MEANING IN "NEAMING": THE PROCESSING OF WORD PUNS INVOLVING MORPHOLOGICAL AND SYNTACTIC TRANSPOSITION USING THE "REVERSE PRINCIPLE"

By

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Dedication

To my wife Zalerapi and my son Unkhankhu.

Acknowledgements

Declaration

I, Chimwemwe Mayinde Mystic Kamanga, hereby declare that except for the advisory contribution of my supervisor, Professor Heike Tappe, and the contribution of sources duly acknowledged, this treatise is my own work. It has never been presented for any degree of another university.

Signature

Date

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Abstract

The word pun is one of the figures of speech that people employ in everyday communication and especially in literary works in order to advance intricate aspects of meaning that may not be easy to express using 'plain' language. The word pun generally provides a speaker with an opportunity to mean more while saying less instead of saying more while meaning less. Considering the facts that people primarily communicate in order to exchange meaning, and that meaning can be very elusive and controversial, there are two questions about the use of the word pun. Can people understand the meaning in word puns? And, if they can, how do they do so? These questions are especially relevant in the case of literary works because the author is far removed from the audience. As such, there is no room for the negotiation of meaning.

The current study probes these two questions by considering two types of word pun, Chiasmus and Metathesis, which are composed through the transposition of the morphological and or syntactic order of expressions. At a theoretical level, the study explores and explains the common underlying processes that guide the comprehension of the word puns. Further than that, it demonstrates through a case study that people are able to understand the word puns by using what the study proposes to be *the reverse principle.* Ultimately, the study illustrates how people derive meaning of utterances through interplay of the different sub-systems of the language system. The word puns in this study present a good context in which to explore interfaces between semantics and other language fields by linking insights drawn from different fields of linguistic enquiry to the concept of meaning and demonstrating how aspects of all these come together in explaining the processing of word puns that involve morphological and syntactic transposition. Additionally, the study demonstrates that people understand the world by relating concepts to one another because of the underlying relationships existing between concepts and by virtue of the relationships that hold between and among words or word parts.

Meaning in "Neaming"

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Chapter 1. Overview of the research

1.1 Introduction

Linguistic communication is perhaps the most important activity of human life because most of human beings' daily undertakings depend much on whether or not speakers are able to share different pieces of information, which is the basic aim behind linguistic communication. A great deal of such vital information is transmitted through the medium of language, which "considered as an abstract object, is a mapping of sentences to meaning" (Gauker, 2003: 17). Therefore, meaning, the essence of linguistic communication, is an essential aspect of human life.

Although meaning is such an important and prevalent aspect of human life, it is not one of the easiest to conceive and perceive; that is, to encode and decode. There are a lot of intricacies surrounding the encoding and decoding of meaning that create a lot of controversy in the literature on meaning (e.g. Gauker, 2003; Schiffer, 2003; Löbner, 2002; Fromkin, 2000; Kearns, 2000; Obler and Gjeslow, 1999; Trask, 1999; Lyons, 1995; Beedam, 1986; Linsky, 1972; Terwilliger, 1968). This is to say that different scholars approach the concept of meaning in different ways thereby focusing on certain aspects of it and 'sidelining' others. This may create an impression that those aspects that are 'ignored' or not emphasised are not as important as or less important than those emphasised. The controversy, to a certain extent, also emanates from differences among scholars in the way they apply the basic terminology that is used in discussions of meaning; for example, in cases where the same terminology is defined differently by different scholars. However, the one point that comes out clearly is that human beings are able to understand each other with the most amazing kind of ease; as though the whole enterprise of encoding and decoding meaning was a mere game of cards.

Lyons (1995) points out three very important points with regard to people's understanding of meaning. The first point is that there is an essential, though

indirect, connection between what people mean or intend and what the words they use are conventionally held to mean. Secondly, there is an intrinsic and possibly more direct, connection between what people mean and what they mean to say. Thirdly, there is however, a distinction between saying what one means and meaning what one says. From these few points, it can be seen that meaning is such a complex concept that can possibly not be described succinctly. But, whatever the view of meaning one holds does not matter because all the senses in which the word *meaning* is used are interconnected in various ways.

Different theories have been advanced in order to explain linguistic meaning. Lyons (1995: 40) briefly outlines some philosophical theories of meaning, which seek to provide answers to the question "what is meaning?" by pointing out the main focus of each. In the referential or denotational theory (e.g. Dowty, 1979), the meaning of an expression is what the expression refers to, denotes or stands for. The ideational or mentalistic theory (e.g. Strauss and Quinn, 1997) purports that the meaning of an expression is the idea or concept associated with it in the mind of anyone who knows and understands the expression. In the case of the behaviourist theory (e.g. Cobley, 2001), the meaning of an expression is either the stimulus that evokes it or the response that it evokes, or a combination of both, on a particular occasion. The meaning of an expression in the meaning-in-use theory (e.g. Croft, 2000) is determined by, if not identical with, its use in a particular language. In the verificational theory (e.g. Stadler, 2003), the meaning of an expression is determined by the verifiability of the sentences or propositions containing it. And, the truth conditional theory (e.g. Glock, 2003) regards the meaning of an expression as its contribution to the truth-conditions of the sentence containing it. It is important to note however, that no single theory of meaning presents an exhaustive scope and an all-encompassing dimension of the concept of *meaning* because of its diversity. Any hypothesis or theory about meaning is rendered 'porous' in the face of critical questions regarding the nature of meaning. It is not surprising therefore that in the recent past, more focused,

approaches to the study of meaning have sprung up within and across the major disciplines of meaning study in a bid to address some shortcomings in the traditional approaches. Cognitive semantics (e.g. Stockwell, 2002 and Holmquist, 1999) is one development in this regard. In the broadest sense, meaning is divided into two categories (Löbner, 2002). On the one hand, focus is on linguistic meaning; that is, meaning inherent in language, which is the basis of semantics. On the other hand, focus is placed on communicative intention; that is, the purpose inherent in particular use of language, which is the basis of pragmatics.

In the light of such heterogeneity, a corroborative or integrated and contextual approach to the study of meaning appears to be more comprehensive. In addition to that, in order for better digestion of the concept, 'smaller bites at the concept' are more manageable. This study deals with the interaction between two 'pieces or bites of the meaning-pie': *the principle of compositionality* (Partee, 2004; Frege 1891, cited by Jackobson, 1996; Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 1996) and *conceptual metaphor* (Bailey, 2003; Condon, 1999; Lakoff, 1993, 1991; Chandler, 1990; Lakoff and Turner, 1989; Kittay, 1987; Lakoff, 1980; Ortony, 1979; Reddy, 1979). It is important to note that this study draws insights from different and sometimes even conflicting theories. For instance, the conflict between holism and compositionality (Blitner, Hendriks and de Hoop, n.d. and Pagin, 1997). The study also combines insights from the traditional theory of metaphor and those from the contemporary theory of metaphor. The study does not in any way attempt to resolve any of the controversies regarding the concept of meaning in relation to the word puns under study. However, the study recognizes and upholds the distinction between *intrinsic meaning*, which is commonly associated with semantics and *meaning in use*, which is commonly associated with pragmatics and discourse analysis (Lyons, 1995). The two types of meaning are complementary in that people use their intrinsic knowledge of meaning in order to apply it and understand its application in real life communication.

