

Semantic Broadening and Its Implications for Meaning: The Case of English at the University of Venda in South Africa

Phyllis Kaburise* and Ernest Klu**

*Department of English, School of Human and Social Sciences, University of Venda,
Thohoyandou, 0950, Limpopo Province, South Africa*

*E-mail: *<Phyllis.kaburise@univen.ac.za>, **<Ernest.klu@univen.ac.za>*

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ABSTRACT Words have meaning which has been assigned to them by the users of the language. Meaning of words consists of a stable, core, inherent and objective denotative aspects plus any dynamic connotative flavours governed by factors such as geographical and cultural location, age, gender, education, socio-economic status, politics and others. These features allow for narrowing and broadening of the semantic value of words. However these attributes, should not negate the fact that for communication to occur or for commonality in interpretation of words, expressions and our intentions, there must be a core meaning impervious to innovative usage. Broadened or connotative-rich words and expressions have the potential to create misinterpretation in addition to localising ones utterances. This paper examines the notion of semantic broadening at the University of Venda in relation to selected words and expressions used locally and their impact on meaning creation.

INTRODUCTION

It is customary in linguistic philosophy and history to recognise three areas within language studies or semiotics. Montague (1968) provides a useful articulation of these divisions as, syntax, semantics and pragmatics - that may be explained roughly as - syntax is concerned solely with the relations between constituents and their positions; semantics with meaning of the constituents; and pragmatics with the relations among expressions, the objects to which they refer and the users or contexts of the use of the expressions. A discussion of meaning, therefore, within a linguistic context, usually examines meaning as communicated by the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic values of words and expressions. The focus of this paper is on the semantic value or meaning of words and expressions. The process of semantic transformation and their resultant change in the meaning of commonly used words and expressions makes for a fascinating area of study not only in language but also in areas such as socio-linguistics, lexicon acquisition in psycholinguistics, lexicography, cultural studies, New Englishes and others.

Meaning seems the most obvious feature of words and expressions, or more generally language, and yet meaning is quite complex to study because of its subjective nature. It is obvious because it is what we use language for: to com-

municate with one another, to convey 'what we mean' effectively. But the steps in understanding the meaning of something said to us are so nebulous and so difficult to categorise that we have little conscious feel for the principles and knowledge which underlie our meaning-creating ability.

The entry point for any discussion of meaning is at the word level. Words have meaning. This seems a simple enough or straightforward assertion. However, words are not 'objects' that have properties of their own in the same way that concrete objects do. The meaning of a word is simply projected onto it by the custodians of the language, in their roles as speakers and hearers, writers and readers. We cannot assume that there is any God-given meaningful connection between a word in a language and an object in the world. It cannot be the case that we know the meaning of the word *chair*, for example, because this label has some natural connection to the object we are sitting on. Instead a more reasonable approach would lead us to see the word *chair* as a term which is arbitrary (that is, has no natural connection to the object), but which is conventionally used by English speakers when they wish to refer to that type of object that we sit on (Yule 2000: 91).

This assertion by Yule (2000), a rephrasing of Plato's debate on 'the real' and 'the really real' is in line with the notion that the meaning of a word is only joined to the word in the mind of

their users. Martin (1994: 20) quotes Aristotle's (*erpretatione* 16) as saying, "Spoken words are the symbols of mental experiences" and then *De Int* Locke (1690: bk. 2, chapter 3) as noting that "Words in their primary or immediate Signification, stand for nothing, but the Ideals in the mind of him who uses them". Meaningful communication occurs between participants, because there is, at least, some inter-subjective agreement as to what a particular word means, in a particular context. If one adopts a broad notion of meaning, it follows that words or even sentences, considered as abstract entities do not have meaning out of its context of use. It is communicative acts that have meaning because meaning only becomes attached to words or sentences through the actions of a speaker or hearer in particular linguistic and social situations (King et al. 2014).

Within any social context, certain issues have more prominence in people's lives than others and this is reflected in the nature of their language. Every few years, people and societies change the focus of the lives. For example, pre-independence struggles in countries are usually marked by certain genres in literature and music. Hence pre-democracy period in South Africa gave rise to protest literature and songs and the slave trade era in West Africa and America gave rise to the soul - stirring lyrics of the negro-spirituals. Pragmatic theories postulate that the context (defined in its broadest manner) is essential to the creation of meaningful linguistic utterances. In other words, one's communication competence is shown by one's ability to interact relevantly with one's current environment - physical, social, psychological and linguistic.

