

LINGUISTIC PERPLEXITIES: A REFLECTION ON SHAREABLE CONTENTS OF MEANING IN PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

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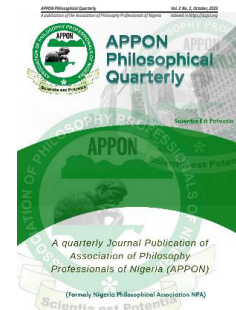
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Abstract

There is an assumption that since words 'have meanings' the constituted linguistic elements of a proposition will be transparently significant and meaningful. But there are subtle linguistic difficulties that characterize the entire spheres of discourse which make the above assumption spurious? It is necessary to question why, more often than not words, concepts and expressions that we usually employ our propositional attitudes do not have those stable meanings that we usually attach to them to signify, symbolize, refer and mean. The study underscores the fact that though language is a field in which interests of most disciplines in the social and human sciences intersect, each of these, more or less, has only preoccupied itself with extolling partial aspects of its communicative functions. The methods of exposition, analysis and critical reflection are employed here. Importantly, it is realized that the meanings words in sentences tend to 'overflow' their usual boundaries in different contexts of usages. But while words of the language that we used to refer, designate, and mean remain quite 'fluid' and non-static, meaning is realizable and shareable among discussants.

Keywords: Linguistic perplexities, language, Reflection, Shared meanings.

Introduction

In transcendental and existential orientations, the human persons talks, speaks and writes, and says about things. He or she radically interacts with others on varied social, cultural, ontological and existential questions. He or she communicates to express something meaningful about shareable human

experiences such as feelings, thoughts, ideas about one thing or other. But there are semantic problems that people usually encounter on the way to understanding *what* is actually being stated and communicated by one to another. Moreover, there are subtle twists in the manner in which certain words or expressions of language are used such as in figures of

speech, metaphor, symbolic language and the literary arts. These encase subtle linguistic nuances that create problems of understanding. Quite often, we grapple with great efforts to make *sense* of that which was unclear. At helpless moments we grapple with alternative words put ourselves through to the other. This paper reflects and highlights the epistemological problem.

Some questions need to be raised here. How does one understand the signifying power of names or words of our language when all that we can lay hands on is its description? To what extent does description confer objectively on reality? But we often succeed in using them. How do we wriggle out of this? In trying to answer these we explored the semantic nature of the problem of 'linguistic perplexities.' Reference is made to some views of ordinary language philosophy in order to elucidate how meaning anchors on the formal framework of structural linguistics. This will help our understanding that language is meaningfully realized as discourse in general. The expository, analytic and critical reflective methods are used in the study. The basic assumptions in the development of linguistic science from the postulates of structuralism is carefully exposed. The implications is the principles of structural linguistics are raised as it's concern with *langue* (and not speech) is only to attain unified

descriptive account of language. Critical reflection on the workings of ordinary language philosophy and critical literary studies are used to bring out the richer sides to language as object of linguistic science as well as discourse in the ever re-creative speech-events of language. It is reference to intersection in the finite use of linguistic signs to generate infinite units of sentences that socially defines language.

Conceptual and Theoretical Review

In Plato's *Cratylus*, Socrates (469-399 BC) argues that words gained their meanings naturally, rather than conventionally and were associated with what they signified or named.¹ Ricoeur observes that in *Cratylus* Plato reaches a stalemate in the theory of naming and noted that neither naturalism nor convention provided answer to the correctness of words. This impasse necessitated creation of a theory of predication.² In Aristotle "nothing is by nature a noun or name". it is by convention that such becomes a linguistic symbol. Etymologically, the Greek *onoma* (*onomata*, plural) is usually translated and used as: (a) 'words', (b) more narrowly as 'nouns' or nouns and adjectives; and (c) in certain contexts, as 'proper name alone'. The *noun* and the *verb* in Greek grammar are both composite sounds and are significant by convention; the first "has no reference to time, and of which no part is significant apart from the rest" while the