The study explores these two theoretical positions by looking at how meaning is constructed and decoded in special linguistic expressions, word puns[1], which are created by transposing the morphological or syntactic order of utterances. The study reveals interesting interactions in the language system at the different levels of language structure; that is, morphology, phonology, semantics, syntax and pragmatics. It is these interactions that make possible the creation and interpretation of the word puns. The focus of this study is, however, more on the interpretation of the word puns than on the creation. There are two parts of the study: a theoretical and an empirical one. The theoretical part of the study postulates the underlying theoretical mechanisms that come into effect in the process of creating and interpreting the word puns. This is largely based on the theoretical explanation of meaning that is provided by different scholars of linguistic meaning mentioned above. The empirical part of the study presents results of a case study in which subjects' interpretation of word puns of the nature described above was investigated through a questionnaire and follow-up interviews. The following are the hypotheses of the case study:

1. Generally, people interpret the word puns under study by using *the reverse principle*. Roughly, the principle states that the meaning of an expression which is constructed by transposing the morphological or syntactic order of another expression is the reverse of the meaning of the transposed expression.

2. People are able to understand the word puns because the word puns invoke images beyond the words that are used in their construction in that the transposition of the morphological or syntactic order of an expression is deemed to represent the transposition of its meaning. As such, one concept is understood in terms of another.

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[1] The term *word pun* is adapted from Hammond and Hughes (1978). The word puns are further explained in section 1.2 below.

This treatise is a report of the findings from both the theoretical review and the case study. The first chapter of the treatise comprises a general introduction to the study. It points out the theoretical issues underlying the concept of meaning, especially from the point of view of interpretation, and the nature of the word puns under study. Precisely, the two positions that make up the core of the research and the interaction between the two with regard to the word puns are explained in detail. The rationale behind the research is also given in this chapter.

In the second chapter, a review of literature related to the current research is presented. This is mainly a review of some of the concepts that directly relate to the encoding and decoding of the word puns. Also included in the chapter are explanations of how each of the relevant concepts relates to the word puns under study.

The theoretical framework in which the current research is designed is outlined in the third chapter of the treatise. *The reverse principle*, which the study proposes to be the underlying mechanism that people use in order to interpret the word puns under study, is also explained here.

This chapter is followed by a chapter in which the methodology of the research is expounded. This includes the aims of the research, its procedure, the research questions and hypotheses, the location and sample of the case study, and the limitations of the research as a whole.

Chapter five of the treatise contains the results of the case study. These results are analysed in the light of the theoretical issues reviewed in the study in order to explain the interpretation of the word puns.

The final chapter of the treatise is a discussion of the patterns emanating from the results of the case study and how these are linked to the theoretical

background of the research. The chapter also includes conclusions that are drawn from the research findings and some recommendations for further research.

1.2 The word puns under study

The word puns under study in this research are instances of conceptual metaphor in as far as understanding one concept in terms of another is concerned. They always include a relation of two concepts to one another in such a way that one is perceived as the 'reverse' of the other (compare examples below) by virtue of a transposition of the morphological or syntactic structure of one expression in order to create the other. That is to say that people are made to understand the reversal of morphological or syntactic structure in two strings of language (which are always presented back to back) to be a 'reversal' of the meanings conveyed by the two strings. These relationships are brought about by morphological, phonological or orthographic similarities among the words or parts thereof that are used in the formation of the utterances. It is common that multimorphemic word sequences are highly embedded in connections with other words containing such morphemes (Bybee, 2001:19, cited by Vallès, 2003). Put differently, the mental lexicon triggers a network based on similarity relations among words sharing the same morphemes, phonemes or letters in orthographic form. Consequently, this network triggers a network of the corresponding concepts that are denoted by these related words, hence meaning relations can be established among them. It is these relations that are exploited in the word puns in order to relate the two concepts to one another. The term *meaning in "neaming"* is used in this study to capture the idea of transposition upon which the word puns in the study are created. The 'word' "neaming" is actually created by reversing the order of the word parts [mea] and [ni] into [nea] and [mi].

Depending on the exact nature of the relationship among the words used, the two elements that are transposed are referred to by other terms: they are called

pseudo-morphemes[2] if they are not necessarily morphemes, even though they might appear as such in a particular case. For example, in the expressions *return of the mark* and *remark of the turn*, the 'word parts' *-re*, *-turn* and *-mark* in the instances of the words *return* and *remark* are not necessarily morphemes, even though they very much seem so. The two elements that are transposed are referred to as *morpho-phonemes* if their relationship is based on a combination of morphology and phonology. And, finally, they are referred to as *letters* in cases where their relationship is based on orthography. A good example is the case of the words *cheap* and *peach*. The two juxtaposed elements, [ch] and [p], are 'punnable' by virtue of being not only units of sound that are similar, but also orthographic units that are similar. The implication is that this study explores how 'reverse meaning' is created and decoded through the use of 'reverse morphology' and 'reverse syntax'.

The word puns can be explained in terms of Hammond and Hughes' (1978) theory of *punnology* in which the authors expound different types of word pun and word play alongside visual punning. The theory says that word puns can be seen as 'accidents of language' that invest certain words with the same sounds. A word pun is created when someone (a punster) notices such 'accidents of language' and draws two disparate meanings together in each punning word, and orchestrates these absurd relations into a capricious whole (Hammond and Hughes, 1978). In other words, the punster creates relations between concepts, objects or thoughts that are denoted by words that sound the same or that have some sounds in common.

The current study deals with the processing of two specific types of word pun, which, borrowing the terminology of Hammond and Hughes (1978), are referred to as *Chiasmus* and *Metathesis*. It is important to note that both types of word

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[2]   A pseudo-morpheme is a word part that is not necessarily a morpheme, though it appears as one.

pun divert from the cover definition of word pun given in Hammond and Hughes' theory of punnology.

In a Chiasmus, two phrases are juxtaposed such that the order of the words in the first is reversed in the second (Hammond and Hughes, 1978). Thus the words are crossed; and by that token, the focal words do double duty. One example is "There is a lot of blood in your alcohol"[3]. In this utterance, the positions of the words *blood* and *alcohol* are deliberately switched in order to create a picture of a critical situation of an alcoholic; that is to say that in the alcoholic's body, alcohol performs the duties of blood due to abuse of the substance. Chiasmus is, in this study, referred to as *syntactic transposition* because it involves the swapping of positions of whole words in sentences.

In a Metathesis, words in a phrase exchange some of their letters (phonemes) in order to form new words in a new phrase (Hammond and Hughes, 1978). This can be exemplified using the expression *return of the mark*. Moving the pseudo-morpheme *-turn* from the word *return* into the position of the morpheme *mark*, and moving the morpheme *mark* into the position of the pseudo-morpheme *-turn* yields the expression *remark of the turn*. In the context which this word pun is used, *return of the mark* denotes the reappearance of a mark left by an abortion (that is, damage to the uterus) that a young girl had in the past, in her married life in the form of failure to conceive. Consequently, people around her pass all sorts of remarks about the turn of events in her married life; hence *remark of the turn*[4]. Another form of metathesis involves words such as *teach* and *cheat*. The two words use the same letters, which are arranged in different orders and thus the resulting differences in meaning can be employed in a word pun: for example, "They don't teach our children; they cheat them". The questionnaire that was used in the empirical part of the research only includes Metathesis of the latter

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[3] This is a common expression used in reference to alcoholics or "near-alcoholics", especially within the beer-drinking community, in Malawi.

[4] The Metathesis is taken from my unpublished short story titled "Return of the mark (Remark of the turn)".

type. In this study, Metathesis is referred to as *morphological transposition* because it involves the swapping of morphemes or morpho-phonemes.

It is assumed in the study that whatever type of meaning advanced by a particular employment of word pun of this nature, people will be able to interpret them in a similar manner to the way they interpret any other linguistic expression in communication. That is to say, they will work out the meaning of the expressions in which the word pun is used by decoding the meanings of the words that are used in the construction of the expressions both individually and collectively. As they do so, they will consider the composition or combinatorics that comes into play in order for the expressions to be effective. And so, they will be able to see the relationship between the concepts or thoughts that are represented by the two strings of language that are juxtaposed. Therefore, they will be able to construct a proposition for the expression initiated by the word pun whose truth conditions determine a possible world in which the proposition is true, from the 'readily available' (real-world) proposition that is denoted by the expression in which language is canonically used.

