

# LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION: AN INTRODUCTION TO APPROACHES TO MEANING AND TEXT ANALYSIS

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*"Cogito, ergo sum". "I think, therefore I am".*  
Rene Descartes, 17<sup>th</sup> century French Philosopher.

## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the concept of language and communication. It gives an exposition to the study of meaning as it diachronically investigates the theories and approaches to meaning. The crux of the study is that language is central to linguistic communication. It explains concept of meaning in language with the various theories of meaning, such as the traditional referential, ideational, behavioural, and contextual theories of meaning. It also examines some modern theoretical developments on meaning. It carries out the pragmatics and critical discourse analysis of some selected texts to demonstrate the application of some of the approaches to meaning in Language. It concludes on the ground that an understanding of approaches to meaning in language would enhance the development of knowledge and promote successful communication in various situations.

**Key words:** Language, communication, meaning, linguistics, pragmatics, critical discourse analysis.

## INTRODUCTION

The maxim by Descartes that *I think, therefore I exist*, confirms that human beings are thinking beings. This rationality is a distinctive feature that distinguishes humans from other animals from time immemorial. Since people live together in communities, there is also the need to communicate thoughts and ideas to others in order to facilitate understanding and promote peaceful co-existence with one another; communication thus becomes essential to human beings. Oyewo (2000) describes communication as a symbolic behavior that occurs between two or more participants. It is usually purposeful, transactional and affective in nature.

Communication, which could be a one-way or two-way process, can be classified as verbal communication in form of oral, intra-personal, interpersonal, written communication, and non-verbal communication. The process of communication has been traditionally identified with stimulus or motivation, which is the need to communicate. This is a communication process that involves the sender of the message; the message; the medium; the channel; the receiver and the feedback that is expected at the end of the communication process. Thus, Akmajian *et. al.* (1992) rightly observed that communication is a social affair that takes place within the context of a fairly well defined social situation. This means that in a given context, par-

ticipants rely on one another to share information in the ideal situation.

### ***Models of linguistic communication***

This study is concerned with two models of linguistic communication, the message model and the inferential model of communication.

#### ***The message model***

John Locke in 1961 propounded the message model of linguistic communication, which states that communication is successful when the hearer decodes the message that the speaker encodes. It also states that communication breaks down, if the decoded message is different from the encoded message. This model portrays language as the bridge between the speaker and the hearer. Thus, language is an essential tool of communication, which transfers thoughts in a coded form from one person to another. However, one of the identified weaknesses of this model is that, it is difficult for the hearer to determine, which of the possible meanings of an expression, is the speaker's intended meaning in a particular occasion. This enhances the problem of ambiguity. For instance: *Cheating spouses can be dangerous.*

This could mean the dangers inherent in the act of cheating on one's spouse; it could also mean that a spouse that cheats can be dangerous. This shows that this model does not provide for contextual appropriateness. Secondly, this model does not account for the 'hidden' or 'unsaid' intention of the speaker.

#### ***The inferential model***

This model of linguistic communication posits that communication is successful when the hearer upon hearing an expres-

sion, recognizes the speaker's communicative intention, (Grice, 1975; Akmajian *et.al.*, 1992). This in other words means that linguistic communication is possible because the hearer and the speaker share a system of inferential strategies from the utterance of expression, to the hearer's recognition of the speaker's communicative intent. The inferential model of linguistic communication proposes that in the course of learning to speak a language, one learns how to communicate in that language by acquiring a variety of shared beliefs or presumptions in addition to the system of inferential strategies. Hence, this approach provides for indirect and figurative communication as the hearer uses context and conversational presumptions to find the speaker's indirect communicative intent. Thus, language is central to linguistic communication, which is the crux of this study.

