

COMPLEXITY OF THE MEANINGS OF MEANING

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to explore the complexity of the meanings of meaning. As the core content of language, meanings exist in the most essential organ of human beings, i.e. the mind. The origin of language started with the existence of human awareness. Its presence has resulted from interaction between human beings and their social and natural environments. In communication, meanings are wrapped in forms where their relation is not necessarily linear. Meanings are referential, ideational, representational, implicational, metaphorical, and/or intentional. One form may convey several meanings, and one meaning can be expressed in various forms. The intervening variable determining such a phenomenon is context. Hence, to perceive meanings, one must understand words and structures, cultures, and surrounding linguistic and non-linguistic contexts.

Keywords: meaning; form; referential; ideational; representational; implicational; intentional.

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi kompleksitas makna dari "makna". Sebagai inti isi dari sebuah bahasa, makna terletak pada organ terpenting dari manusia, yaitu pikiran. Asal usul bahasa bermula dari adanya kesadaran manusia. Kehadirannya merupakan hasil interaksi antara manusia dengan lingkungan sosial dan alamiahnya. Dalam berkomunikasi, makna dibungkus dalam bentuk-bentuk yang hubungannya belum tentu linier. Makna bersifat referensial, ideasional, representasional, implikasi, metaforis, dan/atau intensional/disengaja. Satu bentuk dari "makna" dapat mengandung beberapa makna, dan satu "makna" dapat diungkapkan dalam berbagai bentuk. Variabel intervening yang menentukan fenomena tersebut adalah konteks. Oleh karena itu, untuk memahami makna, seseorang harus memahami kata-kata dan struktur, budaya, serta konteks linguistik dan non-linguistik di sekitarnya.

Kata Kunci: makna; bentuk; referensial; ideasional; representasional; implikasi; metaforis, intensional

Language is the manifestation of human thought. Thought functions as the internal capacity, whereas language is its operational representation. There is a close and inseparable interrelation between thought and language. Language is exerted in the thinking process (Cook, 2021); without language, one can never be thinking. This is consistent with Bolinger and Sears' assertion that "Language is not only necessary for the formulation of thought but is part of the thinking process itself. ...We cannot get outside language to reach thought, nor outside thought to reach language" (1981, p. 135). This also goes in line with the statement made by Samuel Johnson, a lexicographer in the eighteenth century, who said that "Language is the dress of thought" (Hinton, 2021; Aitchison, 1984, p. 14), and is confirmed by Vygotsky's idea (1934) as quoted by Steinberg, Nagata, and Aline, "Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them" (2001, p. 252). In addition, Watson (1919) as rephrased by Bolinger dan Sears also said that "thinking is merely talking to one-self, in an implicit sub-vocal way" (1981, p. 135). Those quotations confirm the inseparability and the closeness of the relationship between language and thought (Hinton, 2021).

Regarding the sequence of existence, thought as the capacity must precede the origin of language as its operational realization. To analogize this relationship with a computer, it can be said that the brain is supposed to be the hardware, thought is the software, language is the operationalization of the software, whereas knowledge, experiences, and ideas kept in the memory is the document file.

Language capacity commences to operate when the human brain acquires its awareness (is activated) to interact with its environment. That takes place when Allah blows a soul to the three-month-and-ten-day old fetus inside mother's womb. The commencement of human awareness (hearing, sight, and comprehension) when the soul is blown to the fetus is consistent with the Qur'anic verse, which means, "Then He perfected and breathed into (his body) His spirit (creation) and He made for you hearing, sight and hearts; (but) you are very little grateful" (As-Sajdah: 9). The heart in that verse is the mind because in another verse it is stated "they have hearts but not to understand, they have eyes but not to see, and they have ears but not to hear" (Al-A'raaf: 179).

Therefore, it can be concluded that language's existence coincides with humans' existence. Humans are the caliph of Allah on earth (Al-Baqarah: 30). He is a creature created perfect (in the best form) (At-Thiin: 4). Humans are the most excellent creatures

compared to other creatures such as angels, jinn, animals, and plants. Humans have a conscience, mind, and five senses. Humans have not only a physical element but also a spiritual awareness. Only humans have morals, thoughts, and passions. For this reason, humans are given the task of managing the earth (Khilafah). So, the question is, when did humans start to think consciously? When he starts to think, that's when he uses language.