The word puns in this study demonstrate how human language, because of its generative nature, enables interlocutors to use the manner in which parts of utterances are combined to figure out meaning by using generative grammar, "a code that is used to translate between orders of words and combinations of thoughts" (Pinker, 1994: 82). This means that grammar provides a template that can be fed with different morphological and syntactic elements in order to come up with meaningful strings of language. This is possible because "each person's brain contains a lexicon of words and the concepts they stand for (a mental dictionary) and a set of rules that combine the words to convey relationships among concepts (a mental grammar)" (Pinker, 1994: 85). A mental grammar is a discrete combinatorial system that allows for a discrete number of words and or word parts to be combined to create larger structures with properties that are different from those of their component parts. The principle of compositionality

(Frege 1891, cited by Jackobson, 1996; Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 1996; Partee, 2004; and Löbner, 2002) is therefore very essential in the construction and decoding of meaning in the word puns.

The word puns can be explained in terms of minimalist principles, which according to Tappe and Härtl (2003), are subject to economy and explicitness. In the minimalist framework (Chomsky, 1995; Radford, 2000; cited by Tappe and Härtl 2003), lexical items enter the process of syntactic construction fully equipped with their grammatically relevant features including categorical, semantic, argument structure, and thematic features (Chomsky, 1995; Radford, 2000; cited by Tappe and Härtl 2003). The punster manipulates these and other features, especially morphological and phonological features, at the level of the two basic mechanisms of syntactic construction, *merge* and *move*, in order to achieve different meaning effects. Additionally, the fact that people understand the world by relating concepts to one another as stipulated in the theory of conceptual metaphor (Chandler, 1995; Lackoff and Turner, 1989; Lakoff, 1993, 1991; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Ortony, 1979; Reddy, 1979; Richards, 1936, cited by Condon, 1999) also helps a speaker to mean a lot while saying a little, and the listener to be able to read in between the lines, because of the underlying relationships existing between the concepts the speaker encodes through the employment of the word pun, but also, by virtue of the relationships that hold between and among words or word parts. However, meaning can be elusive on the part of the comprehender when word puns are used.

1.3 Rationale behind the research

In my experience, Chiasmus and Metathesis are some of the rare figures of speech that are employed in everyday communication and especially in literary works in order to aid people to advance intricate aspects of meaning that may not be easy to express using 'plain' language. I for one have used and always do use both of these in my poetry, short stories and plays (unpublished).

It is not clear however, whether or how people are able to understand the meaning of utterances in which these strategies are employed, considering that meaning can be very elusive and controversial. These questions are especially relevant in the case of literary works because the author is far removed from the audience. As such, meaning negotiation is not possible since there is no direct (immediate) feedback between the two parties.

This research primarily investigates the following questions:

- Can people understand the meaning of expressions in which word puns involving morphological and syntactic transposition are employed?

- How do people go about deciphering the meaning of such expressions if they can?

These questions are looked at both theoretically and practically. At the theoretical level, the research aims to find out whether there are common underlying processes guiding the comprehension of the two types of word pun; and if any, how these comprehension processes can be explained theoretically. At the practical level, the case study conducted as part of the research aims to enquire whether indeed people can understand the word puns; and if they can, whether they can do so in line with the hypotheses advanced in this study. It is envisaged that the findings of the research will contribute to the body of knowledge on the nature of meaning; especially as regards the interfaces that exist at the different levels of the language system.

Chapter 2. Literature review

There are a number of theoretical issues addressed in the literature on meaning that have a bearing on the creation and interpretation of the word puns under study in this research. This literature review briefly outlines some of them in order to shed light on the conditions that necessitate the favourable conditions for the creation and interpretation of the word puns. However, focus is placed on the interpretation of the word puns.

On the basis of the different theories of meaning, the term *meaning* is used in a variety of ways and contexts in the literature. But, one thing that is clear in all the different ways and contexts in which meaning is viewed is that most natural language utterances have a wide range of meanings or interpretations. Trask (1999) defines meaning as the characteristic of a language form which allows it to pick out some aspect of the non-linguistic world. However, in real time communication, people exchange meaning through strings of linguistic forms rather than isolated lexemes. This means that meaning exists at a lexical level as well as at a sentential level.

At the lexical level, people consider the meaning of lexemes by comparing the linguistic forms with pieces of 'objective reality'[5] which they think the lexemes refer to, and on the basis of this, they reach a judgement as to what the linguistic forms mean (Beedam, 1986). *Objective reality* should be understood as mediated by conceptual representations (Tappe (2006) personal communication).

At the sentential level, people actually go through a process of mentally synthesising the syntactic behaviour of the linguistic forms, by noting what other linguistic forms they can be combined with; and on the basis of that, they come

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[5] It is important to note that reality is a controversial concept as it varies depending on a number of factors.

up with judgements about their meanings (Beedam, 1986). Beedam refers to the former as the referential assessment of meaning, and the latter as the structural assessment of meaning.

Meaning can also be defined as the actual aspects of the non-linguistic world that are picked out by linguistic forms or utterances (Lyons, 1995). Therefore, the term *meaning* encompasses both the system by which aspects of the non-linguistic world are represented by the utterance of certain linguistic forms and combinations thereof, and the actual representations of the non-linguistic world by the relevant linguistic forms and combinations of the linguistic forms. It is important to note that one's knowledge of meaning encompasses her/his knowledge of what an entity means as well as her/his ability to use that entity and to understand the use of it by others. Schiffer (2003) elaborates on this point by saying that meaning in a public language is a matter of how an expression is used or apt to be used in communication; while meaning in a system of mental representations, what he calls a *lingua mentis*, is a matter of how the expression is used or apt to be used in thought.

In the literature (e.g. Gauker, 2003; Schiffer, 2003; Löbner, 2002; Kearns, 2000; Fromkin, 2000; Trask, 1999; Lyons, 1995; Beedam, 1986; Linsky, 1972), the technical term *reference* is applied to the use of a linguistic form or expression to represent something; that is, the meaning of the form or expression. The entity referred to by a form or expression is called its *referent*. A distinction is thus made between the denotation of a linguistic form or expression, which refers to the actual or existent things to which that form or expression applies; and the connotation of a linguistic form or expression, which refers to the things delimited by any correct definition of the form or expression (Lewis, 1972). The denotation of a form could be real or fictitious, usual or unusual, and it may even be unimaginable because it has not yet been invented (Löbner, 2002). The former is utterance-independent and it is also called the *extension* of a form or expression, while the latter is utterance-dependent and also called the *intention* of a form or

expression (Lyons, 1995; Lewis, 1972). The word puns under study include all kinds of referents.

Depending on the denotation and connotation of linguistic forms chosen, an utterance is said to make a proposition which is a situational concept. This concept may or may not determine a real-world category (Gauker, 2003; Löbner, 2002). That is to say that a proposition is true or false depending on whether the situational concept does or does not determine the category, or whether a possible-world category can be constructed to meet its truth conditions. During communication, there are many propositions that a speaker believes, and many propositions that the speaker expects the hearer to interpret the speaker as believing as a result of the speaker's speech act or utterance. A proposition is a situational concept expressed by an utterance, which the speaker expects the hearer to recognise as the content of his or her belief, on the basis of the choice of words and syntactic structure employed (Gauker, 2002). This is arrived at through the direct application of the shared understanding of the speaker and the hearer, of the meaning of the words and the syntactic structure employed in the composition of an utterance.

