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Center for Open Access in Science (COAS)

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www.centerprode.com

office@centerprode.com

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Negotiating Course Design in the Mexican Educational System Using Complex Thought: A Case Study in Central Mexico

Troy Crawford, Isaac Frausto Hernández & Irasema Mora-Pablo
University of Guanajuato, Guanajuato, MEXICO
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Language Department

Michael Witten
Meritorious Autonomous University of Puebla, Puebla, MEXICO
Faculty of Languages, Language Department

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Abstract

The University of Guanajuato joined in a national research project that aims to redesign the type of classroom guides teachers use to plan their coursework. The project places its theoretical framework on the philosophical position of Edgar Morin's complex thought. Through redesign of the classroom guide for a course of curriculum design in an MA in Applied Linguistics at the University of Guanajuato a collaborative ethnography was developed to look at how the interwoven steps of complex thought could be inserted into the course framework in order to see if there was an impact from the student's perspective of their learning.

Keywords: Bloom's Taxonomy, complex thought, case study, course design.

1. Introduction

This collaborative case study was carried out as the result of participation in a weeklong workshop in Puebla, in conjunction with a larger network of researchers under the direction of the *Normal School* (teacher education school) system. The workshop consisted in the construction of a course plan designed implementing Edgar Morin's philosophical ideology of complex thought and Bloom's Taxonomy in the sense of building into the course a series of steps that combine the concept of moving from recognition to application, using the course evaluation as evidence.

2. The RECREA research project

The University of Guanajuato began this research by considering the renovation of teaching practices that link meaningful learning processes to significant scenarios where their graduates fulfill the educational and social demands of Mexico, linked to a national project under the direction the *normal* (teacher education) school system. The aim of the current project is to incorporate research groups composed of university and *normal* school members in order to link classroom research with improvements in the learning processes of the students and to gain a

better understanding of teachers' work in the classroom. In this sense, an emergent problem could be conceptualized as the development of teaching practices, which focuses on practical and theoretical problem-solving activities within the classroom environment.

- Conceptualizing the students within the framework of complex thinking will provide them with the opportunity to approach and solve problems within their educational reality from an integral and holistic perspective.
- Regarding classroom practices, it seems possible that taking the small incremental steps articulated in terms of durability, public awareness and training, post classroom success may be more viable.
- The participant acknowledges having a sense of understanding of what the different elements to consider for teaching are.
- This participant notes how having a perspective on the view of the world seems to be the initial point of departure to promote change.

Based on the above, some Higher Education Institutions have generated projects for the Network of Communities for the Renewal of Teaching-Learning in Higher Education (*Red de Comunidades para la Renovación de la Enseñanza-Aprendizaje en Educación Superior*, RECREA) which emerged in 2017, as an initiative of the Department of Higher Education at the Secretary of Public Education, coordinated by the Department of Higher Education for Professionals of Education and the General Office of Higher University Education (Jiménez Lomeli, 2018). To this end, the Universities of Guanajuato and Puebla have joined in the effort by carrying out a small research project that looks at the interaction of the students and teachers in a curriculum design course, employing the underlying theory of Edgar Morin on complex thought into the course plan of action in the terms that have been laid out by the RECREA project, where we have inserted a series of classroom steps that focus on taking the student from the stage of recognition to application through guided discussion and focused evaluation tasks.

3. Complex thought

The idea of complex thought, coined by Edgar Morin (2011), is considered as a strong component of the theoretical basis for the project as well as classroom action research that leads to a plan for monitoring and evaluating the teaching-learning process and the results. This approach allowed the researchers to analyze the learning process by combining Bloom's Taxonomy with the ideological focus of complex thought. In this case, the student is conceptualized as an integral human being and the course syllabus is built around the student in the form of incremental learning steps. The idea being that both teacher and students deconstruct the learning concepts and practices and then rebuild them together; thus, allowing the student to gain agency in the learning process. Furthermore, it also allows the students to personalize the classroom processes. In turn, the student has a higher probability of applying the conceptual information acquired into actual personal, professional practice.

Conceptualizing the students within the framework of complex thinking will provide them with the opportunity to approach and solve problems within their educational reality from an integral and holistic perspective. In this sense, it is fundamental to define the concept of complex thinking, which is seen as complexity in terms of the relationship with the whole, in contrast to the paradigm of simplicity in relation to the obedience of the natural order and the relation of complex thought with interdisciplinarity in opposition to an objective world reality (Morin 1995). Therefore, when talking about complex thinking, it is important to differentiate between "complex" and "complicated", which are often taken as synonyms. But complexity is not a complication, since the second concept is considered as a simple dimension while complexity

implies a number of elements, which as Morin, Roger and Domingo (2002) mention is “a framework of events, actions, interactions, feedback, determinations, hazards, which constitute our phenomenal world” (p. 37). Therefore, when complexity is retaken, it would have to refer to a series of conceptions, relationships and interdependencies obtained from a series of knowledge. Regarding classroom practices, it seems possible that taking the small incremental steps articulated in terms of durability, public awareness and training, post classroom success may be more viable. For the RECREA project, complex thought takes up knowledge as something tangled, in disorder, and ambiguous. In the classroom, the teacher is not the one who delivers knowledge as something already finished, fragmented and simplified, but the student is the one who, starting from uncertainty and imprecision, articulates, understands and develops his own critique through a strategic interaction. This is to be combined with Bloom’s Taxonomy.

This particular Taxonomy is founded on principles that are broken into a set of three hierarchical models used to classify educational learning objectives into levels of complexity and specificity. The three lists cover the learning objectives in cognitive, affective and sensory domains. As Krathwohl (2002) states:

Bloom saw the original Taxonomy as more than a measurement tool. He believed it could serve as

- a common language about learning goals to facilitate communication across persons, subject matter, and grade levels;
- a basis for determining for a particular course or curriculum the specific the meaning of broad educational goals, such as those found in the currently prevalent national, state, and local standards in Mexico;
- a means for determining the congruence of educational objectives, activities and assessments in a unit, course, or curriculum; and
- a panorama of the range of educational possibilities against which the limited breadth and depth of any particular educational course or curriculum could be contrasted (p. 212).

In the case of this project, we have used his verb sets as reference points in the sense that we are employing the four dimensions of knowledge that is referred to in his Taxonomy table (Krathwohl, 2002). However, even though we use this framework to illustrate how the student is to be guided through each phase of the class in the course design, the underlying ideology that is being inserted is in relation to the concept of complex thought in that we are taking the learner from a simple recognition stage to a complex stage of application in the real world. In this specific class (explained in further detail below), we are establishing the ability to analyze and construct curriculum of a program.

4. The research site

The research site is a class in the MA program in Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching in the University of Guanajuato, which is taught on Fridays and Saturdays in the Language Department. The course selected for the case study was *Diseño de Programas de Segunda Lengua* (Second Language Course Design) as it was thought to be a suitable selection for piloting the course design proposed by the RECREA Project.

5. Data collection and analysis issues

Since the purpose of this investigation is to examine the perceptions of the students in depth, case study was deemed to be an appropriate methodological choice because they tend to be intensive in the process of collecting the research data via a number of sources (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Creswell, 2005). In case studies, the research data can be collected by using different data

collection techniques such as documents, archival data, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and artifacts (Stake, 2000; Yin, 1998). Furthermore, Yin (1998) mentions that when the research scope focuses on answering how and why questions, a case study approach should be considered, and this study looks for possible answers to these types of questions in the form of a qualitative instrumental case study. An instrumental case study is defined as a case that often is interested in context and activities. Stake (1995) defines a case study as instrumental “if a particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization. The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else” (p. 136). In this case study our focus is on the course syllabus more than the students. The research data for the case was collected through a weekly journal where the nine participants kept a log of their perceptions of what they had learned after each three-hour class over a period of 12 weeks. Simultaneously, the two teacher/researchers maintained a field journal with ethnographic notes of the course, following the suggestions outlined by Deggs and Hernandez (2018) to serve as a basis for comparing student and teacher perceptions as well as and to provide additional data on the case in under investigation. Pseudonyms were used to protect identity. Finally, the complete data set was analyzed by all four researchers.

6. Data discussion

6.1 *Fostering reflection*

The class initially aimed to bring about reflection amongst the participants with the purpose of having them restructure their beliefs about their past teaching experiences, consider a present perspective about how they go about in their current practices, and reconsider this constructed perspective for future teaching practices.

A question arose among a number of participants as they noticed the vast amount of reflection that the class entailed. This is summarized by the following student:

This class provides a lot of reflection but confusion as well. I don't know what to believe anymore! Was my teaching practice wrong all this time? (Kari 8)

The participant indicates the importance of reflection throughout the class. Yet, she is aware of the possible issues that this may entail. Similarly, a participant found herself in an “eye-opening” situation in regard to change and how to go about it, if possible. She recalls:

In this session it was analyzed to what extent we possess “freedom to change the system”. The teacher asked us a question that was eye-opening to me: “Do you want to be part of the problem?” Certainly, this question made me feel uncomfortable with the way I have been teaching. Although, I'm still struggling to understand what the teacher means by challenging the system since my context doesn't allow people to come up with new ideas or teachers are restricted to follow what it is written on the syllabus. Still, I want to explore in which ways I could contribute to become a teacher that understands and analyzes the content that authorities want us to teach. Probably, by understanding it I may implement some changes. (Lulu 2)

This participant found herself in a situation of discomfort concerning her past teaching experiences. She may have been focused on past experiences that were not as fruitful in which she felt constrained due to impositions from stakeholders. Nonetheless, she aims to better learn about alternatives to implement changes in her teaching practices. A similar case is as follows. The participant analyzes the following:

It was addressed about the elements that are involved inside the classroom such as: the task, unit, book, course, syllabus and curriculum. These factors are familiar for me; however, in my professional and personal life, I did not reflect on what was

their real meaning... I just considered the lesson plan, and that was everything, and the main reason was because the school provided me the curriculum, the syllabus and the book. Thus, I just accomplished my activities but I did not reflect on the relation among these factors. I feel confused because I wonder about the next question: What did I do in my first years as teacher? (Debbie 10)

The participant acknowledges having a sense of understanding of what the different elements to consider for teaching are. Nonetheless, she seems to not have reflected on any possible connections between one or another as it was all provided for her. This leads to questioning what she was doing in her past experiences.

The previous participants acknowledged the role of reflection and the constant recall of their past teaching experiences to better grasp the content being presented in class. This led the participants to begin questioning their previous teaching performance to notice any positive and negative experiences with the aim to begin noticing any challenges that drove to inconsistencies throughout their teaching practice.

6.2 Presenting an array of teaching options

The content of the class shifted towards presenting a number of options for the students to cope with according to their beliefs and practices as English teachers. A number of points of view allowed for the participants to better view their own practices concerning their educational philosophies. A participant presents the following:

I think it is good for us to know about different philosophies in order to compare them, and to see what we can take from them to improve our classes. This class helped me a lot to see that even for the simplest topic, I struggle with according to the way I had to teach it when I am not involved in a certain type of philosophy. Moreover, by the end of the class I understood how I could teach different topics by using other philosophies, or to implement some strategies of those philosophies into my lesson plan. (Vicky 3)

The participant recalls the value of being aware of the different educational philosophies. She noticed the struggle of teaching a grammatical point under a given philosophy, and the array of possibilities that emerge according to the rest of the options that the other philosophies have to offer. Similarly, another participant was also able to grasp the importance of considering the educational philosophies for distinct teaching practices. She mentions the following:

The review of philosophies made me reflect on the test we took last week. According to my results, I considered the best ideology for me... However, I need to rethink if I was consistent with my beliefs and the practice... I used to teach by observing my students and reflect on their needs. In conclusion, this class made me consider aspects in my teaching practice that I had not reflected on before. I particularly enjoyed the link we have made with history because it helps explain the origin and change of concepts. (Vanessa 3)

The participant acknowledges how her beliefs on the more suitable educational philosophy do not coincide with that of the last place where she worked. She is now more aware of how her past teaching practices inclined towards a particular philosophy. Becoming aware of the history of these philosophies and where they originate from helps her find a connection between her practice and what the alternative philosophies have to offer. Likewise, another participant recalled the value of being presented with the alternative perspectives concerning the various philosophy types. She highlights the following:

... I believe it is important to have established our personal philosophy because this facilitates our teaching practice. I consider it takes time to develop our teaching

practice, as well as our thoughts and beliefs on education. Our personal philosophy helps us to develop our role as teacher but also to set our goals and objectives. Having established our personal philosophy, it is easier to develop our role but also to know the limit of the institutions' role. Sometimes as teachers we must follow the rules of the school or headmaster, even when we do not agree. So what happens when we are forced to do something that we do not like? (Debbie 3)

This participant recalls how arriving to a constructed philosophy may take time and how this determines how one goes about developing as a teacher. This, in turn, allows for one to know what can be done and improved as a teacher, while at the same time knowing how much control the institution may have over its teachers. An interesting question arises concerning what can be done when forced to cope with norms that go against an established philosophy. This, in turn, linked to the concept of freedom that the teachers have and where the source of change may lay within. A student discusses the following:

...the analyzed philosophies made me think about the changes in the society, and how it is necessary to have a perspective that allows to explain the world. We also discussed that it is possible to make small changes in our context, but also how every decision we make has responsibilities. Regarding the philosophy and the approach, we follow to teach, there is not a wrong or adequate way to do it, but to be consistent and coherent on what we do is necessary. (Vanessa 2)

This participant notes how having a perspective on the view of the world seems to be the initial point of departure to promote change. She acknowledges that there may not be a right or wrong way to do it, as long as this perspective is coherent with what is being done. She further argues for going beyond what is expected by taking additional action. She notes:

I consider that we are not limited, if we "think outside the box". Small changes can be done. However, the most important step is to take the responsibility of those changes. Everything that is modified produces certain nuisance. It seems that not many people like changes because they are uncomfortable. In conclusion, there is always a possibility of doing "something more". (Vanessa 3)

Once aware of the need to take action and be coherent with one's own teaching beliefs and the actual practice, the participant argues for change. Though change might not lead to a positive outcome all the time, she calls for action in going beyond what is expected as teachers. Change may be seen as vital, yet some participants were not fully aware of their hidden plans within the classroom. The following section discusses how becoming cognizant of their hidden aims for class interferes in how the participants may seem to go about in their teaching practice.

