Stoics made clear distinctions between three things: (i) the forms of language, linguistic sounds, (ii) the messages of those forms, what they called lekta (the singular is lekton), translated “sayables”, and (iii) the referent of a linguistic sign, some actual object in the world. A lekton is whatever it is that is said *about* something; the component of meaning of a linguistic sign which is left over if you disregard reference. For instance, the phrases "The first man on the moon" and "Neil Armstrong" refer to the same person but they don't mean the same thing. To illustrate this, consider the sentences "Neil Armstrong was Neil Armstrong", and "Neil Armstrong was the first man on the moon". The second sentence is informative whereas the first is not. Since all that differs between the two sentences is the substitution of "Neil Armstrong" for "the first man on the moon" we must conclude the two noun phrases differ in some aspect of meaning but not in reference. This aspect of meaning roughly corresponds to the Stoic concept of a lekton. lekta are somethings only by virtue of the presentations of which they are associated. Just as one may refer to an object in different ways, a person may also have different sorts of presentations of an object. Since a presentation is an arrangement of logos it seems plausible to think of a lekton as the pattern of that presentation. In fact, it is recognized by modern scholars that at least some Stoic philosophers most likely conceived there were no presentations without lekta, and no lekta without presentations. Also, lekta were always associated with some form of linguistic sound, although the Stoics were aware of the fact that such associations were rarely in the form of a one to one correspondence. So it appears that for the Stoics, language and thought were inextricably linked. Thus, reality has direct relationships with presentations, presentations have direct relationships with lekta, and lekta have direct relationships with the physical manifestations of language, e.g., words, phrases, sentences, or arguments (SE 4).

Assuming that the Stoics did not make a clear distinction between a linguistic form which is a type opposed to a linguistic form which is a token, it makes sense that the Stoics developed grammatical ideas, such as the analysis of Greek noun cases and verb forms, in respect to lekta rather than linguistic forms. To this end they developed a specific terminology to describe the taxonomy and interrelationships of lekta. Particular lekta were classified as either complete or incomplete. Incomplete lekta were associated with linguistic units smaller than a clause whereas complete lekta corresponded to complete statements. There were types of complete lekta associated with declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory statements. The only analyses of complete lekta of which significant evidence remains to

posterity are analyses of the lekta associated with declarative statements called axiomata (αχιωματα) . Concerned with these statements, incomplete lekta were classified as either subjects or predicates. A subject was associated with a corresponding common or mass noun and a predicate was associated with a verb phrase which might consist of either a simple intransitive verb like "runs" or a verb and its complement or object as in "runs to the acropolis", or "hits the bird".

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES 1

1. Plato devoted exclusively to the question of language one of his dialogues known as _____
2. Which philosopher is regarded as a conventionalist when it comes to what language is?
3. Which group of philosophers distinguished human language into the following: (i) the forms of language, linguistic sounds, (ii) the messages of those forms, what they called lekta (the singular is lekton), translated “sayables”, and (iii) the referent of a linguistic sign, some actual object in the world?

Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be observed that sustained critical discussion about language began way back in antiquity and most of the modern theories about language are more of refinements of the thoughts of ancient scholars.

1.7 Summary

In all of the foregoing, considerable attention has been paid to how the Philosophy of Language developed in the ancient period of Philosophy. Particular, mention was made of the efforts of some of the Pre-Socratic scholars, Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics in the development of the Philosophy of Language.

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1.10 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercises 1

1. Cratylus
2. Aristotle
3. The stoics

UNIT 2 LANGUAGE IN MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

Unit Structure

2.1 Introduction

What do you think are the contributions of Medieval Philosophers to the Philosophy of Language?

This unit focuses on the Philosophy of Language in the medieval period of Philosophy. It pays attention discussion about language in the early middle Ages, it looks at the developmentof speculative grammar as well as the idea of linguistic diversity in the period of the incursion of the Arabs into Europe in the Medieval Era.

2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the place of Abelard in the development of Medieval Philosophy of Language.
- Highlight the features of speculative grammar
- Analyse the Ockham's contributions to the Philosophy of Language
- Discuss the phenomenon of linguistic diversity in the middle ages

2.3 Abelard and the Early Middle Ages

Early medieval philosophers were deeply influenced by the semantic scheme of *On Interpretation.* The way in which Boethius (c. 480–c. 524) discussed it in his commentaries (early sixth century) linked with ideas they found in the writings of St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) to

suggest the following, widely accepted basic scheme: written language signifies spoken languages, which in turn signify a mental language common to all humans, and the terms of this mental language signify things in the world. In medieval texts signification is usually therefore a causal, psychological relation: *w* signifies a thing *x* if and only if *w* causes a thought of *x* in the mind of a competent speaker of the language. There were, however, other influences, especially the grammatical writings of Priscian (fl. 500 c.e.), who was heavily influenced by Stoic theories.

By the eleventh century, there was already a strong philosophical interest in questions about language. For example, St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033 or 1034–1109) wrote a dialogue about the problems caused by a word such as *grammaticus,* which means "grammarian" but also has the adjectival sense of "grammatical": is *grammaticus* a substance, then, or a quality? In Peter Abelard's (1079–?1144) logical writings (c. 1115–1125) the semantics of both words and sentences receive careful and searching attention. Abelard accepts the usual psychologico-causal understanding of signification, but his nominalism—the view that nothing except particulars exists—made it problematic. He accepts that predicates signify universals, and then (in accord with his theory) goes on to identify these universals with what are not things—mental images or, in the latest version of his theory, a thought-content. Abelard also developed an account of the semantics of sentences. Assertoric sentences signify what he calls *dicta* (literally, "things said")—by which he means states of affairs or (on some occasions, something nearer to) propositions. *Dicta,* however, are not things; they are, literally, nothing. The parallel with the Stoics' *lekta* is striking, although direct influence does not seem possible. Thirteenth-century thinkers talked of sentences signifying *enuntiabilia* (things able to be said), and some fourteenth-century thinkers use the term *complexe significabilia* (complexly signifiables)—in both cases bringing themselves even closer to the meaning of the Stoics' term.

2.4 Speculative Grammar

Speculative grammar was a striking, though short-lived, episode in medieval thinking about grammar. Its outstanding exponents, Boethius and Martin of Dacia, and Radulphus Brito, were arts masters at the University of Paris in the period from approximately 1250 to 1300. They aspired to give grammar the universality demanded of an Aristotelian science and, although they worked entirely with Latin, they believed that the underlying structure they were uncovering was that of any language, although each language represented it using different combinations of sounds. At the basis of speculative grammar is the Aristotelian semantics, which aligns things in the world, thoughts, and words. The

speculative grammarians held that there are modes of being (properties of things, such as being singular or plural, active or passive) and, parallel to these, modes of thinking (as when the intellect thinks of a thing as being singular or plural, and so on). The modes of signifiying (*modi significandi*— from whence the term *modistic grammarians* or *modists*) parallel these modes of being and of thinking. So, a first imposition links a sound with a certain sort of thing, and this root becomes a part of speech by being given *modi significandi* that first of all make it into one of the parts of speech (noun, verb, and so on) and then add features such as case and number (for nouns) or tense and person (for verbs). The modists' assumption is that the Latin grammatical categories are precisely molded to the general structure of reality, which is captured accurately in thought.

2.5 The Terminists and Ockham

A little earlier in the thirteenth century, logicians at Paris and Oxford were busy developing a different approach to the relation between words and things, the theory of the properties of terms, which was given its most popular exposition in the *Tractatus* (the so-called *Summulae logicales*) of Peter of Spain (Pope John XXI; d. 1277). The theory of the properties of terms concerns the way in which nouns refer in the context of a sentence. One distinction (in the terminology of the English logician William of Sherwood) is between material supposition, where a word refers to itself ("Man has three letters")—a medieval equivalent of quotation marks—and formal supposition, where it refers to something in the world. Formal supposition can be either simple or personal: in simple supposition, a word refers to a universal ("Man is a *species* "), whereas in personal supposition it refers to particulars in various different ways, which the terminists further distinguished. The theory provided for the (personal) supposition of a word to be "ampliated" or "restricted" by its context. By adding *white* to *man*, one restricts the supposition of *man* to just those men who are white; by making it the subject of a future-tense verb, one will restrict the supposition of the noun to men in the future. Expressions like "think of" and "it is possible that" ampliate the reference of nouns in their scope to include all thinkable or possible such individuals.

Terminism did not fit the interests of mid-and late-thirteenth-century thinkers, but it was revived again in the fourteenth century. William of Ockham (c. 1285–?1349) uses it, in an adapted form, in setting out one of the most elaborate medieval theories about mental language. William is so fully committed to the idea of our thoughts being naturally structured in a language-like (indeed, Latin-like) way, that he breaks the Aristotelian mold and holds that, rather than words signifying thoughts, both words (natural language) and thoughts (mental language) signify

reality in much the same way. Since Ockham—like Abelard before him—was a nominalist, he could not accept the usual idea that simple supposition is of universals: according to him, a word has simple supposition when it supposits for a mental term, but does not signify it.

2.6 Linguistic Diversity: Dante and the Arabs

The mainstream Western medieval tradition of thought about language concentrated on a single language, Latin. By doing so, it gained the advantage of allowing philosophers to see more clearly the large, abstract questions that concern the relation of any language to the mind and to reality. It also suffered, because scholars (as appears strikingly in the case of the speculative grammarians) simply assumed that features in fact special to the structure of Latinwere universal to every language. By the later Middle Ages, however, there was at least some analytical investigation of the facts of linguistic diversity. The great poet Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), writing his *On Eloquence in the Vernacular* in Latin to defend writing in Italian, tried to explain how all languages derive from the original tongue spoken by Adam, and how they have changed and developed.

Things were very different in the Arabic tradition. During the eighth and ninth centuries, a great quantity of Greek scientific and philosophical work was translated into Arabic. In the earliest period, at least, those thinkers in Islam who thought of themselves as followers of the Greek philosophers tended to play down the value of grammatical study. Their attitude led to a famous confrontation in 932 between the grammarian Abu Sa'id al-Sirafi and the philosopher Abu Bishr Matta. While Matta held that logic provided a universal key to thinking, al-Sirafi's contention was that Greek logic is based on the Greek language: writers in Arabic need, rather, to study their own language. The contrast with thirteenth-century Latin thought is piquant. There, grammar was made into a sort of universal linguistic logic; here logic itself is argued to be as particular as the grammars of different languages.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

1. In his logical writings, the semantics of both words and sentences receive careful and searching attention. Which philosopher accepts the usual psychologico-causal understanding of signification?
2. Which Philosopher is so fully committed to the idea of our thoughts being naturally structured in a language-like (indeed, Latin-like) way, that he breaks the Aristotelian mold and holds that, rather than words signifying thoughts, both words (natural language) and thoughts (mental language) signify reality in much the same way?
3. The mainstream Western medieval tradition of thought about language concentrated on a single language which is _____

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be rightly said that philosophical discourse on language received further boost in the works of Medieval scholars. That is, their ideas further helped to cement the foundations upon which modern philosophy of language will continue

2.7 Summary

From the foregoing, attention has been paid to the general aura of the Philosophy of Language in the Medieval era. The unit looked at the place of Abelard in the language discourse of the Middle Ages, it considers the development of speculative grammar as well as the connections between Ockham and the terminists. Finally, some attention was given to the phenomenon of linguistic diversity in the middle ages.

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2.9 Possible Answer to the Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. Peter Abelard
2. Williams of Ockhams
3. Latin

UNIT 3 LANGUAGE IN MODERN PHILOSOPHY

Unit Structure

3.1 Introduction

The focus of this unit is on the Philosophy of Language in the third era of philosophy, the modern period. In this unit, only three positions are isolated for brief discussion. They include: John Locke's position on what language is, the linguistic reflections of Spinoza and finally, the thoughts of J. S. Mill with regard to language and logic.

3.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the unit, you will be able to:

- Expose Locke's view on Language
- Articulate the basic elements of linguistics in Spinoza's thought
- Highlight the key elements in Mill's discourse on language and logic.

3.3 Locke's View of Language

Locke claims in his *Essay on Human Understanding*, Book III, chapter ii, the second paragraph: Man, though he has great variety of thoughts, and such from which others as well as himself might receive profit and delight; yet they are all within his own breast, invisible and hidden from others, nor can of themselves be made to appear. The comfort and advantage of society not being to be had without communication of thoughts, it was necessary that man should find out some external sensible signs, whereof those invisible ideas, which his thoughts are made up of, might be made known to others. For this purpose, nothing was so fine, either for plenty or quickness, as those articulate sounds,

which with so much ease and variety he found himself able to make. Thus, we may conceive how words, which were by nature so well adapted to that purpose, came to be made use of by men as the signs of their ideas; not by any natural connexion that there is between particular articulate sounds and certain ideas, for then there would be but one language amongst all men; but by a voluntary imposition, whereby such a word is made arbitrarily the mark of such an idea. Considering the last part of that claim, it is clear that Locke thinks that that the connections between particular words and the ideas for which they stand are neither natural nor necessary but instead are arbitrary and conventional. When Locke claims that, "Words are sensible Signs, necessary for Communication of Ideas," he is taking a very practical, and some might say surprisingly post- modern, view of the development of language. For Locke, language developed merely as a means to facilitate the development of society so that one may convey ideas which may otherwise remain hidden "within his own breast" so to speak.

According to Locke, man has a "great variety of thoughts" which needs to be expressed for a variety of reasons, but seeing as how they are all contained within his own mind, they are not accessible to others and so needed an external method of communicating these thoughts. For Locke, this external method was words, and though they were "well adapted to the purpose"as the signs of their ideas, there is no connection between the particular sounds the ideas that they represent. An interesting, though convoluted, way of putting it might be to say that there is no inherent quality of "goldness" within the color gold. Rather, the inverse relationship seems to be the case wherein calling gold "gold" is what gives the property of "goldness" to other things. If it was the case that there was a natural connection between particular words and the things they represent then, according to Locke, there would be only one language. Instead, the only relation between a word and the particular idea it represents is completely arbitrary and words are merely "sensible marks of ideas."

