Identity, Synonymity and Indeterminacy: A Relativist Defense of Uniform Translation

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Abstract

There is no entity without an identity. Identity is for the philosopher as Synonymity is for the linguist. The concept of *identity* has a wide-ranging epistemic applicability—especially in psychology and sociopolitical studies. In both instances, the core of the concept concerns that a thing is what it is, and not another; and how we come to know that a thing is what it is, or when we have one thing, not two or more. At some macro level, the basic rule for the disputation on the concept informs the principle of individuation. This law or principle states that an object is what it is and nothing else. If a thing is an object, say, a man, then it is a man and nothing else. If I am not sure what the identity of an object is, I should not categorically say anything about it. But if I know what it is, then I should be able to distinguish it from every other thing that does not share the same characteristic(s) with it. So, 'if I am a spirit, then I am a spirit. Put in a different way, if any statement is true, then it is true. Propositions as such could also be said to be tautology—no clarification on it beyond the

fact that it is what it is and not another. All these point to the fact that inherent in language are the issues of meaning/meaningfulness, identity, Synonymity and translation. Thus, adopting some phenomenological and analytical tool to review existing theoretical amid evident factual materials, this theoretical work espouses the nature and meaning of language; stipulates the nature of identity and translation; and ex-rays Quine's principle of indeterminacy. The ravening analysis helped espouse that the issue of meaning and translation surface as a result of the attempt by philosophers of language to reduce meaning to the dictate of some subject (which is subjectivist). However, the work concludes that, based on the need for reasonable human communication and understanding, minimum uniform translation of meaning without compromising identity is possible on two grounds—which it eventually stipulates.

Keywords*:* Identity, indeterminacy, meaning/meaningfulness, relativism, Synonymity, translation

Introduction

Since the twentieth century, some useful efforts have been made, much energy expended, and some quantum of blood dissipated on the analysis of meaningfulness, language and its uses. An analysis of the main historical concepts and uses with which philosophy of language has been concerned is necessary. For the much of the preceding past, there has been a general but impressive attempt to understand the components of any working language and the relationship the understanding speaker has to its elements and the one which such elements bear to the world it obtains. In this way, linguists and philosophy of language interacts with psychology, metaphysics and physics so much so that many believe that all of philosophical problems and worries about meaning are reducible to those arising from the use or misuse of language; that they are therefore resolvable once the linguistic complexities are redressed. If the philosophy of language is the fundamental basis of all philosophical problems, then, it must concern itself with the problems of logical forms, meaning and reference, inference and predication, speech art, locution, illocution, and per-locution of terms/concepts, definition, translation and all their relationships and associated errors.

Language is a means of human communication. Like eating and sleeping, language is common to all mankind, but unlike them, it is not but must be learned by members of the group in which it belongs because this enables the user to have a relationship with the cultural elements and the relationship they bear to the world (Blackburn, 1996). Language also includes gestures and animal sounds; it also involves some special set of symbols and rules, used for transmitting information, as in a computer (Webster, 1978). Language carries and defines what is carried. This implies that language expresses reality and identity. Hence two basic aspects characterize language: the utterance and understanding or meaning. Between these two is the fact of pointing out what, how and why we mean.

Somehow, intricately, the concept is an eclectic one—particularly as one where arrangement of vocal sounds conventionally representing concepts, feelings, objects, and other aspects of culture. There are many kinds of language. These include spoken, sign, special, and brail, and they share some basic characteristics. Most animals do indeed communicate. But the fact is that the art of speech is exclusive to man. Its variety is dependent on man's creativity. We can conveniently posit that "language" is a creation and design by man for his being a member of society. By it, man expresses his will, desires, intentions, worries, queries and purposes. Thus, language is a purposive behaviour. By expressing our purposes, wills or desires, language also connotes a kind of voluntary act. Language involves the interplay of letters, words, phrases and clauses into sentences (whether in Greek, Arabic, Edo, English, etc.) with their respective meanings and functions. Again, language is the vehicle for which users express thought, emotion and reality. And the reasonability or logicality of such expressions depends on ones grasp of the constitutive elements and their functions.

Language has some features. One is *transparency* (which draws attention to extra-linguistic phenomena); another is *objectivity* and *universality*—though its type is still dependent on culture, especially natural language. Words and sentences, thus, get their meanings and references within some culture; language is therefore *contextual*. For example, "Father" in English means male parent of a child; but in football circles, it means "expert"! Above all language portends *meaningfulness* defines any language; language states a meaning—though spoken language has

to be semantically well-formed and depictive of a true state of affairs adjudged so by some rational individuals in a community. Language could be used for praying, requesting, directing, informing, expressing, reporting, speculating, singing, teasing, asking, quarrelling, greeting, *et cetera*. Thus the uses of language include the *declarative/informative*, *emotive/expressive*, *directive*, *interrogative, and multiple functions*—ceremonial, performative, and other stipulated context. Hence even though language is universal, it is culturally defined. Accordingly, the central issue arising from the nature of language is the adequacy or the otherwise of the attempt to translate with exactitude of meaning from one language to another. This is exacerbated by the issue of identity and Synonymity vis-à-vis Quine's declaration of the indeterminacy principle. These issues are delicately interconnected. In this work, these respective themes would be espoused and their interconnectivity articulated and ratiocinated. This would culminate in the attempt to situate the possibility, reality and rationality of uniform translation, as against Quine's stance.