6.3 Uncovering the unseen aims

Detecting the implicit aims that the participants may have had concerning their teaching practice was of crucial importance for them to be more knowledgeable of what and why they do when developing as English teachers. This seems to be of interest for the participants once they became aware of their hidden curriculum and what this may entail. Initial questions arose concerning the impact of having a sense of their hidden curriculum. A participant mentions the following:

An important point to consider is if my hidden curriculum is useful or not to my students or their needs. Also, these questions arise: How do I know if my hidden curriculum is good or bad for my teaching practice? How did my hidden curriculum change over the time? (Debbie 4)

Raising awareness of the hidden curriculum, the prior example denotes how participants began to reflect on their past experiences and how their unseen plan may have had an impact on their teaching. A participant further elaborates on the role of the hidden curriculum:

... previous experiences as students shape your teaching practice as teacher. This means that as a teacher, I do not want to repeat the things I consider were not useful in my learning process... I realize that these issues are part of me, of my personality, of my way of thinking. Even when I had been teaching for a couple of years, I have not noticed how these aspects affect positively or negatively on my teaching practice. In others words, I was not completely aware of my hidden curriculum. (Debbie 4)

The participants were aware of the issues faced when developing as English teachers though they may not have been aware of what this referred to. Another participant also became cognizant of the importance of being aware of her hidden intentions throughout her teaching. She follows:

A concept that was not new for me but did not understand was the hidden curriculum. In this class, I discovered that I follow and implement, either consciously or unconsciously, certain patterns with my students. The reason behind this is that I probably think that these will help them to become better students or somehow will contribute to accomplish their objectives. However, how do I know what they need? Or why am I assuming that they need guidance specifically from me? Probably I am also assuming that since I'm the teacher I know best; therefore, I should provide everything. (Linda 5)

The participant became acquainted with the unseen aims presented along her teaching practice. In her case, these hidden aims are with the purpose to help her students improve. However, she questions how she may better grasp a sense of what her students need and to what degree they might need guidance from her. As the teacher, she assumes her students expect her to provide the majority of the input and guidance. A participant also related to the previous by highlighting the importance of her hidden curriculum. She comments on the following:

It was also very interesting to find out that we all implement a hidden curriculum either conscious or unconsciously. I had not realized that I include some organizational skills within the language content I teach, perhaps because I consider it is something they lack and would be a useful tool for their learning process. But now I think that this practice is based on my assumption of how they learn just because it is the way I learned. Maybe my students don't even need it, and I am including it within the curriculum of my class. This, once again, reinforces the role of a teacher in a learner's learning process as well as how influential we could be in it. (Penelope 5)

Like the afore-mentioned participant, this previous participant also recognizes the relevance of her hidden curriculum. She acknowledges having not being aware of it, yet she aimed to incorporate elements according to the possible needs of the students based on her assumptions of what she can do to reinforce their learning process.

Further elaborating on the role of the hidden curriculum, another participant became aware of the effects that bringing in additional and hidden elements into the class may have. He notes the following:

... I could go in-depth to what I represent as a teacher and to consider how I can reflect my personal interests to my students. Depicting these characteristics is not wrong, but it is essential to be accurate or aware of when this happens (Sandy 5)

The participant acknowledges that this notion of a hidden curriculum is not necessarily a negative one. Furthermore, this participant highlights the significance of how accurate this unseen plan is for the students when it is applied at the correct time. Another participant was also able to relate her hidden curriculum with the authority that she may hold in class. This tendency may lead to a more democratic class in which her students are more active participants. She holds:

In this session I learned that there is not a complete authoritarian, nor a democratic class and democracy should be conceived as negotiation rather than pleasing everybody. To me, it would be ideal to perform democratic lessons, but I question myself how to achieve this without being afraid of losing control of my own class. Without a doubt, performing a democratic class involves changing my own beliefs as well as noticing when I am implementing elements from my hidden curriculum (Linda 11)

The participant is aware of the challenge of modifying her hidden curriculum. She inclines toward a position in which her students become active participants in making the decisions in class. However, this may be a restrictive stance as she may lose authority and face in the process.

The participants became intrigued by the notion of the hidden curriculum and how their unseen objectives for their students play a significant role in how they go about in their teaching. This impacts them as teachers in the sense that they may or may not be aware of these ulterior motives that they do not make visible for their students, though they may become prominent at some point further on in their education.

6.4 *The role and degree of power*

A topic of interest for the participants to restructure their thinking processes relates to hegemony and the distribution of power that may be given at a certain school or institute. The concept was first introduced concerning other elements and how power imposition from various sources is present to varying degrees. A participant recalled the issue of broader social control over English teachers and how we may be excepting of being given attention. She expresses the following:

When we were talking about the authority inside classroom and democracy the professor made us realize that English teachers are conditioned to do what they are asked to do, so we are always working as other people ask us to do even if we are not happy with that. The professor made us realize that when this happens, again we can see hegemony controlling us again, in every step that we teachers make. I was reflecting on this and the only thing that came up to my mind is that teachers are the only ones who know what happens inside the classrooms, so our voices should be listened to in order to have better job environments and proper designed classes for our students. The concern here is that we are so used to not to being heard that even when something happens inside the classroom that is not appropriate, we tend to be silent and not do anything because we are used to not being heard. (Richelle 10)

The participant initially notices hegemony over English teachers in terms of the oppression that we may have within our field. She notices what position we have in the classroom as understanding what happens within the four walls, yet there are external sources that determine how the class goes about. However, hegemony was also viewed from the perspective of the teacher inside the classroom and how varying degrees of control may be fruitful to exploit. A participant mentions the following:

In this class, the teachers gave us the elements from which we can analyze a curriculum as well as a syllabus such as the role of students, metalinguistic elements or material design... these elements shed light on what we can approach to become critical teachers and try to explore areas from which we can adjust our practice and identify areas where we may be perpetuating hegemony. (Linda 4)

The participant became acquainted with different elements to consider when aiming to explore perspectives from which a teaching perspective may be modified. It is important to

highlight how these elements relate to a given power that becomes present and how this power may lead to broader control. Similarly, a participant further expressed how understanding himself as a teacher led to reconsidering his teaching practice in terms of how social power depicts the decisions to be taken. He expresses the following:

... I could analyze and try to understand how true I am as a teacher and how this is reflected in my teaching practice. Being aware of knowledge is relevant for us to improve our practices and consider what to do or not based on what is said by superiors for us to do. So, hegemony depicts substantial influence in our construction in social life, but also to raise awareness in the decisions we take and be responsible with them will allow us to avoid mistakes we might later do. (Sandy 4)

The participant was able to be cognizant of what having social control implies. This relates to not only having a sense of who he is as a teacher, but also how his conception of such is brought into his teaching practice to promote what he believes beyond what is imposed by higher stakeholders. This, in turn, is reflected on how the person wishes to mold his teaching practice.

Likewise, this understanding of hegemony was able to perpetuate within another participant in terms of having a deeper understanding of who she is as a teacher and once aware of the degree of control to be exploited within the classroom, use this in favor for a more positive experience when developing as a teacher. She mentions:

The concept of hegemony was mentioned. I believe that we are part of this system. Thus, it is important to know what we like, what we want, what we would change as teachers, and what kind of teachers we want to be. Once you identify the aspects mentioned before, you could be able to use hegemony positively in your classroom. (Debbie 8)

The participant acknowledges how social control is prominent in our society. Moreover, she believes that being more aware of who we are as teachers gives us broader advantages when aiming to promote control within our classrooms. The participant further elaborates on her perspective:

...as teachers we have certain power that could be used in a positive way; we can help and guide our students to be more critical about the things established in our society. If we as teachers start to do an internal change of our positions, who we are and the things we are able to do, the change in our society would be of real impact. (Debbie 7)

The participant once again calls for initial understanding of who we are as teachers to promote a social change within our teaching practices. These elements seem to go hand in hand, in which one may not perpetuate when lacking the other.

The participants were able to grasp the knowledge of having social control, its implications and how to go about using it to their advantage in the classroom. This linked to change and how they could be able to adjust their teaching based on firstly becoming more acquainted with who they are as teachers, to then have control of the varying degrees of power that they are able to use to their abilities based on what the institution may entail.

6.5 From thinking to action

There seems to be an overall positive effect in class in terms of complex thought and taking the students from more critical view of their teaching practice to proposed action based on the content covered throughout the course. A perspective from a participant consists of becoming aware of alternatives to view his teaching practice. Yet, he believes that there may be a possible existing gap between theory and practice. He considers the following:

We have lived diverse situations as English teachers, and now we are aware of the theory and ideologies of how the things are and how they “should be”. At this point, I would like to observe a kind of free experience for my classes. I see these new ideas and concepts in content classes where students are self-committed, but I would like to see them for language classes as well... I saw different critical functions of what we learned in theory, but there is still a wall to overcome that might take us to the praxis. (Guy 11)

The participant is mindful of the content covered in class, yet he views it as an “ideal” state. He seems to be open to trying out alternatives as a possible way to overcome that bridge between theory and practice. Another participant also acknowledged the importance of the content covered in class and expressed the following:

There’s a before and after of the way I understand and think about education, in general. I am aware of how the system works and mainly, my job and responsibilities in it. Yes, it will be hard to change it, but... I am in! (Penelope 12)

The participant recalled the importance of the content covered in class for her to be more conscious of how the education system functions and her role within it. She acknowledges the difficulty of promoting change when difficult situations arise or are imposed upon us, yet she is determined to do so. Similarly, a participant also became more cognizant of how she performs as a teacher. She mentions the following:

I think from now on, I have become more critical in terms of what I do in the class. Moreover, I have become more reflective regarding education in a generalized sense to my own universe, which is what happens in my classroom. (Vicky 11)

The participant also considered the importance of being aware of her own teaching practice. She admits to become keener to questioning what happens within her classroom as she develops as a teacher. Likewise, a participant also felt a positive sense towards better understanding herself as an English teacher and being true to her ideologies. She conveys the following:

I must say it was sort of liberating to admit and embrace the educational philosophy we follow. We are now capable of doing so. This, for me, means we can now differentiate among them and most of all that we are aware what each of them implies for our teaching and mainly for our students. What I recall is that there is no good or bad philosophy, what it is bad is for us not to be coherent and consistent in what we say or think we do and what we actually put into practice. (Penelope 9)

The participant seems better prepared to defend her position as an English practitioner. She became knowledgeable of the different options and grasped what seemed best for her. Nonetheless, she accepts the responsibility of performing as she thinks. A similar perspective was taken from a participant who views the relevance of the many aspects surrounding how he develops as a teacher. He considers the following:

After discussing how power is represented by different hidden features around the world, I realize that sometimes we as teachers are ghosts pretending to be doing something almost unreachable. In other cases, we are aware of this control or in the discrepancies that language entails, but we are not willing to do or foster for a change. We reproduce a series of systematic steps towards repetition, pretending we are doing something different. Therefore, the relevance of being congruent and consistent in our teaching practice is relevant. Moreover, understanding and trying to break these vicious circles where we are, should be our duty as part of the teaching society. I consider high relevance on how curricula are constructed and how we ignore some elements that are hidden in it. (Sandy 9)

The participant views teachers as invisible entities within the curriculum. He proposes his view on how English teachers argue for change when disguising teaching practices that may be

repetitive. The importance of breaking this cycle is presented to lead to positive change. Similarly, another participant acknowledges the significance of going a step further in one's teaching practice. She reflects on the following:

Today's question that I take for homework is: when are we going to create something new if we don't step outside the box? This is a triggering question that all teachers should be thinking about if we want to see an improvement in our students. Now I understand that when asked to challenge the system, it does not refer to doing whatever we think it is correct, but to understand educational philosophies, and question inconsistencies in educational policies or the syllabus we are following to be aware of what it is going on inside the institution and out of it.
(Linda 10)

The participant considers the cruciality of going beyond what is expected from the educational system we are in, and not only understanding what happens within our education setting, but outside of it as well in terms of educational beliefs and policies or norms we are to follow.

The participants seem to be more knowledgeable of different paths and the array of alternatives to develop as English teachers. Each alternative option entails a set of duties and responsibilities for the teacher and a way for the students to benefit from. This raises thought for action amongst the participants as they feel better equipped to promote changes within their teaching practices.