Ogden and Richards (1972) observe that throughout almost all our lives, we are treating things as signs. This accounts for the interpretation of language as the key to the understanding of the sign-situation, and the beginning of wisdom. This implies that an understanding of language is fundamental to human understanding and it is an essential tool for the integration and maintenance of a society. Fromkin and Rodman (1978) buttress this by saying that to understand our humanity; one must understand the language that makes us human. This shows that language is the source of human life and power. Several scholars have described language as the medium of communication, which has the characteristics of being arbitrary, systematically structured, conventional, culturally transmitted, universal, contextual and productive, (Akindele & Adegbite, 1999; Oye-shile, 2000; Adesida, 2006; Lamidi, 2000).

Similarly, Cruse (1990) describes language as

"a system of conventional signs, all aspects of whose structure phonology, morphology, syntax, etc. exist ultimately to serve the function of conveying meaning". This means that the primary function of language is for conveying meaning at various levels as signs, which can be linguistic signs, paralinguistic signs and non-linguistic signs. Linguistic signs can be verbal or non-verbal. The verbal signs are perceived through the prosodic aspects of language, such as intonation and stress. The para-linguistic signs are perceived through the voice as voice colour, modulation, etc.; while the non-verbal signs are perceived in form of posture of the speaker, facial expressions, gestures, etc. However, as the verbal language is the only channel of everyday communication through which a conceptual content of any complexity can be conveyed for effective meaning, language thus enhances human understanding and development of knowledge, by being vitally helpful in conveying the various meanings of any utterance. As the problem of meaning in communication has been with human beings for long, several approaches to meaning have been devised to express the role of language in the interpretation of meaning.

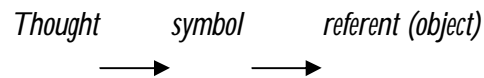
Basically, there are three kinds of meaning; these are descriptive meaning, expressive meaning and evocative meaning. Descriptive meaning is the meaning that determines if the statement is true or false; and it governs the logical relations between sentences. It can be prepositional, ideational, cognitive, or denotative. Expressive meaning is concerned with feelings and attitudes, which are expressed rather than described, such as the feeling of pain, surprise, anger, etc. This kind of meaning is valid only for the time and place of utterance. Evocative meaning is the meaning from the images and feelings

the words evoke in a hearer. It is usually derived from the descriptive and/ or expressive meaning.

**Theories and Approaches to Meaning**

There are numerous theories of meaning. The traditional approaches to meaning include:

Referential theory of meaning: This theory explains the relationship between words and objects. It is also referred to as extensionalism, language is made to have extension to objects or referents. It describes the process of communication as:



This theory claims that a linguistic symbol refers to its referent. However, it does not account for expressions that have different meanings but the same referent. Also, some words do not refer to any external entities. e.g.: *however, meanwhile*, etc.

One of the other traditional theories of meaning is the ideational theory of meaning, which claims that the meaning of a word refers to the idea that it evokes in the speaker and the hearer. However, the problem with this theory is that it is difficult to ascertain that the hearer shares the idea of the speaker. The behavioural theory of meaning examines the process of communication in order to explain the nature of meaning in language. It claims that the speaker's utterance acts as a stimulus to the hearer who then makes a response. The problem with this theory is that it over-simplifies behavioural process as in most cases; meaning cannot be reduced to the stimulus- response connection. Other traditional theories include:

**Contextual theory of meaning:** This theory

claims that the meaning of a word is realized in a culturally determined 'context of situation', (Ogunsiji, 2000; Cruse, 1990; Lamidi, 2000). This theory posits that contexts determine meanings within the concrete linguistic situation. It emphasizes appropriateness, acceptability, and insists that situational variables should be regarded as important to language description.

However, this theory of meaning does not give much room for the relation of reference; also, the notion of context or situation is an open-ended one.

**Lexical Field approach to meaning:** The field theory as propounded by Saussurean structuralism holds that a lexical field refers to a structured group of words with related meanings that have some sort of distinctive life of its own. For Saussure, a linguistic system consisted at every level of set of paradigmatic choices, arranged along the syntagmatic axis according to definite principles of combination. This means that linguistic units do not possess inherent significance in isolation, but acquire their linguistic value only by virtue of their paradigmatic or syntagmatic relationship with other units in the system. This means that for instance, one cannot have a good understanding of the word 'warm' without examining its relation with hot, cool, scorching, freezing, etc. The field theory of meaning employs the approach of sense relation through the meaning that a word contracts with other words in the language. The sense relations could be the paradigmatic relation of lexical choice; or the syntagmatic relation at the level of structure of a sentence.