After the blowing of the spirit triggers the awareness of the mind, then humans begin to interact with their environment. That is where the language began to exist. Then, language continues to develop in line with the development of the brain and speech apparatus. Yule (1985: 1-3) and Finnegan (2018) state that there are three sources of the origin of language, namely from God (the divine source), natural sounds (the natural sound source), and oral-gesture sources. He stated, God created Adam, and "whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof" (Genesis 2, p. 19). Alternatively, following Hindu tradition, the language came from the goddess Sarasvati, wife of Brahma, creator of the universe. In most religions, there appears to be a divine source that provides humans with language. ...in a city called Babel "because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth (Genesis 11, p. 9) (1988, p. 1).

In Islam, wa 'allama Aadamal asmaa'a kullaha "And He taught Adam all the names" (Al- Baqarah: 31) can be understood as the beginning of the existence of thinking awareness to humans to interact with their environment; and that was the beginning of language. With that capacity, humans can understand and respond to various phenomena that occur in their natural and social environments. And that ability makes him superior to angels.

The development of language is not only due to the creative process but also a process of imitation of natural sounds such as natural objects or animals, as well as sounds produced by environmental apparatus. Examples of words produced by imitating natural sounds, in Indonesian, there are words such as: bom, tas kresek, kentut, muncrat, etc.; in Javanese: keblok, kethak, manuk dekuku, mansrut, etc.; in English: splash, screech, bomb, bang, rattle, hiss, buzz, etc.

In short, the stages of language development are as follows: first, humans were created by God and given a spirit, and with that spirit, humans began to have consciousness. This awareness develops in line with physical development, namely the brain and speech organs. Furthermore, with the awareness of the mind, humans interact

with their environment (nature, animals, or other humans). In the interaction process, humans initially only produce sound signals that are not systematic by imitating the sounds of nature and the animals around them. Over time, when people imitate each other, sometimes make new sound cues, and understand each other's intentions, speaker-listeners agree on the signs they use. So, language was created.

In other words, the basis of human language development (Kaplan, 2023) is the process of imitation, creation, and evolution. The process of imitation was initially carried out on the natural surroundings, the sounds of objects, animal sounds, and mutual imitation between community members. This opinion is consistent with the view of behaviorism. In addition to the process of imitation, with the ability of reason, humans are also creative in the sense of creating and developing new sound signals or symbols to meet their communicative needs in interacting with society. Such development does not happen immediately but takes quite a long time, in the sense of evolving evolutionarily, until it finally becomes a relatively established language. It is said to be "relative" because any language in this world always experiences dynamics in line with the social dynamics of language users. Sometimes there is a missing vocabulary, in the sense that it is no longer or rarely used by the community, and at the same time there is a new vocabulary that emerges, and is used by the community.

MEANING AND FORM OF LANGUAGE

The function of language is as a tool for communication. Communication is the activity of delivering (conveyance) and/or receiving (perception) messages. There is no communication without messages or meanings transacted or interacted with by the communicating parties (interlocutors). In the communication process, the messages/meanings sent and captured by the communicants are wrapped in a form. Therefore, meaning and form are like two sides of a coin. Meaning cannot exist without form, while form is useless without meaning (Sun, 2022).

Language is manifested in the form of sound or written symbols, which are sent orally (speaking), orthographically (writing), or moved and captured through the senses of hearing (listening) or sight (reading). Meanwhile, meaning is wrapped in a form and captured by the brain (mind). The relationship between meaning and form does not have

to be linear because it is affected by other factors, namely context. With context, one form can have various meanings; conversely, one meaning can be conveyed in various forms.

DEFINITION OF MEANING

Like the various manifestations of forms, i.e. names, labels, icons, signs, movements, or symbols, meaning also has various meanings. There are several views on what is meant by meaning. The first meaning is referential (Mahmoudi et al., 2022; Martinich in Canfield, 1997, p. 13). In this approach, the words or sentences we produce have a reference in the real world. We say, (1) "Yesterday, when interviewing Cipta Lesmana, Samad wore a black jacket." Overall, this sentence refers to a talk show on television, Metro TV, where Abraham Samad, the host, wore a black jacket when interviewing Cipta Lesmana, one of the political communication experts. All references to these sentences are apparent and exist in the real world. This approach is controlled by a truth value principle, in that the sentence must have a truth value.

The weakness is that not all sentences have a truth value in the real world. The sentence, (2) "The king of France got married with the qasidah queen of Saudi Arabia," clearly has no truth value (reference) in the real world, because there is nobody as French king and no one as qasidah queen from Saudi Arabia. But who denies that it is a sentence whose grammatical structure is correct, and people who do not know will assume that the information is also true. For people who do not know, sentences (1) and (2) have the same level of truth.