¹ Plato, "Cratylus", trans. Benjamin Jowett. *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), 421-474. Accessed: 12/10/2016, http://www.classicallibrary.org/plato/dialogues/6_cratylus.htm

² Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor; Multidisciplinary Studies in the Creation of Meaning in*

significance of the *verb* has reference to time and space.³ Without the *name* nothing can be identified as the subject of an expression as the *verb* enables the predication of this subject. A *name* is used to “imitate the being of the object to which it has been assigned.” Its signifying power (*dunamis*) “lies in its power in separating the being of its object by descriptive means.⁴” “Words do not mean, they are mere labels and tags on objects. Only the whole statement or proposition *says* that something *is* such and such. Its interpretation as rests on belief that the natural order of thoughts is mirrored by the order of words. To be true the words must provide true information about the objects they name on asymmetric combination of naming expression (noun clause) with a predicate.

In *On Interpretation* Aristotle notes that while “spoken words are symbols of mental experience” and “written words are the symbols of spoken words.” Though there is common “mental experiences, which these directly symbolize... as also are those things of which our experiences are the images,” all men neither have the same writing nor the same speech sounds.⁵

For Wilhelm Von Humboldt (1767-1835), an associative unity exists between the phonic form and the “usage to which the phonetic form is put to designate objects and to associate ideas.” It is on this rationale, that thought associates ideas and relates them to things that constitutes the laws governing use of language.⁶ But there is no formal logic regulating the manner of this association. This one of the implications that language is a signifying function which reality is meaningful only within the conventions of a linguistic community. But here, Humboldt simply glosses over the epistemic problem of understanding as if it is a given ‘fact’. Hence, he could not account for the social manifestation of language.

For Wittgenstein philosophers have a false picture of how certain complex words function in a language.⁷ Philosophical problems arise either due to confusion in the use of words in one language with their use in another, or when they are used outside the context in which it ought rightly to function in a language-game.⁸ Ordinarily, symbolic use of words must be interpreted to elicit from its polysemy the correct meaning in question. In such latter

Language (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 81

³ Aristotle, *Categoriae*, trans. E.M. Edghill, in *The Basic works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard Mckeon (New York: The Order Library, 2001), 1, 1-2, 17-28, 7

⁴ David Sedley, *Plato's Cratylus*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 521584922ws.pdf

⁵ Aristotle, *Categoriae*, translated by E.M. Edghill, in *The Basic works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard Mckeon (New York: The Order Library, 2001), 1, 1-2, 17-28, 7

⁶ Humboldt, Wilhelm Von, “Language, Understanding, and the Historical World”, in ed. Muller *The Hermeneutic Reader*, 99.

⁷ Wittgenstein, L., *Philosophical Investigations*, 2nd. edn., (trans.) Anscombe GEM) Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), § 47 § 116.

⁸ Wittgenstein, L., *The Blue and Black Book*, 26-7, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 47

cases, language goes 'on holiday' and is 'idling'.⁹ It leads, according to Howe, "perplexity, muddle, and confusion, and, in extreme cases, to the erection of grandiose and often paradoxical metaphysical theories which seem profound, but which are really no more than the magnified products of linguistic error."¹⁰

Language as Complex of Intentional Shareable Content

John Locke maintains a conventional view of language. *Words* are the sensible signs of men's ideas and are used either in one's thought as "*aide memoir* or to "bring out personal ideas and lay them before others' views."¹¹ The activity of the mind is characterized by a "busy and boundless fancy" in which, from the "vast store" of ideas in his mind, man paints of things "with an almost endless variety."¹² Locke argues that words or "sounds have no natural connexion" with ideas which they stand for. But all have "their signification from the arbitrary imposition of men"¹³ and it is by "long and familiar use" of the words do they "come to excite in men certain ideas so constantly and readily, that they are apt to suppose a