**Paradigmatic relations:** These represent the system of choices of conceptual categories provided by language. This holds be-

tween words that can be chosen at a particular structural point in a sentence. The paradigmatic sense relation manifests meaning as:

**Synonym:** E.g. Repair/mend; brave/fearless; conceal/hide; commence/begin; etc.

**Oppositeness** (*antonym, complementaries, reversives, and converses*), for instance:

**Antonyms** (denial of one term is not equal to asserting the other and members denote qualities which vary from one context to another): E.g. Large/small; long/short; fast/slow; strong/weak; etc.

**Complementaries** refer to the denial of one term is equal to the assertion of the other. e.g. dead/alive; true/false; open/shut; etc.

**Reversives** refer to an utterance, which the verb refers to a process that can be changed and restored to the original state. E.g.: enter/leave; rise/fall; advance/retreat; ascend/descend; appear/disappear; tie/untie; dress/undress; etc.

**Converses/relational opposites** indicate the relationship between two or more people viewed from different perspectives by the participants. E.g. *above/below; buy/sell; before/after; precede/follow; lend/borrow*, etc.

**Inclusion and exclusion (hyponym:** eg. Tree as the *super-ordinate* term and willow as the *hyponym*.);

**Incompatibility:** E.g. Willow not Sycamore; Trout not Pike; etc.

**Meronymy** refers to inclusion and exclusion that are spatial in nature. The term that refers to the whole is called **holonym** and the

term that refers to the part is called **meronymy**. e.g. *Finger*: hand; *spoke*: wheel; *petal*: flower, etc.

**Syntagmatic sense relation:** This can be perceived as semantic normality and abnormality, or as co-occurrence restriction. For semantic normality and abnormality, the patterns of normal or abnormal occurrence of a word are a reflection of its meaning. For instance: *Mary took radiance in her hands*.

This is grammatically in order but semantically odd. However, co-occurrence restrictions may manifest as sectional restriction, collocational restrictions, and presuppositions. This type of syntagmatic relation, that is, co-occurrence restriction is usually descriptive and dependent on grammatical structure. For instance:

***Paul killed the chair.***

***Paul killed the corpse of the man.***

There is usually a case of collocational restriction, if a semantic oddness can be avoided by replacing one or more items by their synonyms (or near synonyms). Thus, the violation of collocational restrictions results to inappropriateness, while the violation of selectional restrictions results to contradiction or incongruity. Selectional restrictions are usually explained in terms of lexical presuppositions. For instance:

***The hunter killed the curdgeon.***

This presupposes that the curdgeon is a living thing.

**Semantic Feature approach to meaning:**

This refers to the idea of lexical decomposition by explaining the meaning of words in terms of simpler units of meaning called semantic features or semantic components. Semantic components as proposed by Katz

and Fodor (1963) comprised a dictionary, in which the meaning of each lexical item was specified in a uniform way, with a set of rules for combining the separate word meanings according to the syntagmatic structure in order to give the word a global meaning. For example: ***bachelor*** could mean:

Human with lowest academic degree;  
Human, male who has never married;  
Animal, a young seal without a mate in breeding season.

Another illustrative example of componential analysis is in the tradition of structural semantics. For instance, the features of different kinds of human beings could be presented thus:

The features above are markers that are intended to give a full analysis with residue of meanings of the lexical items. However, a feature analysis, which aims to account for the whole of a word's meanings, runs the risk of infinite proliferation of features.

Apart from the aforementioned, the traditional approaches later evolved into the contemporary theories of meaning that include: pragmatics, stylistics, and critical discourse analysis. Attention in this study is given to pragmatics as it relates to philosophical meanings of expressions and how words are used in particular situation or context and to critical discourse analysis.