The construction and comprehension of the word puns under study is evidence of the interaction of the three levels of linguistic meaning: "*expression meaning, utterance meaning* and *communicative meaning*" (Löbner, 2002: 8). Expression meaning is the meaning of words, phrases or sentences taken out of any particular context, in their general sense. Expression meaning "may be subject to certain meaning shifts" based on the reference and truth advanced in particular occasions (Löbner, 2002: 8). Utterance meaning is the meaning which comes about when a sentence with its expression meaning is actually used in a concrete context of utterance, whereby the identity of referents and the truth conditions of the situational proposition are determined. The context includes the speaker and the addressee(s) of an utterance, the time and the place at which the utterance is produced and or received; and the facts given when the

utterance is produced or received (Löbner, 2002). Communicative meaning is the meaning of an utterance as a communicative act in a given social setting. As they encode their message, speakers choose their words in order to achieve specific communicative intentions; and this is the meaning that addressees are mainly concerned with when they interpret language use (Löbner, 2002). This is also the case regarding the word puns in this study.

As already mentioned above, the concept of *meaning* has been widely researched from different perspectives. Semantics is concerned with the meanings of individual words in language as well as the meanings of different combinations of words, which depend on the manner in which the words are combined in linguistic constructions (Partee, 2004; Gauker, 2003; Fromkin, 2000; Kearns, 2000; Jackobson, 1996; Lyons, 1995; Jackendoff, 1990; Levelt, 1989; Baldinger, 1980; Linsky, 1972). Taken together, the two types of meaning form the core of meaning, or the starting point from which the whole meaning of a particular utterance is constructed (Kearns, 2000). According to Jackendoff (1990), a formal theory of meaning must be expressive enough to account for the distinctions of meaning made by language users, and for the semantic relations between the words. In other words, the theory must provide the basis on which speakers relate words, phrases and sentences to their understanding of the nonlinguistic world, so that they can make judgements of reference and truth (Jackendoff, 1990). The word puns under study are evidence for this kind of processing: different combinations of the same lexical items or parts thereof encode different understandings of the nonlinguistic world. The word puns illustrate how the "various aspects of the syntax of a sentence are determined by the meaning of the predicator in the sentence" (Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 1996:487).

In pragmatics, the study of *meaning* focuses on how the context in which language is used determines the intention of an interlocutor in saying what they say the way they do (Löbner, 2002; Lyons, 1995; Thomas, 1995; Mey, 1993;

Cruse, 1990). The focus in pragmatics is thus on the communicative functions fulfilled by language. During linguistic communication, interlocutors assume that each one of them is following the same guiding principle, unless they receive some indication to the contrary. This principle, *the cooperative principle*, was first proposed by philosopher Paul Grice in 1967. The principle demands of interlocutors to make their contribution in accordance with the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which they are engaged (Grice, 1989). On the basis of this principle, interlocutors are able to make any other necessary inferences regarding the meaning of utterances apart from the denotations of the forms used. For instance, they are able to work out *implicature* and *deixis*. This partly explains the apparently amazing mutual ease with which people understand each other.

The cooperative principle is fundamental in the understanding of the word puns in the current study. Listeners and readers can only understand the expressions with reversed morphological and syntactic order if they appreciate them as meaningful in as far as the cooperative principle is concerned. That is, by regarding them to be in observance of the maxims (rules) stipulated in the cooperative principle; or, if not in observance of the rules, by regarding the flouting of the rule(s) to be part of the meaning intended by the speaker. This comes out clearly when one refers to the context in which the expressions are used. Otherwise, communication would break down and the interlocutor would reject the utterances as bizarre. This implies that when the participants interpret the word puns, they assume that the four maxims of the principle (i.e. quality, quantity, relevance and manner), are observed during the construction of the word puns. That is to say that they (listeners) believe the speaker to be saying the truth; using just enough information to make her/his meaning clear; and to be using relevant information to encode the meaning. As a result of that, they are aware that although one part of the expression (especially in Chiasmus) is not presented in the conventional manner of communicating in everyday language, it is used to mean something; and that it means exactly what the creator intends for

it to mean, just the way it is. Therefore, they use whatever clue they can get from what is said in order to find the meaning. The main clue is the very words that are used in the juxtaposed phrases; or, more precisely, the striking similarity between the structures of the two parts of the expression that are juxtaposed to create the pun.

At the heart of the definition of *meaning* lies the concept *concept*, which is concerned with the resources that make possible human knowledge and experience of the world (Jackendoff, 1990). In general, the word *concept* is used to refer to a mental representation that can serve as the meaning of an expression; or a mental representation of something that exists in someone's mind or in the real world. A concept can be a representation of an object, a thought or an idea (Jackendoff, 1999). Due to its creative nature, human language permits the invocation of a large variety of concepts through the production and comprehension of sentences.

In this light, communication is regarded as the placing of sentences in correspondence with concepts on the basis of the lexical items and the structures of sentences. Using Chomsky's (1986) distinction between E-language and I-language, Jackendoff (Jackendoff, 1990) distinguishes between two types of concepts: an I-concept is an entity within one's head, a private entity, a product of imagination that can be conveyed to others only through some means of communication; while an E-concept is a conventionalised concept, shared by a speech community, something that is spoken of as though it exists independently of who actually knows or grasps it. In other words, an I-concept refers to a mentally-represented concept, unique to an individual, which s/he fully knows; while an E-concept refers to a word meaning external to any individual, which s/he may only partially know (Jackendoff, 1990). The word puns in this study involve both types of concepts. They present both conventional concepts (E-concepts) denoted by canonical expressions and I-concepts that evoke possible

worlds, which have to be created on the basis of the relevant denotations of the normal-order expressions.

Another important term in considerations about the nature of *meaning* is the term *metaphor*. This study subscribes to the contemporary theory of metaphor by George Lakoff (1993). The theory, which according to Lakoff (1993) was based on work by Reddy (1979), states that "[...] metaphor is a major and indispensable part of our ordinary, conventional way of contemplating the world, and that our everyday behaviour reflects our metaphorical understanding of experience". In this theory, metaphor is viewed as cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system. Ortony (1979) concurs with Reddy by emphasising that knowledge of reality is a result of going beyond the information given no matter how it comes about. In processing the word puns under study here, comprehenders need to go beyond the information given in that they have to see the reversal of the morphological or syntactic order as a reversal or flipping of meaning.

According to the literature on metaphor (e.g. Gibbs Jr, 1999; Chandler, 1995; Lakoff, 1993, 1991; Lakoff and Turner, 1989; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Ortony, 1979; Reddy, 1979; Richards, 1936, cited by Condon, 1999), there are four components of metaphor. The first component is referred to as *tenor* or the *source domain*. This is the original concept, or the conceptual domain from which metaphorical expressions are drawn. The second component is referred to as *vehicle*: the second concept 'transported' to modify or transform the tenor. This is also known as the *target domain*. It is the conceptual domain that we try to understand using the source domain. The third component of metaphor is referred to as *ground*: the set of features common to the tenor and the vehicle. The last component is referred to as *tension*. This is the effort needed to span the gap between the tenor and the vehicle. Take the expression "Look how far we have come" as an example of the LOVE IS/AS A JOURNEY metaphor. In this expression, the tenor is the concept JOURNEY, while the vehicle is the concept LOVE. Features that are analogous between a journey and a love relationship

are what comprise the ground. For example, while in a journey there are various points or stages, so there are in love relationships: stages like dating, marriage proposal, engagement, wedding and so on. Tension is the effort that is required in order for one to come up with this link between the two concepts.