3.4 Spinoza as A Linguist

Spinoza a linguist operates more within the context of detailing out the linguistic structure of the Hebrew Language. From this standpoint, inferences can also be made for the Philosophy of Language in general. In his discourse on the general principles of language design, he identifies very salient features of the design of a language. In the first instance, *Speech is primary.* The primacy of speech over writing, or the fact that writing is a symbolization of a symbolization, clearly demonstrates the descriptive approach to language study (p. 18): "Nevertheless the originators of the letters in all languages failed to indicate these expressions in the written forms of speech. This is due to

the fact that we can express our meaning much better orally than in writing." At the second instance, *Language is rule-governed, but there exist exceptions to rules.* That language is describable as rule-governed behavior is a basic premise for Spinoza, and he reacted strongly to the prescriptive linguistics of the times. Thirdly, there are also *Deep Structure.* One of Spinoza's most intriguing devices is his concept of deep or conceptual structure, which usually is associated with the linguistics of a much later period (p. 28). In this context, he defines a noun as "things and attributes of things, modes and relationships, or actions, and modes and relationships of actions" (28). With regard to the influence of Spinoza, There is some indication that Spinoza was influenced, to a certain extent, by the Cartesian view that the grammar of a language is a theory of that language, the purpose for which is to account for an infinite number of possible grammatical sentences not being confined only to those sentences as actually found in a fixed corpus, such as the Hebrew Bible (p. 96): "To be sure, as we have said, they [i.e., the Classical grammarians] wrote a grammar of the Scriptures, not of the language. "

3.5 J. S. Mill on Language and Logic

Though Mill holds that basic human thought is possible without language, “in complicated cases [it] can take place in no other way” (*System*, VII: 19). As such, a study of human beings’ theoretical engagement with the world demands clarity on this “fundamental instrument of thought” (Mill, 1991: 663). Mill’s account of language turns upon a distinction between the *denotation* and *connotation* of a word. Words denote the *objects* which they are true of; they connote specific *attributes* of those objects. The word “man”, for instance, *denotes*, or is true of, all men—“Peter, Paul, John, and an indefinite number of other individuals” (Mill, 1991: 31). But it *connotes* the attributes in virtue of which the word “man” applies to these individuals—“corporeity, animal life, rationality, and a certain external form, which for distinction we call the human” (Mill, 1991: 31). Connotation *determines* denotation in the following sense: to know the connotation of a word is to know the necessary and sufficient conditions to determine whether a given object is denoted by that word.

Not all words have connotation. Mill notes that words can be *singular* or *general*. “Cicero” is a singular name—applying to only one object, namely Cicero. “Roman” is, by contrast, a general name—applying to many objects, including Cicero but also Augustus, Nero, and many others. While “all concrete general names are connotative” (Mill, 1991: 32)—signaling the attributes which justify our application of the name to individual objects—the same cannot be said of singular names. To be sure, *some* singular names are connotative—“the author of *De Re*

Publica" is, as we would say, a definite description, and picks out one individual by way of signaling its attributes—but not all are. The name "Cicero" does not connote any attributes at all—but is a proper name, and serves simply as a marker for that individual (Schwartz 2014).

On the basis of the above, Deductive or *a priori* reasoning, Mill thinks, is similarly empty. Predating the revolution in logic that the late nineteenth-century ushered in, Mill thinks of deductive reasoning primarily in terms of the syllogism. Syllogistic reasoning, he argues can elicit no new truths about how the world is: "nothing ever was, or can be proved by syllogism which was not known, or assumed to be known, before" (Mill, 1991: 183).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES 3

1. Which Philosopher is of the opinion that man has great variety of thoughts.
2. Which linguist operated more within the context of detailing out the linguistic structure of the Hebrew Language?
3. Whose account of language turns upon a distinction between the denotation and connotation of a word?

Conclusion

In conclusion, these three scholars were discussed so as to give an overview of what language discussions were in the Modern era. The closing of the discussion with Mill is meant to serve as an introduction to the full blooming of the Philosophy of Language in the Contemporary Era of Philosophy.

3.6 Summary

In this unit, the discussions have centred on three key figures. First, attention was given to John Locke's view on language. Secondly, Spinoza's linguistics was also considered and thirdly, Mill's language and logic were also discussed.

3.7 Further Reading

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3.8 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 3

1. Locke
2 Spinoza
3 J. S. Mill

UNIT 4 CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

Unit Structure

4.1 Introduction

This is the period when the Philosophy of Language comes to its own. This is the era when the Philosophy of Language, as discipline, was born. Given the fact that the issues in the era will preoccupy the whole of this course, attention will be paid to just two elements here. They are: pragmatists on language and truth, as well logical positivism.

4.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the unit, you will be able to:

- Discussion the position of pragmatism on language and truth
- Expose the central claim of logical positivism

4.3 Pragmatists on Language and Truth

Peirce's logic and theory of language was embedded in a general theory of signs, which he called 'semiotics', and to which he attached great importance. A sign stands for an object by being understood or interpreted by an intelligent being; the interpretation is itself a further sign. Peirce calls the external sign a 'representamen' and the sign as understood 'the interpretant'.The semiotic function of signs is a triadic relation between representamen, object, and interpretant (Kenny, 2007: 126).

Peirce classified signs into three classes. There are natural signs: clouds, for instance, are a natural sign of rain, and stripped bark on a tree may

be a sign of the presence of deer. Next, there are iconic signs, which signify by resembling their objects. Naturalistic paintings and sculptures are the most obvious examples, but there are others such as maps. Two features are essential to an iconic sign: (1) it should share with its object some feature that each could have if the other did not exist; (2) the method of interpreting this feature should be fixed by convention. Finally, there are symbols, of which words are the most important example, but which include such things as uniforms and traffic signals. These, like iconic signs, are determined by convention, but unlike iconic signs they do not operate by exploiting any resemblance to their objects. Since Peirce, theorists have divided semiotics into three disciplines: syntactics, the study of grammar and whatever may underlie grammatical structure; semantics, the study of the relationship between language and reality; and pragmatics, the study of the social context and the purposes and consequences of communication. Peirce's own work operated at the interface of all three disciplines; but in the work of his followers, despite their school title of 'pragmatists', discussion focused upon two key concepts of semantics, namely meaning and truth (Kenny, 2007: 127).

Peirce and James explained meaning in similar ways: in order to discover what an utterance meant you had to explore what would be the practical consequences of its being true, and if there was no difference between the consequences of two different beliefs then they were in effect the same belief. But James maintained that the truth of a belief, and not just its meaning, depended on its consequences, or rather on the consequences of believing it. If my believing that p is something that pays in the long run, something whose overall consequence is profitable for my life, then p is true for me. The pragmatist's claim, he tells us, is this:

> Truth, concretely considered, is an attribute of our beliefs, and these are attitudes that follow satisfactions. The ideas around which the satisfactions cluster are primarily only hypotheses that challenge or summon a belief to come and take its stand upon them. The pragmatist's idea of truth is just such a challenge. He finds it ultra- satisfactory to accept it, and takes his own stand accordingly (James, 1997: 199).

Pragmatism, he claimed, was not at all inconsistent with realism. Truth and reality are not the same as each other; truth is something known, thought, or said about the reality. Indeed, the notion of a reality independent of any believer, James said, was at the base of the pragmatist definition of truth. Any statement, to be counted true, must agree with some such reality.

4.4 Logical Positivism

The *Tractatus* of Wittgenstein quickly became famous. Oddly enough, though it was itself highly metaphysical, as well as austerely logical, its most enthusiastic admirers were the anti- metaphysical positivists of the Vienna Circle. This group, which grew up round Moritz Schlick after his appointment as Professor of the Philosophy of Science in Vienna in 1922, consisted of philosophers, mathematicians, and scientists; among its members were Friedrich Waismann, Rudolf Carnap, and Otto Neurath. In 1929, after a congress in Prague, the circle issued a manifesto which proclaimed the launch of a campaign against metaphysics as an outdated precursor of science. The ideas of the circle were publicized in the journal *Erkenntnis*, founded in 1930 and edited by Carnap in conjunction with Hans Reichenbach of Berlin. The circle was broken up in 1939 as a result of political pressure, after Schlick had been killed by an insane student (Kenny, 2006: 368-9).

The great weapon in this attack was the Verification Principle. This, in its original form, ruledthat the meaning of a proposition was the mode of its verification. Such a view of meaning enabled one to rule out of court as meaningless all statements which could neither be verified nor falsified by experience. Faced with a dispute about the nature of the Absolute, or the purpose of the Universe, or Kantian things-in-themselves, the Positivist could expose the emptiness of the quarrel by saying to the warring metaphysicians: 'What possible experience could settle the issue between you?' (Kenny, 2006: 369).

Almost as soon as the Verification Principle was stated disputes broke out about its status and its formulation. The principle did not seem to be itself a tautology, a mere matter of definition. Was it, then, verifiable by experience? If not, it seemed to stand self-condemned as meaningless. Moreover, not only metaphysical propositions, but scientific generalizations, were incapable of conclusive verification. Should we say then that the criterion of significance was not verifiability but falsifiability? Thus, general propositions would be significant because they were conclusively falsifiable. But how, on this view, were assertions of existence significant? Short of an exhaustive tour of the universe, no experience could conclusively falsify them. So the principle was reformulated in a 'weak' form which laid down that a proposition was significant if there were some observations which would be *relevant* to its truth or falsity. And it was allowed that there were significant propositions which, while 'verifiable in principle', could not be verified in practice. Even thus qualified, it was not easy to apply the Verification Principle to matters of history; and any further modifications of the principle ran risk of making it so wide as to admit metaphysical statements (Kenny, 2006: 369).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

1. Mention the classes of signs as posited by Peirce?
2. The verification principle in its original form, ruled that the meaning of a proposition was the mode of its _____
3. The principle of verification was reformulated in a 'weak' form which laid down that a proposition was significant if there were some observations which would be relevant to its _____

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to note that attention is given to logical positivism in this unit because the claims of logical positivism are very fundamental to the claims of the Philosophy of Language in general. In fact, the importance of science to language which was highlighted by the logical positivists will determine the course of the Philosophy of Language subsequently.

4.5 Summary

The discussions above have been focused in the first instance on pragmatism and its discussions on truth and language. At the second instance, the focus has been logical positivism with a special focus on highlighting its central claim.

4.6 References/Further Reading

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4.7 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 4

1. (a.) Natural signs
   (b.) Iconic signs
   (c.) Symbols

2. Verification

3. Truth or falsity

MODULE 3 MEANING AND ITS DIMENSIONS

INTRODUCTION

This module is made up of five (5) study units. The first focuses on the connotative dimension of meaning. The second pays attention to the denotative dimension of meaning, the third focuses on sense relations, while the other two units focus on lexical dimensions of meaning and grammatical dimensions of meaning respectively.

UNIT 1 CONNOTATIVE DIMENSION OF MEANING

Unit Structure

1.1 Introduction

This unit focuses on the connotative dimension of meaning. It seeks to give a brief and clear understanding of how meaning is understood semantically from the point of view of connotation.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the unit, you will be able to:

- Define meaning
- State the connotative aspects of meaning
- Itemsie the various types of connotation

1.3 Definition of Meaning

From the point of view of Linguistics as a field of study, meaning can simply be understood as the aboutness of natural language. In this sense, a noise that I make when I speak or a scribble that I produce when I write words in English or a sign-language gesture I make are physical objects that convey *meanings*, they are *about* something. Also, when we use language to communicate, to talk in relation to things in the world, people and their properties, relations between people, events, etc. we are trying to convey meaning about these realities. The property of 'aboutness' of linguistic signs (or symbols) is one of the defining properties of natural languages, it is what a semantic theory of natural languages tries to capture.

At a more technical level, meaning can be defined from two points of view. It can be understood as the action of putting words into relationship with the world. At the second level, meaning can be understood as the notion, the concept or the mental image of the object or situation in reality as reflected in man's mind (Stati, 1971). These definitions puts meaning first at the level of the words acting in the world. The second puts meaning at the level of words creating concepts and metal images in the mind. Thus, meaning can either be in relation to the world or in relation to the mind. In articulating the dimensions of meaning, there is first the denotative dimension.

1.4 Connotative Aspects of Meaning

Connotation is the emotional and imaginative association surrounding a word. **That is,** the affective or emotional associations elicited by a word, which clearly need to be the same for all people who know and use the word. **Connotation** refers to the personal aspect of meaning, the emotional associations that the word arouses. Consider the verb *work.* One definition of *work* is "to engage in purposeful activity." For most people, the word *work* has a neutral or positive connotation. However, some synonyms for *work* create negative feelings. What feelings do the following sentences evoke?

I worked in the yard this weekend.
I toiled all weekend in the yard.
I plugged away until the yard was mowed.

Worked, *toiled*, and *plugged away* generally mean the same thing, but their connotations are very different. While *worked* creates the sense of purposeful activity, *toiled* has the added meaning of strenuous, continuous labor and *plugged away* connotes persistence. The shades of

meaning are what give each word its unique connotations. Notice how the following words change in shades of meaning, from positive or neutral connotations to negative connotations.

proud	confident	arrogant	haughty
young	childish	immature	
reserved	timid withdrawn	inhibited	

Authors choose their words very carefully to create specific feelings and reactions in thereader.

1.5 Types of Connotation

As observed above, connotation can happen at three different levels. Connotation can be neutral, positive or negative, depending on the meaning the write wants to pass across. Connotation can be **flavor or positive connotation** when words that make people feel good are used. Connotation can also be **unfavorable or negative connotation**; this occurs when words that provoke negative emotional responses are used. Lastly, **neutral connotation** refersto the use of words that not good or bad; it refers to an indifferent situation with regard to the level of emotions lodged in words. It is often used when the author doesn't want to show strong emotions either way.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES 1

1. Give a simple definition of meaning.
2. What is connotation?
3. Mention the three types of connotation.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, the everyday use of language is indeed connotative, but this does not exhaust the dimensions of meaning to the ordinary everyday use of language. The unit will focus on the denotative dimension of meaning

1.6 Summary

From this section, the consideration has been on understanding meaning itself, of which it canbe understood either in relation to the world or in relation to the mind. The unit also considered what connotative meaning can be and considered the three types of connotation.

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1.8 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. meaning can simply be understood as the aboutness of natural language.
2. Connotation is the emotional and imaginative association surrounding a word.

3.(a.) Positive
(b.) Negative
(c.) Neutral

UNIT 2 DENOTATIVE DIMENSION OF MEANING

Unit Structure

2.1 Introduction

This unit focuses on the denotative dimension of meaning. The unit will define denotation andconsider some of the aspects of denotation.

2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Define denotation as it relates to meaning
- Itemise some examples of denotative meaning

2.3 Definition of Denotation

The definition of *denotation* refers to the direct or dictionary meaning of a word, in contrast to its figurative or associated meanings (connotations). To understand the difference, think of how words would be used in writing about science or legal matters (with a precision of meaning) vs. how words would be used in poetry (rich with allusion, metaphor, and other shades of meaning than just their straight dictionary meanings). Denotation describes a concise dictionary definition of a word, without taking into account any current slang or connotations it may have. Legal and scientific language strives for precision in its language, adhering to denotative meanings for clarity. Advertising and poetry, on the other hand, look for words rich in connotations to pack every word with extra layers of meaning.

