

**THE SEMANTICS OF PROPOSITION WITHIN ITS ECOSYSTEM: A
CRITIQUE OF REFERENTIAL REALISM IN SOME PHILOSOPHIES OF
LANGUAGE**

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ABSTRACT

A study of the semantics of propositions was carried out. The objective of the study was to show the implication of referential realism as a theoretical foundation of some select philosophies of language for the semantics of propositions. The method adopted for the study was content analysis. The schools of philosophy of language studied include nominalism, conceptualism, contextualism, and truth-conditional semantics. In the course of the analysis, it was discovered that referential realism fails to capture the meaning of the proposition. The paper concluded by defining the proposition within its ecosystem as a report on the cognitive activity of the subject, in such a way that the contributions of both the cognitive subject and object were recognized as semantic components.

KEYWORDS: *Semantics, Nominalism, Conceptualism, Contextualism, Truth Conditions And Proposition.*

INTRODUCTION

Hetherington argues that "Knowledge entails truth" (1996, p.7). Ozumba amplifies it by arguing that for knowledge to be knowledge, it must be true (Ozumba, 2001). One may add, otherwise, it is sheer belief. But what is truth? The problem of the meaning of truth constitutes a great theme in the history of epistemology. The concept of truth is derived from truth predicative assertion; it is true. It is one that follows statements or is followed by statements, though sometimes unexpressed. In the following statements, it plays a classifying role by qualifying statements either as true or false in a two-valued logical operation or as true or false or indeterminate in a many-valued logical qualification. In such a role, the truth predicate or concept is the property of the statements that it classifies. It is a property of a statement as well as a property of language. It is not the property of language in general. It is the property of language when used constatively as a belief statement. Belief statements are assertions or propositions. Thus, it is the property of propositions. It is within the context of the proposition that the concept of truth finds meaning. Hence, the search for the meaning of truth in epistemology would properly begin with the search for the meaning of the proposition.

Understood as a property of language, the notion of truth can only be properly defined when language is well understood. The history of philosophy reveals many theories of language, explicitly or implicitly. Explicit theorizing on language became quite popular in the 20th

century's analytic philosophical tradition. However, prior to the analytic tradition, it would be incorrect to deny the presence of a philosophy of language in earlier philosophies. The history of philosophy is replete with many theories of meaning. From the nominalism of Plato, through the mediatory theory of the mediaevals, to the contextualism of the last century, the theories of meaning for constative sentences have been anchored on referential realism. But referential realism, as an underpinning theory of the major schools of the philosophy of language, would be shown in this paper to be an incomprehensive semantic framework for the proposition.

Referential realism is itself not a school in the philosophy of language. But it is a theoretical framework that underlies all the philosophies of language selected for this study. Referential realism is the assumption that the meaning of sentences in any language is located in the meanings of individual words that are components of the sentences and that the meaning of such words is totally satisfied by speaker independent domains of existence. Such an assumption excludes reference to the cognitive activity of the subject as a referent for semantics. But it is the thesis of the paper that referential realism is false and that accounts for its ability to provide an adequate semantics of the proposition. The paper has, however, gone ahead to define the proposition as well as provide a semantics that takes into account the cognitive act of the subject as its referent.

The method adopted for the study was content analysis. The theories of language were not randomly selected. They were selected based on their prominence in the history of philosophy. So, it is believed that the selection does not exhaust the major trends in the field but is sufficient for the purpose of the paper. The philosophies of language selected include nominalism, conceptualism, contextualism, and truth-conditional semantics.

Nominalist Semantics

Nominalism as a theory of language is associated with Plato. According to the theory, "the relationship between a word and the thing to which it refers is the relationship of naming" (Udofot, 1998, p.48). Within the context of this theory, the signified is a certain object in the world. "Words, therefore, are names or labels for things" (Udofot, 1998, p.48).

Aristotle falls equally under the naming tradition. Thus, in his analysis of language, Aristotle is careful to state what is signified by single units of language—that is, mainly, single words. Each such unit signifies a substance or a quantity, a quality or a relative or somewhere or when or being in a position or having or doing or being affected. In his category, Aristotle distinguished between substance and its predicaments. The predicative he linguistically divides into two, namely, what could be said of substance and what is present in substance. Thus, Aristotle understood language, especially predicates, as playing two roles, namely; identification and description. In playing these roles, "some predicates identify the nature of a thing, others identify a quality or a quantity, and so on" (Evans, 1987, p.50). Thus, "in their descriptive use, predicates express various features which things possess." (Evans, 1987, p.50). Aristotle's linguistic nominalism is a picture theory.