On Identity

According to W.V.O. Quine, there is no entity without identity, agreeably. Yet the concept of *identity* has a wide-ranging epistemic applicability—especially in psychology and sociopolitical studies. In both instances, for instance, the core of the concept concerns that a thing is what it is, and not another; and how we come to know that a thing is what it is, or when we have one thing, not two or more. This law or principle states that an object is what it is and nothing else. If you are an object, say, a man, then it is a man and nothing else. If I am not sure what the identity of an object is, I should not categorically say anything about it. But if I know what it is, then I should be able to distinguish it from every other thing that does not share the same characteristic(s) with it. So, 'if I am a spirit, then I am a spirit'. In other words, "if any statement is true then it is true" (Copi and Cohen, 144). Propositions such as this are also said to be a tautology—no clarification on it beyond the fact that *it is what it is and not another*. At some macro level, the basic rule for the disputation over the concept informs the principle of individuation; and yet at some much higher-level, any principle of individuation (for nations) would tell whether a nation survives such things as shift of territory, of government, and of origins of inhabitants, for instance. Hence the issue of whether or how a nation (a people) survives/resist in defense of its cherished identity

ignites the principle of self-determination.[1] (Blackburn, 1996). Thus *identity* refers to the qualities or attributes that distinguishes a person, group or thing and makes it different from others. it is simply the characteristic feature of the person that makes them not the other person. According to Hogg and Abrams (1988), identity is people's concept of who they are, of what sort of people they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others.

The term, identity is derived from the Latin word, *identitas* (which means *sameness*) and is the unique attribute of a thing which it alone possesses. Identity as a concept yields many philosophical discussions such as the 'identity of *indiscernibles* (which worries that if thing, say, "A" and another, say, "B" share all same properties, could they also be said to mean one or be the same thing?). There is also the issue of 'the identity of a person *overtime*'—for instance, the case of a particular girl currently named *Astra Ikpemosi*, who, two years later decides to thenceforth be called *Astrilla Oshiokhuane*; could the girl be said to be the same person? So there are several puzzles surrounding the notion of identity. One famous one is the puzzle of the *ship of Theseus* raises the question: at what point does an object which has had all of its components parts replaced truly change; or does that object retain its identity as that same initial object? Similarly (although originally offered by Plato and Heraclitus), as claimed by Cohen and Marc (2004), the puzzle of the ship of Theseus *supposed* that the famous ship sailed by the hero Theseus in a great battle was kept in a harbor as a museum piece; and as the years went by some of the wooden parts began to rot and were replaced by new ones; then, after a century or so, every part had been replaced. The question then is whether the "rehabilitated" ship is still the same object as the original.

In language studies and analytic philosophy, identity as a concept refers to the unique attributes of a concept (a word, sentence or phrase) that gives it its unique meaning and makes it completely different from another concept (word, sentence or phrase). For example, when we say *This is a golf ball*, *i*dentity in this regard would be concerned about the unique attributes that makes the object a golf ball and not an egg ball or football—even though all three are synonyms for ball.

On the Doctrine/Paradox of Synonymity

The concept of Synonymity refers to a state when words possess similar attributes, characteristics, qualities and meaning (Hornsby, 2015). It opines the semantic association that exists between words that can mean the same thing in a given context. When words used in a context have similar meanings, then they could said to be synonymous. Example is the word 'begin' it is synonymous with other words such as 'start' and 'initiate'. When things are synonymous, they are said to be alike or even be the same, that a thing is amazing is the same to say that it is incredible or unbelievable. This is because Synonymity connotes substitution, that 'X=Y' means that anywhere we see 'X' we can substitute same with 'Y' or that 20 divide 5 can be a substitute for the number 4.

The word, synonym is derived from the Greek word, *Synonymon,* which can be translated to mean having the same sense as each other. In analytic thought, a synonym would be any word, concept or phrase that has similar meaning of another word, concept or phrase within the same language and when used in the same sense can be substituted with each other. To say that things are identical is to say that they are the same. Thus "identity" and "sameness" mean the same; their meanings are identical. However, they have more than one meaning. This means that when we say things are synonymous, they share also the same identity. But this qualification raises a paradox.

A paradox is a declaration or a statement that contains inherent contradictions; this means that it can both be true and false at the same time; they often sound reasonable and are derived through a correct logical process but which upon further analysis prove their contentious nature of containing contradictions (Hornsby, 2015). Etymologically, paradox is derived from two Greek words *'para'* which means 'beyond or outside of', and '*dokein*' which means 'to think' (translated into '*paradoxes*' which means 'something contradictory'). It is important to note that 'paradoxes' at first glance are always statements absurd because they are contradictory but which upon further thinking or reflection makes sense. It is used to engross the mind of a reader to uncover a fundamental logic doing this allows a reader to conceptualize ideas in a different way. Paradoxes are used to show the fallibility of human logic. Let us take some examples of paradox.