2.4 Aspects of Denotation

While denotation is a relatively simple concept, there are some additional facts about it thatare worth knowing:

Denotations are objective and do not change with context: A word's *connotation* depends on a person's general culture and specific personal background. For instance, one person might hear the word "father" and experience a connotation of stern, unforgiving, and distant, while for a different person "father" might have a connotation of loving kindness. The connotation depends on each person's personal experiences. But the *denotation* of the word is the same for both people.

Denotations *don't* have to be neutral: Many websites describe denotations as being "neutral," in contrast to connotations which can be positive, negative, or neutral. This is a misconception. While it's true that connotation can *add* a positive, negative, or neutral spin to that word's denotation, the meaning of the word can certainly affect whether the word is positive or negative. For example, it would be wrong to say that the words "smile" and "smirk" have the same denotation but different connotations (with "smile" being positive and "smirk" negative). The definition of "smirk" is "a smug or conceited smile." The very definition of smirk—its denotation—is *already* negative. The key to denotations is not that they are neutral, but that they are literal and do not extend past the precise literal definition ofa word or phrase.

2.5 Denotation Examples

Every single word in every language has a denotation. The examples of denotation in literature, speeches, and the speech of everyday life is therefore endless, but that also makes it hard to pick out one example from literature that better illustrates denotation than any other example. Instead of providing examples from literature, it's probably more helpful to see examples of words that have similar denotations but different connotations. The following listprovides just that:

1. Chef and Cook
   - **Denotation:** Both words denote someone who prepares food.
   - **Connotation:** A "chef" has the connotation of being professional and accomplished, while a "cook" has a connotation of being someone who makes food as an amateur or for friends and family.
2. House and Home
   - **Denotation:** Both words denote a place where people live.
   - **Connotation:** A "home" also connotes warmth and love,

while a house lacks such a connotation and refers more to the structure of the building than the feeling inside it.

3. Shrewd and Clever
   - **Denotation:** Both words denote intelligence.
   - **Connotation:** "Shrewd" has a connotation of selfishness and trickery; "Clever," in contrast, has a much more positive connotation of quick- wittedness but without the sense of selfishness that is connected to "shrewd."
4. Skinny and Slim
   - **Denotation:** Both words denote thinness.
   - **Connotation:** "Skinny" has a connotation of overly thin, bony, or a bit awkward. "Slim" has a connotation of a graceful or beautiful thinness.
5. Journalist and Newshound
   - **Denotation:** Both words denote someone who reports on the news.
   - **Connotation:** "Journalist" connotes a certain sense of honor and nobility in the job, whereas "newshound" connotes a kind of amoral, "feeding frenzy" quality to the gathering and dissemination of the news.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES 2

1. What is denotation?
2. Mention the two aspects of denotation.
3. Give any two examples of denotation.

Conclusion

Denotation also complements connotation as a dimension of meaning. But these two don not exhaust the dimensions of meaning. There are yet other dimensions which subsequent units will focus on.

2.6 Summary

The above has dealt with the definition of denotation as distinct from connotation with regard to meaning. It also went ahead to identify two vital aspects of denotation, which stands it out from connotation. Lastly, the focus was on examples of denotation. This was done have connotation in view as well.

2.7 References/Further Reading

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2.8 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercises 2

1. Denotation refers to the direct or dictionary meaning of a word, in contrast to its figurative or associated meanings (connotations).

2.(a.) Denotation are objective and do not change with context
(b.) Denotation do not have to be neutral

3.(a.) Chef and cook
(b.) House and home

UNIT 3 SENSE RELATIONS

Unit Structure

3.1 Introduction

This unit shall pay attention to sense relations with regard to meaning. In order to do this, the unit shall first consider the definition of sense relations and final, it will consider the levels of sense relations.

3.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Define sense relations
- Itemise the levels of sense relations

3.3 Definition of Sense Relations

Semantically, all words are related in one way or another. A word which is related to other words is related to them in sense, hence sense relations. This kind of sense relationship is a paradigmatic relation and it is often between words or predicates. A **paradigmatic relation** is a relation that holds between elements of the same category, i.e. elements that can be substituted for each other. It contrasts with syntagmatic relation, which applies to relations holding between elements that are combined with each other. The opposition between 'paradigmatic' and 'syntagmatic' relations is an important dichotomy of structuralist linguistics. The term 'paradigmatic relation' was introduced by Louis Hjelmslev. Ferdinand de Saussure, who established the opposition between the two types of relations in structuralist linguistics, used the term *associative relation* for what Hjelmslev called *paradigmatic relation*.

One possible definition of *sense relations* is: "Any relation between lexical units within the semantic system of a language", (Matthews 1997:337). This means that there has to be a relation in meaning between lexical units of a language. It does not matter if this relation expresses some kind of identity or non-identity. One could also define *sense relations* as "a paradigmatic relation between words or predicates". "Paradigmatic relations are those into which a linguistic unit enters through being contrasted or substitutable, in particular environment, with other similar units", (Palmer 1981:67). In other words, a paradigmatic relation is a relation where an individual lexical unit can be replaced by another. A less scientific approach to sense relations is made by David Crystal: "We have a sense relation when we feel that lexemes relate to each other in meaning", (Crystal 2003: 164).

3.4 Levels of Sense Relations

The most common relations in meaning between lexical units are S*ynonymy* and A*ntonymy*. These two can be further sub-divided. The different types of **sense relations** can be described with the help of the logical operations of implication and contradiction. A logical **implication** is a metalinguistic relation between two propositions p and q: q logically follows from p (i.e. *p implies q*), if every semantic interpretation that makes p true automatically makes q true. This concept of implication plays a crucial role in describing the semantic relations ofsynonymy and hyponymy.

Synonymy is the semantic relation between two words that have the same (or nearly the same) meaning. Referring to the definition of logical implication, synonymy corresponds to a bilateral implication or equivalence: Two expressions A and B in the same syntactic position are synonymous if A implies B and B implies A (e.g. *movie-film*). Thus, synonymy presupposes the substitutability of the given expressions in all contexts. These expressions share the same denotational and connotational meaning and are referred to as **complete synonyms**. However, most synonyms are **partial synonyms** and differ with regard to their connotations.

In contrast to synonymy, **hyponymy** corresponds to a unilateral implication: Two expressionsA and B in the same syntactic position are hyponyms if A implies B and the converse does not hold (e.g. *tulip-flower*). Thus, hyponymy can be viewed as the semantic relation of subordination, i.e. the specification of semantic content: An item A is a hyponym of B, if the meaning of A is included in the meaning of B, but not vice versa. The superordinate term is referred to as **hyperonym**, while hyponyms that share the same hyperonym are called **co-hyponyms**. Besides hyponymy, a second important hierarchical sense

relation is called **meronymy**. Meronymy refers to part-whole relationships that hold between words on different hierarchical levels (e.g. *hand-arm*). Whereas hyponymy involves a relationship of inclusion between different classes, this is not the case with meronymy. Synonymy and hyponymy contrast with various types of semantic opposites. The most important sense relations that are based on the logical relation of **contradiction** are antonymy, complementarity, conversion, and incompatibility. The term **complementarity** (binary antonymy, nongradable antonymy) refers to an either-or relationship between the two terms of a pair of semantic opposites. It is a binary relationship in which the meaning of one lexeme is equivalent to the negation of the other lexeme (e.g. *dead-alive*). In contrast to this binary relation, **gradable antonyms** are restricted to gradable expressions that usually correlate with opposite members of a continuum (e.g. *good-bad*). This type of relationship is strongly connected to the notion of comparison, i.e. some normative relative term is needed (*a small elephant is a large animal*). The third and fourth type of semantic opposites are characterized by a reciprocal semantic relationship between pairs of words: While **converses** (relational opposites) describe the same situation from different perspectives (e.g. *doctor-patient*), **reversives** (directional opposites) involve a change of direction, especially a motion in different directions (e.g. *open-shut*). Finally, the notion of **incompatibility** refers to a non- binary semantic opposition of two expressions that are semantically similar yet differ in a single semantic feature and are thus incompatible (e.g. *red-blue*). Since in most cases co- hyponyms are semantically incompatible in a given context (e.g. *tulip-rose*), the relationship between them is also referred to as incompatibility.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES 3

1. What is sense relation?
2. What is paradigmatic relation?
3. In contrast to synonym, _____corresponds to a unilateral implication.

3.5 Summary

In all of the foregoing, the idea of sense relation as it relates to meaning was identified. The various levels of sense relations were also identified and the sub-divisions of these levels werealso articulated.

Conclusion

The idea of sense relations also add more to the various dimension of meaning that has been identified. This creates a more expansive understanding of meaning. Aside these, there are also lexical and grammatical dimension which all these have not been able to take care of. This will be the focus in the next unit.

3.6 References/Further Reading

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3.7 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 4

1. Sense relation is any relation between lexical units within the semantic system of a language.

2. Any relation that holds between elements of the same category, i.e. elements that can be substituted for each other. It contrasts with syntagmatic relation, which applies to relations holding between elements that are combined with each other.

3. Hyponymy.

UNIT 4 LEXICAL AND GRAMMARTICAL DIMENSIONS OF MEANING

Unit Structure

4.1 Introduction

This unit shall pay attention to both lexical and grammatical dimensions of meaning. By so doing, it will conclude the discussion on the dimensions of meaning.

4.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the lexical dimensions of meaning
- Enumerate the grammatical dimensions of meaning.

4.3 Lexical Meaning

Based on the Oxford Advance Leaner's Dictionary, lexical meaning is "the meaning of a word considered in isolation from the sentence containing it, and regardless of its grammaticalcontext. According to the free dictionary, lexical is "the meaning of a word in relation to the physical world or to abstract concepts, without reference to any sentence in which the word may occur. Lexical words, also known as content words, have concrete meaning that goes beyond their function in a sentence. These words refer to things, people, actions, descriptions, or other ideas that have more than just a grammatical usage. Their meaning is easily identifiedby a clear concept or item. The categories of English words that are lexical include nouns, adjectives, most verbs, and many adverbs. Nouns, for example, refer to specified ideas, people, places, or things. The concepts behind words like "dog," "love," or "Brazil," for

example, are very clear. Adjectives describe nouns in well-defined ways, providing information about colors, texture, number, size, and so on. Likewise, adverbs can be lexical words if they specifically describe nouns or verbs. Because they evoke specific ideas, descriptors like "red," "quickly," "heavy," or "effectively" are considered lexical. Most verbs also fall into the lexical category because they refer to specific actions. For example, the meanings of words like "think," "sing," "understand," and "jump" are easy to grasp.

4.4 Grammatical Meaning

According to Lyons (1995: 52) a lexeme may have different word-forms and these word- forms will generally differ in meaning: their grammatical meaning – the meaning in terms of grammar. For example, the forms of *student* and *students* differ in respect of their grammatical meaning, in that one is the singular form (of a noun of a particular class) and the other is plural form (of a noun of a particular class); and the difference between singular forms and plural forms is semantically relevant: it affects sentence-meaning. The meaning of a sentence is determined partly by the meaning of the words (i.e. lexemes) of which it consistsand partly by its grammatical meaning.

Lyons introduces the term “categorial meaning” which is part of grammatical meaning: it is that part of the meaning of lexemes which derives from their being members of one category of major parts of speech rather than another (nouns rather than verbs, verbs rather than adjectives, and so on). Thus, all lexemes with full word-forms have a grammatical, more particularly, a categorical, meaning. For example, the lexemes ‘easy’ and ‘difficult’ have the same categorial meaning: they are both adjectives. Each lexemes, however, has certain semantically relevant grammatical properties. The two word-forms *easy* and *easier* of the lexeme ‘easy’, though sharing some part of their categorical meaning, differ grammatically in that: one is the absolute form and the other the comparative form. This difference does not occur to the lexeme ‘difficult’ for this lexeme has only one form *difficult*, which does not accept any inflection. Though ‘easy’ and ‘difficult’ belong to the same category of adjectives, having the same categorial meaning, they do not share all the grammatical features each has in terms of morphology and syntax. Likewise, all the lexemes sharing categorial meaning do not have all the grammatical meanings in common.

Grammatical words, also known as function words, have little definite meaning on their own and are ambiguous without context. Some also function to impart the speaker's attitude or perspective onto other words. These kinds of words define the structure of a sentence and relate lexical words to each other. Grammatical words include prepositions, modals

and auxiliary verbs, pronouns, articles, conjunctions, and some adverbs.

4.5 The Difference between Lexical Words and Grammatical Words

Lexical words supply meaning to a sentence, whereas grammatical words relate the lexical words to one another. Look at the following sentence that only shows the lexical words: " cat jumped _____tree dog ran ____." This looks like nonsense. All you know is that it is about jumping cats, running dogs, and trees. It may be possible to guess the complete meaning of the sentence, but you can't know for certain because cats, dogs, and trees can be related in different ways. Now look at the sentence with the grammatical words re-inserted: "The cat jumped into the tree as the dog ran forward." The sentence makes sense. Notice, however, that if you put a different set of grammatical words in, you get a completely different meaning: "The cat jumped from the tree after the dog ran away." You can see that the grammatical words clarify the logical relations between the lexical words and define their function in the sentence.

Although it's technical, the difference between lexical words and grammatical words is straightforward. It is an important concept for linguists because the distinction seems to exist in all languages, not just English. Understanding these differences helps scholars figure out the relationship between the different languages, as well as the history of the English language. It may even give some insight into how human minds work. Understanding these types of words will help increase your comprehension of English.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES 4

1. Define the term meaning.
2. Define the term " lexical.
3. What is the difference between lexical words and grammatical words?

4.6 Summary

The above has considered lexical and grammatical words as well as how they relate to meaning. It has also considered the difference between lexical and grammatical meanings and how they enhance our understanding of the English language and indeed other languages.

Conclusion

With all the above, the discussion on the dimensions of meaning have been exhausted. The focus will now be on theories of meaning in the philosophy of language. This will require that special attention be placed on the theorists of meaning as well.

4.7 References/Further Reading

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4.8 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 4

1. Meaning entails the meaning of a word considered in isolation from the sentence containing it, and regardless of its grammatical context.

2. Lexical is the meaning of a word considered in isolation from the sentence containing it, and regardless of its grammaticalcontext.