The nominalist theory of language also had representation in Hume's empiricism. The mental impressions of Hume's subjects were assumed to be exact pictures of reality. This position is argued by Wilfrid Sellars as thus: "... in developing the form of the classical doctrine that the mind knows the world by virtue of containing a 'likeness' of it, Hume assumes, without careful explication, that the 'perception' of the configuration is a configuration of perception" (1972,

p.228). Sellars, who himself is a proponent of the picture theory, argued that Hume's theory, at the core of it, is sound, but becomes problematic when perception is taken as a sensation or image (1972).

Logical atomism was an attempt to overcome the constant sense fluctuations observed in language by Frege. Assuming representational semantics, it became the argument that every statement represents an adequate and fixed picture of the reality of facts in the material world (Stumpf, 1982). The two major proponents of this view were Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Russell argued that it is a fact that things in the world have various properties and stand in various relation to each other. Thus, the constituents of the complexity of reality are facts. The analysis of complexity must begin with the analysis of facts. Russell matched the complexity of facts with the complexity of language and argued that the aim of analysis is to be sure that every statement represents an adequate picture of the world. Russell's aim in logical atomism was to tighten language in order to avoid spurious metaphysical speculation. Hence, his ideal was to control the content of language. He thought by so doing, the expressions and meaning of language would stand out clearly. Russell carried this view to the foundations of mathematics. Thus, the logic of relations is an ontological logic.

Russell reduced all of reality to just the facts. Adjectival facts are predicates, and nominal facts are proper names. Language consists in part, then, of words, which in their simplest form refer to a particular thing and its predicate, as for example, "a red rose" (Stumpf, 1982, p.421). The simplest kind of fact, like the one just stated, is an atomic fact. "Propositions that state atomic facts are called atomic propositions" (Stumpf, 1972, p.422).

Apart from atomic propositions, there are equally molecular propositions. A molecular proposition is a truth function of one or more atomic proposition(s). Russell's molecular propositions do not have corresponding molecular facts. They are the union of two or more atomic propositions with the aid of the logical connectives of their component atomic parts. Language, therefore, is constituted of atomic propositions, which can be tested by an empirical method or technique (Stumpf, 1972). Thus, a significant statement is true or false depending on how things are. But the transition from atomic to molecular facts is rather suspect because there are no facts to be referenced as molecular. Besides, there are no referents for logical connectives in that material universe with which to test the truth of molecular propositions.

Wittgenstein's logical atomism differs from Russell's only in verbal formulations. The foundational convictions are similar. Wittgenstein based his theory on the notion of elementary propositions, which are supposed to assert that a simple fact is the case. As Wittgenstein himself would argue, "the simplest kind of proposition, an elementary proposition, asserts the existence of a state of affairs" (Wittgenstein, 1961, p.166). Sellars states that "it is a familiar fact that Wittgenstein restricts his conception of picturing to matter-of-factual statements in the narrow sense" (1972, p.222). Thus, a proposition states how things are. "An elementary proposition consists of names. It is a nexus, a concatenation, of names" (Wittgenstein, 1961, p.167). His view concerning a molecular proposition is similar to that of Russell. Wittgenstein refuses to call it a molecular proposition. He simply calls it a proposition. Thus, he writes: "A proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions" (Wittgenstein, 1961, p.166). What Wittgenstein had in mind when he was talking about propositions as the statement of the state of affairs could be likened to an observation sentence or protocol sentence of the type, "This table is red." It is some kind of empirical report. They are the constituents of meaningful language. Thus, Wittgenstein,

in his characteristic way, said that he was setting out to demonstrate that philosophical propositions are meaningless. He states this in his own words as follows:

Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not only false but nonsensical. As a result, we cannot provide an answer to such a question but can only establish that it is illogical. Most of the propositions and questions of philosophers arise from our failure to understand the logic of our language (Wittgenstein, 1961, p.165).