In this referential approach, there is a concept called deixis (Al-Hamzi et al., 2023; Yule, 1997). Deixis is a point of reference that has personal, spatial, and temporal references. Examples of personal references are we, you, they, etc. In contrast, spatial references such as here, there, and material references such as now, then, etc. These references develop following the extending universe principle (Wahab, 1990). The meaning of the same deixis marker will change according to the development of the context.

Let us consider the following examples of sentences. (3a) "Let's clap together now." (3b) "I'm reading an English newspaper now." (3c) "We're taking Introduction to Linguistics now." (3d) "Joe Biden is the president of the USA now." (3e) "It's global era now." Temporal deixis "now" in sentences (3a, b, c, d, e) has different meanings. At (3a),

now means this very second, (3b) these last few minutes/hours, (3c) this semester, (3d) these last five years, and (4e) in this century. The same applies to the following spatial deixis “here.” (4a) I like to sit here. (4b) Children usually play football here. (4c) The price of the computer is cheap here. (4d) Pluto is the farthest planet from here. At (4a), “here” means on this chair, (4b) in this field, (4c) in this city, (4d) this planet earth.

The second approach is ideational (Sakrikar, 2019; Halliday, 1991). In this view, language is an idealization of a fact, then formulated into a language symbol. Saussure calls facts signified and their idealization or conceptualization, which is then realized in the form of symbols signifier (Lyons, 1979; Ullman, 1972). Meaning is at the level of concepts or ideas that are abstract (intangible) and/or an abstraction of an observable phenomenon. Rooted from this understanding comes what is called sense and proposition. Sense is the meaning captured by the mind based on logical criteria, while the proposition is generated by a complex relationship between the elements in the sentence (sentence meaning). (5) "The chair is reading a poem." Sentence (5) is meaningful because the grammatical relationship between the elements is evident. Still, the proposition does not make sense because the chair is an inanimate object that is impossible to read. (6) A: "Have you sent the letter?" (7) B: "My bicycle chain broke." If sentences (6) and (7) stand-alone, then two propositions are unrelated. Sentences (6) regarding mail delivery, (7) regarding broken bicycle chains. However, if (7) answers the question (6), both propositions are relevant. A asks if B has sent a letter (which A entrusted to B). If B answered only with "No", surely A would ask again "Why?" If B answers with the sentence "I can't go", A will definitely ask again "Why?" Finally, B could not help but tell why he had not sent the letter. Sentence (7) is the answer. By directly answering (7), B has fulfilled Grice's conversational maxims: quantity, manner, and relevance (Brown & Yule, 1983). How did that interpretation emerge? What connects propositions (7) and (6) so that they are so closely related? That is the idea or message behind the proposition. The relationship between meanings or ideas is called coherence.

Meaning is also representational (Aisyiyah, 2023). This means the forms we produce or perceive during communication represent what is in the mind. Chomsky (1965) calls forms at the surface structure (outer structure) level, representing the deep structure in mind. One example of the manifestation of this view is when we read a text; we can know and feel the author's attitude when he expresses it in the text. We can

perceive a sense of sadness, happiness, beauty, hatred, pleasure, confusion, and so on because the meaning we perceive has actually been represented in linguistic forms.

When we communicate, what we catch is often far more than what is revealed, "more communicated than what is said" (Yule, 1997, p. 19). This is because the meaning is also implicational. That is, what is revealed explicitly actually implies implicit messages. The terms often used to describe implicative meanings include presupposition, implicature, inference, and entailment.

A presupposition is a thought the speaker believes the listener has (Aravind et al., 2023). For example, when looking for someone's house, when we are in a village alley according to the address, we ask an old woman sweeping the yard, (8) "Excuse me, ma'am, where is Pak Salim's house?" When we ask, we have confidence that the old woman sweeping the yard knows Mr. Salim. That is the presupposition behind the above question. Without that presupposition, our questions might be, (9) "Excuse me, ma'am, do you know Mr. Salim?" "Do you know where his house is?" This presupposition is not necessarily true because the old woman will likely answer this question, (10) "Sorry, son, I am a new maid here." The old woman's answer implies that she does not know Mr. Salim and where his house is.

Implicature is the implied meaning of an utterance (Haugh, 2022). When someone with his motorbike says, (11) "Oops, I ran out of fuel." The youths sitting on the street side reply, (12) "The petrol station in the front T-junction, turn left." Speech (11) implies that he asks where people are selling fuel even though he does not state it explicitly. Speech (12) also implicates that at the T-junction turning left there is a petrol station or shop selling gasoline, although this is not explicitly stated.