natural connexion between them."¹⁴ The constant use the same sign (words) for the same idea establishes meaning for it does not "create doubtfulness or ambiguity of their signification" but does "excite in the hearer the same idea which it stands for in the mind of the speaker." For Locke, this consists "the right use and perfection of language."¹⁵ Chomsky notes that the 'reality' of language is too complex to be described completely.¹⁶ But beyond this descriptive perspective, a philosophy of language has much to say about the meaningfulness of lots of things that are said or written about the vast ocean of reality. That reality is, that it is the subject matter of every philosophical discourse, that the truth of reality is communicable and is shareable suffices to be understood here as the shareable contents of meaning.

Properly speaking, language is a complex medium through which our communicable content is driven. To understand its complex reality in the face of disparate methodological approaches add to its enigma. Noam Chomsky defines language from a structuralist perspective, that is a:

... set (finite or infinite) of

⁹ Wittgenstein L. *Philosophical Investigations*, §§ 38 & 132

¹⁰ M.W. Howe, "Language Game", in Peter V. Lamarque (ed.), *Concise Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Language* (New York: Elsevier Science Ltd., 1977), 129

¹¹ Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Jim Manis Hazleton. <http://www2.bn.psu.edu/faculty/jmanis/jimspdf.htm>, III, II, 2, p. 390

¹² Locke *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II, I, 1 & 2; III, II, I & 2; PP.86 & 390

¹³ Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, III, IX, 4; p. 465

¹⁴ Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, III, II, 8; p. 393

¹⁵ Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, III, IX, 4; p. 465 & III, IX, 2

¹⁶ Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures*, Second edn. Introduction by David W. Lightfoot (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2002.), 16

sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements. ... (that is) finite number of phonemes (or letters in its alphabet) and each sentence is representable as a finite sequence of these phonemes (or letters), though there are infinitely many sentences.¹⁷

But Battista Mondin explains its instrumental value and communicative use as “that activity with which man, through vocal or written signs, puts himself in communication... to express...sentiments, desires, or knowledge.”¹⁸ Thus, we have double conceptual orientations. The two approaches refer to differing methodological traditions addressing rather two aspects of an epistemological content, namely: language as structural relations of linguistic signs and language as speech activity. The first advocates for principles of structural linguistics, the second for a reflection on philosophy of language. The former is the concern of linguistic science, the latter, of philosophy of language. For obvious reason of its multifaceted considerations and heterogeneous nature, the structural linguist brackets off speech-acts from its articulation of the science of language. The reason include the historical and cultural, synchronic and diachronic

issues, the subjective and inter-subjective dimensions in the instrumental use of linguistic signs to say and write about things and the other hears and reads, and understands them. However, the core concern at this point is to elucidate the nature of certain conceptual difficulties encountered in the use of language to say and to mean one thing or other. This is what has been characterized as 'linguistic perplexities'.

Linguistic Perplexities and Shareable Contents of Meaning

There are usually cognitive gaps between our language and the world which they are used to represent, signify or mean. Usually, according to Russell:

One man's act of thought is necessarily a different thing from another man's, one man's act of thought at one time is necessarily a different thing from the same man's act of thought at another time. Hence, if whiteness were the thought as opposed to its object, no two different men could think of it, and no one man could think of it twice. That which many different thoughts of whiteness have in common is their object, and this object is different from all of them. Thus, universals are not

¹⁷ Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures*, 2

¹⁸ Battista Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology* (Bangalore, India: Theological Publications, 2005), 133
⁸Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy, An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Dennis Savage (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970) 3-5

thoughts, though when known they are the objects of thoughts.¹⁹

The above boarder on how ideas stand for things which our use of words denote or refer to. Not only this. There are cases of 'verbal mistakes' like in the misuse of words and slips of tongues in applying wrong names or words to things. This always raises the question of "whether language has been properly fitted to the world." However, one already knows that Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* failed to explain that words, as mental symbols, strictly mirror or picture reality.