It is noteworthy, that the legitimate philosophy proposed by logical atomism is crude empiricism. As such, metaphysics, as such, would be meaningless in logical atomism. The meaning of signs is limited to the empirical state of affairs. Wittgenstein writes as follows:

The correct method in philosophy would really be to say nothing except what can be said. i.e. propositions of natural science-i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy-and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person – he would not have the feeling that we are teaching him philosophy – this method would be the only correct one. (Wittgenstein, 1961, p.166).

The picture theory has featured in contemporary times in the writings of Wilfred Sellars, especially in his *Truth and Correspondence* (1972). Sellars' articulation of the relationship between language and the world is one of two uniform realms of natural objects; one is linguistic and the other physical (1972). The essence of this relationship is that of "likeness" (Sellars, 1972, p.277). The possibility of the likeness relationship is established by Sellars by virtue of the "Myth of the Super-inscriber" (1972, p.228). The duty of this inscriber is to inscribe, in a wax-like form, and at an incredible rate, all the thoughts of an individual (Sellars, 1972). Sellars' myth of the super-inscriber is actually an explanation of the duties of the intellect. Properly understood, Sellars' position is a form of argument that ideas are the configuration of the Cartesian ego. Thus, Sellars' inscriptions must resemble facts.

One of the semantic problems of nominalism is its identification of the world with specific words, thus encouraging semantic rigidity. It is also too limited (to constative usage) in its understanding of language in general. Another problem that faces nominalism is the problem of the isolation and discontinuity of words within the proposition. The transition from individual words and their referents in the objective domain to the possibility of a proposition is a transition that nominalism fails to explain. If words independently of the proposition have complete meaning in their referents, why is the proposition necessary? This question is not addressed by nominalism. Besides, nominalist semantics, assuming the validity of referential realism, is hinged on the argument that the meaning of a word is its non-linguistic referent. This assumption is taken too far by nominalist semantics to the bare argument that every word is like a label or a name for some reality. Wittgenstein even went further to claim that 'a proposition is a nexus, a concatenation of names' (1961). This extreme referential realism portends very difficult implications for nominalism. It implies that in a proposition like "All S is P," there are empirical referents for each word in the nexus. But that would be incorrect, because apart from the subject of the proposition, every other component of it is a non-empirical construct of the cognitive subject. Hence, by assuming the validity of extreme referential realism, nominalist semantics is false. The falsehood of nominalism is predicated on granting legitimacy to the error of referential realism, which advocates the exclusivity of external objects as an adequate satisfaction of the

semantics of any given language. Such exclusivity is responsible for the search for the meaning of the proposition in the absolute objective realm without reference to the cognitive agent.

Conceptualist Semantics

The difference between nominalism and conceptualism in the theory of language is found in the emphasis on names in the former and mental images in the latter. Some nominalist theories, however, possess conceptualist imprints. They are both systems of referential realism. Although the realist referents for the nominalist is not restricted to empirical objects, conceptualists restrict their referents to mental images only.

Nonetheless, conceptualism in the theory of language is a demonstration of triangular semantics, representing the relation between expression, sense or meaning, and reference. This relationship has various verbal representations among conceptualists. For instance, Udofot (1998) notes that "de Saussure uses the concepts of the signifier, the signified, the referred, and the referent. Sapir states them as the acoustic image (word), the mental image, and the object. For Ogden and Richards, they are symbols, thoughts or references, and referents. For this, Ullmann uses the concepts of name, sense, and thing. Frege calls them "expression, sense, and reference" (Pp. 51–53). This work would adopt Frege's triangular representation of meaning for its analysis of conceptualist semantics because of his importance in the philosophy of language. The expression is given in FIG. 1 below:

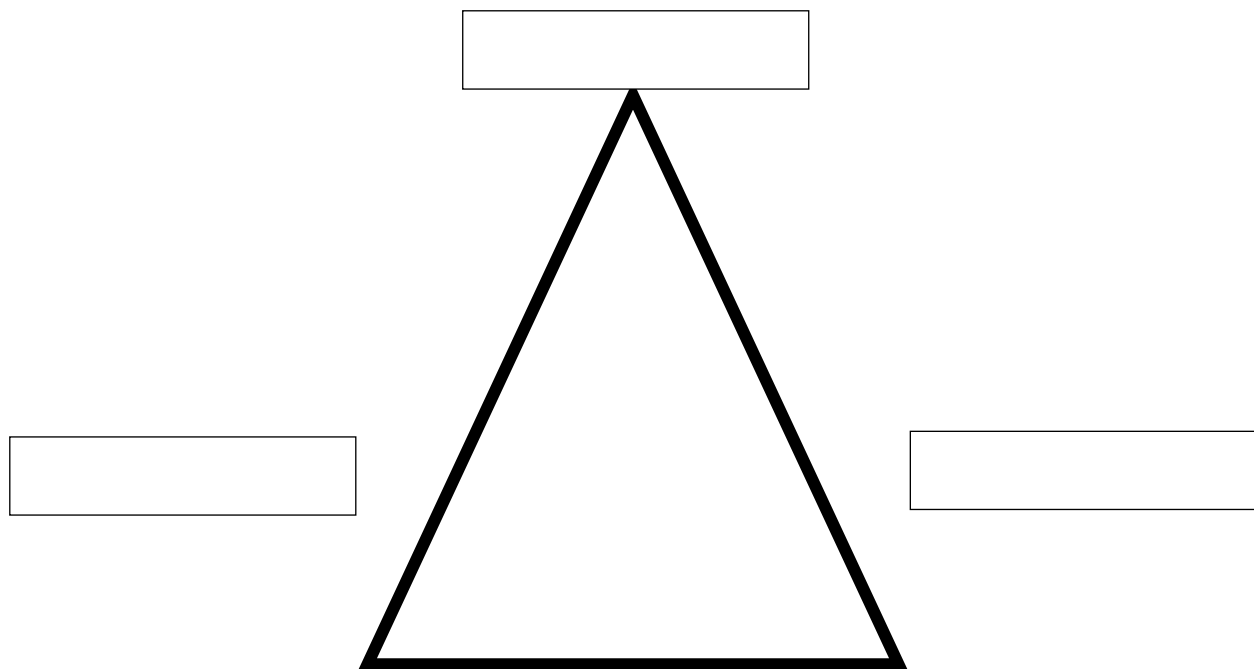


FIG. 1: Showing the triangular relationship in conceptual semantics

Conceptualist semantics is rooted in medieval grammar. Accordingly, Udofot (1998) x-rays that "the medieval grammarians postulated that "vox significant" mediantibusconceptibus" (the word signifies through the medium of concepts)" (p.50). This is to say that the form of the word signifies things by virtue of the concept associated with it in the minds of the speakers of the language (Udofot, 1998). Thus, conceptualism is the theory that the meaning of a word or an expression is the concept associated with it in the mind of the speaker or hearer (Udofot, 1998). According to de Saussure, in language, the sound image and the concept are both linked to the object by virtue of an associative bond (Udofot, 1998). "Sapir's image theory sees meaning as the image of the thing formed in the mind of the speaker or hearer when he sees a physical form and associates it with a sound image..." (Udofot, 1998, p.50). Compared to de Saussure's sign theory, Sapir's theory understands meaning as a mental picture rather than an idea which is associated with the word (acoustic image) and linked to the object spoken about (Udofot, 1998).

Conceptualist semantics is also identifiable in the theory of Frege. Frege argued that language consists of expression, sense, and reference, as well as functions and objects (Resnik, 1980). A sense, according to Frege, is an objective and abstract entity "we grasp when we understand the word with which it is associated" (Resnik, 1980, p.18).

An argument often leveled against conceptualist semantics is that it is the consequence of asking for the meaning of a word outside the unit of meaning, which is a sentence (Austin, 1972). Austin argues that such questions lead to views concerning generalities. And he calls it "the fallacy of asking about 'nothing-in-particular'." (Austin, 1972, p.133). From the viewpoint of Austin, Frege would have been guiltless, but the problem associated with his work is that, in spite of the recognition of the unit of meaning in sentences, he still "sought meaning in terms" (Resnik, 1980, p.19). In that context, Frege proposed what is today known in the philosophy of language as the context principle. The principle states as follows: "Only in the context of a sentence does a word have meaning." (Davidson, 1972, p.199). But in his analysis of language, Frege investigated the concept of meaning in individual terms and only later in sentences. Consequently, an argument attributed to Frege has it that "a singular term is used to pick out an object; if it succeeds in doing so, then its object is its reference" (Resnik, 1972, p.19). This separation of analysis would ordinarily result in the problem of the possibility of conceptual combination. By acquiescing to the semantics of terms, Frege threw out completely the input of the subject in the meaning of words and the possibility of a proposition. Hence, there are actual difficulties associated with the explanation of the recombination of parts (terms) to give a unit sense, which is not the referent of either of the parts but a sense, a thought, or a proposition. This difficulty is responsible for the definition of propositions as queer entities because of their inability to satisfy referential realism. Put differently, if every term in a proposition has a reference, what is the reference of the proposition itself as a sense constituted by its component parts (terms)? The available option is to posit some putative entities in the mind or in some Platonic world.