Language is a representation of a person and the social situations prevailing at any time. A person's mental, physical and psychological frame of mind is reflected in the words and expressions she chooses to use to interact with society. Language is a physical manifestation of a person's total being including their social inheritance. Therefore, people's overall condition will be reflected in items they choose to surround themselves with, the people they interact with and the way they express themselves. Language is dynamic and flexible and if any means of communication wants to stay that way and not become a dead language, it must accommodate changes that occur in people and their sit-

uations. There is little dissent that language is user-created and it acquires its identity from its users and not vice versa. This is the central premise for the examination of the utterances discussed in this paper.

Aim

The investigation was to ascertain whether semantic changes in selected words and expressions have the potential to impact on meaning-creation.

Background

Second language speakers of any language, including South African users, usually express themselves in a way which reflects their total linguistic richness. Such expressions, if analysed multi-dimensionally, provide valuable clues to the thought processes of the learners, the intricacies of the spoken and written versions of the learners' previous languages, and the unique nature of the second language. A natural quest for knowledge, inter-dependence of international economies and ease in mobility have seen societies becoming multilingual and affecting or being affected by every communication event they interact with. Users of a language leave their idiosyncratic mark on any language in their attempt to customise it to their unique environment or incorporate their individual extra connotative meaning. Although it is an accepted fact that words are in constant transformation arising from life's vagaries, all such flexibility is subject to the maintenance of communication or similar interpretation of messages by interlocutors.

The need to effectively communicate is a must for users of a language, even L2 speakers. Hence when a particular linguistic group has individualistic utterances it merits attention in relationship to meaning creation. It is not uncommon to hear some utterances in South Africa which needs analyses in terms of language concepts like features of communication, New Englishes, semantic transformation, pragmatic competence and others (Kachru 1982; Speakes 2014). It is within this context that a semantic analysis was undertaken of selected commonly heard words and expressions in relation to their meaning potential.

Theoretical Framework

Semantics, the second category in the three-part division of language is usually limited to the study of the meaning of linguistic expressions (as opposed to, for example, their sound, spelling and use). Generally, semantics is the study of meaning and linguistic semantics is the study of meaning as expressed by words, phrases and sentences in conjunction with their syntactic arrangement. It is more usual within linguistics to interpret semantics quite narrowly, as concerning the study of those aspects of meaning encoded in linguistic expressions that are independent of their use on particular occasions by particular individuals within a particular speech community. In other words, semantics is the study of meaning abstracted away from those aspects that are derived from the intentions of speakers, their psychological states and the socio-cultural aspects of the context in which the utterance was made.

In her book on semantics, Kempson (1988: 139, 2003) sums up one of the main assumptions about the meaning of natural/ordinary language: that a complete account of sentence meaning is given by recursively specifying the truth conditions of the sentences in the language or, “semantics = truth conditions”. Kempson elaborates that on this truth-conditional view of semantics, the central property of natural languages is that we humans use language to communicate propositions: information about the world around us. A specification of the propositional content of a sentence is a specification of the minimal set of truth conditions under which the particular proposition would be true. So on the view crudely expressed by the equation, semantics = truth conditions, it is assumed that the semantic content is exhausted by determining its propositional content. Kempson concludes this section by saying that it is uncontroversial that the meaning of a sentence is made up of the meaning of the words which it contains and their syntactic arrangement in that sentence. Accordingly, the semantic component of a grammar is, in this view, assumed to be a formal algorithm which assigns propositional contents to a sentence on the basis of the meaning of the expressions it contains and the syntactic configuration.

Hopper and Traugott (1993: 69) write in the same vein that semantics is primarily concerned with meanings that are relatively stable out of

context, typically arbitrary and analyzable in terms of the logical conditions under which they would be true.