3. Lexical words supply meaning to a sentence, whereas grammatical words relate the lexical words to one another.

MODULE 4 MEANING AND REFERENCE THEORY OF MEANING INTRODUCTION

Unit 1 Reference Theory of Meaning
Unit 2 Sense and Reference
Unit 3 Reference and Indexicality

This module has three units and the general focus is on the reference theory of meaning. Unit one considers reference theory particularly. Unit two considers the concepts of sense and reference and lastly, unit three studies reference and indexicality.

UNIT 1 REFERENCE THEORY OF MEANING

Unit Structure

1.1 Introduction

This unit focuses on the reference on the reference theory of meaning. It will first consider themain idea of the reference theory of meaning. Then it will consider the position of Gottlob Frege on the reference theory of meaning. The unit will also consider briefly the weaknesses of this theory of meaning.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. State the main idea of the reference theory of meaning
2. Discuss the Gottlob Frege's position on the reference theory of meaning
3. Articulate the weaknesses of the reference theory of meaning.

1.3 The Main Idea of Reference Theory

The idea in this theory is that "linguistic expressions have the meanings they do because they *stand for things;* what they mean is what they stand for. On this view, words are like labels; they are symbols that represent, designate, name, denote or refer to items in the world: the name 'Adolf Hitler' denotes (the person) Hitler; the noun 'dog' refers to the animal dog. Furthermore, the sentence 'The cat sat on the mat' represents some cat sitting on some mat, presumably in virtue of 'The cat' designating that cat, 'the mat' designating the mat in question, and 'sat on' denoting (if you like) the relation of sitting on. Sentences thus mirror the states of affairs they describe, and that is how they get to mean those things. This theory of linguistic meaning would explain the significance of all expressions in terms of their having been conventionally associated with things or states of affairs in the world, and it would explain a human being's understanding a sentence in terms of that person's knowing what the sentence's component words refer to.

1.4 Gottlob Frege and the Reference Theory of Meaning

This theory has its roots in the works of Gottlob Frege. Frege associated with each meaningful part of a *language something he called its 'Bedeutung, normally translated as 'reference'. Frege's insight was to see that the references of the parts of a sentence contribute in a systematic way to the truth or falsehood of sentences in which those parts occur. Thus, if you replace a word in a sentence *S* with a word having the same reference, the truth or falsehood of *S* will not change. But this gives rise to a notorious problem. Suppose one believes that George Orwell wrote *1984*, but does not know that Orwell is Blair. Then while the sentence 'John believes that George Orwell wrote *1984*' will be true, the sentence 'Alf believes that Eric Blair wrote *1984*' will be false. So if meaning is what determines the truth or falsehood of a sentence, there must be more to the meaning of a sentence than the references of its parts. Frege dealt with this problem using the notion of 'sense'. The sense of an expression is, intuitively, not what is referred to by an expression, but the *way* it is referred to. Each sense determines one reference, but to one reference there may correspond many senses. Thus, senses can be many, but reference is one and only one. Central to Frege's view is the ideas that senses are abstract objects, not ideas in people's minds.

1.5 Weaknesses of the Reference Theory of Meaning

Despite the appeal force of this theory, it is insufficient to adequately deal with the question of meaning. In the first place, not every word

does name or denote any actual object. For example there are the *names* of nonexistent items like Pegasus or the Easter Bunny. 'Pegasus' does not denote anything, because there is in reality no winged horse for it to denote. Or consider a simple subject–predicate sentence: 'Ralph is fat'. Though 'Ralph' may name a person, what does 'fat' name or denote? Not an individual. Certainly it does not name Ralph, but describes or characterizes him (fairly or no). Furthermore, there are words that grammatically are nouns but do not, intuitively, name either individual things or kinds of things—not even nonexistent "things" or abstract items such as qualities. Quine (1960) gives the examples of 'sake,' 'behalf,' and 'dint.' One sometimes does something for someone else's sake or on that person's behalf, but not as if a sake or a behalf were a kind of object the beneficiary led around on a leash. Or one achieves something by dint of hard work; but a dint is not a thing or kind of thing. (I have never been sure what a "whit" or a "cahoot" is.) Despite being nouns, words like these surely do not have their meanings by referring to particular kinds of objects. They seem to have meaning only by dint of occurring in longer constructions. By themselves they barely can be said to mean anything at all, though they are words, and *meaningful* words at that. Also, there are parts of speech other than nouns do not even seem to refer to things of any sort or in any way at all: 'very,' 'of,' 'and,' 'the,' 'a,' 'yes,' and, for that matter, 'hey' and 'alas.' Lastly, there are specific linguistic phenomena that seem to show that there is more to meaning than reference. In particular, coreferring terms are often not synonymous; that is, two terms can share their referent but differ in meaning—'Joseph Ratzinger' and 'the Pope,' for example.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. What is the main idea of reference theory?
2. The reference theory of meaning has its roots in the works of which Philosopher?
3. State the major weakness of the reference theory of meaning.

Conclusion

Given the weaknesses of the reference theory of meaning as discussed above, other various this theory developed to address this short comings. One of such is the idea of sense and reference. This will be the focus of the discourse in the next section.

1.6 Summary

From all the above, this unit has defined the reference theory of meaning pay attention to its main idea. The unit has also considered Gottlob Frege and his contribution to the discourse on the reference theory of meaning. The unit has also identified the weakness of the reference theory as it relates to meaning.

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18 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. The main idea of this theory is that linguistic expressions have the meanings they do because they *stand for things;* what they mean is what they stand for.

2. Gottlob Frege

3. It is insufficient to adequately deal with the question of meaning.

UNIT 2 SENSE AND REFERENCE

Unit Structure

2.1 Introduction

This unit seeks to address the one of the weaknesses of the reference theory. This is the fact that one reference can have more than one referent. In such cases the reference theory of meaning will be quite confusing. To deal with this problem Gottlob Frege introduces the idea of sense along with reference. To understand the idea of sense of reference with regard to the reference theory of meaning, the unit first considers how the idea of sense and reference emerged in mathematics. It then looks at how the idea operates in language generally and finally narrows to how it works with regard to propositions.

2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss how the idea of sense and reference emerged from mathematics
- Articulate how the idea of sense and reference functions in language
- Itemise the role of sense and reference in propositions

2.3 Mathematics and the Question of Sense and Reference

Frege's influential theory of meaning, the theory of sense (*Sinn*) and reference (*Bedeutung*) was first outlined, albeit briefly, in his article, "Funktion und Begriff" (Function and Concept) of 1891, and was expanded and explained in greater detail in perhaps his most famous work, "Über Sinn und Bedeutung" (Sense and Reference) of 1892. In

"Funktion und Begriff", the distinction between the sense and reference of signs in language is first made in regard to mathematical equations. During Frege's time, there was a widespread dispute among mathematicians as to how the sign, "=", should be understood. If we consider an equation such as, "4 x 2 = 11 - 3", a number of Frege's contemporaries, for a variety of reasons, were wary of viewing this as an expression of an identity, or, in this case, as the claim that 4 x 2 and 11 - 3 are one and the same thing. Instead, they posited some weaker form of "equality" such that the numbers 4 x 2 and 11 - 3 would be said to be equal in number or equal in magnitude without thereby constituting one and the same thing. In opposition to the view that "=" signifies identity, such thinkers would point out that 4 x 2 and 11 - 3 cannot in all ways be thought to be the same. The former is a product, the latter a difference, etc.

In his mature period, however, Frege was an ardent opponent of this view, and argued in favor of understanding "=" as identity proper, accusing rival views of confusing form and content. He argues instead that expressions such as "4 x 2" and "11 - 3" can be understood as standing for one and the same thing, the number eight, but that this single entity is determined or presented differently by the two expressions. Thus, he makes a distinction between the actual number a mathematical expression such as "4 x 2" stands for, and the way in which that number is determined or picked out. The former he called the reference (*Bedeutung*) of the expression, and the latter was called the sense (*Sinn*) of the expression. In Fregean terminology, an expression is said to *express* its sense, and *denote* or *refer to* its reference.

2.4 Sense and Reference in Language

The distinction between reference and sense was expanded, primarily in "Über Sinn und Bedeutung" as holding not only for mathematical expressions, but for all linguistic expressions (whether the language in question is natural language or a formal language). One of his primary examples therein involves the expressions "the morning star" and "the evening star". Both of these expressions refer to the planet Venus, yet they obviously denote Venus in virtue of different properties that it has. Thus, Frege claims that these two expressions have the same reference but different senses. The reference of an expression is the actual thing corresponding to it, in the case of "the morning star", the reference is the planet Venus itself. The sense of an expression, however, is the "mode of presentation" or cognitive content associated with the expression in virtue of which the reference is picked out.

Frege puts the distinction to work in solving a puzzle concerning identity claims. If we consider the two claims:

(1) the morning star = the morning star
(2) the morning star = the evening star

The first appears to be a trivial case of the law of self-identity, knowable *a priori*, while the second seems to be something that was discovered *a posteriori* by astronomers. However, if "the morning star" means the same thing as "the evening star", then the two statements themselves would also seem to have the same meaning, both involving a thing's relation of identity to itself. However, it then becomes difficult to explain why (2) seems informative while (1) does not. Frege's response to this puzzle, given the distinction between sense and reference, should be apparent. Because the reference of "the evening star" and "the morning star" is the same, both statements are true in virtue of the same object's relation of identity to itself. However, because the senses of these expressions are different--in (1) the object is presented the same way twice, and in (2) it is presented in two different ways--it is informative to learn of (2). While the truth of an identity statement involves only the references of the component expressions, the informativity of such statements involves additionally the way in which those references are determined, i.e. the senses of the component expressions.

2.5 Sense and Reference in Propositions

So far we have only considered the distinction as it applies to expressions that name some object (including abstract objects, such as numbers). For Frege, the distinction applies also to other sorts of expressions and even whole sentences or propositions. If the sense/reference distinction can be applied to whole propositions, it stands to reason that the reference of the whole proposition depends on the references of the parts and the sense of the proposition depends of the senses of the parts. (At some points, Frege even suggests that the sense of a whole proposition is *composed* of the senses of the component expressions.) In the example considered in the previous paragraph, it was seen that the truth-value of the identity claim depends on the references of the component expressions, while the informativity of what was understood by the identity claim depends on the senses. For this and other reasons, Frege concluded that the reference of an entire proposition is its truth-value, either the True or the False. The sense of a complete proposition is what it is we understand when we understand a proposition, which Frege calls "a thought" (*Gedanke*). Just as the sense of a name of an objectdetermines how that object is presented, the sense of a proposition determines a method of determination for a truth-value. The propositions, "2 + 4 = 6" and "the Earth rotates", both have the True as their references, though this is in virtue of very different conditions holdingin the two cases, just as "the morning star" and "the evening star" refer to Venus in virtue of different properties.

In "Über Sinn und Bedeutung", Frege limits his discussion of the sense/reference distinction to "complete expressions" such as names purporting to pick out some object and whole propositions. However, in other works, Frege makes it quite clear that the distinction can also be applied to "incomplete expressions", which include functional expressions and grammatical predicates. These expressions are incomplete in the sense that they contain an "empty space", which, when filled, yields either a complex name referring to an object, or a complete proposition. Thus, the incomplete expression "the square root of ( )" contains a blank spot, which, when completed by an expression referring to a number, yields a complex expression also referring to a number, e.g., "the square root of sixteen". The incomplete expression, "( ) is a planet" contains an empty place, which, when filled with a name, yields a complete proposition. According to Frege, the references of these incomplete expressions are not objects but functions. Objects (*Gegenstände*), in Frege's terminology, are self-standing, complete entities, while functions are essentially incomplete, or as Frege says, "unsaturated" (*ungesättigt*) in that they must take something else as argument in order to yield a value. The reference of the expression "square root of ( )" is thus a function, which takes numbers as arguments and yields numbers as values. The situation may appear somewhat different in the case of grammatical predicates. However, because Frege holds that complete propositions, like names, have objects as their references, and in particular, the truth-values the True or the False, he is able to treat predicates also as having functions as their references. In particular, they are functions mapping objects onto truth-values. The expression, "( ) is a planet" has as its reference a function that yields as value the True when saturated by an object such as Saturn or Venus, but the False when saturated by a person or the number three. Frege calls such a function of one argument place that yields the True or False for every possible argument a "concept" (*Begriff*), and calls similar functions of more than one argument place (such as that denoted by "( ) > ( )", which is doubly in need of saturation), "relations".

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

1. The distinction between the sense and reference of signs in language is first made in regard to _____equations.

2. Frege concluded that the reference of an entire proposition is its _____

3. Frege calls such a function of one argument place that yields the True or False for every possible argument a _____

Conclusion

The discussion has not yet exhausted all the issues that arise from the reference theory of meaning. How reference functions with regard to indexical still remains to be addressed. This will be the focus of the next unit.

2.6 Summary

From all that has been discussed, attention has been given to how the idea of sense and reference emerged from mathematics. The unit also looked at how the problem deals with one of the deficiencies of the reference theory of meaning and lastly, the unit also looks at how the idea operates within the context of propositions.

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2.8 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. Mathematical
2 Truth-value.
3 Concept.

UNIT 3 REFERENCE AND INDEXICALITY

Unit Structure

3.1 Introduction

Philosophers have several reasons for being interested in indexicals. First, some wish to describe their meanings and fit them into a general semantic theory. Second, some wish to understand the logic of arguments containing indexicals, such as Descartes's *Cogito* argument. Third, some think that reflection on indexicals may give them some insight into thenature of belief, self-knowledge, first-person perspective, consciousness, and other important philosophical matters. The concern with indexicals here is to fit it into a theory of meaning and it will be considered from the point of view of the reference theory of meaning.

3.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the unit, you will be able to:

- Define indexicals
- Articulate the basis for indexicals in the semiotic theory of C. S. Peirce
- Discuss the idea of indexicals in the philosophy of David Kaplan

3.3 Defining Indexicals

An indexical is, roughly speaking, a linguistic expression whose reference can shift from context to context. For example, the indexical 'you' may refer to one person in one context and to another person in another context. Other paradigmatic examples of indexicals are 'I', 'here', 'today', 'yesterday', 'he', 'she', and 'that'. Two speakers who utter a single sentence that contains an indexical may say different

things. For instance, when both John and Mary utter 'I am hungry', Mary says that she is hungry, whereas John says that he is hungry. Many philosophers hold that indexicals have two sorts of meaning. The first sort of meaning is often called 'linguistic meaning' or 'character' (the latter term is due to David Kaplan, 1989a). The second sort of meaning is often called 'content'. Using this terminology, we can say that every indexical has a single unvarying character, but may vary in content from context to context.