Example 1*: This statement is a lie.*

One should note that if the above statement is correct, then it, itself is a lie—which means it is not true. But if it's not correct, then it is a lie, which makes it true.
Example 2: *No girl goes to that salon anymore; it's too crowded.*

If the salon is crowded, then lots of girls go there, hence it makes no sense to say "no girl goes" there anymore.

Understanding the Paradox of Identity or Synonymity *Historically,* the paradox of identity and Synonymity is one of the foremost problems in analytic philosophy/movement. Analytic philosophers struggled with the puzzle of identity and Synonymity for a long time, they tried to find the central property that distinguishes a thing and makes it what it is. Plato particularly tried to sketch an argument aimed at proving that there can be no false judgements. In his *Theaetetus*, Plato opined that 'with any given name such as 'Theaetetus' one either knows it or not. But with two names, e.g., *Theaetetus* and *Theodoros* there are four possible combinations: that

a. One knows both
b. One knows the second but not the first
c. One knows neither
d. One knows the first but not the second.

Hence, Plato made two points: that

1. Regardless of whichever of these combinations obtains, it is impossible to judge that one thing is the other;
2. Therefore, there can be no false judgements (McDowell, 1970).

The preceding semantic breakdown lays the foundation for the comprehension of the famous philosophical paradox called the *paradox of identity or Synonymity*. This paradox arises for statements that do not require structural analyses as in the case of the 'paradox of Analysis' because they are just words without semantic structures. Simply put the paradox of identity or Synonymity refers to 'certain words that are referring to themselves' i.e., involving just two similar or synonymous words such as *to begin* and *to start*. The paradox is explained thus; supposing that *destroy* and *demolish* are synonyms (meaning that to *destroy is to demolish,* then (1) we can easily establish that to 'destroy is to destroy'; (2) there are

cogent reasons supporting the argument that statement 1 and 2 mean the same thing and yet enthralling reasons to think that statements 1 and 2 do not mean the same thing. The latter argument is hinged on the fact that statement 1 is informative and statement 2 is not.

In understanding how this issue is a paradox we must understand what is termed *conceptual analysis.* Conceptual analysis refers to the act of understanding the meaning of a word in light of the context in which it was used. Beyond understanding how words are synonymous, it is important to understand them from the framework of the original context in which they were used. Thus, before one can say a word is synonymous with another, the word must have been tested in any context or milieu and concept where the original word was used and if it stands without changing the meaning of the sentence or discussion then it can be said to be synonymous. Take the words *pleased* and *happy* for instance.
Mr. Omoh was pleased with the actions of Mr. Oboh—Statement 1
Mr. Omoh was happy with the actions of Mr. Oboh—Statement 2

Conceptual analysis can only be useful if it helps us get information after all that is what makes language useful. A Statement can be used when it has *cognitive value*, if it offers new information (and this is exactly the paradox as explained in the second proposition of our first example of "to destroy is to destroy"); if it offers no new information, it possesses no cognitive value even though it is correct. The requirement for accepting things as synonymous is that it is both correct and informative, and statement 2 in our earlier example fails to meet this condition—this makes it true yet untrue at the same time thus making it a paradox.

The Paradox of Analysis as Opposed to the Paradox of Identity/Synonymity The paradox of Analysis entails the puzzle arising when a specific word is seen as the same with a particular group of words or a phrase, for example, when one says '*a bachelor* (a specific word) *is an unmarried young man*' (a phrase). If one tries to analyze the word 'bachelor', one would come to the conclusion that it is identical or synonymous with the phrase 'an unmarried young man'. The paradox of analysis arises when we have an expression that does not express an analysis in form of a phrase when trying to express the meaning of a word, as in:

4 Sister = a female sibling
5 Sister = Sister.

In the analytical sense, statement (a) explains the meaning of the word, *sister* with the phrase *female sibling*. However, statement (b) is not analytic; the word sister originally meant sister. The paradox thus is 'can one still claim both statements (a) and (b) are identical? Statement (a) is informative in nature; if a person did not originally know the meaning of the word 'sister', then from reading statement (a) one could easily understand what it means to be a sister. Statement (b) on the other hand does not express any new meaning or knowledge to the word 'sister'. So, can we say statements (a) and (b) are the same or are identical? Yet some philosophers who tried to resolve this paradox argued that statement (a) is not the same thing as statement (b), because statement (a) is informative in nature whereas statement (b) is merely a circular reasoning. However, some other philosophers argued that if statement (a) is true, then statement (b) is true because both statements are identical and synonymous in nature with statement (a). *The paradox of Synonymity and identity* is similar to the paradox of analysis only that while the latter has to do with the relationship between words and a group of words (phrase), the former has to do with the relationship between just words that are identical in nature. It involves just two synonymous words (Rieber, 1994, 105). For example:

1. *Quick means speedy*; which means the same as
2. *Quick means Quick*.