Chandler (1990) includes metaphor as one of the types of figurative language which he calls rhetorical tropes in his discussion of semiotics. Just like in the contemporary theory, he emphasises the point that rhetorical forms are deeply and unavoidably involved in the shaping of realities. He further says that rhetoric is not simply a matter of how thoughts are presented, but it has an influence on ways of thinking. To explicate this point, Chandler cites Lakoff (1989, 1983), who gives the example of the mental domain of LOVE, which can be conceptualised in terms of the mental domain of a journey or travelling. In other words, properties of the concept JOURNEY are used to understand properties of the concept LOVE. It is this that makes it possible for people to talk about different experiences in love using statements like "Let's go our separate ways", "Look how far we have come", "We are at the crossroads" (Lakoff, 1989, 1983), just to mention a few. These are examples of linguistic metaphor, which are motivated by conceptual metaphors and are the realisations that appear in everyday written and spoken forms (Bailey, 2003). Conceptual metaphors are super-ordinate, epistemic and semantic mappings that take the form of TARGET DOMAIN IS/AS SOURCE DOMAIN (Bailey, 2003). The conceptual metaphor behind the linguistic metaphors cited above is LOVE (target) IS/AS A JOURNEY (source). The current study explains the strategy employed in the creation of the word puns under study by borrowing from the theory of conceptual metaphor. That is to say that REVERSED MORPHOLOGICAL OR SYNTACTIC ORDER IS REVERSED MEANING. Besides, there is a specific metaphorical effect in each of the utterances in which morphological or syntactic transposition is used.

It is evident in the foregoing paragraphs that the central function of linguistic communication is to enable a speaker to convey his or her thoughts to a hearer.

Every communication event begins with a communicative intention; and the communicator formulates the intention by employing both the appropriate lexical items and the right structure (Levelt, 1998) in such a way that will allow the cooperative addressee(s) to recognise the intention. As such, there are certain cognitive processes that come into play during language production and comprehension as regards choices of the relevant information to encode and decode communicative intentions, depending on the meaning relationships that exist between and among the lexical items used. The speaker and the listener interact at the level of the mind during meaning production (which is the creation of a situational concept) and comprehension (which is the decoding of that situational concept). In other words, depending on the type of meaning relationships that hold between and among lexical items, a speaker chooses the right lexical items as well as the right lexical arrangement, which will convey the intended meaning to the listener; and the listener deduces this particular meaning based on the understanding that the speaker chose the particular lexical items and arrangement in order to convey the particular meaning.

Levelt (1989) proposes that speech production takes place in three relatively distinct stages: the conceptualiser, the formulator and the articulator (cc Levelt, Roelofs and Meyer, n.d; Snodgrass and Tsivkin, 1994). The conceptualiser generates a preverbal message, which contains information about meaning intentions that may be realised through speech. At this level, a speaker operates in the 'mentalese mode' (Pinker, 1994) or the 'language of thought mode' (Fodor, 1995). The preverbal message contains conceptual characteristics that necessitate the selection of a set of lemmas. A lemma is a morphological part of an item's lexical information, in which conceptual information is linked to grammatical function[6] (Levelt, 1989). Once the appropriate lemmas have been selected, they are combined into a well-formed sentence, through a process

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[6] The term grammatical function has to be understood to encompass phonological, semantic and pragmatic information associated with the selected lemma as meaning involves an interaction among these different levels of the language system.

referred to as 'grammatical encoding'. The result of this process is a surface sentence bearing all the properties of all the lemmas selected. Following grammatical encoding, 'phonological encoding' takes place. This is a process whereby information associated with the selected lemmas is matched with phonologically encoded word frames. Consequently, particular lexemes are selected for articulation. Speech comprehension, the process through which meaning is inferred, can be regarded to involve the same processes as speech production, but in reverse order (De Bot, Lowie and Verspoor, 2005).

It is important to note that during lemma selection, activation spreads across phonologically and semantically or otherwise, related lexemes (Valles, 2003; Levelt, 2001; Reeves, Hirsh-Parsek and Golinkoff, 2001; Costa, Colome and Caramazza, 2000; Levelt, 1989). Put differently, the mental lexicon triggers a network based on similarity relations among lexemes sharing the same morphemes, phonemes, or meanings; which triggers a network of the corresponding lemmas and concepts that are denoted by these related lexemes. It is this network among lemmas that is used to create word puns. This study does not attempt to determine the exact stage at which the 'reversal' or 'flipping' of the morphology, phonology, semantics or the syntax takes place.

The literature reviewed demonstrates that meaning derives from the interplay of a number of factors, which in turn demonstrates that there are various interfaces between semantics and other language components such as morphology, phonology, syntax and pragmatics. The word puns in this study present a good context in which to explore such interfaces. This study links insights drawn from different fields of linguistic enquiry to the concept of meaning by demonstrating how aspects of all these come together in explaining the processing of word puns that involve morphological and syntactic transposition. Therefore, it is in this sense that this research fills a gap in the literature on linguistic meaning. It shows how language is used for thinking together, for collectively making sense of experience (Mercer, 2000) by examining the different resources that interlocutors

exploit in order to figure out the relevant meanings of the word puns. The study also points to the interfaces among the linguistic levels of morphology, phonology, semantics, pragmatics and syntax, which are also utilised in the creation and decoding of the word puns.

Chapter 3. Theoretical framework

Two of the reasons why communication is said to be perhaps the most intricate activity of human life are *the problem of expressibility* and *the problem of comprehension*. That is to say that while speakers are faced with the problem of finding the best way to express their thoughts clearly, listeners are faced with the problem of comprehending the exact meaning intended by the speaker.[7] During many occasions in communication, speakers find it difficult to figure out words that can properly and precisely express their thoughts. In such cases, just as in many other cases of communication; in order "to get information into a listener's head in a reasonable amount of time, a speaker can encode only a fraction of the message into words and count on the listener to fill in the rest" (Pinker, 1994:81). One of the major reasons for the problem of expressibility on the part of the speaker and comprehension on the part of the listener is that "there are far more concepts than there are words..." (Pinker, 1994: 82). In other words, there is no one to one relationship between concepts and words. As such, interlocutors have to make the most of the words at their disposal and the context of communication in which they are engaged.

However, human beings are able to utilise the creativity of language as well as their own creativity in various ways that help to minimise these problems, thus making communication possible and effective all the same. The word pun (metathesis and chiasmus in this case) is one of the ways which human beings can use in order to get around the problems of expressibility and comprehension. That is to say that based on the facts that meaning of utterances derives from the meaning of the individual words used as well as the manner in which they are combined; and that concepts or thoughts can be understood in terms of each other, people 'play around' with words in order to advance certain meaning effects, especially those meaning components that may be difficult to

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[7] The term *speaker* should be generally understood to refer to encoder or addressor, which includes writer; and the term *listener* should be generally understood to refer to decoder or addressee, which includes reader. The two parties are collectively referred to as *interlocutors*.

communicate or that may not come out as interestingly or clearly otherwise. Two different concepts (sometimes not necessarily different; for example in the case of paraphrase) are expressed by using virtually the same words or word parts arranged in different morphological or syntactic order.

The former point in the foregoing paragraph implies that firstly, each linguistic expression is assigned an interpretation as a function of the meaning of its parts; and secondly, the particular manner of combination used by the semantics is a mirror of the syntactic combinations (Jackobson, 1996). Therefore, one can 'read off' the semantics using the syntax (Jackobson, 1996). In other words, meaning derives from both the lexical properties of the words used to construct an utterance, which create a possible world denoted by the particular words, and the linguistic context in which the utterance is constructed. The listener is able to figure out the meaning of the reversed order expression using the new predication, which results from the reversal of lexical and syntactic order. For example, the predication in the expression *bridging the communication gap* is different from that in its reverse expression *gapping the communication bridge*, even though the argument structure is the same in both. This is because in the first case, the word *bridge* is realised as a verb in progressive form and the word *gap* as a head noun that combines with the modifier *communication* to form a compound noun; while in the other case, the converse is true.