Human Beings	Beards	Femininity	Mammalian Glands	Male	Maturity	Pregnancy	Breadwinner
Girl	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
Boy	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
Woman	-	+	+	-	+	-	-
Man	+	-	-	+	+	-	+
Mother	-	+	+	-	+	+	-
Father	+	-	-	+	+	-	+

**Pragmatics**

Pragmatics, which is a branch of modern linguistics, means the study of the meaning of linguistic utterances for their users and interpreters. Three philosophers conceived it out of the abstractions of philosophy rather than of descriptive needs of linguistics. J.L. Austin, J.R. Searle, and H.P. Grice were the founding fathers of this branch of linguistics though none of them used the expression in their work. The crux of the study of these philosophers of communication centres on the communication that associate language with its use to convey messages by users for interpreters, and this is the crux of pragmatics. Austin (1962) claimed that one utterance could at the same time constitute three kinds of acts.

First is **locutionary act** (or locution), which is the act of uttering some expressions with a particular sense and reference. e.g.:

*She warned me to take heed.*

Second is **illocutionary act** (or illocution), which is the act, performed in, or by the virtue of the performance of the locution. e.g.: warned, urged, requested, asked, invited, etc. The third is **perlocutionary act** (or perlocution), which refers to the act performed by means of what is said. e.g., She persuaded me to take heed.

The locution belongs to the traditional territory of truth-based semantics. The perlocution belongs to the effect or result of the utterance. The illocution occupies the middle ground between locution and perlocution. It is the territory of pragmatics, that is, meaning in context. This aspect is the domain of Austin's study. On the other hand, Searle (1969) through the classical Speech-Act theory claimed that meaning is a kind of doing. Searle's study centers on illocutionary acts and illocutionary force, which refer the functions or meanings associated with illocutionary acts. The Speech-Act theory lends itself to establishing systems of classification for illocutions in five categories thus:

**Assertives:** These commit the speaker to the truth of some propositions (e.g., stating, claiming, reporting, announcing, etc.).

**Directives:** These are statements that count as attempts to bring about some effect through the action of the hearer. (e.g., *ordering, requesting, warning, demanding, begging*, etc.).

**Commissives:** These commit the speaker to some future actions (e.g., *promising, offering, swearing to do something*, etc.).

**Expressives:** These are statements that count as the expression of some psychological state (e.g., *thanking, apologizing, congratulating, regretting*, etc.).

**Declaratives:** These are speech acts whose "successful performance bring about the correspondence between the prepositional content and reality". (e.g., *naming, resigning, sentencing, christening*, etc.).

Searle opined that speech acts could be easily distinguished with these five acts.

H.P. Grice also attempted to elucidate on the problem of how meaning in ordinary human discourse is different from meaning in the truth-conditional sense. Grice was interested in explaining the difference between ***what is said*** and ***what is meant***. '*What is said*' refers to the meaning at the face value, the surface meaning or explicit meaning, which can be explained in truth-conditional terms. 'What is meant' refers to the effect that the speaker intends to produce on the hearer by the virtue of the hearer's recognition of the intention (which is the inexplicit or hidden meaning). Thus Grice provides the concept of "co-operative principle" in order to give a reasonable explanation for the process of inferring conversational meanings. The cooperative principle states "*make your contribution such as is required, at the stage which it occurs, by the accepted purpose of direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged*".

This principle is further explained in four constituent maxims:

**The maxim of quality:** Try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically:

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

**The maxim of quantity:**

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

**The maxim of relation:** Make your contribution relevant.

**The maxim of manner:** Be perspicuous and specifically:

- Avoid obscurity;
- Avoid ambiguity;
- Be brief;
- Be orderly.

The Cooperative Principle is a device to explain how people arrive at meanings. There is no assumption that people are inevitably truthful, informative and relevant in what they say. Grice also introduced the concept of ***conversational implicature***, which refers to the pragmatic implications that the hearer figures out by assuming the speaker's underlying adherence to the Cooperative Principle. It is the flouting of the maxims, which leads to the generation of the conversational implicature. Implicature depends on factors of context.