The analysis of Frege's position makes the foundations of the problem of conceptualist semantics evident. It shows the implications of tacitly assuming the validity of narrow referential realist semantics, because it is evident that propositions lack real referents within the framework. Due to its tendency towards abstract metaphysics or the metaphysics of the supra-sensible, the realm of meaning of propositions in conceptualist semantics is unknown. Besides, all language is not for constative use only, yet conceptualist semantics is conducted as though declarative sentences are the only sentences in grammar.

Contextualist Semantics

Contextual semantics as well as speech-act semantics share an orientation. They are both founded on the theory that successful semantics is only attainable in the realm of activities. The origin of the former is traceable to an anthropologist, Malinowski, in about the nineteen twenties and thirties during his study of the language of the Trobrian Islands. The latter is traceable to John Austin in his reaction against conceptualist semantics. According to Malinowski, language should not be turned from its context but seen as used by people for "hunting, fishing, planting, buying, and selling" (Udofot, 1998, p.57). "He decried the language of books as 'a far-fetched derivative function of language' and argues that language was not originally a mirror of reflected thought" (Udofot, 1998, p.57). According to latter contextual and speech-act semanticists, language is a tool that could be used for any kind of work. Such arguments are immediately linked to Wittgenstein and Austin.

In his new stage of philosophical consciousness, Ludwig Wittgenstein considers "the meaning of a word in its use in a language" (Udofot, 1998, p.56). Language is an instrument, and its concepts are instruments. The Wittgenstein of this stage is often identified with the title of the "later Wittgenstein." The latter, Wittgenstein, identifies meaning with use and uses the activity examples to illustrate his point. The new Wittgenstein is seen as repudiating some portions of the doctrine of the *Tractatus* (1961) on the grounds that it was not a result of observation but of pure thought and explanation. Thus, in the new orientation, he argues that the function of language is as varied as the context of use. Hence, meaning is discovered in use. Thus, he assumed that language is a game. But how is this to be known? Wittgenstein says "do not say but look. Do not think but observe" (Stumpf, 1982, p.432). An instance of such a unit of investigation is likened by Wittgenstein to a work example at a construction site: "the boss shouts slab and the worker is seen carrying a slab across the building to the boss" (Wittgenstein, 1993, p.182). From this example, Wittgenstein explains that the meaning of words is found in practical day-to-day usage. So, "language no longer contains one pattern alone, it is as variable as itself. In short, he imagines language to mean "life" (Stumpf, 1982, p.432). The form of life with which language is associated is not intellectualism but the form identified and studied by Malinowski (Udofot, 1998). It is the life of the peasant. For instance, the Austrian peasants, whom Wittgenstein so admired (Gillies, 1993). This love for practical life as a unit of meaning endeared him to Tolstoy's *The Gospel in Brief* (1979), in which there is the following passage:

I turned from the life of our circle, acknowledging that ours is not life but a simulation of life – that the conditions of superfluity in which we live deprive us of the possibility of understanding life, and that in order to understand life I must understand not an exceptional life such as ours, who are parasites on life, but the life of the simple laboring folk – those who make life – and the meaning which they attribute to it (Gillies, 1993, p.161).

The attraction to the practical everyday life that gives meaning to language led to Wittgenstein's corresponding aversion to intellectualism. Be that as it may, an important aspect of Wittgenstein's meaning and use and Austin's speech-act semantics is their instrumentalism of language, which is a departure from copy theory. Words are actually symbols, written or uttered. The use of words is more fundamental in the exercise of language than words themselves. At the mention of a word, the subject does not refer to mental entities either. The mention of a socially recognized word elicits the memory of its immediate past use. Such memories are not classes or concepts. They are pure recollection.