Indexical are also very vital in linguistic anthropology. In linguistic anthropology, *deixis* is defined as referential indexicality—that is, morphemes or strings of morphemes, generally organized into closed paradigmatic sets, which function to "individuate or single out objects of reference or address in terms of their relation to the current interactive context in which the utterance occurs" (Hanks, 1992: 46-47). *Deictic* expressions are thus distinguished, on the one hand, from standard denotational categories such as common nouns, which potentially refer to any member of a whole class or category of entities: these display purely semantico- referential meaning, and in the Peircean terminology are known as *symbols*. On the other hand, deixis is distinguished as a particular subclass of indexicality in general, which may be nonreferential or altogether nonlinguistic.

3.4 Indexicals in the Semiotic Theory of C.S. Peirce

C. S. Peirce in his semiotic theory proposed a model of the sign as a triadic relationship: a sign is "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity" (Peirce, 1897: 798). Thus, more technically, a sign consists of

- A *sign-vehicle* or *representamen*, the perceptible phenomenon which does therepresenting, whether audibly, visibly or in some other sensory modality;
- An *object*, the entity of whatever kind, with whatever modal status (experienceable,potential, imaginary, law-like, etc.), which is represented by the sign; and
- An *interpretant*, the "idea in the mind" of the perceiving individual, which interprets the sign-vehicle *as* representing the object ().

Peirce further proposed to classify sign phenomena along three different dimensions by means of three trichotomies, the second of which classifies signs into three categories according to the nature of the relationship between the sign-vehicle and the object it represents. As captioned by Silverstein, these are:

- *Icon*: a sign in which "the perceivable properties of the sign vehicle itself have isomorphism to (up to identity with) those of

the entity signaled. That is, the entities are 'likenesses' in some sense."

- *Index*: a sign in which "the occurrence of a sign vehicle token bears a connection of understood spatio-temporal contiguity to the occurrence of the entity signaled. That is, the presence of some entity is perceived to be signaled in the context of communication incorporating the sign vehicle."
- *Symbol*: the residual class, a sign which is not related to its object by virtue of bearing some qualitative likeness to it, nor by virtue of co-occurring with it in some contextual framework. These "form the class of 'arbitrary' signs traditionally spoken of as the fundamental kind of linguistic entity. Sign vehicle and entity signaled are related through the bond of a semantico-referential meaning" (silverstein, 1976: 27) which permits them to be used to refer to any member of a whole class or category of entities.

3.5 Indexicals in the Philosophy of David Kaplan

On Kaplan's (1989a) theory, indexicals have contents *in*, or *with respect to*, *contexts*. Each context has associated with it at least an agent, time, location, and possible world. The contentof 'I' with respect to a context *c* is the agent of *c*. The content of 'here' is the location of *c*. The content of 'now' is the time of *c*. The content of 'actually' is (roughly) the property of being the case (being true) with respect to the world of *c*.

Kaplan extends his theory of content to linguistic expressions in general, both simple and complex. On his view, the content of a predicate, with respect to a context, is a property or relation. The content of a sentence, with respect to a context, is a *structured proposition*, that is, a proposition with a constituent structure whose ultimate constituents are individual, properties, and relations. (See the entry on structured propositions.) The content of a sentence *S* with respect to a context *c* has, as its ultimate constituents, the contents of (roughly) the words in *S* with respect to *c*

To illustrate, consider the sentence 'I am a philosopher'. Suppose that the agent of context *c*1 is Mary. Then the content of 'I' in *c*1 is Mary herself, while the content of 'is a philosopher' in *c*1 is the property of being a philosopher. The content of the whole sentence, in *c*1, is a proposition whose constituents are just those two items. We can represent this proposition with the ordered pair ⟨Mary, being a philosopher⟩. A structured proposition which, like the preceding one, has an individual as a constituent, is a *singular proposition*. The content of 'I' with respect to another context *c*2, in which John is the agent, is John, and the content of 'I am a philosopher' in *c*2 is the singular proposition ⟨John, being a philosopher⟩. It is in this manner that the referentiality of meaning is construed in this context.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES 3

1. What is an indexical?
2. Mention the two sorts of meaning of indexicals.
3. According to Kaplan's theory, indexicals have contents *in*, or *with respect to* _____

Conclusion

Other theories of meaning still abound. The theory of reference which has been the focus of this module is just one out of all those. The next module will consider the traditional theories of meaning together.

3.6 Summary

This unit has been concerned with reference as it relates to indexicality. In discussing this, theunit give a concise definition of indexicals. Then it pay good attention to the idea of indexicals in the semiotic theory of C.S. Peirce and in the philosophy of David Kaplan.

3.7 References/Further Reading

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3.8 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 3

1. An indexical is, roughly speaking, a linguistic expression whose reference can shift from context to context.

2.(a.) Linguistic meaning or character
(b.) Content

3. Contexts

MODULE 5 OTHER THEORIES OF MEANING

INTRODUCTION

This section will focus on the other theories of meaning. Aside from the reference theory of meaning, there are other theories as well. These include: use theories, psychological theories, verificationism, truth-conditional theories of meaning and hermeneutic theory of meaning to mention but a few. This unit will consider these theories.

UNIT 1 USE THEORIES

Unit Structure

1.1 Introduction

This unit focuses on the use theories of meaning as different from the other theories of meaning. In doing this, the focus will be on main point of the use theory of meaning, Ludwig Wittgenstein's language game thesis and the speech act theory of J. L. Austin.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Articulate the main point of the use theory of meaning.
- Discuss Ludwig Wittgenstein's language game as a form of use theory
- Expatiate on J. L. Austin's speech act theory as a form of use theory of meaning.

1.3 Main Point of Use Theory of Meaning

The use theories of meaning hold generally that words and sentences are more like game pieces or tokens, used to make moves in rule-governed conventional social practices. A “meaning” is not an abstract object; meaning is a matter of the role an expression plays in human social behavior. To know the expression’s meaning is just to know how to deploy the expression appropriately in conversational settings. Languages and linguistic entities are not bloodless abstract objects that can be studied like specimens under a microscope. Rather, language takes the form of behavior, activity—specifically social practice. Sentences do not have lives of their own. The things we write on blackboards, and the alleged “propositions” they express, are fairly violent abstractions from the utterings performed by human beings in real-world contexts on particular occasions. Meaning in a natural language is seen as primarily a question of how the speaker uses words within the language to express intention.

1.4 Ludwig Wittgenstein on Language Game

The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein was originally an artificial language philosopher, following the influence of Russell and Frege. In his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* he had supported the idea of an ideal language built up from atomic statements using logical connectives. However, as he matured, he came to appreciate more and more the phenomenon of natural language. *Philosophical Investigations*, published after his death, signalled a sharp departure from his earlier work with its focus upon ordinary language use. His approach is often summarised by the aphorism "the meaning of a word is its use in a language". However, following in Frege's footsteps, in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein declares: "... Only in the context of a proposition has a name meaning" (Wittgenstein, 1999: 39)

Wittgenstein offered the key analogy of linguistic activity to the playing of games. Language is not a matter of marks on the blackboard bearing the “expressing” relation to abstract entities called “propositions”; language is something that people do, and do in a highly rule- governed and conventional way. Linguistic activity is governed by rules in much the way that the playing of a game is governed by rules. Thus, when we talk of the meaning of expression, we mean the functions they characteristically perform in the context of our current social practices. In Wittgenstein’s view, this is the locus and natural home of all meaning, though most expressions have vastly more complicated social roles. To bring home his point, Wittgenstein coined the term ‘language-game,’ as in the meeting and greeting language-

game, the wedding language-game, the arithmetic language-game, and so on.

1.5 J. L. Austin on Speech Acts

Probably the most known manifestation and result of the ordinary language philosophy became the theory of speech acts by John L. Austin (1911 — 1960). He focused in it not on the study of language as a tool of expression and preservation of (mainly scientific) knowledge, but on the study of its actual use. He paid attention to language not as an abstract system, but rather as specific ways how we use the language, in which contexts, situations, because without that, in his opinion, we cannot understand the meaning. Peter F. Strawson pointed out to the importance of context already before him. Austin considered as importantto classify the speech acts. If entomologists take pains with the categorization of bugs, philosophers should, in his opinion, resolve to categorize the speech acts.

We can see utterances from various viewpoints. Each means emphasis on another aspect of the utterance. Utterance as a **phonetic act** means that by uttering the sentence we make certain sounds. We can analyse and record these sounds, study their physical properties. When we speak about the **phatic act**, we emphasize that the uttered sounds have the form of words and sentences of certain language, in which they mean something. Today, we can create programmes that recognize in the sound the words of a language. Finally, with the **rhetic act** we emphasise that we are stating something.

More famous is Austin's classification of rhetic speech acts. **A perlocutionary speech act** means the utterance of a meaningful sentence, with which we are saying something. By reserving a **illocutionary speech act**, we emphasise the way how we utter the sentence with the same content. The same idea can be used in speech as a question, order, reply, information, decision, description, judgement, critique, challenge, provision... In language, the necessary context is sometimes substituted with punctuation marks, which attach at least the most common contexts to the idea.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. What is the main point of use theory of meaning?
2. Which Philosopher offered the key analogy of linguistic activity to the playing of games?
3. Utterance as a _____ means that by uttering the sentence we make certain sounds.

Conclusion

In addition to this theory, there are other theories of meaning which address other aspects ofmeaning that are not captured by other theories. One of such will be the concern of the following unit.

1.6 Summary

From the foregoing, the unit has considered the main point of the use theory of meaning. It has also look at Ludwig Wittgenstein's language game theory as it relates to use and also the speech act theory of J. L. Austin as it relates to the use theory of meaning.

1.7 References/Further Reading

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1.8 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. The use theories of meaning hold generally that words and sentences are more like game pieces or tokens, used to make moves in rule-governed conventional social practices.

2 Wittgenstein

3 Phonetic act

UNIT 2 PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES OF MEANING

Unit Structure

2.1 Introduction

This unit focuses on the psychological theory of meaning. It pays particular attention to the philosophical position of H. P. Grice and how he articulates what meaning is from a psychological point of view.

2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the unit, you will be able to:

- State the main point of the psychological theory of meaning.
- Discuss H. P. Grice's theory of meaning.

2.3 The Main Point of Psychological Theory of Meaning

A psychological theory of meaning is a form of internalist understanding of what meaning is. By internal it mean that, this form of understanding disconnects meaning from the external world and places the locus for meaning inside the subject who makes utterance. By this interenalsit disposition, it is easy to say what this approach to semantics denies. The internalist denies an assumption common to all of the approaches discussed so far: the assumption that in giving the content of an expression, we are primarily specifying something about that expression's relation to things in the world which that expression might be used to say things about. According to the internalist, expressions as such don't bear any semantically interesting relations to things in the world; names don't, for example, *refer* to the objects with which one might take them to be associated; predicates don't have extensions; sentences don't have truth conditions. On this sort of view, we can use

sentences to say true or false things about the world, and can use names to refer to things; but this is just one thing we can do with names and sentences, and is not a claim about the meanings of those expressions. H. P Grice develops an extended programme in this direction.

2.4 H. P. Grice and the Psychological Basis for Meaning

H. P. Grice maintained that a linguistic expression has meaning only because it is an *expression*—not because it 'expresses' a proposition, but because it more genuinely and literally expresses some concrete idea or intention of the person who uses it. Grice introduced the idea of 'speaker-meaning': roughly what the speaker in uttering a given sentence on a particular occasion intends to convey to a hearer. Since speakers do not always mean what their sentences standardly mean in the language, Grice distinguished this speaker-meaning from the sentence's own standard meaning. He offered an elaborate analysis of speaker- meaning in terms of speakers' intentions, beliefs, and other psychological states. As a matter of fact, it is generally some version of the analysis must be right. In Grice's reductive project, the explication of sentence meaning is in psychological terms. It proceeds in two importantly different stages. In the first stage, Grice attempts to reduce sentence meaning to speaker- meaning. In the second, he tries to reduce speaker-meaning to a complex of psychological states centering on a type of intention.

In the opinion of Grice, when you say something, it is usually for the purpose of communicating. You deliver yourself of an opinion, or express a desire or an intention. And you mean to produce an effect, to make something come of it. So one might begin as the ideational theorists did and infer that the real natural ground of meaningful utterance is in what mental state is expressed by the utterance. Of course we have already introduced the word "express" as designating a relation between sentences and propositions, but here the term has a more concrete and literal use: sentence tokens are seen as expressively produced by speakers' beliefs, desires, and other propositional attitudes. Grice (1957, 1969) took these facts as the basis of his theory of meaning. He believed that sentence meaning is grounded in the mental, and proposed to explicate it ultimately in terms of the psychological states of individual human beings. We can think of this as no less than the reduction of linguistic meaning to psychology.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES 2

1. What is the main point of the psychological theory of meaning?
2. Which Philosopher maintained that a linguistic expression has meaning only because it is an expression—not because it

'expresses' a proposition, but because it more genuinely and literally expresses some concrete idea or intention of the person who uses it?

3. In the opinion of Grice, when you say something, it is usually for the purpose of communicating. TRUE or FALSE

Conclusion

This theory does not yet exhaust the varied perspectives meaning can assume. Other theories have also made attempt to address these perspectives as well. The next unit will also consider some of these theories.

2.5 Summary

From the above, the unit has considered the main idea of the psychological theory of meaning.It has also paid good attention to H. P. Grice's theory of meaning how it basically a psychological theory of meaning.

2.6 References/Further Reading

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2.7 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. A psychological theory of meaning is a form of internalist understanding of what meaning is. By internal it mean that, this form of understanding disconnects meaning from the external world and places the locus for meaning inside the subject who makes utterance.

2. H. P. Grice

2. TRUE

UNIT 3 VERIFICATIONISM

Unit Structure

3.1 Introduction

Verificationism is yet another popular theory of meaning. This was made popular by the rise of the Vienna Circle and the development of logical positivism. This unit focuses on this theory, paying attention to the positions of A. J. Ayer and W.V.O. Quine with regard to verification in meaning.

3.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the unit, will be able to:

- State the main point of verificationism.
- Articulate A. J. Ayer's verification thesis of meaning.
- Draw the analytic/synthetic divide based on the position of W. V. O. Quine.