Grice specifies two kinds of implicatures. These are ***conversational implicatures***, which depend on the assumption of the Cooperative Principle and ***conventional implicatures***, which are simply associated by convention with the meanings of particular words. In all, the domain of pragmatics is to be identified with SPEECH SITUATION including the utterance (what is said), the speaker and the hearer, but the shared knowledge of the participants both in the immediate situation and general. This shared knowledge is called the CONTEXT of the

utterance. The following is thus a sample analysis of conversation with pragmatic principles.

Here attention is given to the instance of Global System of Mobile (GSM) communication.

Text one: Analysis of a GSM Conversation:

**Speaker Utterance**

	Turns
A : Hello, who is speaking?	1
B : Hello ma, it's me Lola, your daughter's friend.	2
A : My daughter's friend?	3
B : Yes ma, the friend of your daughter abroad.	4
A : My daughter, Funmi, in London?	5
B : Yes! She sent me to give some parcels to you. I'm now in Nigeria.	6
A : Is that so?	7
B : Yes, but could you kindly send some CREDIT to my phone , so I can use it to send the parcels to you.	8
A : CREDIT ? How much credit?	9
B : Erm... say five thousand naira. I need it to post the parcels to you from here.	10
A : Five thousand naira?	11
C : (A nearby listener) Mummy, cut it ! That is 419. The person is trying to defraud you. (End of conversation)	12

From the above conversation, it is obvious that all the speakers speak literally and directly. Also, they displayed shared knowledge on the subject of the discourse. The conversation opens with speaker A's presupposition that speaker B is an acquaintance, and on the assumption that the speaker B would not violate the Cooperative Principle of conversations.

In the conversation at turn *four*, speaker B restricts the information given, thereby making the utterance ambiguous. Speaker B flouts the maxim of quantity and manner. This makes speaker A at turn *five*, to supply the missing information about the name of her daughter in London by the process of inference. Speaker A infers from the utterance of speaker B, on the presupposition that her daughter, Funmi, who is abroad, is a shared knowledge between the participants. This prompts speaker A to release the name of the daughter being discussed. Hence, speaker A flouts the maxim of quantity by making her contribution more informative than necessary.

Likewise, at turn *six*, speaker B gives the information of being in Nigeria but fails to state the exact location. Here, speaker B deliberately withholds the information in order to keep the hearer in suspense and prepare the hearer (*speaker A*) for the request that follows. The conversational implicature at that point implies that the speaker B has just arrived from London. The utterances at turn *eight* and *nine* indicate that there is a shared knowledge on the reference to '*credit*' by both speakers. In this context of situation, '*credit*' is the referent for recharging speaker B's account with that particular communication service providers, by buying the recharge card that is worth the required amount and sending it to speaker B's phone number. The '*credit*' can then be converted to cash if the person wishes. This is a process that has become popular with the advent of GSM communication in Nigeria. This also signifies that the usage of the word '*credit*' has expanded with the introduction of GSM in the country.

In the same vein, at turn *eight*, speaker B deliberately gives less information than is re-



quired about the amount of the credit, thus violates the maxim of quantity. At turn *ten*, speaker B is ambiguous with her reference to the parcels, which are not specified. This is in order to heighten the suspense in the conversation and make speaker A to do as she is being bided. The interruption by speaker C, who has been a passive listener to the conversation brings the turns to an end by calling the attention of speaker A to the fact that the conversational implicature from the utterance is that speaker A is about being duped by speaker B. Thus, it portrays the utterances of speaker B to be false and void, and thereby violates the maxim of quality, which says: 'do not say what you believe to be false'. The conversation depicts the typical style of some users of GSM as a means of communication in Nigeria.