Inference is a conclusion the listener/reader draws based on the utterances heard/read (Hall & Mazzarella, 2023). If the implicature belongs to the producer, the perceiver makes an inference. When they hear (11), the youths sitting at the substation infer that the motorbike driver is asking questions and not just telling them that the petrol is running out.

Entailment is a sequence of meanings that are the consequences of an utterance. When the speaker says, (13) "Physics is difficult" then the utterance also implies a series of ideas about vectors, kinetic energy, aerodynamics, etc. nor is it a simple concept as it

includes all the entailment of physics. All the explanations above illustrate that meaning is implication.

Meaning is also based on lexical, structural, and cultural contexts (Kohdtkam, 2022). To understand the sentence, (14) "In language acquisition, meaning is focal while form is peripheral." We need to understand the lexicon in the sentence, for example, language, acquisition, meaning, focal, form, and peripheral. However, to understand the sentence, (15) "I wish she were here," our understanding is determined more by its structure than by its lexicon. We understand the meaning of "he is not here right now" not because of the lexicon but because of the sentence structure.

Furthermore, meaning is also culturally based (Vorkachev, 2021). The Javanese, whose staple diet is rice, can understand more meanings associated with rice than the English. In Javanese, there are several words related to rice, for example, pari (rice grown or harvested in rice fields), gabah (rice that has been removed from the stalk and in large quantities), beras (if the husk has been removed), las (if only there are one or two grains of unhusked rice in the middle of the rice), sego (when the rice is cooked and ready to eat and in large quantities), upo (if only one or two grains of rice fall on the table, or stick around the mouth), karak (if the rice is dried in the sun). In English, they are all called rice.

Meaning can also be metaphorical (Horvat et al., 2021). For example, when someone tells a story about a friend who, if he is owed a debt, he always dodges and makes excuses for not paying at that time. Another friend comments, (16) "Ooh, he really is a welut (eel)." Does that mean the person who told the story was collecting a debt from the eel? Certainly not. Eels are animals with a body like a snake, no scales, and are difficult to hold because they are very slippery. All of the characteristics of the eel seem to be owned by a friend, so the word welut in sentence (16) has a metaphorical meaning.

The most exciting property of meaning is intentional (Castillo, 2015; Yule, 1997). Here, we are no longer talking about the meaning of words or sentences but the meaning desired by the speaker or writer. In this regard, the context function is very significant. How listeners or readers perceive meaning is determined by their knowledge and understanding of the context behind the speech. Without understanding the context, it is almost impossible for the listener or reader to grasp the meaning correctly. So, this

intentional meaning is interesting because it is determined more by extra-linguistic factors.

An example of intentional meaning can be seen in the following illustration. (17) "It's a bit chilly in here." Several things are needed to understand the meaning of the utterance (17) above. First, we must understand the meaning of the words in the utterance, namely the words bit and chilly. By relying solely on a dictionary, it is rather challenging to understand precisely what the utterance means because each word has several meanings. Second, we must know the context of the utterance, namely where the utterance is produced. That way, we will understand what is meant here. Third, we must also know the broader context, such as who says to whom and under what conditions. Only then can we understand the intention of the utterance.

We can easily understand the utterance's meaning with the following information about the context. On a trip by car, the weather is rainy, the car air conditioner is turned on at the lowest temperature, 18 degrees Celsius, and the fan is too big, a passenger in the car who feels cold says the utterance (17). In fact, just by knowing the context, we can grasp the utterance's meaning, even without knowing the exact meaning of the words bit and chilly. Literally, the utterance (17) can be interpreted as "It's cold here, isn't it?" However, understanding the context makes it impossible for the speaker to describe the weather in the car because that is irrelevant. Therefore, the meaning desired by the speaker must not only be to describe the weather but "to ask another friend sitting in the front seat to turn down the volume of the air conditioner so he doesn't get cold." Such an understanding is based not only on the form of language, words, and sentence structures but also on the context behind the utterances.

CONCLUSIONS

Meaning is an essential aspect of language and has various characteristics or approaches: referential, ideational, representational, implicational, metaphorical, and intentional. To reveal the meaning is not enough to know the word's meaning. Many other things are needed to understand meaning in language, including sentence structure, culture, and linguistic and non-linguistic contexts. Because of this complexity, entering the world of meaning is like exploring the wilderness. or IMRAD-based papers, this section provides all the relevant readings from previous works. It provides brief summaries or descriptions of the works of other authors. The research materials should

be from credible sources such as academic books and peer-reviewed journals. Also, the reading materials should be directly relevant to the topic of the research paper.

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