Truth-conditional semantics is better understood if one realises that it was a reaction to the logical positivism of Russell’s era (1905). Logical positivism is a philosophical system which maintains that the only meaningful statements are those that are analytical or can be tested empirically. Logical positivism therefore was principally concerned with the properties of language the truth or falsity of which can be established, hence the term ‘truth-conditional semantics’. Truth-conditional semantics (also known as conventional or conceptual or literal meaning of utterances) therefore covers those basic, essential components of meaning which are conveyed by the literal use of a word or sentence without the benefit of context (Yule 2000). Truth-conditional semantics is usually contrasted to the more ‘flexible’ meaning of utterances as used in specific speech settings, or within pragmatic domains. Van Dijk (1976: 69, 2001) captures this distinction, in this quotation:

Taking semantics, firstly in its usual linguistic sense, a semantic theory is to explicate the “meaning” of phrases sentences and texts e.g. in terms of semantic representation or in terms of semantic “interpretations” of lexico-syntactic sentence structure. Such semantics is different from a semantics trying to account for the meaning assigned to expressions in individual communication by speaker and hearer (pragmatics), if these assigned “meanings” do not have some equivalence relation with the “general” meanings of expressions in the language, but are based on ad hoc features of situations.

Although truth-conditional semantics has some obvious logic, it does have some application flaws. The major criticism is that such a theory must be restricted to statements since it is these that have the property to be true or false. And since not all utterances are used to make statements, other forms, such as imperatives, interrogatives, sentences containing deictic expressions and performatives cannot be accounted for. Kempson (1979) also takes readers through possible answers to this problem. In the end she admits that the best solution is to acknowledge these flaws, not to discard the theory totally, while conceptualising a more embracing one (see also Hanks 2011).

One such embracing theory of language meaning Kempson (1979: 46) discusses is one that extends logical positivism or truth-conditional semantics. Such a theory will be "one in which the meaning of sentences (*words*) includes reference to the beliefs of the speakers". Once meaning is 'personalised' in the sense that the language users' beliefs or intentions (and by logical extension, the context) are factored into an analysis of meaning, we move into examining the dynamic nature of language particularly the ever changing nature of words and expressions.

Meaning change is an ongoing process and follows well defined patterns. Changes are of two broad categories: generalization (also known as extension or broadening, is the employing of a word or phrase in more diverse contexts than its historical application) and specialization (the narrowing or the restricting of the context of use of a word). During these stages of change the word may also undergo pejoration (a process by which a word's meaning worsens or degenerates resulting in less favourable denotative and connotative representation) and amelioration (where a word's meaning is elevated and improved hence conjuring something more favourable and respectable than originally). Changes of this nature may affect the communication value of words and expressions.

The communication process involves a complex verbal behaviour where the participants have to accommodate a variety of interconnected factors before meaning can be generated. The principal meaning-generating tool of humans is their linguistic system or language. This linguistic system can be exploited for communication if the speakers succeed in making hearers aware of something (thoughts, opinions, facts, emotions and so on) which they were not aware of previously. Successful communication depends not only on the receivers' reception of the message and their appreciation of the fact that it is intended for them, but also upon hearers' recognising the senders' communicative intent and making an appropriate behavioural or linguistic response to it. However, for one to assume that if one can speak, then one can communicate is a fallacy. Communication is a behaviour dependent on multiple variables, such as the nature of the language used, the context of the utterance, as well as the function intended by the producer. Consideration of these variables is in addition to observance of general conversation max-

ims which govern natural language interactions (Grice 1975).

The next component in meaning creation, context, serves as the 'binding agent' or the channel through which the language of an utterance creates the intention (function) of an utterance. The study of the context of an utterance is based on the notion that utterances perform different functions or meaning because of their background and circumstance. Pragmaticians note that words are to some extent to be "explained" by the context in which they are designed to be or actually have been spoken in a linguistic interchange. The context of an utterance has to be factored into communication activities as theorists recognise that speaker intent, sentence meaning and hearer interpretation are not always the same. Often we utter sentences that mean more than or are even sometimes apparently different from what we actually say, as in innuendo or sarcastic and ironical comments. Yet listeners understand the additional or altered meaning and communication is achieved. Communication does take place in such situations because meaning is not created solely by linguistic codes, but also by the commonality of the context of the interlocutors.