Speaker B intentionally violates the maxims of quality, quantity, and manner because of her hidden intention, which is to defraud speaker A. Speaker B flouts the maxim of quantity by providing little information than required. As a result, speaker A supplies the missing information by inference and violates the maxim of quantity. Thereby speaker A unconsciously gives speaker B the information that is needed to attain the hidden intention. This shows that language is important to communication.

Language is the spine of any successful communication process but attention must be given to context of usage at any point as demonstrated in the above. Adebite (2000) buttresses that pragmatics studies as shown above, require a combination of the knowledge of the world, knowledge of cultures and conventions of people, and knowledge of the factors of situations in which communication takes place. How-

ever, pragmatics too does not account for all unsaid meanings of contextual usage of language. This then leads to another recent approach to meaning in context, which is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

The linguistic approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Norman Fairclough, seeks to identify the ideologies in a given text through the language of the text from the 'unsaid said', which are the silences that give the implied relation of power between the users of language and ideology of the speaker in the given context of usage of language. CDA identifies the intertextual context, which views discourses and texts from historical perspective; identifies the social order, determines the institutional setting; determines the situational setting; the situation, discourse type, contents, subjects, relations, and connections. Fairclough (2000, 1995, 1992) posits that the member resources which people draw upon to produce and interpret texts are cognitive in the sense that they are in people's heads, but they are social in the sense that they are socially generated and socially transmitted (see Fairclough 2005a, b, c, 2001; vanDijk, 1996; vanLeeuwen, 1996). The extract below gives a short example of the discourse in Wole Soyinka's book, *Climate of Fear* published in 2004.

#### **Contextualization of the text**

Here, Soyinka discusses the notion of fear as a consequence of September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World's Trade Center in USA. He posits that fear had been with Africans long before then; and that it had always manifested in different forms such as abuse of power by military heads of states, super-power nations, religious leaders and followers through fanaticism and religious rhetoric.

**Text Two: Analysis of Soyinka's *Climate of Fear***

	Theme	Rheme	Type of Theme	Function	Clause type
1.	Again and again,	our paths-those of creative people would meet, leading to that immediate question: how did creativity survive under such arbitrary exercise of power? P. 4.	Marked	Circumstantial Adjunct	Hypotactic
2.	The relationship between that fire, a naked force of Nature – even though probably the work of arsonists – and the humanity that was menaced	was very different from the exercise of the power of an individual over another, or that of a totalitarian state over its populace. p. 7.	Unmarked (Thematic equative)	Subject	Simple
3.	Today	the fear is one of furtive, invisible power, the power of the quasi-state, that entity that lays no claim to any physical boundaries, files no national flag, is unlisted in any international associations, and is every bit as mad as the MAD gospel of annihilation that was so calmly announced by the superpowers. P. 9.	Marked (Thematic equative)	Circumstantial Adjunct	Hypotactic
4.	Political cowardice or a lack of moral will, what dominated the thinking of many African leaders	was frankly, 'let us keep mute and maybe he will exempt us from his current revolutionary rampage, or at least exercise his restraining influence and cloak us in selective immunity'. P. 15.	Unmarked (Thematic equative)	Subject	Simple
5.	They	had only to recall that Libya, headed by a young maverick called Gaddafi, was then at the height of its power. P. 16.	Unmarked	Subject	Simple
6.	Distasteful though the conclusion may be to such mind-sets,	September 11, 2001 has proved to be only a culmination of the posted signs that had been scrawled on the sands of the Sahara, over decades in letters of blood. P. 18.	Marked	Comment Adjunct	Simple
7.	Thus: we shall ascend to power on the democratic ladder -	declared the evidently popular Islamist party – after which we shall pull up the ladder, and there shall be no more democracy. P. 31.	Marked	Conjunctive Adjunct	Hypotactic

Hence, the September 11, 2001 event was only a variegation of the fear that Africans live with.

The book examines issues such as the changing face of fear, the conflict between power and freedom; and the complex motives behind unthinkable acts of violence, among others, just as Nigerians now live with the fear of being kidnapped by the 'terrorists' in the Niger-Delta.