7. Conclusion

We can argue that knowledge was delivered as an array of options and the participants were able to grasp what seemed to fit according to their beliefs and ideologies and reconstruct the understandings that best suit each one of them. Gradually, uncertainty was set aside for the students to come to a more critical understanding of who they are as teachers and what they do and aim to do inside the classroom. Nevertheless, we cannot argue that this was the result of the curriculum design. It clearly played a role, but there are also other issues to consider like the teachers themselves and the students. In conclusion the implementation of complex thought in the course design was definitely an awareness raising activity for the teachers and it seems to have played a positive role in the development of the course. It would be appropriate to continue with the same process in more courses and continue tracking the process.

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The authors declare no competing interests.

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Syntactic Structure of Awgni Sentences Based on Form

Berhanu Asaye Agajie

*Injibara College of Teacher Education, ETHIOPIA
Department of Language*

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Abstract

The study attempted to assess syntactic structure of Awgni sentence based on form. Through purposive sampling, thirteen sentences were selected for analysis. Seven informants (three females and four males) were interviewed to crosscheck the relevance of the collected data. Results indicated that sentences in terms of their appearances, forming, constituents' grouping, or causal connection, the number and types of clause they hold were different. Every sentence structure shares syntactic representations that comprise Noun Phrases (NPs), Verb Phrases (VPs), Prepositional phrases (PPs), Adverbial Phrases (ADVPs) and Adjectival Phrases (APs). Sentences have both linear sequences of words; a hierarchical structure with phrases nested in phrases and resulted in dominance and precedence relationships. Finally, the study recommended a further research on some basic properties of Awgni syntax, grammatical functions and semantic roles.

Keywords: Awgni, representation, sentence, structure, syntactic.

1. Introduction

Awgni is the family of Southern Central Cushitic or Southern Agaw (Hetzron, 1966; Palmer, 1959) and as such, it belongs to the Cushitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic language subfamily. It is spoken in the Amhara Regional State, currently known as Awi Administrative Zone. The language can naturally be considered as free of the threat of endangerment. However, when conditions, like the speakers' attitude toward their language, the extensively increasing resettlement of non-Awgni speakers in the region, the multiply of commercial farms and urbanization are taken into account, it seems that the language is not reliably safe from the threat (Hetzron, 1969; Melakneh, 1991; Palmer, 1959; Tadesse, 1988). According to Hetzron (1966), due to Semitic substratum, though slowly, is steadily being superseded many by Amharic. Tadesse (1984) also explains that as there is high acculturation process between Awi and Amhara and as tribalism in Awi is slow; there is the probability of Awgni extinction soon. On the other hand, Tadesse Tamrat (1988) and Haileluel (1991) point out that Awgni is by no means an endangered language. Recently, the language is written and rendering a service as a medium of mother-tongue education. Yet, it exhibits little or no written literature. Hence, its heritable cultural legacies are mostly existed in the memories of tradition bearers (Teferi, 2000; Yaregal, 2007).

- Sentences in terms of their forms, forming, constituents' combination, or causal relationship, the number and types of clause they contain were different.
- Each sentence structure shares syntactic representations (Ss) that include Noun Phrases (NPs), Verb Phrases (VPs), Prepositional phrases (PPs), Adverbial Phrases (ADVPs), and Adjectival Phrases (APs).
- Sentences have both linear sequences of words; a hierarchical structure with phrases nested in phrases and resulted in dominance and precedence relationships.

1.1 *Research problem*

Different researchers (e.g. Haileluel, 1991; Hetzron, 1966; Palmer, 1959; Tadesse 1984; Yaregal, 2007) studied Awgni language. On the other hand, to the responsiveness of the researcher, none of these studies investigated syntactic representations found in Awgni structural based sentences. As a result, college students, teachers, researchers, and other Awgni language users face difficulties in the case of understanding lexical and phrasal categories, head, complement, adjunct, and specifier, syntactic relations and other sources of recursion structures within the sentence. They were incompetent to analyze syntactic structures found in Awgni sentences in a systematic and explicit ways. Therefore, the inspiration of this article is intend to fill the gap through analyzing syntactic structures found in Awgni sentences based on a form.

1.2 *Objective of the study*

The general objective of this article is to undertake the systematic examination of syntactic structures found in structural based Awgni sentence. Accordingly, the specific purposes of the projected study are:

- (1) To analyze syntactic representations found in Awgni sentences.
- (2) To examine syntactic relations found in Awgni sentence.

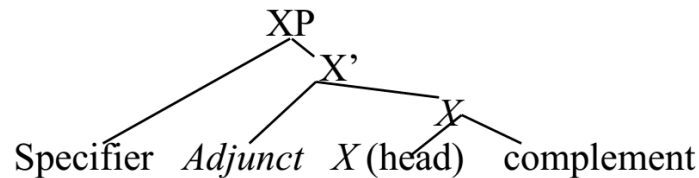
1.3 *Literature review*

Syntax is the study of the rules governing the way words are combined to form sentences. In other words, it studies the structure of sentences. Syntax is the study of the principles and process by which sentences were constructed in particular languages and concerned with the ways in which words combined to form phrases and sentences (Chomsky, 1966; Radford, 1997).

The most reliable criterion used in judging the lexical category of words is meaning, its syntactic function or distributional possibilities by taking account of behavior in sentence (Baye, 1986; Chomsky, 1957, 1965; Kim, 2007; Miller, 2002; O'Dwyer, 2000). Therefore, lexical categories found in Awgni language include Noun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, and Preposition. Phrases are generally constituents that are built up around a particular word. They are group of words that functions as a single unit in syntactic structure of sentence (Borsley, 1996). Phrases can be classified into Noun Phrase (NP), Verb Phrase (VP), Prepositional Phrase (PP), Adverbial Phrase (Adv P), and Adjectival Phrase (AP). The head of phrase can be modified by any construction or words. Accordingly, languages share certain structural similarities in X-Bar sentence structure formation (Carnie, 2002; Chomsky, 1970; Jackendoff, 1977; Jacobs, 1995; McCawley, 1988). Thus, Awgni like other languages shares certain universal phrasal categorical patterns to the way tree diagrams organized symbolically as: S (Sentence), NP (Noun Phrase), N'(recursive), VP (Verb Phrase), V'(recursive), PP

(Prepositional Phrase), AP (Adjective Phrase), N (Noun), V (Verb), P (Preposition), and A (Adjective) (Bach, 1974; Borsley, 1991; Burton, 1997; Radford, 1988).

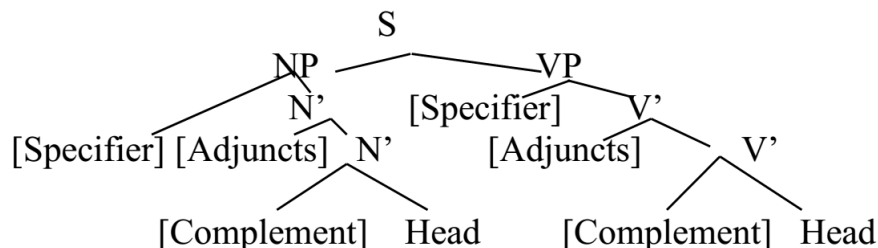
Sentences are the basic unit of syntactic analysis, which is easier to see the parts of (press) and subparts (parts of speech) of the sentence in a tree (Bornstein, 1977). Similarly, x-bar trees are easier to read and enabled to see at a glance the hierarchical structures of the given sentences (Finch, 1998). Indeed, many linguists (Carnies, 2001; Chomsky, 1970; Jackendoff, 1977; Radford, 1997) assume that all XPs, where XP stands for any of NP, PP, VP, or ADP, have three levels of structure. The basic three-level X-bar schema can be displayed as in:



SOV arrangement of Awgni and other syntactic patterns do not allow applying this X-bar convention as it is. Therefore, the subsequent symmetrical X -bar analysis was newly developed. In this way, the study formulates different sets of rules for different phrasal categories. X-bar analysis in Awgni sentence structure has been applied to NP, VP, AP, ADVP and PP. Accordingly, phrase structure rules are illustrated by the means of tree diagram or phrase markers, which show the structure of the sentence (Bornstein, 1977). Phrase structure rules interpreted as an instruction to rewrite or expand the symbol on the left of the arrows as the sequence on the right as in:

- S → NP, VP
- NP → (S'), (Spec), (NP), (pp), (Ad), N
- VP → (S'), (Spec), (PP), (NP), (Ad), V
- AP → (Spec), (PP), (NP), A
- PP → (S'), (PP), (VP), (NP), (AP), P
- ADV → (Spec), (PP), ADV

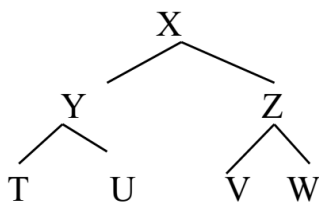
Recall that the researcher decided that N, V, A, P and ADV were heads of their phrases based on the evidence from headedness. In practice, Awgni is head-final language and its heads are located on the right of other phrasal material. Hence, the same set of rules will be applicable to all phrases thus leading to uniformity and computational efficiency in terms of efforts, time and space. Specifier, Adjusts and Complement positions in the subsequent tree are in brackets. This indicates that they are optional in x-bar tree. Every sentence structure must have obligatory heads.



In Awgni, the head of the phrases always occurs at the right edge of the constituent in noun, verb, adjective, adverb and postposition phrases. The position of constituency is the obligatory head of each phrase types come first, and then optional complements, adjuncts and specifier may structure respectively from right to left position. Complements are phrasal categories whose objective is to provide information concerning entities and locations. Heads and

complements are typically adjacent; in few occasions, a head verb might have two complements, adjuncts typically come after the sequence of head and complements. Adjuncts are constituents that tell us more about the how, when, where or why of the activity or situation expressed by the sentences they occur in. Adjuncts can be Verb Phrase, Adjective Phrase, Adverb Phrases, Prepositional Phrases, and Noun Phrases, independent clauses and small clauses. Most obviously, complement types structured in the tree include Noun Phrases, Adjective Phrases, and Prepositional Phrases (Chametzky, 1996).

The meaning of the given head can be more precise by specifier, and its appearance in phrase structures is not obligatory. Syntactically, it can mark a given phrase boundary and it occurs at the left side of the actual sentence tree structure. As a result, its position might be changed. Besides, the category of the specifier differs depending on the type of the head. It is, in fact, not so straightforward to find a case where all four terms head, complement, modifier and specifier syntactically filled. X-bar trees provide a precise way of defining syntactic relation. Relations between any given pair of nodes contained in the same p-marker are dominance and precedence (Bornstein, 1977; Carnie, 1995; Radford, 1981).



The relationships between X, Y and Z are the same, except that X dominates Y and Z, but it also dominates T, U, V and W. Thus, X exhaustively dominates a set of nodes (T, U, and V, W), provided it immediately dominates all the members of the set. To distinguish the dominance relation, X dominates all the nodes below it, but immediately dominates only Y and Z. Using family terminology, X is the mother of Y and Z, and, conversely, that Y and Z are the daughters of X. Moreover, Y and Z are sisters of each other. Corresponding to the terminology concerning dominance, T immediately precedes U, but only precedes V and W. Constituent Y is a constituent of X if and only if X dominates Y. Thus, in the above tree all of Y, Z, T, U, V and W are constituents of X. Nodes T and U make up the constituent Y, and that V and W make up the constituent Z. In the case of immediate constituents, Y is an immediate constituent of X if and only if X immediately dominates Y (Baltin & Anthony, 1989).

The sentence is grammatically the uppermost linguistic sequence made up of one independent or super ordinate clause with a subject and a predicate or two or more closely related clauses (Downing & Locke, 2006). Similarly, Finch (2005) recognized sentences as grammatically complete and semantically independent units of language capable of standing on their own. Complete sentences made up of essential grammatical element like the subject and finite verb not preceded by any word making it dependent on some other group of words (Finch, 2005; Millward, 1983; Nigel, 1990).

Thus, structural classification of sentence was determination of sentence types based on the grammatical construction of sentences in terms of their forms, forming, constituents' combination, or causal relationship, the number and types of classes they contain as being discussed in the next subsection.

Simple sentences have one independent clause with no subordinate clauses (Bolaji & Alabi, 1994; Demirezen, 1998; Jackson, 1982). Due to this, they have a single subject and predicate by telling only one obsession, though, and have merely one verb, and contain just an independent (main) clause (Aarts & Aarts, 1988). In the part of writing simple sentences were begun with a capital letter and ending by means of a period, through three dots, with a question mark, or an exclamation point (Baugh, 1993; Teschner & Evans, 2007).

The complete and educational explanations on compound sentences were sentences consisting of at least two clauses, each of which separated off into their own independent clauses and independent sentences (Teschner & Evans, 2007). These types of sentences were formed by joining or linking two or more basic or non-basic, simple sentences with the aid of coordinating conjunctions or coordinators like and, but, or depending on the association between the jointed or synchronized simple sentences (Aremo, 2004; Verspoor & Sauter, 2000). This linking could be achieved by a semi-colon; a semicolon followed by a connecting adverb; a coordinating conjunction often preceded by a comma; correlative conjunctions; tag questions; no conjunctions; and both coordinate conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs at the same time.

Complex sentences have the main clauses and two or more subordinate clauses formed through the process of subordination. The main clauses of the complex sentence were the major, super ordinate or independent clauses because they could stand on their own. The minor clauses introduced by subordinators like because, although, until, unless, etc. were the subordinate or dependent clauses because they cannot stand on their own to express a complete thought or ideas. The compound-complex sentences were a grouping of the compound and the complex sentence patterns (Finch, 2005).