Context in this study stands for the commonality of belief, location, societal norms, heritage and language usage which are shared by the interlocutors in a language event. Language, as previously outlined is a 'living tool' which its speakers utilised and customise to their own peculiar conditions. Speakers of a language, be it the first or subsequent ones can be said to be 'owners' of the language at that particular moment. But context latitude should not be divorced from the fact that, like any 'tool' certain steps have to be followed if the tool is to operate at its maximum and produce the desired results. The acceptance of regional diversity, with its resultant New Englishes, have not negated the need for a certain basic sameness of meaning before communication can take place. New Englishes is not a free for all but an acceptance that language carries culture, identity and societal orientation, hence certain idiosyncratic language usage is an attempt to use the language as a tool and not for the language to force its users into a communication style which is alien to them. In that regard, idiomatic expressions, direct translation, code mixing and switching, interlanguage, survival communication strategies all seem to

have a place in communication. The English language is surviving and expanding as aL2 or foreign language in diverse contexts because of globalisation in its broadest sense; users' L1 is not seen as a hindrance or source of interference in the acquisition of subsequent languages. Multiple language possessors are seen as having a certain linguistic analytical ability which enables a certain flexibility and adventurousness to be visible in their language behaviour. Second language users bring a certain 'freshness' and excitement to their utterance in their attempt to 'tame' the language for their communication to be accepted in the context in which they find themselves.

METHODOLOGY

This was a study undertaken in the qualitative research paradigm which has roots in cultural anthropology. It is a research tradition in social science that fundamentally depends on watching people in their own environment, and for the purpose of this study, in their linguistic environment. The focus here is on the participants' perceptions and experiences and the way they make sense of their lives. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998) and Bulmer (1993), qualitative research can be multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive naturalistic approach to the subject matter. Qualitative research starts by acknowledging that there is a range of ways of creating meaning from, or interpreting the different phenomena of the world. The qualitative paradigm focuses on discovering the different types of meaning by entering the participants' world and attempts to follow their thought processes so that the data that finally emerges is seen primarily in the participants' language and from their social viewpoint.

An area concerned with the linguistic manifestation of social differences is the study of inter-ethnic communication. Work done by researchers such as Tannen (1989) has shown that the most subtle linguistic cues, ranging from the selection of lexical items, construction of utterances, placement of tonal stress to the arrangement of an argument can systematically differ among speakers of the same language depending not only on the degree of exposure but also stylistic preferences. Studies in cross-cultural politeness strategies demonstrate that the most subtle differences in the prosodic or pragmatic

features of an utterance are enough to isolate categories of users of a language.

Using random selection, three words (*beast, boring and love*) and two expressions (*of course and I can be able*) whose semantic properties have undergone some alteration were analysed to determine the nature of the change and its effect on their meaning-creating potential. Each of the selected words and expressions were componentially analysed to isolate their syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features, pre- and post-transformation, and to examine the intentions controlling these amendments.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

The word 'beast' is not a commonly used word out of idiomatic expressions where it is usually in reference to some obnoxious behaviour as in 'He is a real beast; he is capable of anything'. When used with its denotative meaning, its semantic properties include the fact that a beast is a wild animal; there is minimum interaction between it and humans unless under specialised situations (zoos, game parks, etc.); inspires fear; is usually not killed for consumption; it is not a usual occurrence for beasts to be killed. In some communities, in South Africa, the social significance of events like funerals and weddings is portrayed by the opulence of the catering service and the number of *beasts slaughtered*. Therefore it is not uncommon to hear, '*Two beasts were slaughtered for the wedding / funeral*'. In this context 'beast' is synonymous to 'cows' or 'oxen'. In this usage all the semantic properties around the wildness of beasts have been eliminated hence equating a beast to an ordinary domestic animal used for consumption but strangely in using the verb 'slaughtered' as against 'killed' an element of the wildness has been maintained implying some undesirability about the action. Informal discussions about this phrase have elicited the explanation that an occasion assumes some worth if the organisers can claim that beasts were slaughtered which is not captured by the more tame and mundane expression, '*Two cows were killed for the wedding / funeral*'. The process by which this usage has developed can be said to be the broadening or the generalisation of a specialised word. This is because 'beast' is still the words used to classify animals like tigers, bears, leopards, etc. although I am told that the pre-

ferred nomenclature would be 'wild animals'. Hence one would talk of 'wild animals' in the forest and not 'beasts'. In this process also the additional semantic feature that beasts inspire fear seems to have been lost.