The idea in the concept 'linguistic perplexities' refers to the nature of certain symbolic expressions which pose semantic problems in discourses. The concept refers to much of our linguistic expressions which encase meaning-problems, make conversations difficult and stifle effective communications. It may be due to either inadvertent use or inappropriate use of words; the outright and deliberate abuse of language with the intent to confute or confuse the other about what the words are usually used to mean or refer to; or where, from the nature of language itself determining what is communicated become problematic. Generally, there are imagery, figuration,

metaphors, symbolic expressions, etc which twists words from their normal meanings or referents. It will include the subtle ways in which language is used to express, not only the real and true but also "something other than the real, the possible, the unreal, the utopian idea... the inexpressible." However, our concern is not with the abuse of language with the intent to distort reality. Other perplexing aspects of language use not only pertains, according to Ricoeur, to its "propensity for the enigma, for artifice, for abstruseness, for the secret, in fact for non-communication", but also the meaningless "chattering" in discourse.²⁰ Thus, we usually have scenerios where epistemological attempts to unveil the veiled remain entrenched in the shores of the incommunicable and the untranslatable.²¹

Recall, therefore, that Locke does hint of the "doubtfulness and uncertainty" in the signification of words. This 'imperfection' is due to how the the signs stand for ideas they do rather than its incapacity to signify ideas.²² It became imperative not only to limit linguistic signs to a set of finite means but to have certain signs stand for several particular things, hence, his idea of the *general terms* and *general ideas* to enable the comprehension of several particular things because "the multiplication of words would have

¹⁹. Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Introduction by John Skorupski. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998),57

²⁰. Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation*, translated by Eileen Brennan, with Introductions by Richard Kearney, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 28

²¹. Ricoeur, *On Translation*, 28, 33

²². John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, III,IX, 4 ;p. 465

perplexed their use, had every particular thing need of a distinct name to be signified by.”²³ But this does not get us very far. Ideas of things remain confusing, conflicting or may be inadequately conceived to stand for one particular thing or another.

Inter-animation of Meanings

To correct the problem of the question of the 'correctness' of words Plato re-articulated the identification and predication functions of language. as “*logos* itself and pictures it as the 'interlacing' of the noun and the verb.”²⁴ Hence, as Ricoeur opines, it is “only the *interlacing of discourse* that 'has to do with something.' The sense of the proposition drew from the contributions of the constituent parts, the phrases.²⁵ Words have sense only in so far as they contribute to the sense of sentences in which they occur. It is “difficult, if not impossible” Palmer notes, to extend the theory of naming to include other parts of speech such as adjectives (e.g. attractive, relevant; useful, traditional, difficult, etc); verbs; prepositions; pronouns, etc-as none of these can be “used as a label to identify something that they denote.”²⁶ Philosophers of language have argued that it is by the inter-lacing of the meanings implied in these that meaning is realized.

Ingarden identifies three major parts of speech: the nouns, finite verbs, and function. The nouns intentionally project the objects they name and determine their objects each:

...as to its form (whether it is a thing, a process, or an event, e.g., a tree, a movement, or a blow), as to its qualitative constitution (what kind of object it is and what qualities it has), and finally as to its mode of being (whether it is intended as a real or an ideal or perhaps as a possible object).²⁷

There are other functional parts of the sentence: the phrasal verbs and adverbs- the “is” (a copula in cognizing something, in a declarative sentence); disjunctive: “either” / “or”; the conjunction- “and”; other indexical words: “to,” “each,” “by” that “do not constitute an intentional object through their meaning” but “merely serve to perform various functions in relation to the meanings of other words with which they appear or in relation to the objects of the nouns which they connect.” For instance, “and” joins two nouns or sentences together into a semantic unit of a higher order or compound sentence. As a correlate to this function “it creates a

²³ Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, III,I,3, p.387

²⁴ Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor, Multidisciplinary Studies in the Creation of Meaning in Language* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978),81.