2. Methodology

Descriptive research design was employed in this study. Through purposive sampling, thirteen sentences were selected. Based on the importance, the structure of sentence category, the layout, the length of data, types, meaning and structural simplicity as simple to display, easy to understand anticipated data were chosen. Seven informants (three females and four males) were interviewed to crosscheck the data about sentence types.

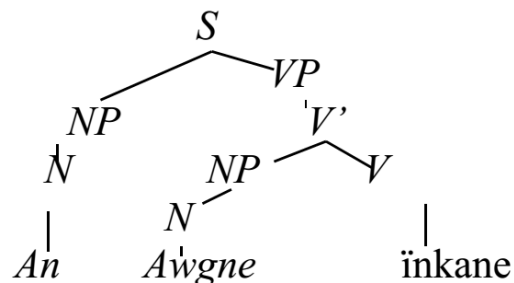
3. Results

The structural categorization of syntactic structure of simple, compound, compound-complex, and complex sentence found in Awgni was analyzed in succeeding sections.

3.1 Simple sentences

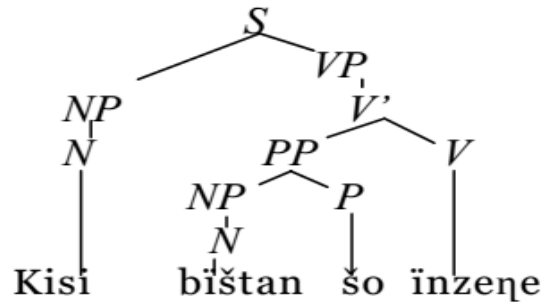
As a rule, the arrangement or sequences of sentence components in Awgni are subject, object, and verb. Thus, simple sentence in Awgni is a sentence that consists of just one independent clause. In this regard an independent clause can stand alone as a sentence. Parts of a simple sentence that contains subject and verb and constitute that complete thoughts were independent clause as in (1):

- (1) An Awgne ïnkane
 I Awgni like
 'I like Awgni'



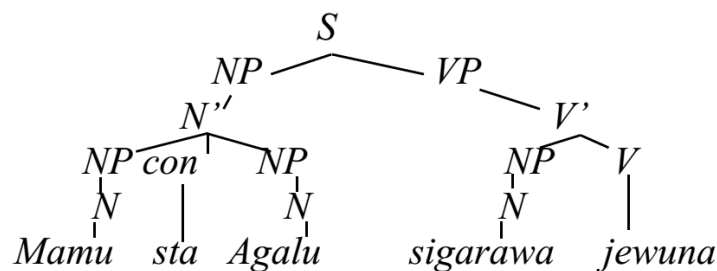
The above (1) simple sentence structure conveys a complete thought. The subject of the sentence is the Noun Phrase *An*, and the verb is *inkane*. The object *Awgne* is the complement that conveys the understanding of what the subject likes. On the face of it, S node immediately dominates NP and VP. Thus, NP precede VP node. As a result, S node is the mother of two constituents NP and VP. These in turn are daughters of S node; all terminal nodes (N, N, and V) are sisters to each other.

- (2) Kisi bīštanšo ĩnzeŋe
 The priest to the church walking
 ‘The priest walking to the church’



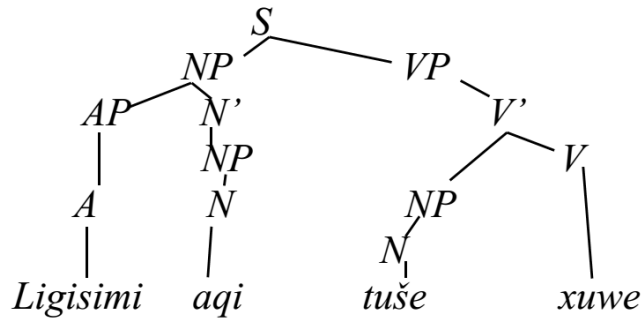
The preceding (2) simple sentence structure consists of merely single independent clause, which has a Noun Phrase *kisi* and a Verb Phrase *bīštanšo ĩnzeŋe* with a finite verb. In Awgni grammar, a finite verb is a form of a verb that shows agreement with a subject and is marked for tense. When a verb has a subject and a tense, it can be referred to as a finite verb. In the case of head *ĩnzeŋe*, no person or thing receives the action. There is no object of the verb. Since, the verb shows movement, it immediately take Prepositional Phrase complement *ĩnšo*. It appears that, S node immediately dominates NP and VP. Thus, NP precede VP node. As a result, S node is the mother of two constituents NP and VP. These in turn are daughters of S node; all terminal nodes (N, N, P and V) are sisters to each other.

- (3) Mamu sta Agalu sigarawa jewuna
 Mamu and Agalu the cigarette bought
 ‘Mamu and Agalu bought the cigarette’



This (3) simple sentence has compound subject: *Mamu* and *Agalu*. The conjunction *sta* conjoins these Nouns. The Verb in the given structure is *jewuna*. Here the top of the tree depicts the subject *Mamu*, the predicate *jewuna* and a third item, the object *sigarawa*, which is the complement. *Sigarawa* refers to the entities on which the act of buying performed. The subject *Mamu* and the complement *sigarawa* are the two arguments of the predicate *jewe* (i.e. the two entities involved in the act of buying). Regarding relationship between syntactic representations exits in, S node immediately dominates NP and VP. Thus, NP precede VP node. As a result, S node is the mother of two constituents (NP and VP). These in turn are daughters of S node; every single terminal node (N, N, N and V) are sisters to each other.

- (4) Ligisimi aqi tuše xuwe
 A tall man the bread east's
 A tall man east's the bread'

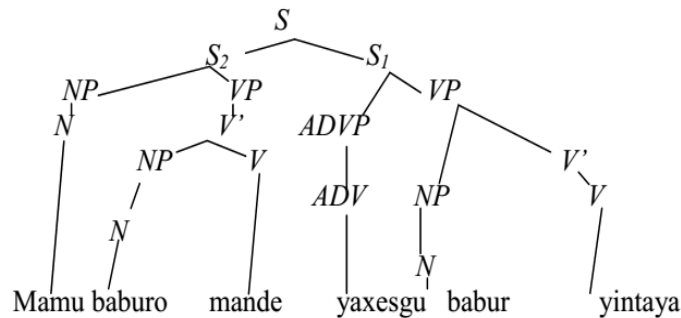


Tree notation (4) has the subject *ligisimi aqi*, the object *tuše* and the verb *xuwe*. *Tuše* is the complement of *xuwe*. This is because; *xuwe* passes over from the subject (*aqi*) and the object (*tuše*). Now, the analysis is claiming that *tuše xuwe* is VP which itself contains another NP *tuše*, and a verb *xuwe*. It appears that, S node immediately dominates NP and VP. Thus, NP precede VP node. For that reason, S node is the mother of two constituents NP and VP. These in turn are daughters of S node. Apparently, NP immediately dominates AP and N'; VP node also immediately dominates NP and V. Thus, all terminal nodes (A, N, N and V) are sisters to each other. It possibly will also contain other types of elements.

3.2 Compound sentences

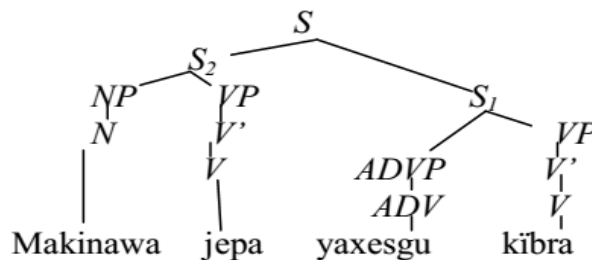
In Awgni grammar, a compound sentence is two (or more) simple sentences connected through a conjunction or an appropriate mark of punctuation. Both sides of a compound sentence are inclusive on their own, but more significant when connected. They are made up of at least two independent clauses, expressing intimately related ideas of equal or the same meaning that are joined together using a comma and a conjunction (*sta/and*, *yaxesgu/however* or *axuki/or*) a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb, or just a semicolon.

- (5) Mamu baburo mande; yaxesgu babur yintayaki
 Mamu the train waited; but the train was late'
 'Mamu waited for the train, but the train was late'



Mamu baburo mande; yaxesgu babur yintayaki is a compound sentence which contains two independent clauses such as *Mamu baburo mande* and *babur yintayaki*. Conjunctive adverbs *yaxesgu* was used to join two independent clauses together. As displayed in x-bar tree, S node is structured into two sentences: S_2 *Mamu baburo mande* and S_1 *yaxesgu babur yintayaki*. These nodes are the immediate complement for the mother node (S). Apparently, S_2 precede S_1 and they in turn are internal nodes. Each node under the tree has their linear and hierarchical relationship. *Yaxesgu* used to join two simple sentence structures to make compound (S_2 and S_1).

- (6) Makinawa jēpa; yaxesgu kībra
 The car I have bought, however expensive
 'I have bought the car, however it is expensive'

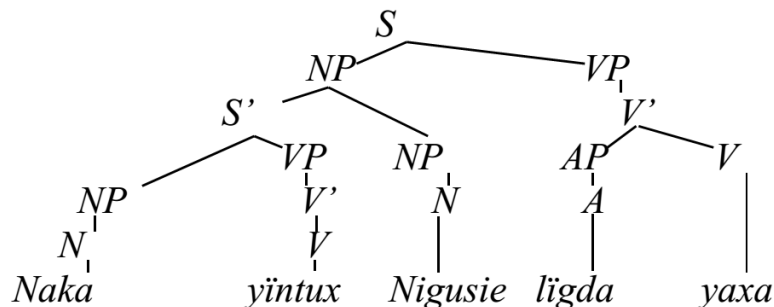


Compound sentences in (6) require conjunction *yaxesgu*. In that case, syntactic structure of *makinawa jēpa, yaxesgu kībra* consists of, S_2 *makinawa jēpa* and S_1 , *yaxesgu kībra*. In terms of relation, the mother node S immediately dominates S_2 and S_1 . Thus, S_2 precedes S_1 node. S_2 more to the point immediately dominates NP and the VP. S_1 in turn dominates ADVP and V.

3.3 Complex sentences

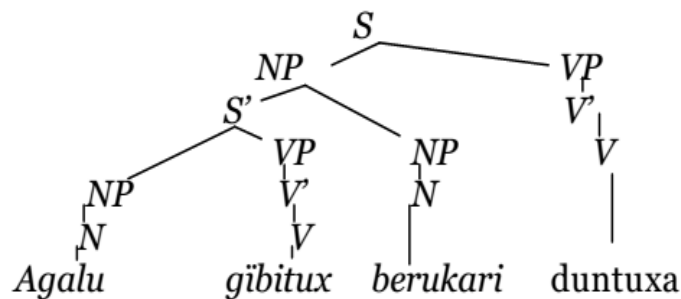
Complex sentences in Awgni consist of only one independent and at least one dependent clause, and often more than one dependent clause. Many instances of conjoining constituents other than clauses best regarded as a version of conjoined clauses. When complex sentence structures analyzed, it is better to identify these structures by isolating words belonging to the Noun Phrase (NP) and the Verb Phrase (VP). The Verb Phrase often contains other words, phrases, or clauses that play further distinctive roles within the sentence. When this occurs, the structure is then broken down into the Noun Phrase and Verb Phrase themselves and any other words, phrases or clauses as in:

- (7) Naka yīntux Nigusie līgda yāxa
 Today came Nigusie handsome became
 'Nigusie who came today became handsome'



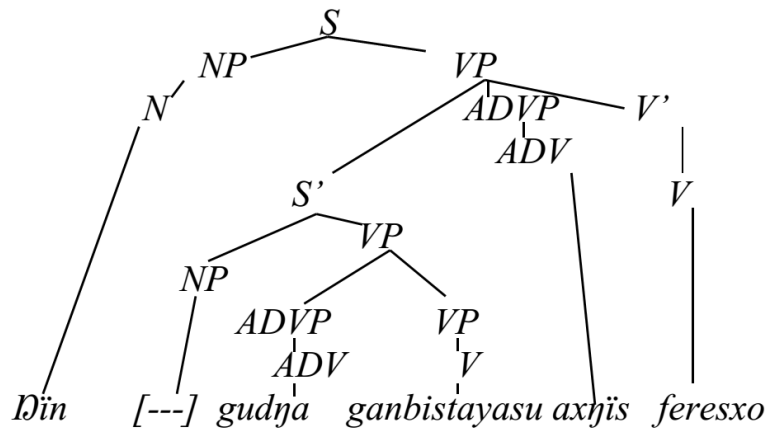
According to (7), the sentence structure *Naka yintux Nigusie ligda yaxa* is broken down into Noun Phrase *Naka yintux Nigusie* and Verb Phrase *ligda yaxa*. The Noun Phrase on the left hand consists of dependent clause modifier (*naka yintux*) and Noun Phrase (*Nigusie*). At the right side of the tree, Verb Phrase conjoined with Adjective Phrase *ligda* and the verb *yaxa*. Here S is the mother of two constituent NP and VP. These two constituents in turn are daughters of S node. Furthermore, S' node actually occurs the left of NP node on the printed page. The two are linked by a branch (solid line) indicates that the NP node in fact immediately dominates S' and NP. S' also immediately dominates NP and VP. Recursion level of V' in turn immediately dominates AP and V.