The paradox here is on the question of whether (1) and (2) are identical in nature. There are compelling reason to think that (1) and (2) means the same. First, both (1) and (2) appear to say that a certain concept is identical with itself. Second is the principle of compositionality which holds that both mean the same, since they consist of words with the same meaning **(**Rieber, 1994). On the other hand, there is ground to think that (1) and (2) do not mean the same i.e. they are not identical. (1) is informative and (2) is not. It is possible to understand (1) without knowing that it is true (i.e. it could be true or false that *quick* means *speedy*. But everyone who understands (2) knows that is true. What this means for this group base on the above logical analysis, (1) and (2) are not identical (Rieber, 1994).

Evaluating Some Resolutions to the Paradox of Identity and Synonymity

Critically, what is the identity status of two different words that are synonymous to each other on the one hand, and two identical words that have the same meaning or reference to the former, on the other? That is: A=B and A=A (As in the

case of *Quick=Speedy* and *Quick=Quick*. Accordingly, several resolutions contend. Let us discuss just a few.

(i) *Metalinguistic Solution* Consider, (a) To be quick is to be speedy; (b) To be quick is to be quick. The paradox of Synonymity here has a straight forward metalinguistic solution. Here, statements (a) and (b) differ in meaning, this is because they are understood to be about words, i.e., statement (a) is being understood *quotationally* so that it means to be 'quick' is to be 'speedy' or more explicitly the concept expressed by 'quick' is the same concept expressed by 'speedy'. Also, that statement (b) is being understood to mean "concept expressed by 'quick' is the concept expressed by 'quick'". The metalinguistic argument defeats the argument that statements (a) and (b) are the same. Metalinguists argue that statements (a) and (b) are in part about words: (a) is for them informative, while (b) is not. In resolving the paradox, consider the view of compositionality—that both synonyms are one and the same since they consist of words with the same meaning. Yet compositionality can be criticized on the ground that the synonyms *quick/speedy* possess cognitive value as the statement has informative content unlike the synonym *quick/quick*. Also, it is possible for *quick/quick* to be false, this happens when 'Speedy' does not reference the same thing as *quick*. But this cannot be said of *quick/quick* which truth status is necessarily true since both words are the same and presented at the same reference. Hence, the metalinguists reject the theory of compositionality especially on the grounds of information. Quick/Speedy will certainly be informative to someone who previously did not know the meaning of Quick.

(b) *Rudolf Carnap's Solution* Carnap offered a solution based on the understanding of the notion of different structures: about what we mean by 'proposition' and 'meaning'. Sentences such as

(i) The concept, *brother* is identical with the concept of *male sibling*
(ii) The concept of brother is identical with the concept of brother.

Sentences such as (i) and (ii) mean the same or express the same proposition in one sense of meaning or *proposition* but not in other. That is because, in one sense, two sentences mean the same or express the same proposition *if and only if* they are equivalent. But in another sense, two sentences mean the same or express the same

proposition *if and only if* they are intentionally isomorphic, i.e. not only are the sentences equivalent, but they consist of equivalent words arranged in the same way. Since (i) and (ii) are equivalent but are not intentionally isomorphic[9], there is, according to Carnap, no univocal answer to the question of whether they mean the same or express the same proposition and so the paradox is solved. Thus Carnap rejected the theory of compositionality which holds as identical, both synonym A =B, A=A. Instead Carnap argued with his theory of intentional isomorphism which states that the identity status of words is determined often when the words are equivalent and arranged in the same way. Since A=B and A=A are not arranged in the same way, then they are not identical. The main trouble with Carnap's solution is that it does not tell what an analysis statement says or what information it conveys. Suppose that Lisa does not know the analysis of the concept 'brother' she believes that the concept brother is identical with the concept brother but does not believe that the concept brother is identical with the concept male sibling. Carnap's view does not tell us whether Lisa does not believe in words, concepts, sets or some other entities. Notice toot that in starting the puzzle about Lisa we did not even use the terms propositions as meaning, so merely positing an ambiguity in proposition or meaning could not solve the puzzle (Rieber, 109).

(c) *Quine's Solution*. For Quine, statements and synonyms are problematic to define. Take for instance,

(i) Teachers are Educators
(ii) Teachers are Teachers

Quine defines synonym in terms of necessity (Quine, 1951). A teacher is defined as an educator if and only if necessarily a teacher is and only is an educator. However, Quine argued that statement (ii) is not identical to statement (i) because the definition is necessarily circular; a teacher is a teacher has not said anything new or meaningful only repeating the word stated. Hence, Quine dismissed statement (ii) on the grounds of its circular nature. Quine argues that we arrived at the definition of synonym by necessity; we assumed that 'bachelor is an unmarried man' is a necessary conclusion. Not only did Quine dismiss the statement "bachelor is a bachelor' on the grounds of its circular nature, he also went on and criticized the statement, A=B as being necessarily circular and

postulated that the terms be dropped altogether because we arrive at them by convention and, according to Quine, we do not point to the meaning of the term. Quine's argument has been criticized from a Neo-Kantian or externalist view point (Rieber, 109). They argue that not all meaning in the word can be directly verified hence some meaning exist only in words and concept as in, heaven=paradise.