The formal properties of this text are examined with Halliday's (1985) Systemic Functional Grammar, at the level of thematic structure with the text meaning analysis; the mood structure with the interpersonal meaning analysis; and the level of transitivity structure with the experiential meaning analysis.

On textual meaning, the thematic examination of sentences reveals that Soyinka uses marked and unmarked themes that are often presented as group or phrase complexes. A marked theme refers to a theme that is different from the subject in a declarative clause, while the unmarked theme is that which the psychological subject (*theme*), the grammatical subject (*subject*), and the logical subject (*actor*) are conflated into a single element.

Halliday (1995) affirms that the selection of subjects by a speaker or writer does give a characteristic flavour to a piece of discourse. The analysis shows that the writer uses more of unmarked themes in the text, *Climate of fear*, to indicate that the subject matter refers to the actor, subject, and theme as the same subject. The textual analysis reveals that most of the clauses above have marked themes for emphasis and to specify reason, or manner, or time of

the events in the discourse.

Thus, the marked themes function as either circumstantial, comment, or conjunctive adjuncts in the sentences. The structure of the sentences are either simple or complex with the logical semantic process of locution of fact or report with the use of expansions in form of elaboration, enhancement, or projection of idea.

The mood structure with the inter-personal analysis focuses on the clause as an exchange, the clause takes the form of proposition. The interpretation of the structure of statements gives the understanding of the clause in its exchange function. The polarity, which is expressed in finite element, demonstrates that the speaker in the text mostly uses the positive polarity. This means that the propositions employed in the text are making assertions with high degree of usuality.

The modality of the propositions shows that the speaker's opinion is more often than not, put with a positive polar form. It shows that the interaction is predominantly in form of assertions given as propositions with statements. The speaker, Wole Soyinka, makes assertions about the forms of power that are exhibited in various societies by rulers. The transitivity structure with the experiential meaning of the sentences above demonstrates that the speaker in the discourse predominantly employs the relational processes of attribution or identification. This means that the writer gives the attribute of; or identifies the participants in the discourse. On some occasions, the material process of action is employed by the speaker to reveal the act that is carried out with the actor and the goal of the action. The implication of this is that the writer often presents the discourse

as phenomena that are observed or identified by the speaker.

The activity going on in the discourse is a review of the various ways leaders in Africa and other parts of the world have exhibited power in the past. The participants in the discourse are the writer and the reader. The speaker uses nominalization to present the subjects in the discourse. Here, the relationship between the speaker and the listener is that of inclusion. The speaker identifies "something" which the listener as a co-participant might not have observed. The speaker thus uses relational processes in portraying the message.

Language in this discourse is used as an instrument of dialogic communication to give information to the reader. The interaction is predominantly in form of assertions given as propositions with statements. The speaker makes assertions about the forms of power that are exhibited in various societies in Africa by rulers.

Thus, the discourse of power in the text centers on the power relation of the ruled (the citizens of a country) and the rulers. There exists the struggle between the ruled and the rulers. The text exhibits a dual level of power. There is the relation of power between the actors and agents on one hand and the relation of power between the speaker and the listener (reader) on the other hand. The later exhibits power by consent rather than power by coercion as demonstrated by the first relation. The societal struggle for power by leaders (rulers) is demonstrated in the discourse at the level of vocabulary. Here, attention is given to some linguistic features that are used in the text as an attempt at identifying the contextual meanings of expressions. Hence, a

lexico-semantic investigation of the text is presented thus:

**Reiteration**

This refers to the repetition of lexical items, use of synonym, near-synonym or a super ordinate term. Examples of words reiterated in the text include:

*fear, power, democracy, humiliation, rhetorical hysteria, fanaticism, etc.*

The words are reiterated also as near synonyms such as:

**Fear:** *Fear of a nuclear holocaust, fear of reprisals, fear of Libya, fear of loss of identity, fear of humiliation, fear of ejection.*