- (8) Agalu gïbitux beru kari duntuxa
 Agalu made metal knife broken
 'The metal knife which Agalu made was broken'



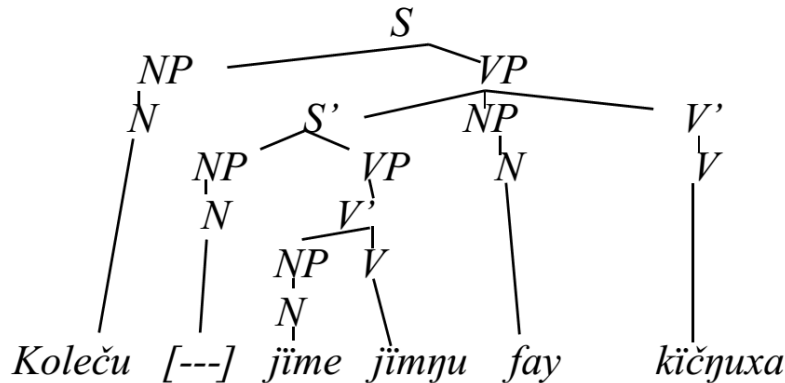
The syntactic structure in (8) displayed that *Agalu gïbitux beru kari* is the Noun Phrase. Dependent clause *Agalu gïbitux* comes first. It modifies the Noun Phrase *beru kari*. The dependent clause *Agalu gïbitux* supports independent clause. The main clause comprises the subject *Agalu*, the Verbal predicate *duntuxa* and the complement clause *Agalu gïbitux*. This clause in turn comprises the subject *Agalu* and the Verbal predicate *duntuxa*. At this point, S is the mother of two constituent NP and VP. These two constituents in turn are daughters of S node and N, V, N, and V are sisters of each other. The two nodes linked by a solid line indicates that the NP node in fact immediately dominates S' and NP. S' also immediately dominates NP and VP.

- (9) ñin gudña ganbistayasu axñis feresxo
 House well was not constructed as destroyed
 'As the house wasn't well constructed, it was destroyed'



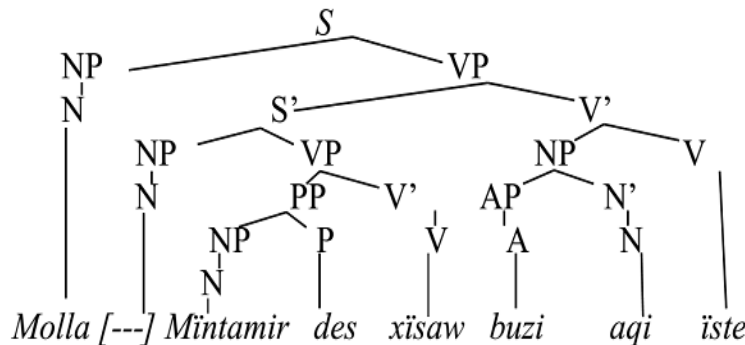
Structure (9) puts on view that dependent and independent clauses are conjoining in the tree diagram. *Gudña ganbistayasu* is a dependent clause. The second merge *feresxo* is the simple sentence that it contains the subject *ñin* and the verb *feresxo*. However, *ñin* serves as subject for dependent (*gudña ganbistayasu*) and independent clauses (*feresxo*). The subject *ñin* is the Noun Phrase (NP) *ganbistayasu* is the Verb Phrase (VP). *Axñis* is also an Adverb (ADV), which serves as a subordinating conjunction. In terms of relations, the mother node S immediately dominates its daughters NP and VP. Consequently, NP preceded VP. Thus, S exhaustively dominates all the other nodes in the tree, however it does not immediately dominate any of the other nodes for the reason that other nodes (S', VP, ADVP, and V') interfere. To be rigorous, the relation of motherhood is one of immediate dominance not dominance.

- (10) *Koleču jime jimñu fay kičñuxa*
 Koleč music playing interest has been achieved
 ‘Koleč’s interest in playing music has been achieved’



According to (10), both dependent (*Koleču jime jimñu*) and the independent (*fay kičñuxa*) clauses are necessary to make a complete meaning. The main clause (*kičñuxa*) does not make sense on its own, and it requires the dependent clause (*Koleču jime jimñu*) to complete its meaning. While their relation between syntactic representations examined, NP precedes VP and they are constituents of S. S node immediately dominates these daughters simultaneously. VP node in turn has S', NP and V' constituents and immediately dominates these nodes. Furthermore S' node immediately dominates NP and VP. Besides VP node immediately dominates NP and V.

- (11) *Molla mīntamīrdes xīsaw buzi aqi iste*
 Molla Mintamir than fat man say
 ‘It was said that Molla is fatter than Mintamir’



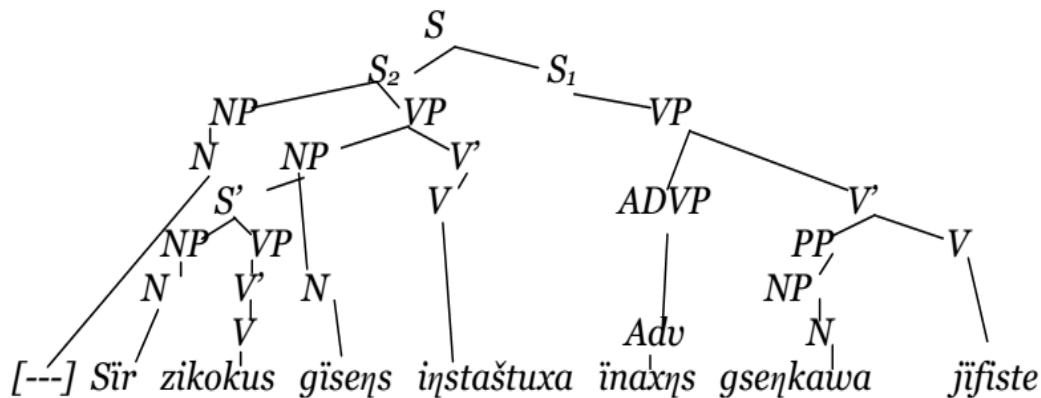
The above-mentioned tree tells us that the overall expression *Molla mīntamīrdes xīsaw buzi aqi iste* is sentence structure. Its head is the verb *iste*, and structured with complement Noun Phrase (NP) *buzi aqi*. On the other hand, the dependent clause (S') *Mīntamīrdes xīsaw*

modifies the head verb (*iste*). The subject of the given sentence is *Molla* and its predicate is *iste*. Furthermore, the mother node S immediately dominates its daughters NP and VP. As a result, NP preceded VP. Therefore, NP and VP are constituents of S. VP immediately dominate S' and V'. Likewise, S immediately dominates NP, and VP; VP node immediately dominates PP and V'. PP in turn immediately dominates NP and P. V' immediately dominates NP and V; NP also immediately dominates AP and N'. Every terminal node is sisters to each other.

3.4 Compound-complex sentences

Awgni compound complex sentences made from two independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses as in (12):

- (12) *Sir zikokus, giseṅs iṅstaštuxa, inaxṅs gseṅkawa jifiste*
 Child when I was by a dog attacked thus dogs afraid
 'When I was a child, I was attacked by a dog, thus, I am afraid of dogs'



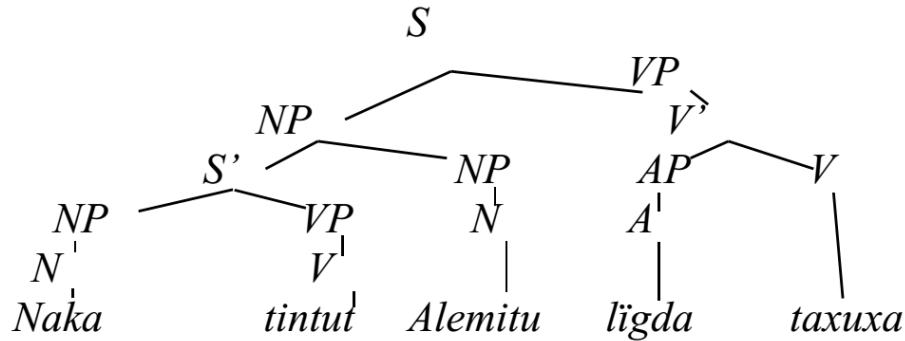
As stated in the above tree *sir zikokus, giseṅs iṅstaštuxa, inaxṅs gseṅkawa jifiste* is a compound-complex sentence. It is the combination of two independent clauses *giseṅs iṅstaštuxa* and *inaxṅs gseṅkawa jifiste*. The tree also structured with one dependent clause *sir zikokus*. A single S node, exhaustive dominance holds between a set of daughter (S₂ and S₁) nodes and their mother node (S) exhaustively dominates a set of nodes S₂, S₁, and their constituents. On the other hand, since S₂ precedes S₁ the linear precedence relation(s) between the daughter nodes could easily be expressing.

4. Discussion

The study was attempted to assess systematic examination of syntactic representations found in structural based Awgni sentence structures. Lexical categories found in Awgni sentences include Noun (N), Adjective (A), Verb (V), Adverb (ADV), and Preposition (P), though more categories were relevant to Awgni language sentences. Henceforth, Awgni Phrases under sentence structure were classified by the type of the head they take as: Prepositional Phrase (PP), Noun Phrase (NP), Verb Phrase (VP), Adjective Phrase (AP) and Adverb Phrase (ADVP). Since simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentence were differed in terms forms, forming, constituents' combination, or causal relationship; the number and types of syntactic phrasal categorical representations were somehow dissimilar. The finding further examined the features of speakers' syntactic understanding like the linear order of the words in the sentence, the groupings of words into syntactic categories and the hierarchical structure of the syntactic

categorical representations. Thus, overall syntactic relations discussed about syntactic representations established in Awgni sentence structures were summarized based on the foundation of Bornstein (1977), Carnie (1995) and Radford (1981) as in:

- (13) Naka tintut Alemitu ligda taxuxa
 Today came Alemitu beautiful became
 ‘Alemitu who came today became beautiful’



Like research findings (Bach, 1974; Borsley, 1991; Burton, 1997; Radford, 1988) showed that in the above complex sentence structure, the topmost node S is the root of the tree; it contains immediately or non-immediately all the other nodes. The clause (S) was built from NP that immediately proceeded by VP. In the case of hierarchical and linear relation, S node immediately dominates the Noun Phrase (NP) and the Verb Phrase (VP). Then, S is the mother of NP and VP and thus, two nodes are daughters of sentence structure. Likewise, structures such as S, S', NP, and V' are internal nodes where; N, V, N, A and V are sisters of each other.

In experimented tree diagrams, each phrase contained a head and possibly, but not necessarily, one or more modifiers. Complements, adjuncts and specifier were optional; complements were typically obligatory and always mentioned in the lexical entries for verbs. Many collocation restrictions applied to heads. Heads and complements were typically adjacent; where a head might have two or more complements, adjuncts typically come before the sequence of head and complements.

5. Conclusion

The results showed that simple, compound, complex and compound complex sentences shared linear arrangements of the words in sentence, the groupings of words into syntactic categories and the hierarchical structure of the syntactic categories in the given x-bar tree. These sentences were also hierarchically structured into successively larger set of constituents, with each constituent belonging to a given categories like A,N, V,P,AD and resultant phrasal categories for instance NP, VP, PP, AP and ADVP.

Sentence types have an internal association that could characterize using the tree diagram. Notable features of constituent structure being drawing in tree were heads, complements, modifiers, and specifier. There were two types of relations existed between every particular couple of nodes contained in similar phrase markers are precedence or dominance. Precedence relation comes into view while one node immediately occurred to the left side of another node in a given phrase marker. The other type of relation occurred among nodes in the same phrase marker was dominance. The node dominated the other just when it occurred higher up in the tree than the initial node, and connected to the first node by continuous set of solid lines. One node was immediately dominating the other if it was the next higher node up in the tree, and connected to the other node by a single branch. Moreover, nodes can have mothers (dominating

other node), daughters node (immediately dominated by that other node) and sister nodes (immediately dominated by same node). However, simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentence were coming in a diversity of shape, method, and size utterances. These sentences were differed in terms forms, forming, constituents' combination, or causal relationship, the number and types of classes they contain. Due to these features, the nature of syntactic representations found in simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentence were to some extent syntactically dissimilar.

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Appendix

Awgni Phonology

Phonology studies how languages or dialects systematically organize their sounds (or signs, in sign languages). The term also refers to the sound system of any particular language variety (Lodge, 2009). Thus, Awgni Phonology is the study of the patterns of sounds in the language. Put more properly, phonology is the study of the categorical organization of speech sounds in languages; how speech sounds are organized in the mind and used to convey meaning. In order to understand, syntactic transcriptions, it is important to locate few points about Awgni vowels and consonants.

Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i	ï	u
Open	e	a	o

The central vowel /ï/ is the default epenthetic vowel of the language and almost totally predictable in its occurrence. Likewise, /æ/, normally an allophone of /a/, is fossilized in some words and might be justified as a separate phoneme.

Consonants

	Bilabials	Labiodentals	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labiovelar	Uvular	Labio uvular
Plosive	b p		d t			k g	k ^w g ^w	q	q ^w
Fricatives		f		s z	š ṣ̌			x	x ^w
Affricates				dz ts	j č				
Nasal	m		n			ŋ	ŋ ^w		
Semivowels	w				y				
Lateral				l					
Trill				r					

Tones: According to Tadesse (1984), Awgni is a tonal language. It has one dynamic and three static tones. These comprise one contour (falling) and three level tones (high, mid and low). By the same token, Palmer (1959) and Hetzron (1969) both identified three distinctive tone

levels in Awngi: high, mid and low. The low tone, however, merely appears in word-final position on the vowel /a/. A falling tone (high-mid) appears on word-final syllables only.

