Chapter II

Language: Meaning and Definition

2.1. Cognitive and Emotive Meaning

Cognitive Meanings: are terms or phrases in a language that conveys **information**.

Emotive Meanings: are terms or phrases in a language that expresses or evokes **feelings**.

Look at the meanings of the following three meanings of **Abortion**:

Abortion is an inhuman act of murdering innocent citizens which in most cases results in the death of the mother.

Since this passage contains terms like inhuman, murdering, and innocent, it evokes **negative feeling** and therefore is **Emotive.**

Abortion is a safe and systematic relief of women from unwanted pregnancy that might lead the woman to certain economic, medical, social or psychological complications.

Since this passage contains terms like safe and systematic relief it evokes **positive feeling** towards abortion and therefore is **Emotive.**

Abortion is a medical procedure in which conception or pregnancy is discontinued for certain reason.

Since this definition simply gives neutral information about abortion its meaning is **Cognitive**.

2.2 The Intension and Extension of Terms

Terms: A term is any word or arrangements of words that may serve as the s**ubject** of a statement. Terms consists of proper names, common names and descriptive phrases.

Example:

Minilik, dog, the first university of Ethiopia, those who are poor, etc

Intentional meaning: consists of qualities or attributes that the term **connotes**. (Connotation)

It implies sense or intention.

Example:

The connotation of the term cat consists of the attributes of being furry or having four legs, of moving in certain way, of emitting certain sounds, and so on.

Extensional Meaning: consists of members of the class that the term **denotes**. (Denotation)

Example:

The denotation of the term cat consists of the cats themselves - all the cats in the universe.

N.B. The meaning of connotation and denotation in logic is different from their use in grammar.

Conventional connotation is connotation of a term consists of the properties or attributes that the term commonly connotes to the members of the community who speaks the language in question. This helps to avoid confusion and decide on the appropriate connotation of a term.

Empty Extension is a form of extensional meaning (denotation) when the term (class) has **no** members.

This might happen for entities that have **perished (disappeared)** with the passage of time.

Example:

Unicorn, elf, dinosaur, current king of Ethiopia etc

Intension **determines** extension means connotation serves as the criterion for deciding what extension consists of.

Orders of Intension and Extension

1. Increasing Intension: when each term in the series (except the first) connotes **more attributes** (become **more specific**) than the one preceding it.

Example:

Living things, animals, insects, bee

2. Decreasing Intension: when each term in the series (except the first) connotes **less attributes** (become **more general**) than the one preceding it.

Example:

bee, insects, animals, Living things

3. Increasing extension: when each term in the series (except the first)

denotes a class having **more members** than the one preceding it.

Example:

bee, insects, animals, Living things

4. Decreasing Extension: when each term in the series (except the first) denotes a class having **fewer members** than the one preceding it.

Example:

Living things, animals, insects, bee

N.B Increasing Intension and **Decreasing Extension** on the one hand, **Decreasing Intension** and **Increasing extension,** on the other hand are the same.

2.3 Definitions and their Purposes

Pilosophers have conflicting views on the purpose of definition.

Example:

Plato- to explicate the meaning of certain eternal essence or forms

Modern logicians: to explicate the meaning of words.

Definition, for modern logicians, is a group of words that assign meaning for some word or group of words.

Definition consists of two parts:

1. **Definiendum :** the word or group of words that is supposed to be defined.
2. **Definiens:** the word or group of words that does the defining.

Definiens is not the meaning of the definiendum, but a symbol.

Other Philosophers: argue that since definition result in clarification of language, they provide a means for the discovery of deeper philosophical truths.

Pragmatic Approach: tries to explicate the purpose of definitions by discussing the various **kinds** of definitions.

1. Stipulative Definitions:

It assigns meaning for the **first** time.

It involves **coining** a new word or giving a **new meaning** for an old word.

Example: tigon and liger,አማርኛ

"**Tigon**" means an animal which is hybrid from male tiger and female lion.

We use stipulative definition when **new phenomena** occur or to set up secret **code**.
Due to its arbitrary nature, there can **not** be such a thing as true or false for Stipulative definition.

2. Lexical Definitions:

It is used to report the meaning that a word **already has** in a language.
They are **dictionary** definitions
They may be true or false
They have a purpose of eliminating **ambiguity**.
Example:
"Fiduciary" means a having to do with a confidence or trust; a person who holds something in trust.
An **Ambiguous word:** when the word can be interpreted as having two or more clearly distinct meanings in a given context.
Example: sound, right, bank,race, light

3. Précising Definitions
It gives precise definition of a word for specific situation/ discipline.
It is a definition which aims at reducing the **vagueness** of a word.
A **Vague word:** when there are borderline cases such that it is impossibele to tell whether the word applies to them or not.
Example: love, happiness, peace rich, fresh, poor, normal, blind, member, contract, equality, teacher, force, criminal, moment of death etc.
Example:
"Blind" means, for federal income tax purposes, either the inability to see better than 20/200 in the better eye with glasses or having a field of vision
Unlike Stipulative definition, a great deal of care must be taken in assigning meaning in Précising definition.