**Power:** *Invisible power, overt power, formal power, etc.*

**Democratic:** *Democratic choice, democratic process, democratic advance, democratic ventures, democratic walk, etc.*

**Bomb:** *Time bomb, suicide bomb, atom bomb, etc*

**Dignity:** *Human dignity, pursuit of dignity, epitome of dignity, essence of dignity, diet of dignity, collective dignity etc.*

**Human:** *Human rights, human survival, human existence, human virtues, etc.*

**Mantra:** *Mantra of Weapon of Mass Destruction, mantra of piety, mantra of beautiful change of faith etc.*

**Super ordinate Terms: Co-Hyponyms**

**Human virtues:** *Integrity, love, tenderness, graciousness, generosity.*

**Architects of necropolis:** *Pol Pot, Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin.*

**Countries:** *Nicaragua, Chile, Argentina, Panama, Iran, South Africa, Hungary, Albania, East Germany, Bulgaria, Nigeria, Algeria, Afghanistan.*

**Religions:** *Christianity, Islam, Orisa.*

**Infidels:** *Unbeliever, Kafri.*

**Dictators:** *Mariam Mengistu (Ethiopia), Pinochet (Chile), Miloseviz (Yugoslavia) General Sanni Abacha (Nigeria) Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe), Hitler, Pol Pot, Idi-Amin, Sergeant Doe.*

The super ordinate items above operate anaphorically as forms of synonyms, while the hyponyms give entailment of the members of the group as a form of expansion that enhances reader's understanding of the concepts through the relation of inclusion.

**Collocation:** This refers to lexical items that regularly co-occur. Words that prominently collocate in the text include:

**Fear:** *Level of fear, diet of fear; climate of fear, constituency of fear, symptoms of fear, conditioning of fear, emotion of fear, kind of fear, bars of fear, power of fear, season of fear, expression of fear, inculcation of fear, virus of fear, era of fear, etc.*

**Power:** *Contention of power, arrogant of power, statement power, exercise of power, triumph of power, apprehension of power, essence of power, quotient of power, exercise of power, thrill of power, laboratory of power, nurturers of power, lust for power, nature of power, sense of power, pursuit of power, crutch of power, consolidation of power, explication of power, expression of power, etc.*

The collocation of words as shown above portrays the various ways the words have been used in the text. It shows the extended meanings that the lexical items could possess. It is used to reinforce the reader's imagination and create vivid picture of the situation, thereby enhancing understanding of the lexical items.

**Antonyms:**

Some few instances of antonyms as found in the text are:

Monologue	-	<i>dialogue</i>
Life	-	<i>death</i>
Freedom	-	<i>domination</i>
Humiliation	-	<i>self-esteem</i>
Dignity	-	<i>indignity</i>
Human virtues-		<i>human vices</i>

The social order of the discourse reveals that the speaker presents the use of power in Africa by Military rulers. For instance, it portrays the kind of power employed by General Abacha, and some other totalitarian leaders. The power that produces fear as demonstrated by African leaders and terrorists is that which results from coercion, as opposed to power of education and enlightenment that enhances freedom and dignity. This presupposes that most African leaders adhere to power by coercion because they lack philosophical orientation and do not possess adequate education on ideologies that influence societies.

The social practice in Africa is that anyone can ascend to power particularly with the use of arms and ammunition, and as a result, subject the citizenry to his whims and caprice.

## CONCLUSION

Although this study is in no way exhaustive, it has, with the above instances of text analy-

sis for meaning in language, demonstrated that language is central to communication. The various theories and approaches to meaning reveal that meaning in language is a very complex phenomenon, which may be vague until it is properly contextualized within a socio-cultural domain or situation. This study has also shown that there can be ordinary or surface meaning of utterances but there is usually more to the inexplicit or unsaid meaning of utterances. The awareness and adherence to conversational maxims will enhance successful communication in conversations. It has also portrayed that the knowledge of approaches and theories of meaning would enhance speakers' effective use of language in various contexts. In the same vein, as no particular approach to meaning is all encompassing, an ecclesiastic use of the approaches is recommended for interpretation of meaning in language. Finally, it has demonstrated the importance of language in the development of human knowledge.

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