(d) *Frege's Solution* Using the 'theory of meaning', Frege holds that words have both a *reference* and *a sense* and can be used in different senses to refer to the same object. Statements of identity have the form 'a=b' (bachelor=unmarried man) and not merely a=a (bachelor=bachelor). Statements a=b, according to Frege, represent "valuable extensions of our knowledge" in that it possesses cognitive value. The sense contains the mode of presentation of the objects.[11] For example, the expressions, 'the evening star and the morning star' refer to the same object (both refer to the same thing, namely the planet *Venus*—although presented in different senses which can be represented thus,
The evening star (A) = The Morning star (B).

This statement 'the evening star is the morning star' has cognitive value; as a meaning can be derived from it, as against the statement: The evening star (A) = The evening star (A) which does not have cognitive value; it offers no new information. Frege's seems most plausible in resolving the paradox. He's draws a nexus with Russell's theory of definite reference.

The debate involved a long standing puzzle regarding so-called "identity" statements e.g. statements consisting of two names or descriptions joined by *is* or *are*. The puzzle was how to account for the apparent informativeness of statements such as "Venus is the morning star," in which the referents of the names or descriptions are the same. Because, "Venus" and "the morning star" both refer to Venus, the statement "Venus is the morning star" must be equivalent in content to "Venus is Venus" both statements say of a certain object, namely Venus. But if the two statements say the same thing, how is it possible that one of them, "Venus is the morning star," is informative? Indeed, it represents a discovery made by astronomers in ancient Babylonia whereas the other, "Venus is Venus," is not? The meaning of an expression, according to Frege, is what one can be said to grasp when one understands it and what the expression shares with its translations into

other languages. The meaning determines the expression's referent as the thing to which the meaning uniquely applies. Thus, the referent of "the morning star" is the planet Venus, because the meaning of "the morning star" has the same referent, their meanings are different, and this explains why "Venus is the morning star" is informative and "Venus is Venus" is not.

(e) Russell's solution to the puzzle is based on his theory of descriptions. Russell held that definite descriptions are not genuinely referring expressions, as are logically proper names, and that sentences containing them are logically equivalent to complex general statements containing existential and universal quantifiers. On this view, the sentence "Venus is the morning star" is logically equivalent to the complex of statements:

(i) There is a morning star,
(ii) There is at most one morning star, and
(iii) If anything is a morning star, then it is Venus."

Thus, "Venus is the morning star" is informative because it is equivalent to a complex statement that contains information about the morning star and its relation to Venus. In contrast, according to an early view of Russell (one in which ordinary proper names function logically as genuine names rather than as concealed descriptions), the sentence "Venus is Venus" says only that Venus is identical to itself. However, for Frege every referring expression, whether a proper name or a description, has both a meaning and a referent; whereas for Russell, proper names have referents but no meanings. Consequently, within a Russellian semantics the connection between language and the world via proper names is direct, whereas for Frege it is indirect—taking place through the intermediation of the meaning of the name. But the question remains, what is the implication of the doctrines of identity and Synonymity on meaning and translation?

The Nature of Meaning and Issue the of Translation

To be clear, there is need to translate from one natural language to another, even into many ones—for spread of ideas and information. But could this translation be done and original meaning still retained? This question is relevant in that it recognizes the fact that culture is various and so is language. Thus, any translation of linguistic form would have several psychological and aesthetic implications on

the original theme, goal and meaning. How? First, consider the cacophony (word sound) of words: it must change as it translates; second, the rhythm (correspondence of a sequence of sound) and rhyme (resemblance of initial consonants) are altered in translation; and third, and more importantly, the meaning and connotation of words is often distorted through translation; the new language could be stricter or broader (this could be worse concerning works of art, with the issue of *form.* Translation is a process which involves the transference of meaning [say a piece of drama, opera, or poem] from one language ((the source language, say, English) to another (the target language, say, Etsako) (Izibili, 2002, 32). The issues concern the following.

1. *Words considered outside their essential meanings.* The effectiveness of words also depends on their:
   (a) *Sound* (which considers word-cacophony—some words sound heavier, more forceful or persuasive, and passionate than other similar ones;
   (b) *Rhythm* (refers to a sequence of corresponding/coherent word-sound produces a peculiar rhythm which itself is a unique sequential order, sound or form); and
   (c) *Rhyme* (the successive arrangement of sounds and unique rhythm produces a rhyme). All these three attributes are possibly lost, distorted or exaggerated in translation;

2. *Words and their essential meanings.* Words are culture dependent; certain words or their direct equivalent may not be existent in other language, leaving the room for approximation—which may be broader or stricter. Take the term *ada* for instance. Among the Yoruba, it means "cutlass", but means "first daughter" among the *Igbo* both of Nigeria. Even within a specific language, idioms and other unique expressions may be difficult to understand. However, precision of meaning is lost in translation.

3. *Word connotation.* Language is cultural; therefore, the emotional attachment to language is contagious—which defines the seriousness attached to and the efficacy of the words. While the denotation of a term may be objective and definite, its connotation (largely subjective) may not. Word connotation is lost in translation.