The latter point implies that people understand the world by relating concepts to one another. That is to say that metaphor is used as "a linguistic means of bringing together and fusing into a unity diverse thoughts and thereby re-forming the perceptions of the world" (Kittay, 1987:6). Effectively, metaphor should be understood as one strategy that is used to make up for the gap between the number of concepts to be communicated and the number of words in language. By regarding one concept in terms of another, and consequently encoding one concept in terms of another, speakers are saved the burden of having to look for the appropriate words and structure for encoding every single concept that they

want to encode when there is an underlying relationship between or among the concepts involved. The overarching metaphor in the word puns under study here is one whereby the reversal of the morphological or syntactic order is held to represent the reversal of meaning in the two juxtaposed expressions. In the case of the example in the paragraph immediately above, while the first case creates an image of a gap being closed up, the second case creates an image of a gap being opened. The operating metaphor however is one of BRIDGE AS HARMONY or GAP AS ABSENCE OF HARMONY.

In a nutshell, on the one hand, the employment of the word puns under study here is an instance of a speaker only encoding a fraction of her or his message in words and counting on the listener to fill in the rest. On the other hand, it is an instance of expressing and understanding one concept in relation to another. The strategy helps the speaker to express herself or himself 'more easily' than if they would have to do so in a straight forward manner, although the clarity of the message may not be guaranteed.

There are a numbers of specific theoretical principles that can be said to come into play in order for the word puns to be created and decoded. These are the principle of compositionality, conceptual metaphor, argument structure (herein presented alongside compositionality), the cooperative principle, and minimalism. This section briefly explains how the first two principles contribute to the creation and decoding of the word puns under study since the others are explained in earlier pages. The principle of compositionality (Partee, 2004; Löbner, 2002; Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 1996; Frege 1891, cited by Jackobson, 1996; Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 1996; and Partee, 2004) states that the meaning of utterances derives from the individual meanings of words as well as the syntactic structure used. In more specific terms, "the expression meaning of a complex expression is determined by the lexical meaning of its components, their grammatical meanings and the syntactic structure of the whole" (Löbner, 2002: 15). The lexical meanings of the expression derive from the meanings of the

individual words as stored in the mental lexicon. The grammatical meaning of expressions is the meaning that the expressions advance by virtue of the grammatical forms of the lexical items used in the production of the expressions. The syntactic structure of expressions refers to the order in which the individual lexical items in the expressions are put together in accordance with the rules of the language. This is what reveals the *argument structure* of expressions (Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 1996).

The argument structure of utterances, which is directly reflected in the internal syntactic structure of verb phrases (Radford, 2004), plays a vital role in the decoding of meaning of utterances. The structure is initiated by the semantic relations that hold between entities in syntactic structure on the basis of the semantic properties of words used in the encoding of propositions. Semantic properties are parts of the meaning of words, which enable them to perform certain roles in larger syntactic structure. Propositions comprise a *predicate* and a set of *arguments*. A predicate is a concept that concerns one or more entities in an activity or event, while an argument is an expression denoting a participant in the relevant activity or event.

In order to describe argument structure adequately, the semantic role played by each of these arguments in relation to its predicate has to be described. The literature presents a 'universal typology'[8] of these roles. Radford (2004) cites Jackendoff, 1972; Filmore, 1968; and Gruber, 1965; in this light. Löbner (2002) agrees with Radford. The following are some of the semantic roles, also known as thematic roles. *Theme* refers to the entity that undergoes the effect of some action. *Agent* is the entity that instigates some action. *Experiencer* is the entity that experiences some physical or psychological state. *Locative* refers to the place in which something is situated or takes place. *Goal* refers to the entity that

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7. There is an ongoing debate as to whether there are indeed some universal thematic roles and which these are (Tappe (2006) personal communication).

represents the destiny of some other entity. *Source* is the entity from which something moves. And, *instrument* is the means by which some action is performed. These roles are assigned to the entities by the main verbs used in utterances. Knowledge of the thematic roles played by different entities used in the construction of an utterance goes a long way in aiding someone to figure out the meaning of the utterance as a whole. Knowledge of the thematic roles played by the various entities in the word puns helps the decoder quite a lot. This is because it is the changes in the roles played by the parts that are juxtaposed that effect the changes in the meaning of the utterances.

With regard to conceptual metaphor, this research draws on the theoretical position which stipulates that people understand the world by relating concepts to one another (Chandler, 1990), which forms the basis of the theory of *conceptual metaphor*. This study subscribes to the contemporary theory of metaphor by George Lakoff (1993) with regards to its explanation of the concept of meaning, although it also has elements of the traditional theory of metaphor, which regards metaphor to be a cover term for the different kinds of figurative language. The theory is based on work done by Reddy (1979, cited by Lakoff, 1993). It states that metaphor is a major and indispensable part of our ordinary, conventional way of contemplating the world, and that our everyday behaviour reflects our metaphorical understanding of experience. In this theory, metaphor is viewed as cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system. Ortony (1979) concurs with Reddy and Lakoff by emphasising that knowledge of reality, whether it is occasioned by perception, language, memory or anything else, is a result of going beyond the information given no matter how it comes about.

It is important however, to note that the application of conceptual metaphor in this study diverts from that of its proponents. The word puns under study do not necessarily involve the kind of cross-domain mapping between concepts as stipulated in the contemporary theory of conceptual metaphor. In decoding the word puns under study here, people need to go beyond the information given in

that they should see the transposition of the morphological or syntactic order as a reversal or flipping of meaning. Consequently, they should be able to 'calculate' the meaning of the reverse-order-utterance on the basis of the meaning of the normal-order-utterance. This is such because the encoder of the word puns exploits the inherent similarity that exists between the two concepts as well as the words that are used to express the concepts that are juxtaposed. The result is always a striking coincidence between perception and language such that it is easy for a listener to decode meaning from the clues that are evident in the similarities of language and conceptualisation.

3.1 The underlying mechanism in the comprehension of the word puns under study: *The reverse principle*

I propose that in order for people to interpret the meaning of utterances in which the morphological and syntactic order of words and parts thereof is transposed, they use a principle which in this research is termed *the reverse principle*. The principle states that:

> *If in an expression, the combination of lexical or morpho-phonological items is a transposition of the combination of the same lexical or morpho-phonological items in another expression, the conceptualisation invoked by the former expression is a transposition of the conceptualisation invoked by the corresponding original expression.*

That is to say that the conceptualisation that is invoked by one expression (T), in which lexical or morpho-phonemic items, for example, [C], [K] and [M], are arranged or combined in the format M K C is a transposition of the conceptualisation invoked by another expression (R), in which the same lexical or morpho-phonemic items [C], [K] and [M] are arranged or combined in the format C K M. Considering the example of *teach* and *cheat* given above, in the word *teach*, the pseudo-morphemes or letters [tea-] and [-ch] are arranged or

combined in the C K M format, while in the word *cheat*, the same pseudo-morphemes or letters are arranged in the inverse format M K C.

As mentioned already, the two expressions in such utterances can be, and are in this research, said to be reverses of one another, although in some cases, like that of *teach* and *cheat*, they are not absolute reverses of one another. The degree of reversal, which ranges from paraphrase to absolute antonym or opposite, is dependent on the nature of the concepts or meanings involved as determined by the context in which the utterances in question are used. The word *reverse* is preferred to competing terms because it encompasses the general effect that the mechanism in such word puns has on expressions. That is, reversing the conceptualisation; reversing grammatical function of words (in some cases); reversing grammatical properties and even class of words (in some cases), reversing position of words or parts thereof; and other effects.

It is important to note that while in some cases expressions resulting from two reverse morpho-syntactic orders are both canonical, in other cases, only one is canonical.[9] An instance of the former is *cheap* and *peach*, which is typical of Chiasmus; an instance of the latter is *the people in government* and *the government in people*, which is typical of Metathesis. In addition to that, the two are deemed canonical or non-canonical, original or reversed depending on the context in which they are used. The context tips the interlocutor off as to which one is default and which one is induced by manipulation of that default order. This brings up the question of which point in the speaking process the reversal takes place: before or after production of the default utterance; a question that is beyond the scope of this study.