3.3 The Main Point of Verificationism

According to the Verification Theory, a sentence is meaningful if and only if its being true would make some difference to the course of our future experience; an experientially unverifiable sentence or "sentence" is meaningless. More specifically, a sentence's particular meaning is its *verification condition,* the set of possible experiences on someone's part that would tend to show that the sentence was true. The Verification Theory of meaning, which flourished in the 1930s and 1940s, was a highly political theory of meaning. It was motivated by, and reciprocally helped to motivate, a growing empiricism and scientism in philosophy

and in other disciplines. In particular, it was the engine that drove the philosophical movement of logical positivism, which was correctly perceived by moral philosophers, poets, theologians, and many others as directly attacking the foundations of their respective enterprises. Unlike most philosophical theories, it also had numerous powerful effects on the actual practice of science, both very good effects and very bad. But here we shall examine verificationism simply as another theory of linguistic meaning.

3.4 A.J. Ayer and Verification Thesis in Meaning

The empiricist basis of Ayer's attitude to meaning was laid first in his reading of Hume. The thought that no idea had any empirical significance unless it was suitably related to an impression stayed with him, and was reinforced both by his reading of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and by the time spent in Vienna with the Logical Positivists. His first formulation of a criterion of meaning, the principle of verification, was in the first edition of *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936), where he claimed that all propositions were analytic (true in virtue of their meaning) or else either strongly verifiable or weakly verifiable. Strong verification required that the truth of a proposition be conclusively ascertainable; weak verification required only that an observation statement be deducible from the proposition together with other, auxiliary, propositions, provided that the observation statement was not deducible from these auxiliaries alone. This rapidly proved defective: any proposition *P* conjoined with 'if *P* then *O*', where '*O*' is an observation statement, will yield *O*, without this being deducible from 'if *P* then *O*' alone. So in the second edition Ayer amended the principle to read: a statement is directly verifiable if it is either an observation statement or is such that an observation statement is derivable from it in conjunction with another observation statement (or observation statements), such derivability not being possible from the conjoined observation statement(s) alone. And a statement is indirectly verifiable if, first, in conjunction with certain other premises it entails one or more directly verifiable statements that are not derivable from these other premises alone, and, second, that these other premises "do not include any statement that is not either analytic, or directly verifiable, or capable of being independently established as indirectly verifiable" (Ayer, 1946: 17).

3.5 W.V.O. Quine, the Analytic/Synthetic Divide and the Question of Meaning

Quine represents another version of the verification theory of meaning. In his "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", he makes the case for rejecting the analytic/synthetic divide. Quine (1953) went after the very core of

Logical Positivism, and in effect analytical philosophy, by attacking the analytic/synthetic distinction. The Positivists had been happy to admit a distinction between sentences that were true in virtue of the meanings of their terms and those that were true in virtue of the facts, but Quine brought a certain skepticism about the meanings of individual expressions to the table. Quine dismissed the idea of a meaning as a real item somehow present in our minds beyond the ways in which it manifests itself in our behavior. In a strongly empiricist spirit, he argued that we have no access to such things in our experience, thus they could not explain our linguistic behavior, and therefore they had no rightful place in our account. Without tidy parcels of empirical content or analytic truths to anchor an account of meaning, Quine saw little use for meaning at all. Instead, his work focused on co-reference and assent among speakers. In *Word and Object* (1960), he suggested that our position as speakers is much like that of a field linguist attempting to translate a newly discovered language with no discernible connections to other local languages.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

1. What is the main point of the verification theory?

2. The empiricist basis of Ayer's attitude to meaning was laid first in his reading of which Philosopher?

3. Which philosopher went after the very core of Logical Positivism, and in effect analytical philosophy, by attacking the analytic/synthetic distinction?

Conclusion

Another vital theory of meaning is that of the truth conditional theory. In spite of all that the various theories have addressed, the relationship of truth to meaning has not been adequately captured. This will be the focus of the next unit.

3.6 Summary

This unit has considered verificationism as a theory of meaning. Particular attention was also paid to A. J. Ayer's and W. V. O. Quine's perspectives to the verification theory as it relates to meaning within the philosophy of language.

3.7 Reference/Further Reading

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Graham Macdonald, Alfred Jules Ayer, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ayer/#Bib

3.8 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 3

1. According to the Verification Theory, a sentence is meaningful if and only if its being true would make some difference to the course of our future experience; an experientially unverifiable sentence or "sentence" is meaningless.

2. Hume

3. W. V. O. QUINE

UNIT 4 TRUTH-CONDITIONAL THEORY OF MEANING

Unit Structure

4.1 Introduction

This unit focuses on the truth conditional theory of meaning. In doing this, it will consider the truth conditional theory of meaning in general, then it will narrow down to considering the Donald Davidson's and David Lewis' positions with regard to this theory of meaning.

4.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- State the main point of the truth-conditional theory of meaning.
- Articulate Donald Davidson's position on the truth-conditional theory
- Enumerate the position of David Lewis on the truth-conditional theory.

4.3 The Truth Conditional Theory

Truth-conditional theories of semantics attempt to define the meaning of a given proposition by explaining when the sentence is true. So, for example, because 'snow is white' is true if (read 'if and only if') snow is white, the meaning of 'snow is white' is snow is white. Truth-conditional theories generally begin with the assumption that something is a language or a linguistic expression if and only if its significant parts can represent the facts of the world. Sentences represent facts or states of affairs in the world, names refer to objects, and so forth. The central

focus of a theory of meaning remains sentences though, since it is sentences that apparently constitute the most basic units of information. For instance, an utterance of the name "John Coltrane" does not seem to say anything until we point to someone and say, "This is John Coltrane" or assert "John Coltrane was born in North Carolina" and so on. This view of the sentence as the most basic units of meaning is compatible with compositionality, the view that sentences are composed of a finite stock of simpler elements that may be reused and recombined in novel ways, so long as we understand the meanings of those subsentential expressions as contributions to the meanings of sentences. We might understand names and other referring expressions as "picking out" their referents, to which the rest of a sentence attributes something, very roughly speaking.

4.4 Donal Davidson and the Truth Conditional Theory

Davidson writes that it is folly to try to define the concept of *truth* (Davidson, 1996), and the same holds for the closely related concept of *meaning*: both belong to a cluster of concepts so elementary that we should not expect there to be simpler or more basic concepts in terms of which they could be definitionally reduced. Davidson, therefore, pursues neither a theory of what meaning is nor a theory of what meanings are. Rather, for Davidson a theory of meaning is a descriptive semantics that shows how to pair a speaker's statements with their meanings, and it does this by displaying how semantical properties or values are distributed systematically over the expressions of her language; in short, it shows how to construct the meanings of a speaker's sentences out of the meanings of their parts and how those parts are assembled. He identifies certain constraint that make meaning possible. These include:

1. **Compositionality**

   The first of these constraints is that a theory of meaning should be *compositional*. The motivation here is the observation that speakers are finitely endowed creatures, yet they can understand indefinitely many sentences; for example, you never before heard or read the first sentence of this article, but, presumably, you had no difficulty understanding it. To explain this phenomenon, Davidson reasons that language must possess some sort of *recursive structure*. (A structure is *recursive* if it is built up by repeatedly applying one of a set of procedures to a result of having applied one of those procedures, starting from one or more base elements.) For unless we can treat the meaning of every sentence of a language L as the result of a speaker's or interpreter's performing a finite number of operations on a finite (though extendable) semantical base, L will be unlearnable and uninterpretable: no matter how many sentences I master, there will always be others I do not understand.

2. No Meaning Entities

Davidson's second adequacy constraint on a theory of meaning is that it avoid assigning objects (for example, ideas, universals, or intensions) to linguistic expressions as their meanings. In making this demand, Davidson does not stray into a theory of what meanings are; his point, rather, is that "the one thing meanings do not seem to do is oil the wheels of a theory of meaning… My objections to meanings in the theory of meaning is that… they have no demonstrated use" (Davidson 1967, p. 20).

Following these, Davidson uses the semantic theory of truth to establish the idea of meaning he is putting across. This semantic theory of truth is not a metaphysical theory of truth in the way that the correspondence theory of truth is. That is, the semantic theory of truth does not tell us what truth is, rather, it defines a predicate that applies to all and only the true sentences of a specified language (technically, true-in-L) by showing how the truth-conditions of a sentence of the language depend on the sentence's internal structure and certain properties of its parts. This should sound familiar: roughly, the semantic theory of truth does for truth what Davidson wishes to do for meaning.

4.5 David Lewis and the Truth Conditional Theory of Truth

David Kellogg Lewis is quite popular for modal realist position which centres on possible worlds. In his thinking, possible words exist, every possible world is a concrete entity, any possible world is causally and spatiotemporally isolated from other possible worlds, our world is a possible world. This form of realism also informs a certain kind of theory of meaning or philosophy of language which Lycu tries to articulate as a version of the truth conditional theory of meaning. Since in truth conditional theory of meaning, it is the correspondence of the sentence to the world that is the meaning, we can imagine how this truth and meaning will hold in other possible worlds. This affords a new version of the idea of a sentence's truth condition. The sentence is true in some possible circumstances and not in others. Which, in the vernacular of possible worlds, is to say that the sentence is true in some worlds and not in others. When two sentences have the same truth condition, they will be true in just the same circumstances, in just the same worlds. When they differ in truth condition, that means there will be some worlds in which one is true but the other is false, so they will not be true in just the same worlds. As a first approximation, then, let us take a sentence's truth condition simplyto be the set of worlds in which it is true. For the truth-condition theorist, of course, that set of worlds will also be the sentence's meaning. It would follow that synonymous sentences are true in just the same worlds, whereas for any two nonsynonymous sentences there will be at least one world in which one

of the sentences is true but the other false. This idea generalizes to the meanings of subsentential expressions.

A direct argument for the possible-worlds version of the Truth-Condition Theory, given very briefly by Lewis (1970: 22ff) holds that, in order to say what a meaning is, we may first ask what a meaning does, and then find something that does that. A meaning for a sentence is something that determines the conditions under which the sentence is true or false. It determines the truth-value of the sentence in various possible states of affairs, at various times, at various places, for various speakers, and so on. The idea here is that, if you understand a certain sentence *S*, and you are shown a possible world at random—we fly you there and dump you down in that world, miraculously making you omniscient as regards its facts—then right away you know whether *S* is true or false. So one thing that a meaning does is to spit out a truth value for any world it is given. Which is to say that a meaning is *at least* atruth condition in the sense of a particular set of worlds.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES 4

1. What is the main point of the truth-conditional theory?
2. According to Davidson " it is folly to try to define the concept of truth (Davidson, 1996), and the same holds for the closely related concept of meaning." TRUE or FALSE
3. David Kellogg Lewis is quite popular for modal _____ position which centers on possible worlds.

Conclusion

This discussion on truth condition closes the discourse on the theory of meaning with read to the philosophy of language. The following modules will consider other aspects of the philosophy of language which include issues like: the language of thought and private language, as well as metaphors.

4.6 Summary

This unit focused the truth conditional theory of meaning, paying attention to the main point of the theory. After doing this, the unit considered the position of Donald Davidson and David Lewis with regard to the truth-conditional theory of meaning.

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4.8 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 4

1. The truth-conditional theories of semantics attempt to define the meaning of a given proposition by explaining when the sentence is true.
2. TRUE
3. Realist

UNIT 5 HERMENEUTIC THEORY OF MEANING

Unit Structure

5.1 Introduction

This unit is devoted to considering the hermeneutic theory of meaning. Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation and it has its unique understanding of meaning. Specifically, attention will be paid to Heidegger's and Gadamer's theories of meaning. The unit will close by considering the issues of interpretation and translation in the Philosophy of Language and the issues that come with it.

5.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the unit, you will be able to:

- Expose the key elements in Heidegger's theory of meaning.
- Discuss the close relationship between language and meaning in Gadamer'sphilosophy
- Highlight the basic issues in the discourse on interpretation and translation

5.3 Martin Heidegger's Theory of meaning

For Heidegger, language is significant as part of the broader critique of the tradition of Western metaphysics and its manifestation in modern subjectivism. Recall that Heidegger wants to retrieve the forgotten question of Being, thematizing Being as different from being as "existence" or "presence." In his later writings, marked by the influence of the poet H61derlin and first seen in his 1935 *The Origin of the Work of Art,* Heidegger begins to make language more central to his general inquiry, to his thematization of the forgotten dimension of Being. Recall

that he wants to shift focus from a rootedness in subjective states and to awaken an awareness of the "Being process"-the sense of Being as a ground in which things originally reside, and from which they emerge out of this concealment, to become present, or disclosed, and hence capable of intelligibility. Heidegger comes increasingly in his middle and later writings to make language, and specifically poetry, central to his thematization of this "Being process."

We see one early example of this in the essay on the artwork, in which Heidegger claims that *"All art,* as the letting happen of the advent of the truth of beings, is as such, *in essence, poetry* (Heidegger, 1977a: 143, 184). To contextualize this briefly, Heidegger's *Origin of the Work of Art* essay locates art as one site where the Being process occurs; that is, the artwork isa site for what Heidegger calls the event of truth (a*letheia),* "set into" the work of art. What is of interest to us here is Heidegger's characterization of language (Scheibler, 2000: 866).

In his later writing, Heidegger develops the idea that language is not a tool for human being but that man is summoned to respond to the speaking power of language. His later writings shift focus from a consideration of language as human discourse *(Rede)* in the earlier work of *Being and Time* to language as the site where the Being comes into view. This "inverted" relation in connection with language, first strongly articulated in the essay *What Are Poets For?* (1946) and the *Letter on Humanism* (1947), occurs throughout his later texts, notably *Poetically Man Dwells* (1951) and *On the Way to Language* (1959). In coming to the idea that it is not man who speaks language but language which speaks through humans-Die *Sprache spricht- we* see a transformation of Heidegger's earlier effort to think the question of Being. Inthese texts we see a recognition that his previous focus on language as discourse, which conceived discourse as rooted in human being *(Dasein)* in *Being and Time,* did not do justice to the power and mystery of language. He comes to recognize that the privileged position in the process of disclosure is not occupied by human being, but by language, which is now associated with Being (Heidegger, 1977b: 143, 184). Language is no longer discourse which "articulates intelligibility," then, for this operates only in a *further uncovering* of entities which are *already manifest* and hence does not give us primary access to the process or event of Being (Scheibler, 2000: 867).

Language, then, lets the world appear. What Heidegger is emphasizing is *not* that language constitutes an essential connection between a word (a *concept* for an object) and an object; the word's primary function is not as a sign, as designation.38 Rather, he is drawing attention to the fact that the world, through language, is disclosed in a way identified with the process of revealing and concealing: "Language is the lighting-concealing advent of Being itself."39

A final aspect of Heidegger's conception of language is relevant here; it relates to the privileged role Heidegger accords the poetic word, poetry. Focusing on language in this way prepares us for the possibility of the coming of a new era. But the essential relation of human beings to Language-the human experience of Being identified with language-is, for Heidegger, not adequately expressed in the everyday sphere of colloquial communication.