On the Principle of Indeterminacy of Translation

Broadly speaking, Quine's thesis sought to *extensionalize* the properties that populated the *Principia*. Generally speaking Quine thought that *intensional* definitions, and likewise "meanings" were vague, *mentalistic* entities out of touch with the concrete particulars that comprise extensional definitions. Quine introduces indeterminacy thesis as a theory that there is equivocation of meaning, translation and interpretation. This equivocation is seen in the analogy of a linquist who learns another language. There is indeterminacy inherent in the use of language as a means of communication. This raises the question on the status of language, in the first place. Quine's task in translation and meaning is to examine how much of language we can understand by studying it as an instrument used for responding to stimulation, a prime example of which is a flash of light zapping the retina. It may then be asked: how does Quine's task affect meaning, the analytic-synthetic distinction and Synonymity, all of which are important concepts in language? The outcome is that meaning in language as related to intension becomes irrelevant. Quine sees his task as to consider how much of language can be made sense of in terms of its stimulus conditions, and what scope this leaves for empirically unconditioned variations in one's conceptual scheme.

Quine's contention is that language is studied as a relationship between stimulation and behavior response, then by assenting or dissenting to that stimulation it may become clear how we may make sense of our linguistic system and whatever significance it may become clear how we may make use of our linguistic system and whatever significance it may hold. For Quine language is described as the complex of present dispositions to verbal behavior. The issue here is to explain human behavior (Quine calls it verbal behavior) by its currently observable correlation with stimulation. This means that language should be understood as disposition to stimulus response. This enquiry is an attempt to study the words and utterances of a speaker based on his/her dispositions to respond to eternal stimulations alone. This study will include the understanding of the set of stimulations that will elicit the disposition either to assent or dissent in the speaker. If we study the words and sentences of a language based on the dispositions to respond to verbal stimulations alone, the question is: what are the consequences of this model for language and the nature of words and utterances in general? Quine argues that by studying these dispositions we would

understand whether our language is determinate or indeterminate, from this nature of the study of language, what is the kind of meaning that words can have? Again what scope does it leave for the distinction between statements that are necessary and statements which are contingent?

Moreover, when we use words or language as a social instrument to respond to the world, it is important to examine what status meaning takes in such a process. Quine says in Pursuit of Truth that "the meaning of a sentence of one language is what it shares in its translations with another language…." Then to determine the meaning of words and sentences in one language, it becomes pertinent to determine what it shares with other languages by its translations. This assumption is what led to Quine's enterprise of radical translation. In this enquiry of radical translation, Quine imagines a linguist who is to translate an alien language into his or her own native language without the help of a native informant. The only data that the linguist has to rely upon to get the translation scheme of the native are the native utterances and their attendant observable behaviour. This is just because the linguist has no other means of translating the language of the native. A linguist scheme is formulated prior to its use as a response to the situation. It may also be said that the linguistic scheme is formed just as we are responding to the situation. Therefore, the linguist is expected to formulate a translation manual to be used in his inquiry.

One of Quine's objectives is to show that the meaning that words and sentences take does not go beyond their relationship with verbal or non-verbal stimulation. Quine's research therefore attempts to show that if language can be sufficiently explained by its relationship with natural disposition to stimulation, then it would become sufficient to argue that any theory or concept that places any different interpretation of meaning onto words and sentences becomes incorrect. This means that if some key concepts in language such as meaning, analytical, synonymy, sematic rule etc., are to convey any meaning at all they are to convey stimulus meaning. To form his translation manual, the linguist starts his enterprise by noting how the native uses his words in response to present stimulation. For example, the native utters "Gavagai" translates to his own sentence, 'Rabbit.' However, since the native might use a different sentence at the sight of a rabbit which might translate to 'animal; 'white; or 'rabbit; the linguist has to find out

when the native wishes to assent to the sentence 'Rabbit' at the sight of a rabbit and not at the sight of an animal or a white object. Then at the sight of a rabbit, the linguist has to utter the word 'Gavagai' and study the native's assenting or dissenting response. But to achieve this feat, he has to be able to translate the native's 'Yes' and 'No'. However, Quine's translator will leave some important aspects of language—speaking out of the enquiry here. There are some culturally coded gestures which usually accompany either 'Yes' or 'No'. Different gestures are employed for different contexts. It then becomes an issue how Quine's translator will translate these elements of body language. The linguist learns the native equivalence of 'yes' and 'no' by watching the native's response to the sentence 'Gavagai' that follows the physical stimulation accompanying the appearance of a rabbit. If he elicits 'evet' in so many instances of the sight of a rabbit, then 'evet' is taken to be equivalent to 'yes' while 'yok' is found to be the equivalent of 'no'. for further clarity, questions are asked to make sure that the native's 'yes' and 'no' are adequately mastered. For Quine, the linguist uses this method to develop the working manual with which to penetrate the heart of the native's language for instance, the linguist can nbow translate the native's sentence "Gavagai' as 'Rabbit', "there is a rabbit"' parts of rabbit," or "tracks". He can also translate his 'yes' and 'no' with this development, Quine recasts meaning in terms off stimulation. The affirmative stimulus meaning of sentence such as 'Gavagai' for a given speaker is defined as the class of all the stimulations that would prompt his assent to it. Conversely the class of all stimulations that would prompt dissent for a given speaker is defined as the negative stimulus meaning of a sentence. An example of a negative stimulus meaning is the case in which the native would dissent to the stimulation of a hedgehog because it is not a rabbit, and he is being asked about rabbits. Therefore, the stimulus meaning of a sentence for an individual sums up his disposition to assent to or dissent from the sentence in response to present stimulation.