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[9] The word "canonical" implies conventional morphological or syntactic order. "Non-canonical" implies unconventional morphological or syntactic order.

Chapter 4. Methodology of the Research

4.1 Aims of the research

The general aim of the research is to explain the interaction that exists among the various levels of the language system in determining the meaning of utterances. That is to say, how an individual's knowledge of a language's (in this case English) morphology, phonology, semantics, syntax and pragmatics collectively comes into play in order for them to comprehend utterances. More specifically, the research aims to demonstrate the comprehension process through the interaction between the principle of compositionality and the theory of conceptual metaphor with regards to the comprehension of meaning in word puns involving morphological and syntactic transposition.

4.2 Procedure of the research

This research comprises two components: a theoretical analysis and a case study. The theoretical part of the research involves two parts. Firstly, some theories of meaning are critically analysed in relation to the principle of compositionality so as to explain theoretically the mechanisms underlying word puns that involve the transposition of morphological and syntactic order, as a reference point. Secondly, the theory of conceptual metaphor is reviewed as it relates to word puns involving morphological and syntactic transposition. The analysis of these two theoretical concepts was envisaged to unravel some insights about critical creative characteristics inherent in language and in human beings that make it possible for the word puns to be used effectively.

The case study takes into account two major aspects regarding the comprehension of the word puns. Firstly, the study sets out to determine whether subjects can understand the meanings of given utterances in which the word puns are used. This is done by using a comprehension test in the form of a questionnaire that includes statements and optional responses to questions on the statements. The questions and responses are designed in such a way that

the options that a subject chooses provide an indication of how they interpret the meanings of the word puns. Secondly, following from the questionnaire, some of the subjects are interviewed in order to explain how they go about determining the meanings of the word puns. That is to say that the research wants to elicit some insights as to how the subjects proceed in the process of comprehending these word puns, in order to determine the extent to which the proposed *reverse principle* is used.

4.3 Questions and hypotheses of the research

There are a number of questions that this research seeks to provide answers to as regards comprehension of word puns that involve morphological and syntactic transposition. The questions are explored using extracts from some of my literary works (unpublished)[10]. The major questions that the research investigates are:

1. Are there common underlying processes guiding comprehension of these two types of word pun?

2. How can these comprehension processes be theoretically explained?

The following additional questions are investigated in order to expand the answers provided to these broad questions:

3. How do people process the meaning of word puns that involve morphological and syntactic transposition?

4. Do people use *the reverse principle* outlined above to process the meaning of utterances resulting from such transpositions?

5. How does transposing the lexical or morpho-phonological arrangement of an expression affect meaning?

6. What resources are used to comprehend the meaning of an expression?

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[10] These include poems and short stories.

7. Are the same resources that are used to process meaning of canonical order expressions used to process the meaning of word puns with transposed morphology or syntax?

8. What concepts in the mind of the encoder and decoder of language are created by particular language use?

The overarching hypothesis of this study is that people use *the reverse principle* in order to comprehend word puns involving morphological and syntactic transposition. The principle states that *the conceptualisation of expressions in which morphological or syntactic order is transposed is the reverse of the conceptualisation of the corresponding normal order expressions.*[11] Another hypothesis is that people are able to understand literary works in which language is used in special ways because literary works have the power to invoke images beyond the words that are used. Literary works obtain such power from the power of words by calling upon the full content and the total complex of each word (Allort, 1990); that is, both the *co-text* and the *context*, the *linguistic* and the *extra-linguistic* context of each word. Such is the case because our experiences, knowledge, beliefs and wishes are involved in and expressible only through patterns of language, which are rooted in material existence (Stockwell, 2002).

The underlying mechanism in Chiasmus and Metathesis is also understood to be metaphorical because the transposition of the lexical or morpho-phonemic[12] order in utterances is employed to represent reversal of the meaning communicated. In other words, by flipping the canonical structure that is allowed by language grammar, to yield non-canonical structure induced by creativity on the part of the punster and morpho-phonemic relation on the part of words, the concepts evoked are transformed from one semantic configuration to another

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[11] Normal order refers to the canonical order of lexical or morpho-phonological elements in utterances.

[12] Note that the transposed word parts (i.e. morphemes or pseudomorphemes) are transposable by virtue of being units of sound (i.e. phonemes or 'syllables').

thereby creating a different meaning in each case. This is in keeping with Kittay's assertion that "metaphor is used as a linguistic means of bringing together and fusing into a unity diverse thoughts and thereby re-forming the perceptions of the world" (1987: 6).

4.4 Location of the case study

The case study was conducted at two places: the Howard College campus of The University of KwaZulu-Natal (U.K.Z.N.) in Durban, South Africa and Mzuzu University (MZUNI) in Malawi. The two places were chosen because I, the researcher, was operating between these two places during the period of the study. I was at Howard College during term time and at Mzuzu University during vacation.

4.5 The sample for the case study

There were a total of thirty six subjects who participated in the case study: twenty males and sixteen females. The participants were selected by convenient random sampling method because that was the best method in as far as the circumstances of the study were concerned. Their willingness to participate in the study was the most important factor. Apart from that, participants were required to be proficient in English[13]. Out of these, twelve males and eleven females participated in both the questionnaire and the follow-up interview. Some of the remaining thirteen subjects declined the interview because they did not feel comfortable with it, while others simply failed to make time for it.

Ten of the participants are from Howard College, and they all took part in both the questionnaire and interview. Three of these are female English mother-tongue-speaking South Africans. The other seven participants, two of whom are

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[13]   Participants' proficiency was self-rated on a five-point scale: mother-tongue, very good, fairly good, poor, and other. The ratings ranged from fairly good to mother-tongue.

females, as well as the rest of the participants in the study are Malawians who are proficient in English and at least one Malawian language. The sample can be said to have been linguistically balanced in terms of ability to understand the questionnaire and the interview.

The sample from Howard College comprised nine postgraduate students and one undergraduate all of whom are doing different courses. The sample from Mzuzu University is more divergent: the sample included three female lecturers, seven female students, one female secretary, one male student, and fourteen male lecturers. All the student participants from Mzuzu University are in the final year (fourth year) of their studies. Thus, the sample is balanced in terms of training and experience, which are considered to be important in inferring the meanings of the word puns.

Although there is some diversity among the participants in the case study, there is no significant evidence of any particular group having an advantage over the other. For instance, lecturers did not necessarily perform differently from students in either the questionnaire or the interview. The only point worth mentioning is that those participants who have some background of linguistics, especially those who have studied or are studying linguistics, found it much easier to explain themselves regarding the way they comprehended meaning than those without such background.

4.6 Analysis of the results of the case study

The results are analysed in terms of recurrent patterns in the subjects' responses to the different questions in the questionnaire and the follow-up interview. This is done by drawing inferences from the empirical data using the recurrent themes and concepts that manifest. Participants' responses to the different questions in the questionnaire are grouped into three categories. The first category comprises *congruent responses*. These are responses that match (i.e. are congruent to) the responses that I (the researcher) expected the participants to come up with in

accordance with the intended meanings of the word puns[14]. Responses different from those expected are referred to as *incongruent responses*. The third category comprises items which participants did not provide answers to. These are labelled *no response*. Because there are two types of word pun in this study (i.e. Chiasmus, questions 1-5, and Metathesis, questions 6-10), the results are divided into two parts in some cases, while in other cases they are presented wholesomely. The results are presented in tables that show the different trends that manifested in the case study. The responses to the questions in the follow-up interviews are not tabulated, although they are also analysed in terms of the different patterns that manifest.