Syllable: The Awngi syllable in most cases fits the maximum syllable template CVC (C standing for a consonant, V for a vowel). It also follows the patterns like: CV, VC, CVCVCCV, VCCCVCC, CVCC and CCVCC.

Vowel harmony: Whenever a suffix containing the [+high] vowel i is added to a stem, a productive vowel harmony process is triggered. Hetzron (1969) calls this process regressive vowel height assimilation. The vowel harmony only takes place if the underlying vowel of the last stem syllable is e. This vowel and all preceding instances of e and o will take over the feature [+high], until a different vowel is encountered. Then the vowel harmony is blocked.

Orthography: Awngi is used as Medium of Instruction from Grade 1 to 8, 9-12 and in the College level in Awi Zone. It is written with an orthography based on the Ethiopian Script. Extra fidels used for Awngi are ሻ for the sound ŋ and ቈ for the sound q. The Fidel ፀ is used for ts/ʃ, the Fidel ኸ for the sound X.

The noun: is marked for number-cum-gender (masculine, feminine or plural) and case. The nominative is unmarked for one class of nouns, or marked by -i for masculine nouns and -a for feminine nouns. Other cases are accusative, dative, genitive, locative, directional, ablative, commutative, comparative, invocative and translate. Hetzron also mentions adverbial as a case of Awngi, but an interpretation as a derivational marker seems to be more appropriate. Both number-cum-gender and case are marked through suffixes to the noun stems (Hetzron, 1969).

The Verb: The Awngi verbal morphology has a wealth of inflectional forms. The four main tenses are imperfective past, imperfective non-past, perfective past and perfective non-past. There are various other coordinate and subordinate forms which are all marked through suffixes to the verb stems. The following distinctions are maintained for Person: 1sg, 2sg, 3masc, 3fem, 1pl, 2pl, 3pl. Awngi verbal morphology is most economically described when it is assumed that for every verb there are four distinct stems: The first stem is for 3masc, 2pl, 3pl. The second stem is for 1sg only, the third stem for 2sg and 3fem, and the fourth stem for 1pl only. These four stems need to be noted for every verb in the lexicon and serve as the basis for all other verbal morphology. The stems remain the same throughout all verbal paradigms, and it is possible to predict the surface form of each paradigm member with these stems and the simple tense suffixes (Hetzron, 1969).

Syntax: The main verb of a sentence is always at the end. The basic word order is therefore SOV. Subordination and coordination is achieved exclusively through verbal affixation.



Semantic Shifts Within Infinitive Constructions in English

Tatiana Sallier

St. Petersburg State University, Faculty of Philology, RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to trace the semantic evolution of predicates governing the infinitive. The article is aimed at proving that the lexical units governing the infinitive display a semantic shift from more concrete lexical meaning to more abstract modal meaning. The research is conducted on the basis of the theory of context. It is proved that the infinitive is an element of syntactic context reinforcing the modal seme in the meaning of the governing predicate. As the modal seme within the meaning of the predicate is reinforced regularly and the lexical seme only occasionally, the lexical seme is weakened and gradually disappears, the predicate acquiring purely modal meaning. Lexemes having no modal meaning outside the infinitive phrase acquire it when governing the infinitive, which imposes modality upon the governing predicate. The general semantic shift for this type of construction is from concrete lexical to abstract modal, and the modal seme being stronger in these contextual conditions.

Keywords: infinitive construction, grammaticalization, semantic evolution, contextual reinforcement, systemic trend.

1. Introduction

The study covers lexical units governing the infinitive as an object (he wants to do something).

The semantic processes occurring within infinitive phrases in English and some other European languages is a diachronic process well described in linguistic literature. The analytical tense forms in English where former modal verbs evolved into auxiliaries (Ilyish, 1972: 203); the construction “to be going +infinitive” acquired first the meaning of intention, and later of future; the fact that the verbs *can* and “to know” are of the same origin, deriving from the Old Germanic *cunnan* (Cf. German *kennen* (to know) and *können* (can)). The development of modal meanings of the verbs *can* and *may* was described by Traugott (1989, 2017).

It’s also worth remembering that in modern English, such verbs as *to manage*, *to seek*, *to mean* change their semantics when governing the infinitive, acquiring quasi-modal meanings of result, attempt and intention respectively. The mechanics of this process, however, hasn’t been fully explored, nor was the contextual aspect taken into account.

The semantic evolution of infinitive constructions is considered in the framework of the context theory formulated by N. Amosova (1968: 47-51). The scholar distinguishes lexical and syntactic context, the latter being a syntactic structure helping to realize the meaning of a word.

She introduced the concept of “indicative minimum”, that is of a lexeme or a syntactic structure helping to realize one of the meanings of a polysemantic word.

- Lexemes regularly governing the infinitive lose their lexical meaning and become modals.
- Predicates governing the infinitive lose their meaning because of their syntactic position.
- Lexemes having no modal meaning acquire it when governing the infinitive.
- The infinitive is the indicative minimum for the modal seme in the meaning of the predicate.

2. Methods

The methods to be applied in the research include contextual, semantic and syntactic analysis. Contextual analysis is especially important, showing which elements of meaning are reinforced or suppressed within the syntactic structures with the infinitive. The concept of syntactic context seems to be especially fruitful, as syntactic structure affects the lexical semantics. The infinitive structures were considered in the framework of a larger textual unit, to establish their communicative value. Pragmatic criteria were also taken into account to establish the comparative communicative importance of syntactic structures.

3. Results

It has been proved that lexical items regularly governing the infinitive lose their lexical meaning and become modal links. Lexemes having no modal meaning outside the infinitive constructions acquire it when governing the infinitive, which means that the infinitive imposes modality on any lexeme governing it.

4. Discussion

4.1 *The semantic and modal characteristics of lexical units governing the infinitive*

First of all, it is appropriate to consider the meaning of lexical items governing the infinitive. They include words meaning desire (want, wish, yearn, to be eager), attempt (try), possibility (to be able), positive and negative result (manage fail) verbs of speech (promise, refuse, agree) intention (mean, plan, propose) and of emotional attitude (to be happy, sorry, glad)

It can be seen that all the semantic groups have modal or quasi-modal meanings. The action expressed by the infinitive can be presented as real or unreal, depending on the meaning of the predicate.

Let's consider examples:

- (1) She was happy to be on the mainland. (S.K. 17)
- (2) I wanted to see John Harman. (N.Sh.L. 153)
- (3) The officer promised to make inquiries. (N.Sh.L. 65)

The first example allows the transformation “she was on the mainland” which means that the condition denoted by the infinitive is presented as real; meanwhile the phrase “she was happy” without the infinitive has no modal meaning. Consequently, the modal meaning is conferred upon the governing unit by the infinitive.

In examples (2) and (3) the action denoted by the infinitive is presented as unreal, because both a wish and a promise may remain unfulfilled. The examples show that the modal meaning itself is created by the infinitive, whereas the type of modality (real or unreal, and within

unreal modality meanings of desirability, capacity, obligation, intention, etc.) is conveyed by the meaning of the predicate.

As to the semantic structure of the predicate, it can be divided into two semes: the modal seme, connecting the subject and the action denoted by the infinitive and the lexical seme. In (1) the lexical seme is that of emotional condition; in (3) the verb has the lexical meaning of speech.

To see which element of meaning is stronger consider an example:

(4) If you get into any legal trouble we should be glad to act for you. (N.Sh.L. 20)

The transformation “if you get into any legal trouble we should be glad” is impossible because it contradicts the meaning of the statement. The adjective “glad” doesn’t mean emotional condition, but only readiness to perform an action, which shows that the modal element is semantically stronger than the descriptive element.

4.2 *Syntactic properties of infinitive constructions*

To understand the mechanics of semantic shift, it is interesting to compare the amount of information carried by the governing word or phrase and the infinitive group.

(5) I was interested to see a small, secluded part served by a middle-aged woman where the elderly could buy the clothes they were accustomed to, black skirts and flannel petticoats and coarse kitchen aprons. (N.Sh.L. 310)

The predicate *was interested* is complemented only by the infinitive group, whereas the latter consists of 24 meaningful words and consequently carries a far larger information load.

Let’s see the examples where the predicate has other subordinates besides the infinitive:

(6) He had long ago decided not to go into the garden shelter at night until an actual raid began. (R.Gr. 172)

(7) He is very anxious to speak to you before you go. (Ch.N. 149)

In (6) the predicate is modified with a two-word adverbial of time; in (7) by an intensifier.

The limited capacity of the predicate to accept subordinates and, consequently to convey information, is caused by its syntactic position: it is crammed between the subject and the infinitive group; the infinitive, however, having no obstacle to the right of the group, can realize all the verbal valences and accept a subordinate clause. The material studied shows that if the predicate is modified at all (which doesn’t happen often) the modifier is of one meaningful word. So the infinitive group, because of its syntactic position, carries a far larger amount of information than the predicate.

4.3 *The communicative value of parts of the infinitive phrase*

The relative importance of the information conveyed by the predicate and the infinitive group may be illustrated by the following example:

(8) If it should be possible for you to come to our office in London, our Mrs. Sandbourne will be very glad to give you all particulars and to answer all your questions. (A.C.N. 37)

The sentence allows a transformation:

(8a) Mrs. Sandbourne will be glad.

(8b) Mrs. Sandbourne will give you all particulars and to answer all your questions.

The comparison between (8a) and (8b) in terms of their communicative value shows the communicative prevalence of the infinitive group. The utterance is a promise to provide information, expressed in (8b); as to the first statement (8a), Mrs. Sandbourne didn't appear either in the preceding or in the following context and her emotions are of little interest to the story. If this phrase is omitted, the message will be the same, perhaps a little less courteously expressed. Examples (4)-(8) show that the main bulk of information is conveyed by the infinitive phrase.

Another factor contributing to the weakening and loss of lexical meaning by the predicates governing the infinitive seems to be functional sentence perspective, that is the distribution of information within a sentence. The examples quoted show that the main part of information is transmitted by the infinitival phrase with its great informational capacity, provided by the ability of the phrase to grow. The predicate, be it a verb or an adjective with the link verb has limited information potential and assumes the transitional function of linking the subject and the action. The fact that transitional elements gradually lose their lexical semantics and come to express temporal and characteristics of the sentence was established by Firbas (1974).

4.4 *The semantic evolution of the predicate*

To illustrate the process of a gradual loss of the lexical meaning, see the examples:

(9) They refused to take a penny from Scarlett, telling her she would do the same for them (M.G.W. 300)

(10) She got along better barefoot, but Eileen Howard refused to try it (Sh.L. 47)

(11) I had refused to be seen in the red pants and yellow parka I had found in the suitcase. (Sh.N.L. 126)

(12) Her cheerful flesh refused to be mortified (Bl.M.M. 28)

In (9) the speech *seme* in the meaning of the predicate is reinforced by the adverbial phrase (telling her, etc); in (10) the speech act exists (there are two characters), but no details are given. The unwillingness to perform an action may or may not have been expressed verbally, which is not important for the narration. (in 11) the speech act is absent because the character is alone; in (12) it is impossible because of the inanimate subject. It can be seen that if the lexical *seme* is not reinforced by the context, it is gradually weakened, while the modal *seme* (negation in 11-14) is systematically reinforced by the infinitive phrase.

A similar semantic evolution is demonstrated in the verb *to decline*

(13) He declined either to regain consciousness or to die. (Sr.Dr. 180)

As the semantics of the infinitive rules out verbal expression, the verb *declined* in (13) can be understood as expressing pure negation, without any additional components.

Some other verbs display the same tendency. The verb of mental activity *to expect* comes to mean intention:

(14) Johanna expected to treat her as a kind of upper servant. (S.Dr. 42)

This evolution is typical for the verb *to fail* which loses the meaning of unsuccessful attempt and becomes a negation marker, devoid of other meanings. See the examples:

(15) A dishonest barman could steal from his employer by failing to ring every sale into the cash register. (A.H.H. 305)

(16) These accounts fail to adequately explain why the genre was so heavily censored. (S.T.B. 179)

The phrase *failing to ring, etc.* in (15) denotes voluntary refusal to perform an action (we can' imagine the barman unsuccessfully trying to ring the sale into the register). In (16) the inanimate subject rules out the notion of unsuccessful attempt.

The phrases "to be ready" and "to be prepared" may lose the meaning of preliminary preparation and come to mean agreement and intention to perform an action. See the examples:

(17) I was ready to report the progress I had made. (N.Sh.L. 25)

(18) The city authorities were ready to remove 10,000 people from their homes and offices. (Google search)

(19) It appears that he [Umar Akmal] is not prepared to show remorse and seek apology. (Google search)

In (17) the predicate *was ready* implies preliminary activity described by the phrase *the progress I had made*. In (18) *were ready* means just an intention (perhaps an unwilling intention) to displace the residents. In (19) the phrase *not prepared* doesn't mean the absence of preliminary preparation, but just a refusal to apologize. It's absurd to think that the defendant will do some work on preparing to show remorse. The same is the case for Russian «готов» which sometimes means not the presence/absence of preparation but the agreement/disagreement to perform an action. The Russian translation site "Reverso" translated the phrase не готов as "unwilling":

(20) Том был не готов платить такие деньги за подержанный компьютер (Tom was unwilling to pay that much money for a secondhand computer). (Reverso site)

The translator didn't see the seme of "prior preparation", which testifies to its substantial weakening and disappearance.