²⁵ T. R. Baldwin, “Meaning: Philosophical Theories”, in ed. *Concise Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,147

²⁶ Palmer, *Semantics*, 19

²⁷ Roman Ingarden, “The Phenomenological Theory of Meaning”, in ed. Muller, *The Hermeneutic Reader, Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, (ed.) Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, with an Introduction and notes, (New York: Continuum, 2006),201

certain intentional interdependence of the objects” of the nouns it joins. The finite verbs, in part help to determine:

...the states of affairs as purely intentional sentence correlates. In their various forms, in conjunction with the manifold syntactic functions of the function words, they produce a great multiplicity of sentence structures and sentence complexes and, corresponding to them, a multiplicity of sentence correlates, especially states of affairs and their interconnections....such as concrete situations, complex processes involving several objects, conflicts and agreements among them, etc.²⁸

While the sentence is the unit of meaning, its meaning draws from the 'over-flow' of the functional relations of the various linguistic units in its composition. The idea of this is implied in the principle of compositionality. How does this play out?

Some Perspectives on Ordinary Language Philosophy

Language functions by predicating and identifying roles of certain words. The identifying expression “specify one thing and one alone.” It “always designates

entities that exist (or whose existence is neutralized, as in fiction).” As such Ricoeur opines, “when I speak of something, in principle I speak of something that exists”²⁹ or that is capable of existing. In this way, proper logical subjects are understood potentially as existent. The identifying word or phrase is ultimately reducible to the concept of a logical subject. Moreover, things exist as particulars, as individual things. Thus, the notion of existence (instantiated in the named particular things) is linked to the singularizing function of language. This is, Ricoeur opines, “the point at which language 'sticks,' where it adheres to things.”that is, that though there be 'perplexities' we encounter daily in our use of language, the words successfully 'sticks' to what they name.

Contrary to the identifying function which names a substantial individual and singular existent, the predicative function concerns the nonexistent and the universalizable. Related to the predicate term in this predicative function are the 'adjectives of quality' (great, good,) and their 'substantival counterparts' (greatness, goodness); the classes to which individuals belong (minerals, animals); relations (X is beside, under, near, Y); and actions (killing, kissing as in Brutus / *Okonkwo* killed Caesar / Ikemefuna). These qualities, classes, relations, and actions are universalizable.³⁰ For the linguist the

²⁸. Roman Ingarden, “The Phenomenological Theory of Meaning”, 202

²⁹. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*; 82

³⁰. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*; 82

predicate is the determination of the subject. Hence, “it is is always the counterpart of a singularizing identification” such that the dissymmetry of the identification and predicating functions is a necessary conception in the propositional nature of the sentence. Ricoeur, avers that “for it makes no sense to ask whether goodness exists, only whether some thing, which is good, exists.” The dissymmetry of the two functions not only implies the ontological dissymmetry of subject and predicate as hinted above. Ricoeur further draws from Strawson's distinction to mark a justification of Benveniste's distinction between semiotics and semantics. In this distinction, semiotics is concerned with the generic or universal function and semantics the view to the singular. Ricoeur cites him to say:

'The sign's value is always and only generic and conceptual. Therefore, it has nothing to do with any particular or contingent signified, and anything individual is excluded; circumstantial factors are to be regarded as irrelevant.'³¹

Ricoeur sums up that this characteristic (identifying/singularizing and predicative; semiotic and semantic functions) proceeds from Benveniste's very notion of 'instance of discourse', which implies that: “it is language, as used and in action, which can take circumstances into

account and have particular applications.... 'The sentence, the expression that belongs to semantics, is only concerned with the particular'.³² Sentences join in diverse ways to form semantic units of a higher order which exhibit quite varied structures; from these structures arise such entities as a story, a novel, a conversation, a drama, a scientific theory. By the same token, finite verbs constitute not only states of affairs which correspond to the individual sentences, but also whole systems of very diverse types of states of affairs.”³³ Thus, the parts of the sentence play significant roles in embedding the composed meaning relations encapsulated by them. The signs of the linguistic science provides the formal base for this anchorage. But then speech-acts are events which semantic reality and conversational implications goes beyond the logic of formal relations within the system of signs relations. So, in ordinary language philosophy the social, cultural, historical and contextual setting are imperative for realizing the meaning reality in set of words strung together. Besides philosophical analysis, there are translation and interpretation. Each of these are geared towards making the perplexing and the enigma in human discourse clearer and distinct for understanding.