Another word which seems to have undergone alteration in its properties is the word 'boring' as used in an exchange of this nature: *Speaker A: Did you find your missing money? Speaker B: I did not. It is so boring*'. There would be nothing unusual or noteworthy in Speaker B's response if the missing money was earmarked for entertainment purposes hence its disappearance would cause some boredom. The word 'boring' seems to have undergone a semantic broadening where it is now descriptive of any unpleasant experience or anything disappointing to the speaker. On University of Venda campus, these may include diverse situations, such as, a disagreement with a friend, low marks in an assignment, inability to obtain semester marks from the administrator, unhappiness with the conditions in the hostel, a robbery on campus, being forced to walk in the dark to and from the library and so on. In these examples, other terms like, *worried, exasperated, concerned* and much more, could have been used to better capture the emotions of Speaker B. The statement as it stands does not provide an accurate picture of the emotional state of Speaker B. Although the expansion of the use of the word 'boring' has been explained as 'semantic broadening' that may not be strictly accurate. In semantic broadening part of the original meaning of the word is maintained but it is quite difficult to refer to some of the above situations as partially 'not interesting'. Alternatively, one can say a total 'semantic shift' has taken place, but here also there is a problem, as a word which has undergone a semantic shift contains no aspect of the original meaning. Therefore a componential analysis of the word 'boring' shows its inappropriateness in the above utterance. The word 'boring' is overused in some South African contexts particularly among the younger generation and this has reduced its semantic value, in much the same way as words and expressions like, 'at this point in time', 'comrade', 'at the end of the day' 'point of departure' and others have been semantically devalued. In most cases, these words and phrases can be replaced by more meaningful substitutes. In spite of the linguistic laziness that this practice portrays, such usage, does seem to have

a 'bonding' effect on the speakers or confirms their 'membership' in a specific linguistic group.

Another word of interest is the use of 'love'. As a verb we use it in sentences like 'I love fish and chips', 'I love reading' where the objects of the love are inanimate or 'I love my sister / mother / grandparents/ my friend Taki/' where although the object of love is animate, the love is natural, platonic and expected. Here the meaning is basically 'extreme fondness / liking' of an item or person. However, if one were to move out of this circle of relations, friends and family and use 'love' to refer to a relationship existing between two people then the semantic value of the word broadens to include 'romantic attachment' to the object of the love. It is therefore very disconcerting if somebody who does not fall in the group of family, relation or close friend says 'I love you' to mean 'I am extreme fond of you' or 'I like you a lot / very much'. Words and their grammatical arrangements facilitate communication and if an occasion arises where a hearer needs to pause and decipher what a speaker has just said, meaning can be in jeopardy. Sentences are semantically unacceptable if they are ambiguous, contradictory, anomalous, vague as in such situations the spontaneity and clarity of communication is not achieved. The word 'love' does not always mean 'to like at a greater level' or 'greater intensity' when used in certain contexts or within certain relationships. The polisemous nature of words, the connotations surrounding words and expressions forces some vigilance in usage. A more non-local construction could be '*I really like you a lot*' or '*I am very fond of you*'. Componential analysis of the word 'love' in this context shows a narrowing of the properties to exclude the sexual attachment, focusing on the platonic aspect. Another explanation may be the fact that a continuum does not exist between the words '*love - hate*' in an L2 speakers first language hence subtleties in the emotions surround the word 'love' cannot be captured therefore L2 speakers non-appreciation of them. Semantic broadening, naturally, is all about such transformations but such creativity must denote same message for the interlocutors.

The expression '*of course*' is another expression worthy of comment. Let's look at this exchange: A lecturer not sure whether a student had attended her lecture asked: *Lecturer: Were you in class today? Student: Of course*. This

interaction recalls the extensive work done in cross-cultural pragmatics by writers, such as Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and Thomas (2000) where particular attention has been paid to politeness or deference across languages and cultures. Thomas (1986) gives examples of pragmatically inappropriate transfer of structures across cultures. She cites the example of *konesno* a Russian word meaning 'of course' which is often used instead of *da* (yes) to convey an enthusiastic affirmative in English like 'yes, indeed' or 'yes, certainly'. Often, however, 'of course' implies that the speaker has asked something which is self-evident so that if the utterance is a 'genuine' question, it can sound, at best, peremptory and at worst, insulting. One may therefore conclude that the response 'of course', in this utterance, should be read as 'Yes indeed I was' or 'I certainly was in class' or words to that effect, and not the usual hearer's interpretation of 'What a stupid question' or 'Isn't it obvious?' Studies in pragmatics or conversation principles (Grice 1975; McGlone 2012) indicate that communication occurs more often than miscommunication. That is because the cooperative maxims allow interlocutors to make a lot of mental adjustment to statements should they initially pose some challenges. Hearers, on being faced with an unusual utterance are more likely to pause, isolate the cause of the unease, find alternate meanings aided by factors like structural arrangements of the codes, context (time, place and occasion), previous statement, status of the interlocutors, in their attempt to create meaning. Armed with all this background information, a hearer very rarely is unable to interpret the message or intention of an utterance.