5.4 Hans-Georg Gadamer's Theory of Language and Meaning

Gadamer has developed a hermeneutic idiom that articulates a *via media* between seeing a text as simply dictating the meaning to be found there, on the one hand, and seeing it as a *tabula rasa* on which readers are free to inscribe whatever meaning they wish, on the other. For him, meaning is not fixed by the contents of the intentional states of either authors or readers. Such states amount, in effect, simply to more text that is up for interpretation in the same sense as the text they are associated with. They can be considered, but doing so is just addressing a somewhat more capacious text than that with which one started. They provide just one sort of context within which a text can be understood. But there are others (Brandom, 2004: 5).

Another of his guiding ideas is that there is no such thing as the meaning of a text in isolation from its context – at least the context of its reading. A text can only be read from some point of view, in some context. The interpreter's own attitudes and commitments form one such context. Meaning emerges in a *process*, which has the form of a *dialogue* in which the text is just one of the players. Meaning is a product of the words on the page and other features of the context in which it is situated – for instance, a tradition in which it features, or the concerns and questions a reader brings to the text. Understanding (practical grasp of meaning) consists in exercising a practical capacity to adjudicate the reciprocal claims of authority and responsibility on the part of the text and various contexts (Brandom, 2004: 5).

5.5 Interpretation and Translation

In the twentieth century, giants in the (Analytic) philosophy of language such as Rudolph Carnap, W.V.O. Quine and (to some extent) Donald Davidson variously displayed an interest in translation as the test case for meaning, or as a way of elucidating the meaningfulness of language. At first in this period, translation played second fiddle to the Logical Positivist's project of constructing an ideal, empirically reducible language, into which ordinary language could be translated. Translation, it was thought, would allow philosophers such as Carnap to test the

meaningfulness (and the meaning) of claims of ordinary language, on the presumption that the ideal language was exhaustively meaningful. Those sentences of ordinary language that could not be translated into the ideal language would be demonstrably nonsensical.1 The various empiricistic conceptions of meaning that Carnap experimented with—first phenomenalism (Carnap [1928] 1967), and later physicalism (Carnap [1936] 1954; 1937)— gave way to problems that prompted Carnap to change his approach (cf. Carnap 1956). Despite such changes on the specifics of semantics, the hope that translation could clarify meaning had already been planted and thus began to warrant attention in its own right (Ranganathan, 2007: 4).

Quine appeared to embrace the prominence given to translation by his mentor, Carnap, as a test of meaning, in constructing the thought experiment of "radical translation". Ironically, the result of Quine's investigation was that not only translation, but meaning itself, is suspect, lacking full objectivity. Quine concludes his radical translation thought experiment in *Word and Object* by arguing that translation is a problematic project according to a thoroughgoing empiricism because the totality of all possible empirical evidence cannot always determine whether a given translation—to the exclusion of other contrary translations—is right or wrong, even though the translations in question are incompatible and perhaps even contradictory (Quine, 1960: 27). While Quine's *Word and Object* (1960) began to close translation's chapter in twentieth century Analytic philosophy, translation theory as an autonomous subject began to come into its own.

This estrangement of translation theory from the greater philosophical tradition was not restricted to the Analytic tradition alone. Jacques Derrida, not too long after Quine, delivered an analogous criticism of translation, which I shall call the *lost in translation* thesis. Just as Quine's criticism of translation is a comment on Carnap's project, Derrida's project can be read as a criticism of Heidegger's early work. Derrida's entire project can be read as a sustained criticism of the notion that there is an original meaning that can be recovered through some type of phenomenological or hermeneutic process. In the context of translation, Derrida argues that languages are natural, animated systems of signification that contain several "tongues", and that any process of translation violates this similitude of multiple and self-referential significance (Derrida and McDonald, 1985: 100). The result is that no translation can ever preserve the totality of signification, and every process of translation involves loss of content despite the fact that the very process of translation is the mandate of transferring and preserving meaning. Derrida calls this paradox of translation the "double bind" (Derrida and McDonald, 1985: 102). Derrida in *Plato's Pharmacy* makes his case for the lost in translation thesis by reviewing problems in

translating Plato's dialogues, and in particular the multiple and self-referential significances of the Greek "*pharmakon*". He notes that it stands for both poison and medicine and that Plato relies upon this ambiguity at many points to advance the plot. Derrida calls this simultaneous use of the term in an ambiguous fashion that takes on one meaning in the present context, while also referring to itself as an ambiguous symbol, and to multiple meanings from the perspective of the various characters in a plot, *anagrammatic writing*—a feature of writing that he thinks cannot survive translation, if one chooses any one of the component significations to render it (Derrida, 1981: 98).

Derrida's lost in translation thesis is similar to Quine's indeterminacy of translation thesis, in so far as both indict translation as incapable of preserving meaning. However, Quine's thesis holds that the problem is that we are at a loss to even make sense that there is an objective question as to what competing but incompatible translation is correct. Despite Derrida's association with a semantic subjectivism in the popular consciousness, (and despite his very real tendencies towards semantic nihilism) Derrida's criticism of translation noted here does not explicitly cast doubt on the objectivity of the meaning of a source text, but with the possibility that it could be preserved in translation. Either way, the prognosis is not happy for translation. It is thus not surprising that translation theorists have in general moved away from philosophy, opted for descriptive or empirical accounts of translation, or pursued what seems to be positive grounding in Functional Linguistics. This very aversion to the philosophy of language no doubt motivates the choice of most authors in the field to describe their subject as "translation studies" as opposed to "translation theory." (Ranganathan, 2007: 7)

SELF-ASSESSEMENT EXERCISES 5

1. State Martin Heidegger's theory of meaning.

2. In his theory of language and meaning, _____ believes that meaning is not fixed by the contents of the intentional states of either authors or readers.

3. _____ was thought, would allow philosophers such as Carnap to test the meaningfulness (and the meaning) of claims of ordinary language, on the presumption that the ideal language was exhaustively meaningful.

Conclusion

The unit considers translation and interpretation together because most times, the quest to translation goes hand-in-hand with the exercise of interpretation. Within his whole process, meaning is vital because it is the preservation and transfer of meaning from one linguistic frame to another that is at the core of interpretation and translation

5.6 Summary

In this unit, attention has been paid to Heidegger's and Gadamer's theory of meaning. Also, attention was given to the problem of how translation and interpretation has continued in the philosophy of language.

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5.8 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 4

1. For Heidegger, language is significant as part of the broader critique of the tradition of Western metaphysics and its manifestation in modern subjectivism.

2. Hans-George Gadamer

3. Translation

MODULE 6 LANGUAGE OF THOUGHT, PRIVATE LANGUAGE ARGUMENT AND METAPHORS

INTRODUCTION

This module addresses two key aspects of the Philosophy of Language. These are: the language of thought and the question private language. Each of the units that follow will be dedicated each of these aspects of the Philosophy of Language

UNIT 1 LANGUAGE OF THOUGHT

Unit Structure

1.1 Introduction

In very simple terms, the language of thought hypothesis (LOTH) is the hypothesis that mental representation has a linguistic structure, or in other words, that thought takes place within a mental language. The hypothesis is sometimes expressed as the claim that thoughts are sentences in the head. In this unit, the focus will be on how the hypothesis is presented by Jerry Fodor. Sequel to this, the unit will consider the basic argument for this hypothesis and lastly, some objections to the arguments for the Language of Thought will also be looked at.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Articulate the language of thought as presented by Jerry Fodor
- Itemise the arguments for the language of thought
- Enumerate the objections to the argument s for the language of thought.

1.3 Language of Thought (LOTH)as Presented by Jerry Fodor

The Language of Thought position was first introduced by Jerry Fodor in his 1975 book *The Language of Thought*, and further elaborated and defended in a series of works by Fodor and several collaborators. In Jerry Fodor's philosophy, the language of thought is a necessary corollary of the Representational Theory of Mind (RTM). Thus, to understand Fodor position on the language of thought, there is need to understand his position on the representational theory of mind. Broadly speaking, RTM claims that mental processes are computational processes, and that intentional states are relations to mental representations that serve as the domain of such processes. On Fodor's version of RTM, these mental representations have both syntactic structure and a compositional semantics. Thinking thus takes place in an internal language of thought. This language of thought is the claim that mental representations possess combinatorial syntax and compositional semantics—that is, mental representations are sentences in a mental language.

What's interesting about this, from Fodor's perspective, is that mental processes *also* involve chains of thoughts that are truth-preserving. As Fodor puts it: [I]f you start out with a true thought, and you proceed to do some thinking, it is very often the case that the thoughts that thinking leads you to will also be true. This is, in my view, the most important fact we know about minds; no doubt it's why God bothered to give us any. (1994: 9) In order to account for this "most important" fact, RTM claims that thoughts *themselves* are syntactically-structured representations, and that mental processes are computational processes defined over them. On Fodor's view, "this bringing of logic and logical syntax together with a theory of mental processes is the foundation of our cognitive science" (2008: 21). On Fodor's view, "this bringing of logic and logical syntax together with a theory of mental processes is the foundation of our cognitive science" (2008: 21).

1.4 Arguments for Language of Thought

Four arguments were proposed for the reality of the language of thought by Jerry Fodor. These are: it is the only game in town, systematicity, productivity and inferential coherence.

1. The Only Game in Town

Fodor's (1975) argument for LOTH proceeded from the claim that the only "remotely plausible" models of cognition are computational models. Because computational models presuppose a medium of representation, in particular a linguistic medium, and because "remotely plausible theories are better than no theories at all," Fodor claimed that we were "provisionally committed" to LOTH. In short, the argument was that the only game in town for explaining rational behavior presupposed internal representations with a linguistic structure.

2. Productivity

Productivity is the property a system of representations has if it is capable, in principle, of producing an infinite number of distinct representations. For example, sentential logic typically allows an infinite number of sentence letters (A, B, C, ...), each of which is a unique atomic representation. Thus the system is productive. A street light, on the other hand, has three atomic representations ("red", "yellow", "green"), and no more. The system is not productive. Productivity can be achieved in systems with a finite number of atomic representations, so long as those representations may be combined to form compound representations, with no limit on the length of the compounds. Here are three examples: A, A→ B and ((A →B) · A) → B. That is, productivity can be achieved with finite means by employing both combinatorial syntax and compositional semantics. Fodor and Pylyshyn (1988) argue that mental representation is productive, and that the best explanation for its being so is that it is couched in a system possessing combinatorial syntax and compositional semantics. The productivity of natural language is based on the productivty of the combinational syntactic and compositional sematic language, which is the language of thought.

3. Systematicity

Systematicity is the property a representational system has when the ability of the system to express certain propositions is intrinsically related to the ability the system has to express certain other propositions (where the ability to express a proposition is

just the ability to token a representation whose content is that proposition). For example, sentential logic is systematic with respect to the propositions *Bill is boring and Fred is funny* and *Fred is funny and Bill is boring*, as it can express the former if and only if it can also express the latter. Similarly to the argument from productivity, Fodor and Pylyshyn (1988) argue that thought is largely systematic, and that the best explanation for its being so is that mental representation possesses a combinatorial syntax and compositional semantics.

Systematicity is the property a representational system has when the ability of the system to express certain propositions is intrinsically related to the ability the system has to express certain other propositions (where the ability to express a proposition is just the ability to token a representation whose content is that proposition). For example, sentential logic is systematic with respect to the propositions *Bill is boring and Fred is funny* and *Fred is funny and Bill is boring*, as it can express the former if and only if it can also express the latter. Similarly to the argument from productivity, Fodor and Pylyshyn (1988) argue that thought is largely systematic, and that the best explanation for its being so is that mental representation possesses a combinatorial syntax and compositional semantics.

4. Inferential Coherence

A system is inferentially coherent with respect to a certain kind of logical inference, if given that it can draw one or more specific inferences that are instances of that kind, it can draw any specific inferences that are of that kind. For example, let *A* be the proposition *Emily is in Scranton and Judy is in New York*, and let *B* be the proposition *Emily is in Scranton*. Here *A* is a logical conjunction, and *B* is the first conjunct. A system that can draw the inference from *A* to *B* is a system that is able to infer the first conjunct from a conjunction with two conjuncts, in at least one instance. A system may or may not be able to do the same given other instances of the same kind of inference. It may not for example be able to infer *Bill is boring* from *Bill is boring and Fred is funny*. If it can infer the first conjunct from a logical conjunction regardless of the content of the proposition, then it is inferentially coherent with respect to that kind of inference. As with productivity and systematicity, Fodor and Pylyshyn point to inferential coherence as a feature of thought that is best explained on the hypothesis that mental representation is linguistically structured.

1.5 Objections to the Arguments for the Language of Thought

There are numerous objections to the Language of Thought hypothesis, but only four of them will be the focus here. These include objections from: context dependent properties of thought, metal images, mental maps and connectivist networks.

1. Context-dependent Properties of Thought

Interestingly enough, Fodor himself has argued that LOTH, should be viewed as a thesis about a small portion of cognition. In his view, even were the theory to be completed, it would not offer an entire picture of the nature of thought (see Fodor 2000). His primary argument for this conclusion is that computation is sensitive only to the syntax of the representations involved, so if thinking is computation it should be sensitive only to the syntax of mental representations, but quite often this appears not to be so. More specifically, the syntax of a representation is context-independent, but thoughts often have properties that are context-dependent.

2. Mental Images

Throughout the 1970s, investigators designed a series of experiments concerned with mental imagery. The general conclusion many drew was that mental imagery presents a kind of mental representation that is not linguistically structured. More specifically, it was believed that the parts of mental images correspond to the spatial features of their content, whereas the parts of linguistic representations correspond to logical features of their content (see Kosslyn 1980).

3. Mental Maps

Another objection to LOTH comes from philosophers who have argued that there are non- linguistic forms of representation that are productive, systematic, and inferentially coherent. For example, David Braddon-Mitchell and Frank Jackson (1996) argue that maps are an important example. The point out that productivity, systematicity and inferential coherence show that thought must be *structured*, where a system of representation is structured just in case the similarities that hold between the representational states of the system reflect similarities that hold between the states that the system serves to represent, such that for new representational states, one can discover which states they serve to represent.