Conversational Understanding as Interpretation

From the philological school, conversational understanding is rendered

³¹ Emile Benveniste, 'La Forme' 35 in Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 82

³² Emile Benveniste, 'La Forme' 36, Cited by Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*,

³³ Roman Ingarden, “The Phenomenological Theory of Meaning”, 202

in interpretation. To understand what has been said or written is to have interpreted it. The conversational interplay between the speaker and writer illumines the exact meaning or message that is being passed across. It is so much so because both the speaker or writer seeks to be heard or read and the meaning in the message passed understood. The hearer or reader also strives to gain knowledge and information being passed across. The concept, *hermeneia* according to Philip August Boeckh (1785-1867) “has long signified the rendering of one person's language intelligible to another, the work of the interpreter.”³⁴ He underlines the fact that “interpretation is consciousness of that through which the meaning and significance of the thing communicated are conditioned and defined.” In other words, in objective significance, literal meaning of a sentence hangs on the descriptive frameworks of linguistic science. Its semantic value is attained when the relations of words, as parts of speech or, according to the ancient Greek, parts of diction are strung together and inter-animate in the sentence according to laws of grammar and literary styles.³⁵

The rules are applied by the author, or in Chomsky's words, competent users of language who speak and write and that understand what is expressed orally or written. Though the author of a linguistic

expression constructs and inputs his or her subjectivity conditioned on historical conditions of the time, he or she does not so much deviate from consciousness of the rules. The other who reads and interprets also reflects upon this consciousness and attains objectivity of understanding.³⁶ In a canon of interpretation, Schleiermacher, explains the cognitive role played by the verb. It precisely determines or indicates how the object and the subject are related to it.³⁷ Each word has possible multiple usages. In a sentence, each “contributes something contextual to its sphere of literal meaning. Understanding will be to grasp the 'unity' of meaning within a circumscribed sphere of its possible multiple usages. It is as contextualized by its presence in the sentence. The unity in meanings of the word does not derive from “itself, but from its context.”³⁸ It is within such inter-textuality that the propositional meaning or sense of the sentence is generated and communicated in verbal communications, dialogues, and reading of texts.

Hedged between Gottlob Frege's reference (*Bedeutung*) and sense (*Sinn*) distinction is the third, namely, the associated ideas (*Vorstellung*). The three connect to the objective, inter-subjective and the subjective levels of meaning, respectively. For Frege, it is only the

³⁴. Philip August Boeckh, “Philological Hermeneutics”, in *The Hermeneutics Reader*, 134

³⁵. Boeckh, “Philological Hermeneutics”, in *The Hermeneutic Reader*, 135, 140

³⁶. Boeckh, “Philological Hermeneutics”, in *The Hermeneutic Reader*, 136f

³⁷. Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, “Foundations: General Theory and Art of Interpretation” in *The Hermeneutic Reader*, 3

³⁸. Schleiermacher, “Foundations: General Theory and Art of Interpretation”, 88

objective and inter-subjective that have “shareable and communicable contents.” The major difference lies in the mode of connecting one idea to a sense:

...just as one man connects this idea, and another that idea, with the same word, so also one man can associate this sense and other that sense.... They are not prevented from grasping the same sense; but they cannot have the same idea.... If two persons picture the same thing, each still has his own idea.³⁹