4. Theoretical Definitions

It provides a theoretical picture or characterization of the entity or entities denoted by definiendum.
Example: **scientific** words such as: light, force, mass, acceleration and **philosophical** words: good, mind God, change, idea, cause.
Example:
"**Sound**" means a compression wave in air or some other elastic medium

having a frequency ranging (for humans) from 20 to 20,000 vibrations per second.
Like stipulative definitions theoretical definitions are neither true nor false.

5. Persuasive Definitions

The purpose of this definition is to engender (create) a **favorable** or **unfavorable** attitude toward what is denoted by the definiendum.
It involves **emotionally charged** or **value laden** meaning to a word.
Example:
"Capitalism means" the economic system in which humanity is scarified to the wanton quest for money, and mutual understanding and respect are replaced by alienation, greed and selfishness.

2.4 Definitional Techniques
Two kinds:
A. An Extensional (Denotative) Definition

It is the one that assigns a meaning to a term **by indicating the members** of the class that the definiendum denotes.
They are chiefly used for producing **lexical** and **stipulative** definitions.
Three kinds of denotations:

1. Demonstrative (ostensive)
By **pointing** to one or all of the members of that class
Example:
"**Board"** means this or this and this and this (as you point it)

2. Enumerative Definitions
It assigns a meaning to a term by partially or completely **naming the members** of the **class** the term denotes.
Example:
"Actor" means a person such as Fikadu Teklemariam, Mulualem, Serawit, or Tilahun

3. Definition by subclass
It assigns a meaning to a term by partially or completely **naming subclasses** of the class denoted by the term.
Example: "Philosophy" means metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics, or aesthetics.

B. Intentional (connotative) Definitions

It is one that assigns meaning to a word by **indicating the qualities** or **attributes** that the word connotes. Four kinds:

1. Synonymous definition

It is one which the definiens is a **single word** that connotes the same attributes as the definirndum.

Example:

"Physician" means doctor

2. Etymological Definition

It assigns a meaning to a word by disclosing the word's **ancestry** in both in its own language and other language.

Example:

Logic, Philosophy, Orthodox, ሥነምግባር

"Orthodox" is originated from two Greek term *ortho*-straight or correct and *doxa*-belief or opinion.

3. Operational definition

It assigns a meaning to a word by specifying certain **experimental procedures** that determine whether or not the word applies to a certain thing.

Example:

A solution is acid if and only if litmus paper turns red when dipped in to it.

4. Definition by Genus and Difference

It is assigning a meaning to a term by identifying a **genus** term and one or more **difference**.

Example:

Ice means frozen water

(Species) (Difference) (Genus)

Criteria for Lexical Definitions

Rule 1. It should conform to the standards of **proper grammar**.

Example:

"cardiac" is like something to do with the heart. (improper grammar)

Rule 2. It should convey the **essential meaning** of the word being defined.

Example:
"Computer" is a machine which is capable of storing a great deal of information. (Not essential)

Rule 3. It should be neither too **broad** nor too **narrow**.

Example:
"Bird" means a warm blooded animal. (Broad)
"**Bird**" means any awarm blooded animal, feathered animal that can fly. (Narrow)

Rule 4.They should **not** be **circular**.

Example:
"Silence" means the state of being silent.

Rule 5. It should **not** be **negative** when it can be affirmative.

Example:
"Concord" means the absence of discord. (negative)

Rule 6. It should not be expressed in **figurative, obscure, vague,** or **ambiguous** languages.

Examples:
"**Architecture**" means frozen music. (Figurative)
"**Bunny**" means a mammalian of the family Leporidae of the order Lagomorpha whose young are born furless and blind. (Obscure)
"**Democracy**" means a kind of government where the people are in control.(vague)
"Triangle" means a figure composed of three straight lines in which all the angles are equal to 180˚. (ambigious)

Rule 7. It should avoid **affective** terminology.

Example:
"Government" means the **cruel** and **irresponsible** executive committee of the exploitation class (Incorrect)

Rule 8. It should indicate the context to which the definiens pertains. (Whenever the definiendum

is a word that means different things
in different contexts, a reference to
the context is important.)

Example:
"Strike" means (in baseball) a pitch
at which a batter swings and misses.