It is this reference to initial ontological permutation that Quine argued for in his *Ontological Relativity and other Essays* (1969). According to Quine, language is specifically a mode of interaction between at least two creatures, a speaker and a hearer. "It pre-supposes an organized group to which these creatures belong, and from where they acquire the habit of speech" (Quine, 1969, p.207). What Quine means here is that language is a social art acquired basically from the overt behavior of people in relation to speech contexts, socially recognized (Quine, 1969). In any such context, there is the objective pull whereby, within the same linguistic community, people respond in the same way to similar stimulations. This assumption is based on another assumption that the other subject's constitution is similar to ours. Where there is doubt about such stimulation in the face of similar experience, Quine advises that the "principle of charity" be applied (1969, p.46).

Another important factor in Quine's semantics, for the argument put forward here, is the positing of the possibility of this social art. In Quine's argument, "the new and more liberal kind of rational reconstruction is a fictitious history in which we imagine our ancestor introducing those terms by a succession" (1969, p.77). Quine makes these projections as follows:

...begin by picturing us at home in our language, with all its predicates and auxiliary devices. The vocabulary includes "rabbit", "rabbit part", "rabbit stage", "formula", "number", "ox", and "cattle"; also the two-place predicates of identity and difference, and other logical principles. In these terms, we can say, in so many words, that there is a formula and that the number is a rabbit and that a rabbit part, this and that same rabbit, and this and that different parts. In just those words, this network of terms and predicates and auxiliary devices is, in relativity jargon, our frame of reference, or co-ordinate system (1969, p.48).

Although Quine's goal is really epistemological, his linguistic ontological provision for the co-ordinate system is very insightful. It exposes the depth of the new Wittgenstein as a generalized context principle, which marks a shift from Frege's context principle as noted by Davidson (1972). The context principle has reserved the unit of meaning for a particular sentence. But within the generalized context principle, the unit is a particular language.

Despite the accomplishments of contextual semantics in extending the study of semantics to the social context of language use, the new Wittgenstein, like the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* (1961), failed to demonstrate an exegetical analysis of the semantics of propositions. What contextualists ended up doing was to state, analogously, that "the meaning of a proposition is the meaning its concepts acquire within the context of use". That did not say any specific thing about a proposition that was not equally valid for interrogatory or imperative sentences. But a proposition is a constative sentence, so its semantic analysis is supposed to be a little different from that of other forms of sentences. Contextual semantics fails to produce that difference. The reason is that, operating within referential realism, it seeks to avoid the consequences of that

theoretical framework. By virtue of that avoidance, it ends up avoiding a commitment to a specific exegesis of the semantics of a proposition. Consequently, the specific meaning of the proposition is lost in contextual semantics.

Truth Conditional Semantics

A theory that presupposes the use theory, the sentence as the unit of meaning, the symbol-referent notion and the necessity of recursion is the truth conditional semantics, put forward by Tarski and supported by Davidson. According to this theory, "to know the meaning of a sentence is to know the conditions under which it is true or would be true" (Udofot, 1998, p.76). Tarski is of the opinion that a true statement is one that if it states that the state of affairs is so and so, then the state of affairs is so and so (Udofot, 1998). Thus, Tarski's example that snow is white is true if and only if snow is white. The implication of the expression is that if statements state how things are, then they are true. The context or condition for truth is the same as the condition for meaning. The value of the truth of the proposition is its unit of significance.

Davidson argues that sentences are the units of truth and meaning. To know the meaning of an unknown sentence in a language is to correlate the sentences with sentences whose truth-value has already been known. This recursive correlation is the entailed presupposition and the force of the implicature of truth conditional semantics, even though Davidsons' analysis of the unknown sentence is problematic.

It is very difficult to ascertain how Tarski and David departed from nominalist semantics. But a careful look at their analysis shows the importation of the concept of linguistic recursion, which has a sociological undertone of contextual semantics. Despite such an undertone, truth-conditional semantics is an advanced version of nominalism. For instance, it is difficult to show how the statement "'snow is white' is true if snow is white" is different from the statement 'a proposition says how things are'. Both statements are different expressions of the same idea: nominalist referential realism. Hence, they draw the same implication as nominalist semantics as shown above. But one thing stands out from the above study of contextual and truth conditional semantics; viz, the idea of meaning is still reduced to only the meaning of terms as signs for absolute objective input. There is also the presupposition that once the context grants the terms their meanings, taking into account the recursive grand scheme of language by Quine, then the meaning of the proposition is necessarily established. These ideas and their attendant presuppositions are ill-founded. Even though contextualists incorporated the subject through social context into their analyses, they reduced the relation of meaning to the social meanings of terms alone. This reductionism is made possible because of the limitation of referential realism to terms' semantics. Unfortunately, term semantics is the semantics that considers only the inputs of objective referents, with a total exclusion of subjective activity as a referent for language.