4. Connectionist Networks

The most widely discussed objection to LOTH is the objection that connectionist networks provide better models of cognition

than computers processing linguistically structured representations (see Bechtel and Abramson 1990, Churchland 1995, and Elman et al. 1996 for useful introductions). Such networks possess some number of interconnected *nodes*, typically arranged as layers of *input*, *output*, and *hidden* nodes. Each node possesses a level of activation, and each connection is weighted. The level of activation of all the nodes to which a given node is connected, together with the weightings of those connections, determine the level of activation of the given node. A particular set of activations at the input nodes will result in a particular set of activations at the output nodes.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. To understand Fodor position on the language of thought, there is need to understand his position on the representational theory of mind. TRUE or FALSE
2. _____ claims that mental processes are computational processes, and that intentional states are relations to mental representations that serve as the domain of such processes.
3. Mention two arguments for the language of thought.

Conclusion

The next unit will focus on the concept of private language and will consider the extent and reality of such a concept.

1.6 Summary

In this unit, the focus was on the language of thought thesis as presented by Jerry Fodor as well as its constraints and the objections to the existence of such a language with the reality and use of language.

1.7 References/Further Reading

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1.8 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. TRUE

2.Representational theory of mind

3.(a.) The only game in town
(b.) Productivity

UNIT 2 PRIVATE LANGUAGE

Unit Structure

2.1 Introduction

This unit considers private language and it does so by first looking at what private language is. It then considers Ludwig Wittgenstein's statement of the argument for private language. Finally, it looks at Saul Kripke's restatement of the argument.

2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the unit, you will be able to:

- Define what private language is?
- State Ludwig Wittgensein's private langauge argument
- Articulate Saul Kripke's restatement of the argument.

2.3 What Private Language Is

In the words of Tanesini, "a logically private language would be a language that only one person could speak and no one else could either learn or understand. It is thus different from a solitary language, which is the language of only one person, but which could at least in principle be understood or learnt by others" (123). In Wittgenstein's own words, "the words of this language are to refer to what can be known only to the speaker; to his immediate, private, sensations. So another cannot understand the language" (*Investigations* §243).

The argument for private language holds that, there is (are) language(s) "whose primitive terms signify the speaker's 'private' sensations and perceptions, allegedly inalienably owned and truly known only by their

bearer" (Hacker 758). Private language as used here is not one that in fact can be understood by one person, but a language that in principle can only be understood by one person. A private language must be unlearnable and untraslatatable.

2.4 Ludwig Wittgenstein's Classic Statement of the Argument

Wittgenstein's main attack on the idea of a private language is contained in §§244–271 of *Philosophical Investigations* (though the ramifications of the matter are recognizably pursued until §315). These passages, especially those from §256 onwards, are now commonly known as 'the private language argument', despite the fact that he brings further considerations to bear on the topic in other places in his writings; and despite the fact that the broader context,of §§243–315, does not contain a singular critique of just one idea, namely, a private language—rather, the passages address many issues, such as privacy, identity, inner/outer relations, sensations as objects, and sensations as justification for sensation talk, amongst others.

Nevertheless, the main argument of §§244–271 is, apparently, readily summarized. The conclusion is that a language in principle unintelligible to anyone but its originating user is impossible. The reason for this is that such a so-called language would, necessarily, be unintelligible to its supposed originator too, for he would be unable to establish meanings for its putative signs.

We should, however, note that Wittgenstein himself never employs the phrase 'private language argument'. And a few commentators (e.g., Baker 1998, Canfield, 2001: 377–9, Stroud, 2000: 69) have questioned the very existence in the relevant passages of a unified structure properly identifiable as a sustained argument. This suggestion, however, depends for its plausibility on a tendentiously narrow notion of argument—roughly, as a kind of proof, with identifiable premisses and a firm conclusion, rather than the more general sense which would include the exposure of a confusion through a variety of reasoned twists and turns, of qualifications, weighings-up and re-thinkings—and is a reaction against some drastic and artificial reconstructions of the text by earlier writers. Nevertheless, there is a point to be made, and the summary above conceals, as we shall see, a very intricate discussion.

2.5 Saul Kripke's Re-statement of The Argument

An important thing to note when discussing Kripke´s interpretation of Wittgenstein´s arguments is that he in no way claims that what he states really are the views that Wittgenstein himself held. They are also not really the views of Kripke either. In Kripke´s own words: "So the

present paper should be thought of as expounding neither 'Wittgenstein´s' argument nor 'Kripke´s': rather Wittgenstein´s argument as it struck Kripke, as it presented a problem for him" (Kripke, 1982: 5).

Kripke´s take on Wittgenstein is that the problems Wittgenstein presented are of a skeptical nature and that the solution is a skeptical one. The discussion begins both for Wittgenstein and Kripke with rules and the following of rules, as well as what such things mean both for private language and language in general. Since Kripke finds it most accessible, it is first, and primarily, discussed in the form of mathematics (Kripke, 1982). Kripke´s argumentation. Kripke´s argumentation is in the form of a dialogue in which a skeptic questions the foundations of rule-following by questioning the existence of justifications for the supposed knowledge of the rule being followed and Kripke attempts to reply to the skeptic. It is stated that when one is asked the question "what is 57+68?", one simply answers "125" since the "+"-sign denotes addition and addition yields the answer 125. To this the skeptic wonders: How did you know that you intended to use addition when encountering the "+"-sign? If you use a rule which is the same every time you see "+", then how do you know that the rule you were supposed to use was actually addition and not something else, like *quaddition*? (Kripke, 1982). Quaddition is explained to be the same as addition, with the exception that for numbers over 57 the answer to all calculations is 5 and therefore the answer that should have been given was 5, not 125. The skeptic claims that since a rule such as addition is applicable to an infinite amount of calculations, and humans are finite beings only ever capable of performing a finite number of calculations, one cannot examine the previous uses of the rule to determine which rule it was that was actually used. "Perhaps when I used the term 'plus' in the *past*, I always meant quus: by hypothesis I never gave myself any explicit directions that were incompatible with such a supposition." (Kripke, 1982: 13). 1 This skeptical dilemma is revealed to be the central question in Kripke´s book, since it seems to be a very difficult question to answer (Kripke, 1982).

Kripke´s skeptical solution (skeptical since it accepts the premises of the skeptical challenge) states that language is possible between individuals since in such a situation there can be a comparison of answers and agreement. Also important is that there need to be criteria to determine the use of a concept, which need to be agreed upon as well.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

1. What is private language?
2. Kripke´s take on Wittgenstein is that the problems Wittgenstein presented are of a _____nature and that the solution is a skeptical one.
3. State Kripke's skeptical solution.

Conclusion

The next module will focus attention on two final aspects of this course. These are metaphors and language in African philosophy.

2.6 Summary

In this unit, the focus has been on the private language argument. In addressing this argument, the unit defined private language, then it considered Ludwig Wittgenstein's statement of the argument and finally it considered Saul Kripke's restatement of the argument.

2.7 References/Further Reading

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2.8 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. In the words of Tanesini, “a logically private language would be a language that only one person could speak and no one else could either learn or understand."

2. Skeptical

3. Kripke´s skeptical solution (skeptical since it accepts the premises of the skeptical challenge) states that language is possible between individuals since in such a situation there can be a comparison of answers and agreement.

UNIT 3 METAPHORS

Unit Structure

3.1 Introduction

This unit focuses on metaphor as a dark side of the philosophy of language. It begins by looking at the issue with metaphors and go ahead to articulate the various acoounts for whilejustifying the validity of their role in natural language.

3.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the unit, will be able to:

- Understand why metaphor is considered as the dark side of the philosophy oflanguage?
- Articulate some of the accounts for metaphor.

3.3 The Issue with Metaphors

Philosophers like language to be literal. This is the case because of the drive for linguistic precision in analytic philosophy which is the birthplace for the philosophy of language. This linguistic precision is aimed at removing ambiguities in the use of language. This reflects standard philosophical practice. Philosophers tend to think that literal speech is the default and metaphorical utterances are occasional aberrations, made mainly by poets and literary arts. Based on this, our discussion thus far have concentrated on theories of literal reference and literal meaning, there has barely been any mention of *metaphor* and other figurative uses of language. But this is only a bias; sentences are

very often used in perfectly ordinary contexts with other than their literal meanings. Indeed, virtually every sentence produced by any human being contains importantly metaphorical or other figurative elements. For this reason, it will not be an exaggeration to maintain that non-literal usage is the rule, not the exception. The inability of mainstream philosophy of language to deal adequately with this phenomenon of the non-literal use of language perpetually haunts the philosophy of language. Hence, the tag: the dark side of the philosophy of language.

There is some variation in taxonomy as to how metaphor is classified with respect to other figures of speech. Some theorists use the term 'metaphor' very broadly, as almost synonymous with 'figurative.' Others use it very narrowly, as naming one very specific figure alongside many other ones. We shall not bother ourselves with making such fine distinctions here. We shall stick to the broad understanding and focus on the philosophical questions concerning metaphors. The main philosophical questions concerning metaphor are two: (i) what is 'metaphorical meaning,' broadly construed? And (ii) by what mechanism is it conveyed? That is, how do hearers grasp that meaning, given that what they hear is only a sentence whose literal meaning is something different? Metaphor raises many further important philosophical questions, about the rationale for expressing oneself metaphorically instead of directly, the distinctive effectiveness and power of metaphor as a figure of speech, and the centrality of metaphor in each of several walks of life, but in this discussion we shall fix our attention to more specifically linguistic questions.

3.4 Semantic Twist Account of Metaphors

Semantic Twist Accounts hold that metaphor results from the interaction or interanimation of words and word meanings as they are brought together and act on each other in the settings provided by particular utterances made on particular concrete occasions. When we take an uttered sentence as a metaphor, we assign it a new and distinctively metaphorical *meaning*. The assignment of fresh meaning to the sentence as a whole results from a more local assignment of fresh meaning to one or more of the sentence's constituent words or phrases, the ones we take metaphorically, the *focal* words or phrases. The meanings assigned the remainder of the sentence, the *framing* words or phrases, remain unchanged. Influential early semantic twist accounts were provided by I.A. Richards (1936), Max Black (1954), and Monroe Beardsley (1962).

3.5 Pragmatic Twist Account of Metaphors

Pragmatic Twist Accounts maintain that when we resort to metaphor, we use words and phrases with their standard literal meanings to *say* one thing, put one thing into words, yet we are taken to *mean*, taken to assert or acknowledge or otherwise indicate, something entirely different. Our sentence as used by us means one thing, we in using it mean or are properly construed as meaning something entirely different. Metaphor is a genre of deliberate and overt suggestion, one by means of which speakers *commit themselves to*, implicitly *vouch for the truth of*, the things they suggest. Paraphrase is an effort to get at what is metaphorically suggested by putting it (or some part of it, or some approximation to it) directly into words, thereby explicitly saying (more or less fully and more or less accurately) what was implicitly vouched for by the original metaphorical utterance. The thought that metaphor concerns what *speakers* mean as opposed to what *their words* mean is old and widespread. Often it comes with the further thought that metaphor reveals by concealing—revealing things in the end by concealing them at the outset.

3.6 Comparativist Account of Metaphors

Ancient Greek poetry was rich in extended explicit comparisons—similes—of the sort we now call *epic* or *Homeric*. Aristotle goes on to contend that "similes are metaphors needing an explanatory word" (*Poetics* 1407a)—as if the difference between the "The lion [Achilles] rushed" (metaphor) and "He [Achilles] rushed as a lion" (simile) came down to the presence in the latter of a stage direction indicating that Achilles went on the attack *in the guise of* a lion. A simile is thus a lengthened metaphor. Quintilian turns things round, speaking of metaphors as shortened similes:

In general terms, Metaphor is a shortened form of Simile; the difference is that in Simile something is [overtly] compared with the thing we wish to describe, while in metaphor one thing is substituted for the other.—*Institutio Oratoria*, ca. 95 AD, 8.6, 8–9.

Like his fellow ancients, Quintilian conceived metaphor as an affair of terms rather than as an affair of sentences. A metaphorical employment of the term "lion" to refer to the man Achilles doesn't *say* that Achilles is like a lion, since it doesn't *say* anything at all. Namings aren't sayings; they merely pave the way for sayings. What Quintilian meant, then, is that a simile *states* the real or alleged similarity (of Achilles to lions) which the corresponding metaphorical substitution *leaves to a listener's imagination*. Some such comparativist account of metaphor has been proposed from time to time by modern critics (Nowottny, 1962) and by modern linguists (Ortony, 1979).

3.7 Brute Force Account of Metaphors

*Brute Force Account*s maintain that in metaphor, no words go missing and neither words nor speakers are induced to mean anything out of the ordinary. Instead, an utterance that would otherwise be idle or pointless produces something Richard Moran calls a "framing effect"(Moran, 1989): listeners are induced to view or consider or experience the primary subject (or subjects) in a fresh and special light, a light afforded by juxtaposing it (or them) with the secondary subject (or subjects). What makes a remark metaphorical is the fact that it induces this framing effect—together, perhaps, with the specific syntactic strategy it employs for getting the job done. Paraphrase (so-called) is best viewed as an effort to provide a salient and representative sample of the real or apparent truths about the primary subject(s) the framing effect induces us to notice, think about, or dwell upon. It mustn't be viewed as a restatement of some metaphorically expressed or metaphorically conveyed message, since there is no such message, restatable or otherwise. As Donald Davidson put it in the most influential statement of such an account, "What Metaphors Mean": When we try to say what a metaphor "means," we soon realize there is no end to what we want to mention… How many facts are conveyed by a photograph? None, an infinity, or one great unstatable fact? Bad question. A picture is not worth a thousand words, or any other number. Words are the wrong currency to exchange for a picture. (Davidson 1978, 46–7) Davidson cheerfully admits that there are things we can naturally and usefully refer to as metaphorical meaning and metaphorical truth. But they aren't the seeds of metaphorical understanding; they are among its fruits. We mislocate metaphorical meanings if we regard them as accruing to particular words or phrases, the words and phrases we take metaphorically. And we mislocate metaphorical truth if we think of it as accruing to particular sentences, the ones we take to be metaphors.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES 3

1. State the two main philosophical questions concerning metaphors.
2. Mention any two accounts of metaphors.
3.State the Brute force account of metaphors.

Conclusion

Metaphors are very vital to natural language. Even though analytic philosophy cannot fully account for them, they are part of the reality of language.

3.8 Summary

This unit considered the issue of metaphors as the dark side of the philosophy of language. In so doing, it looked at the issue with metaphors and articulated some of the accounts of metaphor.

3.9 References/Further Reading

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3.10 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise 3

1.(a.) What is ‘metaphorical meaning,’ broadly construed?
(b.) By what mechanism is it conveyed?

2. (a.) Semantic twist account of metaphors
(b.) Pragmatic twist account of metaphors

3.The brute Force Accounts maintain that in metaphor, no words go missing and neither words nor speakers are induced to mean anything out of the ordinary.