He adds a third distinction, *Vorstellung*, the associated idea. These three-cognitive dimensional distinctions, namely, reference (*Bedeutung*)- the “object perceivable by the sense; sense (*Sinn*)- the “common property of many people,” or the “common store of thoughts which is transmitted from one generation to another” and *Verstellung* (the *associated idea*) correspond to three semantic levels: the *objective*, *inter-subjective*, and *subjective*, that is, the *idiosyncratic representation*. The subjective is idea of the referent, or “an internal image” of the memories of sense impressions of acts that I have performed.” As such it is “often saturated with feelings.” The clarity of its

parts “varies and oscillates.” Even in the same person the same sense is not always connected with the same idea of an object. Thus, Frege noted that “as one man connects this idea and another that idea, with the same word, so also one man can associate this sense and another that sense.” For Frege only it is only the objective and inter-subjective that are cognitively relevant.⁴⁰ The reason, Medina explained, is because only the two possess “shareable and communicable contents.”⁴¹ As it stands, his conception of the *subjective* has negative implications for all works of arts wherein by varying “colouring and shading” of ideas the artist sought to give eloquence to the sense he or she envisioned. For this “uncertain connexion of ideas with words” Frege's subjective conception also raised questions about the objectivity of meanings in translations of texts into other languages. Since, for Frege the subjective lacks objectivity, the right sense of ideas as may be represented here “must be evoked by each hearer or reader according to the hints of the poet or the speaker.” However, Frege did not write off the reality of the arts in general thriving heavily on the subjective ideas for “without some affinity in human ideas art would certainly be impossible; but it can never be exactly determined how far the intentions of the poet are realized.”⁴² Thus,

³⁹. Jose Medina,¹ Jose Medina, *Language, key Concepts in Philosophy* (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), 49, 60

⁴⁰. Frege Gottlob Footnote, “On Sense and Reference”, trans. Max Black, in *Translations from Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege, 2nd ed., ed., Peter Geach and Max Black* (Oxford; Basil Blackwell, 1970), 59-60

⁴¹. Jose Medina, *Language, Key Concepts in Philosophy* (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), 49

⁴². Frege, “On Sense and Reference”, 61

no matter how fleeting the ideas are they must be bound unto reality.

Conclusion

Language is the use of arbitrary system of sign relations in the various communicative functions, namely, the referential, expressive, appellative and ontological functions. It is a system of finite and arbitrary sign relations. Unlike in formal logic with rigidly fixed rules those in ordinary or natural language gain their signification by convention. Chomsky did bring out the relationship between competence and performance. Linguistic science drew its principles from the postulates of structuralism in De Saussure. It bracketed the social fact of speech in its historical and cultural dimensions because these many sided aspects posed descriptive problem for the linguistic science. While its description provided a the objective side to the study of language, it is the semantic import of philosophy of language which manifests the aspect of human subjectivity in creative use of the linguistic signs that is used in dialectical understanding of the language phenomenon. The use of language brings us into reflection about *that* which constitutes the subject matter of language because there is never a language without reference to man and his perceptions and experiences of reality in an inter-subjective world. Our speech events refer to a *life-world*. *This life-world* is a thematic field of meanings, for man says and says *about* reality. The

subject is that for whom there is a world to reflect upon. To this world he or she represents as “intentional pole”, direct outward of itself the subject. To understand language is to interpret the world it refers to and becomes meaningful.⁴³ This world is a subject of common cognitive heritage. But because language operates as system of virtual signs relations determination of the meaning of the words we use sometimes becomes confusing. This difficulty does not mean that there is no inter-subjective reference to things which sense, meaning is understood. The dialogue situation requires a cooperation from both speakers and hearers in a continuous negotiation to attain common understanding of the subject matter being discussed. Language has always remained that tool among interlocutors . It is as Martin Heidegger says, 'the house of Being' and everyday man is preoccupied with acts of predication about this or that reality. The understanding that is gained in reflecting on communicative import of language is beyond what one can learn in linguistic science's descriptive account of language.

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⁴³. Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy, An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), 8-9, 16-18

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