Language is a social tool and our inherent desire to be part of a social group, to have identity and not to make the other person lose face mean that interlocutors put in extra effort during the communication process. Most people are very reluctant to say 'I don't understand you'; they would mentally rephrase the utterance and when in extreme doubt use face-saving expressions like, 'Do you mean...' or 'Do I understand you to say...' Such linguistic behaviour assists one to make the necessary adjustment in the semantic value of the expression under discussion. Interestingly, 'of course' can also be seen in a positive light when used as an affirmation or a logical conclusion of a point, in other words, when not used as a response to a

direct question. An assumption can therefore be made that this is the usage that the student intended.

On numerous occasions, one hears the expression '*I can be able to come later*' as against '*I can come later* or '*I am able to come later*'. The expression, 'I can be able..' one would recognize as consisting of two modal auxiliary verbs 'can' and 'be able' both expressing aspects of 'ability', 'possibility', 'permission' and 'willingness'. Like most terms, in analyzing complex verbal phrases modality has been used in various senses in sentence construction. At its most general, modality may be defined as the manner in which the meaning of a clause is qualified so as to reflect the speaker's judgment of the likelihood of the proposition it expresses being true (Quirk et al. 1994). Modals are a problematic area of English grammar as their use varies and since they are often associated with pragmatic use of the language, individualism also comes into play. Modals indicate aspects of language and therefore are not usually time and tense markers. In pragmatic usage, the past form of modals (could, would, should, etc.) tend to imply tentativeness or politeness, '*Could I borrow your pen for a second?*' '*Would you be able to give me a ride to the shops this afternoon?*' and not past actions. Individual preferences come into play here as aspects do not always have to be expressed by modals, therefore one can say '*It is possible for me to come today*' as against '*I can come today*'. The use of modals is therefore not seen as essential in the verbal phrase. Modals poses additional challenges to L2 users as language aspects may not be differentiated in their L1, as for example, in some Ghanaian languages. And in some cases aspects like *possibility* and *permission* are not part of the verbal class but such notions are expressed by lexical items like, '*tomorrow*' to indicate '*possibility*', '*please*' to indicate a request for '*permission*'. The researchers assumption is that the use of the double modals is for emphasis as in the use of 'of course'. It is not quite clear the source of the expression, whether mother-tongue interference or transfer or semantic narrowing of the individual modals but whatever the logic behind this often-heard expression, the researchers always tell their students that one ability-expression modal is quite adequate to get the message across.

CONCLUSION

The above discussions show the flexibility that is allowed with speech events. Communication is the articulating of one's intentions in such a manner that confusion is eliminated allowing the hearer to interpret one's intentions. The interpretation process is assisted by factors such as shared linguistic, social and cultural backgrounds as well as interlocutors' willingness to cooperate during any speech event. Although the utterances analysed are particular to a linguistic group, they do not offer room for misinterpretation ensuring that communication does take place but they have the danger of localising one's utterances and not making it accessible to a wider language community. Of course, such utterances are completely in line with the concept of New Englishes' proponents who believe that a language is the property of its users.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Language, as noted earlier, is the property of its users and there is need for language to transform in accordance with different developmental issues, around the world, that affect these users. Language needs to create new words or broaden the old ones to capture, to express innovations occurring, globally. Transformations in the structure, semantic properties of expressions and norms of conversations are collectively agreed upon by both the native and non-native users of the language. To ensure broader communication and reduce localisation of one's language, commonality in understanding of words and expressions must be observed. This means that any extreme individualism in language which might result from either broadening or narrowing of language's semantic properties should be avoided. Even for advanced second language users, to be understood, there is a need for constant checking with established support resources like dictionaries, thesauruses, common usage reference materials to reduce instances of inaccuracy, literal translations and non-differentiation of the platforms of formal and informal usage. It is imperative for L2 users to recognize that, although

English is, relatively, quite accommodating of linguistic innovation, it is not a *laissez-faire* situation and rules of usage around words and expressions must be observed.

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