Occasion, Standing, and Observation Sentences Given Quine's stimulus theory, various kinds of sentences depend on their relationship with the disposition of the subject to respond to the conditioning stimulation. These sentences are classified as occasional, standing or observation. An occasion sentence, for example, is one in which the subject uses his disposition to assent or dissent, given the current stimulation. The scope of time within which what is referred to as the current

stimulation is determined is the modulus. The modulus sets spacio-temporal limits to the present stimulation. The sentence 'see a rabbit' is uttered at the sight of a rabbit. When the rabbit disappears, the sentence becomes 'we saw a rabbit'. The interval of the time when the spectators undergo the present stimulation of a rabbit is referred to as the modulus. An occasion sentence is different from the other kinds of sentences because its stimulus meaning is solely dependent on the present stimulation within the modulus. This means that the stimulation that elicits assent during certain modulus may elicit dissent at another. In this case, minimally worded sentences such as 'Red' 'Gavagai', '*It hurts*; or *it is raining*; etc., are all occasion sentences existing within a particular modulus. However, for standing sentences, the eliciting stimulation has a longer span. The subject has the tendency of repeating his earlier response, given the same stimulation. Hence it is possible for subjects to span multiple moduli. For instance, the subject's assent to the sentence 'The weather is hot' has a longer modulus than to the sentence of 'Gavagai.' Here the sentence, 'The weather is hot' is a standing sentence. There is also a daily assent to the verbal stimulation of a sentence such as 'It is 1:00pm., for standing sentences, their stimulation may keep the response unchanged over a considerably longer time. Sentences with short moduli are referred to as occasion sentences, while those that span longer moduli are called standing sentences. In the case, it is the modulus that distinguishes occasion sentences from standing sentences. In addition, there are also observation sentences. An observation sentence is one that keeps its stimulus meaning unchanged, given some other collateral information. Examples of such sentences are 'No bachelor is married,; and 'No child is an adult.' Observational sentences as the examples might show may have their site in either a belief or system of mores in the sense that the foundation of the acceptability of language, strictly speaking may be said to be conventional. This fact in turn may explain the relationship of observational sentences that wear their meaning on their sleeves. An observation sentence is a sentence to which all the speakers of a given language have the disposition to assent, given the same conditioning stimulation and in spite of any other contrary stimulation. For a sentence to be referred to as observation sentence, it has to satisfy two criteria. The first is generally acceptability: the sentence must command an outright assent or dissent by all speakers. The second condition is inter-subjectivity. This means that all speakers must have the same disposition about the sentence. Quine argues that observation sentences can be translated by the

linguist based on the criteria identified. Quine notes as well that the truth functions such as negation, logical conjunction and alternation can be translated by the field linguist from the native language to his home language.

Ontological Relativity This is one of the major philosophical bases for indeterminacy between/among different languages, societies, cultures, and, by its consequences, it applies even between/individuals within the same society and same culture. The linguist who learns a new language has a different background from that of the native. The way he views reality is not the same with that of the native. In fact, there is varying ontological commitment. Reference, meaning translation and even interpretation are not the same. Similarity or Synonymity is not sameness even. Consequently, Quine's argument leads to ontological relativity; because reference is relative to a coordinate system–or a translation scheme–and the coordinate system in provided by the background language and this differs from one language to another. The relativistic thesis Quine holds is that we cannot fully interpret a theory from one language to another unless the reference of the objects described in that theory is fixed upon the reference of these objects are fixed by our own theory. Also translating a theory is doubly relative from, and is relative to the manual of translation arbitrary selected leading to indeterminacy of translation, to translate that theory into ours, or another language. So translation in this sense is doubly relative. But if Searle is right in saying that Quine's thesis of indeterminacy of translation and inscrutability of reference is based on Quine's behaviorist's assumption, then if behaviorism is refuted, as Searle argued by *reductio ad absurdum*, the thesis of ontological relativity fails too. For what Quine holds as ontological relativity is supported by two theses of inscrutability and indeterminacy, and if these two theses e supported by behaviorism assumption, and the result is refutation of that assumption, then Quine's ontological relativity fails too.

Identity and Synonymity: A Defense of Uniform Translation

Donald Davidson has rejected ontological relativity, and stands against the first-person case, but he kept inscrutability of reference and indeterminacy. For on his view the sematic feature of language is a public feature and the public feature is subject to indeterminacy, therefore there is no unique reference. Davidson then makes an appeal to the principal of charity and Tarski-style theory of truth to put

constraint on meaning. He holds that truth and logical form can be indeterminate; even if they are fixed, acceptable theories may still differ with respect to the reference they assign to the same words and phrases. On his view the only empirical evidence is the fact that speakers 'hold true' certain sentences in certain situations and that there are alternative ways of matching words with objects which are inconsistent, but can equally well explain why the speaker holds a sentence true. Searle's view is that both Quine's and Davidson's arguments converge and that both can be constructed as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the premises they involve, given that the two theses of inscrutability and indeterminacy are based on a behaviorist assumption. In order for Davidson to accept inscrutability or indeterminacy claims, he needs to hold, as Quine does, the identified assumption of behaviorism—or the added hidden premise to Quine's argument of indeterminacy.