For some lexemes, the loss of lexical meaning and the acquisition of modality is a diachronic fact, registered in the dictionaries. Such are the verb "to seek" meaning an attempt when accompanied by the infinitive; (cf. the French verb *chercher* displaying a similar semantic shift: it means *to look for* without the infinitive complement and *to try, to want* with it). The verb *to propose* means intention and is free of the speech seme it contains in other contexts; *to manage*, means realized action.

The examples quoted show that the weakening and loss of lexical meaning by the words governing the infinitive is a systemic unidirectional process (the unidirectionality of the grammaticalization process was established in Heine and Traugott, 1991). It can partly be explained by structural factors. The finite verb or an adjectival phrase are crammed between the subject and the infinitive and have limited opportunity to be modified by other subordinates besides the infinitive. Contextual reinforcement of the modal or quasi-modal seme is compulsory, whereas the lexical seme is seldom reinforced by the context. In the absence of contextual reinforcement, the lexical seme is weakened and gradually lost, the verb becoming a modal link devoid of lexical meaning.

Functional sentence perspective, as was noted above, also contributes to the loss of meaning. With the main amount of information carried by the infinitive phrase, the predicate finds itself out of informational focus, gradually losing all the semes except the one linking the subject and the infinitive, that is temporal, modal and phasal semes.

The lexeme governing the infinitive display another tendency as well: lexemes having no modal meaning in other contexts become modals when governing the infinitive. See the examples:

(21) She **chafed** to be gone and tell the story to her husband.

(22) Mr. Perry **is just itching** to know what it's all about. (B.M.M.)

(23) She **was in a fever** to look out of the window (A.S.Dr. 27)

(24) The Prince of Wales... **was frantic** to conserve the kingdom for his own son.
(A.S.K. 295)

(25) He **burned** to distinguish himself in battle. (A.S.K. 74)

(26) I've **been dying** to get my hands on your manuscript.

In all the examples the predicate has the meaning of desire. It should be noticed, however, that these lexemes have no modal meaning unless accompanied by the infinitive. *Chafe* (21) and *itch* (22) mean skin irritation. *Fever* (23) means a medical condition; *frantic* (24) is extreme anxiety (cf. *anxious* in (7)); all these lexemes have quasi modal meaning of strong desire. The common element of their initial meaning is physical discomfort. It is interesting to note that the adjective *eager*, meaning “strong desire” has been derived from French *aigre* – sour, acrid, which means that a lexeme meaning “causing physical discomfort” came to mean desire.

Besides the lexemes quoted above, the meaning of desire within infinitive construction is usually acquired by other lexemes meaning discomfort: *to burst*, *to ache*, *on fire* or excitement: *mad*, *frantic*, *agog*.

In this connection, it is interesting to trace the distribution of meaning of the adjective *anxious*. The existence of the other meaning “restless, worried”, shows that originally the sense of anxiety was present in the constructions with the infinitive. (cf. *frantic* in 22). Gradually, in the absence of contextual reinforcement, this sense was neutralized and the adjective, within the infinitive construction, came to mean “desire, intention”.

To follow the semantic evolution of the lexemes governing the infinitive let's turn to the group of predicates denoting possibility. It was noted above that the verbs *can* and *know* are of the same Germanic root, so the meaning of ability developed from the more concrete idea of knowledge. Cf. French “Elle sait écrire” (she can write) and Old Russian “он знает читать» (he can read) For example:

(27) Но будутъ устроены экзамены , и если воспитанникъ не **знаеть читать**, то треть суммы будетъ удержана (Exams will be held and if the pupil can't read, a third of the amount will be withheld.) (Z.M.N.P. vol. 116, p.30)

It can be seen that the Old Germanic *cunnan* followed by the infinitive lost its lexical meaning and evolved into a pure marker of modality devoid of any other semantic element. It can even denote the epistemic modality of probability, as pointed out by E. Traugott (1989).

Another modal marker which has undergone a similar evolution is the adjective *able*. It is derived from Old French *hable* – “capable, agile, nimble”. In Modern English the word means “capable”. When followed by an infinitive phrase, however, the adjective is a modal marker. The absence of lexical meaning can be illustrated by the word's inability to accept an intensifier:

**He is very able to do something* being impossible.

On the other hand, new words and phrases, having no modal meaning without the infinitive are used to denote possibility.

(28) Having thus got rid of his two associates, Nigel was free to put certain questions which he didn't want either of them to hear. (N.B. M.M. 10)

(29) You are competent to run their culture center. (G.J.Sq. 157)

(30) I didn't have the heart to throw the case away. (I.Sh.N. 157)

In (28) *free* means possibility caused by the absence of obstacles; in (29), *competent* means possibility created by the personal qualities of the subject; in (30), the absence of possibility is caused by emotional factors. In all cases, the modal meaning is conferred upon the predicate by the infinitive.

The group of predicates with the meaning of attempt is also enlarged by lexemes having no modal meaning:

(31) Dan fought to control his temper. (G.J.Sq. 207)

(32) He struggled to add something to this. (Gr. M.B. 231)

Both verbs usually mean violent confrontation and imply the presence of a rival. In the examples, however, the second participant of the fight or struggle is absent and both verbs have the meaning of attempt and imply the difficulty of the action expressed by the infinitive. So the transformation of meaning from lexical to quasi-modal is obvious.

The process looks as follows: lexemes regularly taking the infinitive as an object lose their lexical and emotional meaning and become modal links; to achieve expressiveness, new words and phrases are used, which acquire modal meaning only when governing the infinitive.

5. Conclusions

The research conducted makes it possible to draw the following conclusions:

- The semantic evolution undergone by lexemes governing the infinitive is a systemic diachronic process.
- Lexical items regularly governing the infinitive tend to lose their lexical meaning and become modal and quasi modal links.
- The desemantization is caused by the syntactic position of the lexeme: the predicate is crammed between the subject and the infinitive having limited possibilities of extension.
- Due to this syntactic circumstance, the lexical part of the meaning is of minor communicative value, the main information load being carried by the infinitive phrase which can be extended freely.
- The lack of extension results in the lexical seme not being reinforced by the context, whereas the modal or quasi modal seme is regularly reinforced by the infinitive phrase,
- Alongside the loss of lexical meaning by the words governing the infinitive, the sphere of modal and quasi-modal meanings is constantly enlarged by new lexical items having no modal meaning outside the infinitive constructions.
- The infinitive therefore is an element of syntactic context reinforcing the modal seme where it already exists and invoking it in lexemes which take the infinitive as an object occasionally.
- Consequently, the infinitive and infinitive phrase serve as the indicative minimum for the seme of modality.

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Do not Tell me How to Talk to Men! A Critical Discourse Analysis on Matthew Hussey's Advice on “How to Charm him with your Texts”

Valeria Márquez Arellano

University of Guanajuato, Division of Social Sciences and Humanities, MEXICO

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Abstract

Gender in discourse and feminist ideologies have been more examined in different fields. Regarding the area of Applied Linguistics, there has been more attention to how men and women are represented linguistically, more specifically in feminist studies. The following article examines the chapter “How to charm him with your texts” of a book that provides women with advice on “how to get the man”. I provide a feminist critical discourse analysis (Lazar, 2007) with the support of previous studies on critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2010). This article sheds light on some women categorization made by the author of the book and from a feminist ideology perspective.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, feminist critical discourse analysis, gender in discourse, feminist ideologies.

1. Introduction

This article is a critical discourse analysis of a chapter in Matthew Hussey's book “how to talk to men”. To begin with, a brief overview will be presented to give context about the book and the author. Then, the theoretical framework used for this analysis will be discussed as well as some terms that need to be mentioned to understand the analysis of the chapter. Therefore, an analysis of the chapter will be presented. Finally, a conclusion, closing thoughts, and suggestions for further research will be presented.

1.1 About Matthew Hussey and his work

Matthew Hussey works as a love life coach. He has a YouTube channel where he uploads different videos to help women with their relationships. Hussey is also a writer and his books as well as his podcasts, videos, and radio shows are about relationships and tips on how to get the man of your dreams. For this article, I will analyze a chapter in his book “How to talk to man”. This book provides women with different chapters that cover different situations and an explanation of what to do or what to say, and things women should not do. The chapter chosen for this analysis is about “how to charm him with your texts”. It covers different scenarios and provides the reader with scripts to illustrate women on how to respond. However, Hussey

categorizes women into four different types, and he presents chunks of conversations portraying women into these categories.

- Throughout his book, Matthew Hussey categorizes women in four different types that may affect the development of their identity.
- How women are categorized might be due to different ideologies, contexts, and cultures.
- Marketing strategies might be involved to target certain audiences.

2. Theoretical framework

To analyze this chapter, I decided to work with a critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework. CDA “typically examines a combination of linguistic features to discern how language functions in the reproduction of social structures” (Remlinger, 2008: 116). In addition to this, Fairclough (2010) explains that CDA is a “transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of the social process” (p. 10). Therefore, I decided to work with this framework since it provided me with an insight to a combination of different features that can be examined in a discourse.

Additionally, the chapter which I analyzed for this study contains some discourse that seems to be categorizing women. Van Dijk (2010) discusses that critical discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary area that comments on the ethnography of communication as well as “other approaches to the social and cultural aspects of language use” (p. 8). As a result, one aim of critical discourse analysis is “exposing strategies that appear normal or neutral on the surface but which may in fact be ideological and seek to shape the representation of events and persons for particular needs” (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 5). This study analyzes what is underneath the discourse that is presented, and it examines it from a different perspective. It takes into consideration some aspects such as gender, power, and ideologies, to mention a few.

Another area which informs this study is feminist critical discourse analysis. To begin with, Lazar (2007) discusses that:

The aim of feminist critical discourse studies, therefore, is to show up the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities (p. 142).

Because of this, feminist critical discourse analysis pays closer attention to gender, discrimination, and stereotypes, among others in both spoken and written discourse to draw upon some of the realities that women face. In addition to this, Lazar (2007) explains that feminist critical discourse is concerned with “the interrelationships of gender, power, and ideology in discourse” (p. 144). That is why it is important to comment on this to have another perspective on the chapter which was analyzed for this study. Also, to provide more information to the area of feminist critical discourse analysis.

2.1 *Gender and discourse*

First, it is important to define the term gender. According to Coates (2004) gender “is the term used to describe socially constructed categories based on sex” (p. 4). For this study, I will look at gender in terms of male and female. It is important to draw upon this to avoid any further type of discrimination. Gender, however, has changed according to the influence of cultures and how people see it, more specifically when it comes to the roles males and females have to follow. Remlinger (2008) explains that “gender roles are constituted through people’s everyday lived

experiences and influenced by cultural meanings” (p. 115). That is why according to each culture, the role that has to be followed. For instance, women belong to the kitchen, and men are the ones to provide money and food to the house; women should only perform certain jobs whereas men can work in places that require more strength, to mention some scenarios.

In the area of discourse, gender has a slightly different role. Halliday and Webster (2007) explain that when it comes to language and structures, we are concerned about how typical the context of the situation, the function and the structure of the words are, we then see how language works as a form of behavior. However, the area of gender in discourse analyzes how women are to look according to what is exposed through media, texts, and/or spoken discourse, and sees how women are according to this ideal that is being portrayed (Cameron, 1992). In this case, this article pays closer attention to how women are portrayed and the roles they have to play to be accepted, or as the author claims, to get the man.

2.1.1 Texting

It is important to comment on texting for this study. The chapter to be discussed offers some advice on how to respond to certain texts. First, Halliday, Hasan and Christie (1989) highlight that “the way the text is interpreted in its context of situation” (p. 47). There are different scenarios discussed in the chapter, but the interpretation of it will vary according to different aspects such as the context, the reader, ideologies, and cultural background.

However, little is known concerning texting in the area of discourse analysis. There is more literature concerning written discourse rather than texting. Nowadays, texting has become part of the way humans communicate, and it opens up a different channel. Machin and Mayr (2012) mention that “language is not simply a vehicle of communication, or for persuasion, but a means of social construction and domination” (p. 24). In addition to this, how people reply to a text depends on what he or she seeks to aim, and thus “linguistic strategies are after all chosen within particular social contexts and relations” (Cameron, 1992: 71). In this study, Hussey provides women with different options to guide them in their written conversation, and thus the context and strategies are set up scenarios. Finally, Halliday (1994) comments that “language can effectively express ideational and interpersonal meanings only because it can create text” (p. 130). Therefore, I can look at the chapter and at the texts provided from different perspectives, whether is ideational, interpersonal, or from a feminist point of view.

2.2 Feminism: What women think?

Feminism has become an important area to conduct research. The emphasis and the attention to research in feminism do not only examine political or work ideologies, but it also covers it linguistically. First, “women can never be defined” (Minh-ha, 2005: 39). Women can be called different names or might be categorized, and Minh-ha explains how even with these names or categories women are all of them and still cannot be completely defined. Cameron (1992) depicts that:

there is also a good deal of feminist work emphasizing the importance of cultural representations of gender [...] in stories, pictures, textbooks, scholarly articles, and so on - in forming the identities of real women and men, their notions of masculinity and femininity, their expectations of what is possible and their ideas of what is normal (p. 5).

