

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES & INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
FIRST SEMESTER FINAL EXAMINATION PAPER
DECEMBER 2015

TITLE OF PAPER: LANGUAGE MEANING AND USE

COURSE CODE: ENG 203/ IDE-ENG 203

TIME ALLOWED: TWO (2) HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1. This paper has three (3) questions.**
- 2. Question 1 is compulsory.**
- 3. Choose one other question between Question 2 and Question 3.**
- 4. Question 1 is worth thirty (30) marks and Questions 2 and 3 are worth twenty (20) marks each.**
- 5. Presentation of answers should follow linguistic conventions where necessary, and good language use will attract credit.**

This paper should not be opened until permission has been granted by the invigilator.

QUESTION 1

(a) Read the conversation below, and answer the questions that follow.

Speaker A: Have you washed the floor and done the dishes?

Speaker B: I've washed the floor.

Speaker A: Then tell me when you decide to do it.

Speaker B: I am not your maid.

Speaker A: Well, I thought I could help.

Speaker B: Oh, sorry about that! Thanks, thanks, thanks!

Questions

(i) What is the implicature of each of these responses?

"I've washed the floor" [2 marks]

"I am not your maid". [2 marks]

(ii) In the conversation, pragmatic failure has occurred. Explain in detail what may have been the cause of this failure. [8 marks]

(iii) Due to the pragmatic failure, Speaker B felt there was damage on her face want. Which face want did Speaker B feel was damaged? Explain. [3 marks]

(iv) Speaker B has in turn damaged the face want of Speaker A. Explain how that has happened, and give the politeness strategy the speaker has used to mitigate the effect of the damage. [5 marks]

(b) With the aid of examples, define the following terms:

(i) Entailment [2 marks]

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| (ii) | Connotation | [2 marks] |
| (iii) | Presupposition | [2 marks] |
| (iv) | Analytic sentence | [2 marks] |
| (v) | Polysemy | [2 marks] |

[TOTAL: 30 MARKS]

QUESTION 2

Componential analysis is an approach to the study of meaning which breaks down a word's intension into smaller semantic features. Answer the questions that follow, using the words: **bull, cow, man, boy, woman and girl**.

- (a) Provide at least three semantic features associated with each of these words.
[9 marks]
- (b) Group the words into two semantic classes, and give the features that have informed each grouping.
[4 marks]
- (c) Discuss one merit and one demerit of componential analysis in explaining how meaning is represented in the mental lexicon. Use examples to illustrate your answer.
[7 marks]

[TOTAL: 20 MARKS]

QUESTION 3

- (a) Using the principle of compositionality, explain why the sentence below may not be acceptable to speakers of the English language. [5 marks]

John is a kind-hearted bachelor who takes care of his liquid wife.

- (b) Under what conditions can a sentence be acceptable to speakers of a language regardless of the violation of the principle of compositionality? Illustrate your answer using examples. [5 marks]
- (c) Explain the semantic ambiguity of the following sentences by providing at least two sentences that paraphrase the multiple meanings of each.

Example: She can't bear children.

The sentence can mean either **"she can't tolerate children"** or **she can't give birth to children."**

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| (i) | Is he really that kind? | [2 marks] |
| (ii) | It takes a good ruler to make a straight line. | [2 marks] |
| (iii) | You should see her shop. | [2 marks] |
| (iv) | I said I would file it on Thursday. | [2 marks] |
| (v) | The police were urged to stop drinking by the fifth. | [2 marks] |

[TOTAL: 20 MARKS]