Quine attempts to show the world that translation is indeterminate ends in absurdity because the attempt degenerates into arguing that meaning and the entire language itself are indeterminate. If an entire language is indeterminate, then all Quine's write –ups become suspicious, necessarily and by definition, as they are linguistic in nature. Again, if the entire language is indeterminate and Quine is using indeterminate language to show this fact, his attempt becomes the apparent case of an absurdity. Quine is like a scientist on earth who invents an apparatus and argues with the prosthetic aid of the apparatus that the entire solar system, including its individual constituents, is faulty. Such a scientist should not be taken seriously, the reason being that if his discovery is true then his apparatus/prosthesis is itself a faulty one, being one part of the constituents of the faulty solar system. It follows that such an apparatus should be given up because it can only achieve very little if it can achieve anything at all. Such is the case regarding Quine's indeterminacy thesis: it is self-stultifying. An indeterminate linguistic tool cannot be used to declare language indeterminate. It then follows that language is not indeterminate as Quine has argued. Even supposing that the entire language is indeterminate, the same language cannot be used as the medium to show it. Such a medium should be sought elsewhere, and not in language.

This logical chain leads to the second issue. According to Alston (1964), indeterminacy of translation degenerates into a global indeterminacy of meaning.

This degeneration is so significant that Quine's argument leads to the conclusion that no one means anything determinate either by any of his terms or by any of his non-observation sentences and since the constitution of language is ultimately derivation from the speech activity of its users, it follows that no term or non-observation sentence in a language means anything determinate.

The Quine's contributions raise the pervasive issues with the aim of exposing the problems of language, translation and ultimately interpretation. The question persists now is/can language truly reveal the object as it is without imposing its categories on the subject, or, simply: is translation possible? The idea of identity ignites this question; the issues of Synonymity and indeterminacy exacerbate it. The final commitment of this work is to consider these worries on two levels of possibility (and an additional level blending those two as being both relativist and hermeneutical).

First, one must align with Frege (1970) concerning translation, that there exists a common sense of thought and inter-subjectivity of culture; with Petit and MacDonald (1981), that there is undeniable common practical activity as ground for rational assessment of rival cultural practices; as well as with Doyal and Rogers (1981) calls 'constitutive elements' highlighting that meaning is therefore dependent on some (relative) conceptual scheme. Similarly, But Oladipo (1995) believes that 'loose-translation' is possible—in capturing the essence of an idea in the source language. To achieve such, however, the following conditions apply. The translator, in order to be effective, must be

a. vast in both the source and target languages, though the idea of dynamics (where old terms take newer meanings and new terms emerge in a language) rules-out one's total competence in a language;
b. familiar with the framework of thought (register) underlining the usage of the expression(s) being translated; thus he can capture the subtleties involved in the discourse;
c. sensitive to the cultural peculiarities of both the source and target languages—this enables him to acquire both the repository (historical) and necessary attitudes;

d. conceptually self-aware and guard against uncritical or unreflective assimilation or imposition of ideas and beliefs (world-view) from the source into the target language.

Consequently, and although Wiredu (1980) argues that accurate translation is impossible because meanings are not entities that could lose their generality, however, translation could be defensible on two broad grounds.

(i) Within same language (intra-language) Translation of words and phrases is possible within a particular language since the language exist in some culture which stipulates their meaning. In this way, the idea of Synonymity resolves the conundrum of translation from within (intra-language) a particular language.

(ii) Between or among languages, *inter-language translation* is possible looking at the existence of a common human sense of thought amid the inter-subjectivity of all cultures—which was what facilitated Quine's translator, in the first place. This undeniable common practical activity is sufficient ground for rational assessment of rival cultural practices. This addresses the conundrum from without (inter-language).

Conclusion

Hence even though language is universal, it is culturally defined. The question persists now is/can language truly reveal the object as it is without imposing its categories on the subject, or, simply: is translation possible? The idea of identity ignites this question; the issues of Synonymity and indeterminacy exacerbate it. Accordingly, the central issue arising from the nature of language is the adequacy or the otherwise of the attempt to translate with exactitude of meaning from one language to another. All those themes and issues were espoused and their interconnectivity articulated and ratiocinated. Our attempt culminated in situating the possibility, reality and rationality of uniform translation of meaning, beyond the issues of identity and Synonymity, as against Quine's stance. While the idea of Synonymity resolves the conundrum of translation from within (intra-language) a particular language, the existence of a common sense of thought and inter-subjectivity of all cultures, and the undeniable common practical activity as ground for rational assessment of rival cultural practices address it from without

(inter-language)—even though both solutions appear relativist and hermeneutic. However, deficient, the two channels forecloses the paradox.

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