Semantics of the Proposition within its Ecosystem

The concept of semantic ecosystem is rather a curious one in a paper in philosophy of language. But in order to understand the coinage, it will be necessary to discuss the meaning of "ecosystem." An ecosystem could be defined as a single unit of existence formed by the living organisms of a habitat and their surrounding environment. The idea of an ecosystem is hinged on the idea that all living things have their own unique or peculiar environment within which they survive. It is also related to the idea of the balance of the ecosystem. Hence, the removal of one living organism from an ecosystem and the consequent placement of the same in another

ecosystem could result in a system imbalance on both ends (Balasubramanian, 2022). The survival and sustenance of a living organism is dependent on its location within its natural habitat.

The take away from the above analysis for semantics is the analogy, which could be drawn from individuals in the natural ecosystem to the natural habitat of linguistic tokens or strings of those tokens in the language ecosystem. For instance, in analyzing the meaning of concepts, it is noteworthy that certain concepts are socially more original in certain types of expression than others. The clause "get up from there" is more original to directives than to informative expressions. The ecosystem of language would, therefore, refer to the socially natural context within which language is used in a certain way. Hence, to seek the meaning of sentences is to do so in relation to such contexts. Once language is taken out of such contexts, it loses its meaning. Here is the achievement of contextualism. But contextualism is open-ended. That is why a semantic ecosystem becomes necessary. Little is achieved by the statement that the semantics of concepts is properly attained when language is analyzed in relation to its context of use. As a result, there is no definitive theory of the distinct contexts and purposes of constative, imperative, interrogative, and exclamatory sentences. It appears that contextualists assumed without demonstration that their general statement about context-driven semantics applied automatically to different types of sentences. But that assumption is made in error.

What is achieved here, though a form of contextualism, is a more definite form of contextualism. It is the argument, that sentences do not simply receive meaning from social contexts of use but that each type of sentence has its own unique type of context of use. Such uniqueness defines its semantic ecosystem. Hence, to seek the meaning of any sentence is to first determine the type of sentence it is and its unique semantic ecosystem. Once a sentence is removed from its ecosystem and placed within the generality of other sentences for semantic analysis, such an analysis will end up as unsustainable. The bigger problem is that all sentences viewed without any presupposition do not announce the nature of their unique habitat. Hence, the linguist may have to perform research to discover their habitat in order to properly understand the functions of such sentences.

The natural habitat of constative sentences is not what is expressed in referential realism, which is the relational picturing of or reference to some human-independent reality. This wrong placement of constative sentences in relation to their semantic environment by referential realism is responsible for the objective corresponding theory of truth. Referential realist semantics is a form of representational semantics, which is picture theory semantics. It is the view that a person's belief in a thing is consequent upon his mental analogue to the object (Lycan, 1988). The transition from the analogue to the linguistic is the bane of artificial intelligence research. This analogue is a form of Hume's impressionism. Impressionism or representationalism in artificial intelligence has really revealed the limitations of all forms of representational semantics in epistemology. Mental analogues are never languages. But the study of beliefs outside of believing has led epistemologists to think that the linguistic structures of belief are the inner tokens of the mind. This criticism is applicable to the picture theorist Wilfrid Sellars. Sellars argues that "thoughts and occurrent beliefs are internal representing, inner tokenings, utterances... that play certain distinctive representational and behavior-causing roles" (Lycan, 1988, p.7). Picture theories are representational and analogous. But language is actually a tool and has a symbolic essence and an implicative character in its constative use.

The proper semantic ecosystem of propositions or constative systems is that they are reports on the cognitive activities or acts of judgment of the subject. Hence, propositions report the status of knowledge claimed by the subject. Their reference cannot, therefore, be some object external to the human act of experience and judgment. So, the proposition is only meaningful within the context of a knowledge claim.