In other words, how women are categorized and/or represented may influence their identities and their ideas of what is right or not according to their culture or society. Lakoff (2005) describes how women have this unconscious script which has been the result of different

ideologies that position women and their roles in a certain way. This is then the effect of women's language:

It submerges a woman's personal identity, by denying her the means of expressing herself strongly, on the one hand, and encouraging expressions that suggest triviality in subject matter and uncertainty about it; and, when a woman is being discussed, by treating her as an object - sexual or otherwise - but never a serious person with individual views (p. 243).

Yet, society and culture have shaped these ideas where women are to follow certain roles, converse on certain topics, and remain silent in others. It is important to consider whether the discourse provided in the chapter is part of what is considered women's language and if it creates some type of discrimination or stereotype which will be discussed in the following section.

2.3 *Discrimination or a stereotype*

I shall first define the concepts of discrimination and stereotype to understand what each term entails. According to the American Psychological Association (2016), discrimination refers to the "unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age or sexual orientation" (pp. 2). Ellemers (2018) explains how stereotypes "in general and gender stereotypes in particular may be helpful [...] when trying to understand how large groups of people generally differ from each other" (p. 278). On that account, discrimination is how people are treated based on different characteristics, and stereotypes can be seen as a way to distinguish or to label groups of people based on certain characteristics that might not be related to their race or gender.

To understand more how these terms inform the study, Fairclough (2010) provides with a discussion on a conversation where people may infer that women have certain tendencies, and thus it is explained that this representation of the language comes from an ideology where any given representation is linked to a particular social base. In addition to this, Fairclough (2010) defines ideational as:

naturalized implicit propositions of an ideological character are pervasive in discourse, contributing to the positioning of people as social subjects. These include not only aspects of ideational meaning [...] but also for instance assumptions about social relations underlying interactional practices [...] Such assumptions are quite generally naturalized, and people are generally unaware of them and of how they are subjected by/to them (p. 26).

Therefore, how Matthew Hussey positions women in his book might be the result of these different ideologies created by society. Also, how women are supposed to talk or to act changes depending on the context, the culture, and the norms proposed by such culture. Spender (2005) highlights the fact that naming is part of human nature, "names are essential for the construction of reality [...] By assigning names we impose a pattern and a meaning which allows us to manipulate the world" (p. 97). Then, the categorization Hussey provides might not be considered an act of discrimination or stereotyping, but a human act of giving names to target a specific audience. The following section includes the analysis of the chapter which draws upon the previously mentioned terms.

3. Analysis of chapter

Hussey begins his chapter by explaining the purposes of texting. Then, he introduces "*Four Types of Women He Hates Texting (and What You Should Say Instead)*". The following data contains the description of the four different types of women according to him: (1) The Court

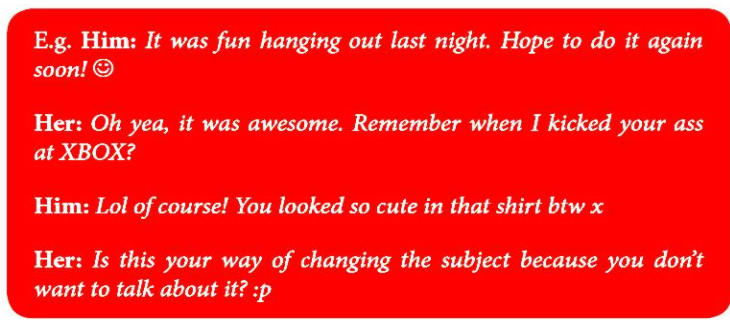
Jester; (2) The Tweenie Fangirl; (3) The Over-Analyzer, and (4) The Blank Wall. Moreover, Hussey provides women with different scripts that represent each type of woman, and in some cases, he includes the appropriate answers. Hussey's book also has a key for the colors used in the scripts at the beginning of his book. Red stands for what should not be said and green stands for the things that might be used instead.

3.1 "The Court Jester"

The first category in Hussey's chapter is "The Court Jester". Hussey uses this category for women who tend to use jokes in what seems to be an extreme way. He explains:

This girl just can't stop joking... And not in a good way. Everything to her is an excuse to bust out another knee-slapper. Except she totally overdoes it. It's exhausting. She thinks it's raising her value. But in fact, the guy stops seeing her as a sexual possibility. She starts to seem like his goofy buddy.

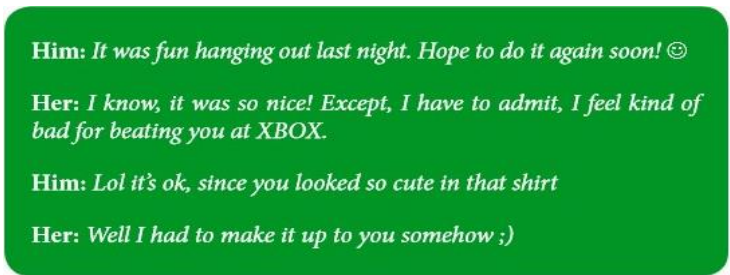
In the previous excerpt, Hussey indicates that when a woman jokes excessively, she loses all her sexual possibilities. In this case, it is suggested that a woman's first approach to man is for a sexual purpose. It is important to highlight the fact that Hussey's book is about how to get the man, and thus some information regarding sexual intercourse is suggested throughout the book. The following script includes a negative example of "The Court Jester" type of women:



E.g. Him: *It was fun hanging out last night. Hope to do it again soon! 😊*
Her: *Oh yea, it was awesome. Remember when I kicked your ass at XBOX?*
Him: *Lol of course! You looked so cute in that shirt btw x*
Her: *Is this your way of changing the subject because you don't want to talk about it? :p*

Image 1. Matthew Hussey's negative example of "The Court Jester"

Contrary to the previous script, here Hussey includes a script of what to say instead:



Him: *It was fun hanging out last night. Hope to do it again soon! 😊*
Her: *I know, it was so nice! Except, I have to admit, I feel kind of bad for beating you at XBOX.*
Him: *Lol it's ok, since you looked so cute in that shirt*
Her: *Well I had to make it up to you somehow ;)*

Image 2. Matthew Hussey's positive example of "The Court Jester"

The red script seems to portray women as 'rude' whereas the green script seems to label women as someone who has to make herself less than a man to be accepted. However, at the end of this section, Hussey highlights the fact men are also into women who have a "sense of humor", and thus advise women not to overdo it. Also, Hussey explains that depending on how close or familiar you are to him, the type of answers you should give to "keep the flirtation going". This first category positions women to be inferior and it seems to limit them in terms of the topics that can be exchanged in a conversation between man and woman (Lakoff, 2005). Yet, it should

be noted that this first categorization is concerned with different ideas among cultures, and countries on how women might respond or act in front of or to men.

3.2 “The Tweenie Fangirl”

The second category in the book is “The Tweenie Fangirl”. This category is concerned with the overuse of emoticons/emojis in a conversation. Hussey depicts the following:

This one has the cutesy, air-headed nature of a sixteen-year-old commenting on YouTube, and peppers every text with a thousand emojis, because apparently words aren't enough to express how she feels.

First, Hussey compares women who overuse emojis as if they were teenagers. He also implies that the use of emojis is the result of not knowing how to fully express in a conversation. Yet, it is important to comment that people, regardless of their age, nowadays use more emojis to illustrate their ideas as texting has evolved during the past years. The following is an example of this category to illustrate his idea:

E.g. “OMFG just ate dis amzing bagel in a bakery near yr plce. U hav to try it smetime! LOL :p ☺ Xox”

Image 3. Matthew Hussey’s negative example of “The Tweenie Fangirl”

After Hussey includes the previous script, he also comments on the overuse of abbreviations as if it were something negative. Again, texting has evolved and become a more frequent channel of communication. However, Hussey then explains that this overuse of emojis and abbreviation might reflect on the intelligence of the person:

It's unnecessary and causes guys to make snap judgments about your intelligence. In texting, all you have are the words you write on which to be judged. When he reads messages in what looks like a sixteen-year-old teenager's language, he's going to assume you have the mind of one [...] Any successful guy who reads text speak like this will be fearful of introducing you to his more respectable friends.

Again, Hussey includes discourse that seems to make women inferior. Hussey explains how depending on the type of (written) discourse used in the conversation, whether a man will introduce you to his friends or not. This category draws upon Cameron (1992) and Lakoff's (2005) ideas of how women are represented and how these categorizations can have an effect on the identity of women, especially teenagers that have access to his book.

3.3 “The Over-Analyzer”

In my opinion, the following category illustrates a woman who might be considered to be independent in this era. Hussey describes “The Over-Analyzer” as:

This girl overthinks everything. She tries to have an oh-so-clever comeback for everything a guy says. She is always in her head, and can't let anything go.

The way Hussey describes an over-analyzer seems to infer that a woman cannot have a much clever answer than a man, and thus positions women as submissive again. The following script shows an example of this:

Him: Still thinking about you in that red dress you tried on today. I know this sounds weird, but it makes your shoulders look really sexy... x

Her: What? Are you saying I have big shoulders?

Him: No! I'm saying they're hot.

Her: Hmm ok lol

Image 4. Matthew Hussey's negative example of "The Over-Analyzer"

In contrast to Hussey's description of the over-analyzer, the previous script includes a conversation where a man compliments a woman, and she does not accept it but instead seems to be offended. First, the script and the definition of the over-analyzer do not coincide since the definition implies that women cannot have a much clever answer than men, but then provides an example where women cannot accept a compliment. Moreover, the following excerpt complements his idea and script:

The over-analyzer can't help but dissect everything a guy says until he's completely drained and exhausted. This is the opposite of confident communication.

The previous excerpt shows a description that coincides more with the script used in this categorization. Hussey explains that to have more "confident communication" women have to acknowledge the compliment, and compliment men as well. In this case, I agree with the idea that it is important to acknowledge a compliment regardless of the person who says it. However, how Hussey represents an "over-analyzer" in this section does not completely coincide in all his examples and what can be inferred with that label.

3.4 "The Blank Wall"

The last category offered in the chapter is "The Blank Wall". Here, Hussey defines it as women who do not get involved in the conversation or who do not formulate enough to have longer conversations.

The Blank Wall gives you nothing to go on, just simple, lame responses that give him no material to work with.

This excerpt, however, also highlights that this vague content does not provide him with information to have follow-up conversations. In this case, it can be inferred that women are expected to include useful or interesting information, and thus the conversation will flow. The following script depicts that:

E.g. Him: Just made cupcakes with my auntie today. I am a domestic goddess! ;)

Her: Nice! I love cupcakes!

Him: Shall I save one for you? Which frosting do you like?

Her: Vanilla!

Image 5. Matthew Hussey's negative example of "The Blank Wall"

Yet, texting depends on two people (in this case) to make the conversation flow, not only depends on one person. Hussey then infers that the use of "lame responses" might indicate a

lack of interest whereas Halliday, Hasan, and Christie (1989) explain that how a text is interpreted might be due to the context or the situation. Hussey then includes the following:

*After three or four of these texts, a guy will simply assume you're either **not interested** or you have **nothing to say** and that **you're dull**. **He's doing the heavy lifting** and getting bland, dull responses in return.*

In this case, it should not be expected for neither men nor women to always provide longer responses to continue with the conversation. There might be more things happening at the time of texting which interfere with the flow of the conversation such as their jobs, schools, chores, to mention a few. Thus, it should not be inferred that these “lame responses” indicate a lack of interest from neither of them. Then Hussey suggests the following type of responses:

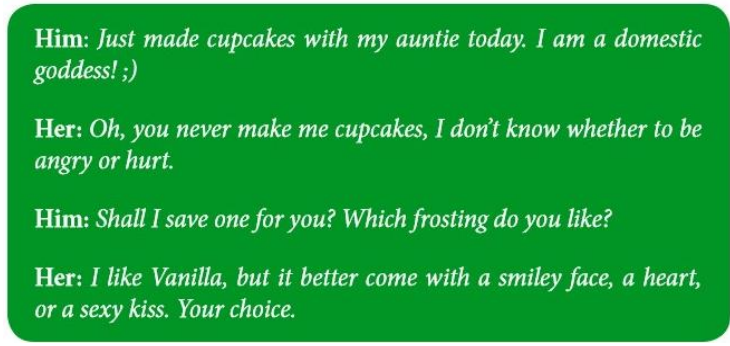


Image 6. Matthew Hussey's positive example of “The Blank Wall”

Hussey here provided an example that included more flirting between man and woman. It again has a sexual connotation that Hussey explains will eventually create a connection. However, the example portrays men in a different role “the domestic goddess” which shows how men can also be part of tasks that are normally considered for women.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, Hussey's chapter provides women with advice on how to respond to men and categorizes them at the same time. This article focuses on how women are described from feminist ideology. To some extent, some of the categorizations provided in the article portray an inferior or submissive stereotype of women who need to follow certain scripts to “get the man”. This article also explained how certain roles and ideologies are involved in each category: women should avoid certain topics; women are less intelligent when overusing certain things in a conversation; women should portray themselves as inferior to men, to mention a few. Yet, it is important to remember that the goal of Hussey's book is to help women to get the man. Therefore, the categorizations used in this chapter might not indicate a type of discrimination, but a marketing strategy to target certain people whose relations might not succeed due to specific patterns or “mistakes” they make. Finally, this article sheds light on how culture, context, and ideologies may influence the way a woman should behave and how this may also have an effect on their identity.

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