Knowledge, as argued above, is a particular judgment or the construction of concepts, in which a given object, say, "Socrates", is detected to satisfy a certain standard, say "man". Thus, the statement, 'Socrates is a man', is a knowledge claim, the reference to which is the past. What is referenced in the past is the judgment and not Socrates himself or his property of being a man. Every statement is essentially like that particular statement above, in relation to the cognitive act, refers to the past and is thus reportage. Even the so-called trivial statements of identity are still informative, with respect to the cognitive act. The reason is that the cognitive act takes place in an immediacy in which the utterance of language is not possible. It was as a result of this that Quine advocated the study of conceptualization, because what is being looked for is in the past. If what is sought for is in the past, then the past would have to be presupposed in semantic analysis. The essence of declarative sentences is that they are reports of judgments that "so and so is such and such." In such reports, the presentation is often in the present continuous tense. But it is important to indicate that what is communicated in constative sentences are reports on judgments. Thus, to investigate the semantics of propositions is to investigate judgments, being conscious of the cognitive operations that go into the judgments that are implied in their words.

Knowledge is the product of this construction of concepts. Apart from the objects, which may have proper names, the concepts refer to the becoming of classes, the being of which could be sighted in their unit of becoming. The act according to which classification is possible (i.e., the detection act) is what the copula refers to. The outcome of the cognitive process called knowledge is a proposition.

A proposition is the overt symbolic expression of a subject's cognitive activity of identification of the existence of a given relation between terms. Hence, the referent of a proposition is not a term or the relation of terms, because there is no objective domain of such a relation to be so referenced but the overt behaviour of identification of the relation of such terms expressed in language. It is simply in this sense that a proposition could be adjudged to be correct or in error. The correctness of the proposition is therefore not the correctness of the syntax of the relation of terms; after all, those terms could equally be so related in a fictitious narrative. But it is the correctness of the activity of identification of the actual existence of a relation between terms expressed in language. Such correctness takes into consideration the cultural usage of language in the face of distinct stimulations and the assumption of the validity of universality of perception. It is the correctness of judgment, evaluated recursively in relation to the linguistic permutations of the speaker's speech community and the universality of the mode of perception, within the subjective assumption that our position in the universe is like those of others.

It is just in the above sense that a proposition is not just referred to as a sentence or a statement, but a judgment, an assertion, or a claim. So, in evaluating a proposition, it is not just a sentence that is evaluated but the cognitive ability of the subject in making correct judgment concerning the actual existence of the relations between terms that is evaluated. This submission defeats any semantics of the proposition that situates its object within a framework of absolute objective referential realism. The reason is that the comprehensive semantics of the proposition cannot be

attained with absolute objectivity. For instance, relations, classes, functions, etc., are not external objects to be referenced objectively, but cognitive constructs given only in the observation of the cognitive behaviour of the subject expressed in language. Assuming that the semantics of a proposition can be satisfied solely by analyzing the relationship of language to external reality is therefore incorrect. This is why the proposition is sometimes defined as a strange entity or anything that could be said to be true or false, or simply as what implies and could be implied; another way of saying a proposition is meaningless ontologically but meaningful syntactically.

The importance of language in cognitive science is the easy access it gives to inter-subjective analysis of judgment; otherwise, the latter would have been difficult. Thus, language as used in constative contexts is referential and implicative; implicative in the sense of implying the cognitive behaviour of the speaker. Every sign has to be understood completely in terms of its significance. But it will be erroneous to assume that the significance must always be some external object, because the fear of finding referents for concepts or general terms and an exaggerated confidence in doing so is responsible for conceptual semantics and Platonism, the practice of absconding from ontology as a referent, and a sojourn in absolute linguisticism as found in Quine (1969). The deviant practice of Quine's semantics would result in representationalism, which promotes an objective correspondence theory of truth, of the type favored by Sellars (Lycan, 1988).

CONCLUSION

In its referential-implicative essence in a constative context, language does not refer to mentalities or images but to the object and the cognitive behaviour of the subject expressed in it. Words are actually learnt from the overt behavior of people, not imprinted on the mind by objects. The importance of the use theory and its consequent referential view of constative sentences and its onto-linguistic recursion is in its ability to overcome the linguistic autocracy of the object and its consequent autonomy of language, to understand that language belongs to humans. By so doing, the correspondence theory of truth of the kind proposed by Tarski, blended with the recursive definition of the Quinean type, taking into full account the implicative references of constative sentences to objective and cognitive units, will become uncontroversial.

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