4.7 Limitations of the case study

There are a number of factors that would limit the extent to which the findings of this case study may be generalised. Firstly, the question of how people go about 'calculating' the meaning of utterances is very controversial and one that is very difficult to explain empirically, particularly from the point of view of the comprehender. Most subjects found it very hard to explicate just how exactly they went about decoding the meanings of the utterances in the questionnaire.

Secondly, the sample of the case study was limited. Only three participants in the case study were South African mother-tongue speakers of English, instead of the ten participants that were originally envisaged to take part. This problem came about partly because of the initial set up of the research, whereby speaking English as a mother tongue or a second language was envisaged to be one of the variables for the case study. Consequently, only mother-tongue and Malawian second language speakers of English were initially targeted. This was however changed during data collection because the approach to the research was changed; it was no longer to focus on comparing mother tongue speakers and second language speakers. Even after the change was made, not as many

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[14] Being the author of the word puns in their original contexts and in the adaptations in the questionnaire, I know their intended meanings.

mother-tongue South African speakers of English came forth to take part in the study. More importantly though, the nature of the case study affected the sample population. Because of the complexity of the questionnaire and the follow-up interview, a lot of people declined to participate in the study, even when (for some) they had initially indicated that they would participate. As such, the sample mainly comprised friends and 'home mates' as they were more 'obliged' to assist.

Thirdly, according to the participants of the case study, the questionnaire itself was hard. In fact, some participants complained that the questionnaire was the toughest they had ever encountered. This was the main reason why a lot of people refused to participate in the study. The questionnaire was hard partly because the word puns were presented outside their original context due to the nature of the exercise. That is to say that the utterances were extracted from poems or short stories, which could not be presented wholly in such an exercise. The word puns were also adapted in order to suit the comprehension exercise. However, the questions in the questionnaire aimed at soliciting indications as to whether the participants understood the word puns and not necessarily the expressions in which the word puns appeared. As such, some questions tapped on the participants' understanding of the word puns as they are used in their original contexts (i.e. the poems or short stories).

Because of this set up, some participants found it hard to accept the utterances as they were, thereby 'forcing some additional contexts' on the utterances. Other participants were not able to read enough from the context in which the word puns appeared. Both of these confusions resulted in responses that were not congruent with those of the researcher. A good example of the latter case is the following statement, which appeared in question number 7 of the questionnaire: *I don't think the man can **coach the team**$_A$; he is only going to **choke the team**$_B$.* Some participants claimed that the answer to the question: "Which phrase would suggest that the man would be fired before the end of his contract?" was not deducible from any of the two highlighted phrases. The participants were

supposed to deduce from the common practice in life whereby if a coach of a team does a bad job he or she usually gets fired. Hence, they were to choose phrase B as the correct answer to the question. Although there were such problems, there is substantial information that reveals some important patterns from which significant conclusions may be drawn.

Chapter 5. Analysis of the results of the case study

This chapter presents an analysis of the results of the case study. The results from the questionnaire are presented in tables showing different patterns that emerge, while the results from the follow-up interview are presented as descriptions of the general trends in the participants' responses to the different questions asked. All the tables are found in Appendix 1, while extracts of the interviews are presented in Appendix 2. Some tables present collective results while others present the results of males and results of females separated. However, the results are not analysed and discussed further in terms of these differences because the sample size is very small. The results from the questionnaire mainly provide answers to the overall question: whether participants are able to understand the word puns. The question of how they go about interpreting the word puns is mainly tackled in the follow-up interviews.

5.1 Distribution of individual total scores

Taking a 50% score to be the cut-off point, out of the thirty six participants, thirty four 'passed' the comprehension test, representing a 'pass rate' of 94%. Only two participants scored below 50 %, representing a 'failure rate' of 6%[15]. The scores ranged from 13 out of 30 (i.e. 43%) to 26 out of 30 (i.e. 87%). The average score is 21 out of 30, which is 70%. All the twenty males who participated in the study 'passed' the test; a 100% 'pass rate'. The females had a 'pass rate' of 87.5%, and a 'failure rate' of 12.5%. The highest score for males is 25 out of 30, which translates into 83%; while the lowest score for males is 15 out of 30, which translates into 50%. The overall highest and lowest scores are both from females. For further details, refer to table 1 that presents the distribution of total scores among the participants. The table shows the total scores attained by participants, and the numbers of participants who attained the particular scores.

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[15]   Although the two are said to have 'failed' the comprehension test, their performance indicates that they too understand the basic mechanism in the word puns, which is more important than scoring high.

These results clearly demonstrate that the participants of the case study were able to understand the word puns in the questionnaire, although they claimed that the exercise was not easy.

5.2 General response patterns

This section presents the general performance of the participants in the comprehension exercise for each question in the questionnaire. Participants' responses to the different questions in the questionnaire fall into three categories. The first category comprises *congruent responses*. These are responses that match (i.e. are congruent to) the responses that I (the researcher) expected the participants to come up with. Responses different from those expected are referred to as *incongruent responses*. The third category comprises items which participants did not provide answers to. These are labelled *no response*. Because there are two types of word pun in this study (i.e. Chiasmus, questions 1-5, and Metathesis, questions 6-10), the results are divided into two parts in some cases, while in other cases they are presented wholly.

Table 2 shows that out of 1080 responses, 736, which is 68%, are congruent. Incongruent responses add up to 278, which is 26% of the responses. The total number of items not responded to is 66, which is 6% of the responses. The total score for participants is higher in Metathesis than in Chiasmus. This suggests that Chiasmus proved to be more difficult for the participants to understand than Metathesis. In the former, the score is 394 out of 540, representing 73%, while in the latter; the score is 342 out of 540, representing 60.3% of the responses. The number of incongruent responses is lower in Metathesis than in Chiasmus, 92 out of 540, representing 17% and 186 out of 540, representing 34.4% respectively. Perhaps participants performed better in Metathesis than in Chiasmus because in the former, the two transposed phrases are both canonical (e.g. *cheap quality* and *peach quality*); hence they were familiar with both of them. This is unlike in the latter where transposition yields non-canonical phrases (e.g. *the people in government* and *the government in people*), hence the

participants found the non-canonical phrases rather difficult. However, the number of items not responded to is higher in Metathesis than in Chiasmus. There are 54 items not responded to in Metathesis, which translates into 10%, while there are 12 items not responded to in Chiasmus, which translates into 2.2% of the total responses. Assuming that a participant does not respond to a particular question on account of finding it difficult, then this result presents a contradiction in the performance of the participants. One would expect a correlation between the level of difficulty of items and the number of items not responded to such that the harder the items to understand, the more the items that would not be responded to.

It would appear to me that this trend was brought about by problems of context. Instead of considering the answers to the questions based on the juxtaposed phrases only, as instructed by the researcher, some of the participants based their responses on the co-text in which the phrases were presented.[16] For example, in the expression *Pick a man from the many that you see and keep him*$_A$; *don't try to keep many and pick one*$_B$; *you will be dead before you do*; some participants were confused by the word "see", which is not highlighted. They interpreted "see" to mean "date". As such, they took it that the lady receiving the advice in this expression was having affairs with many people; so she was at risk of contracting HIV in any case. In other cases, participants imposed their own contexts on the expressions. Such participants confused themselves by reading too much in the contexts of the utterances provided, even though they understood the overall meaning of the expression. A good example where this was the case is the statement in question number 10: *I have only permitted you to chat her*$_A$; *if you touch her*$_B$, *I will strangle you*. Some of the participants who did not provide answers to this question claimed that they did not find any relevant answers because the answers were supposed to be

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[16] While in everyday communication meaning is interpreted on the basis of the context in which an expression is uttered, which includes co-text, in the comprehension exercise of this study, the answers to the questions were supposed to be deduced irrespective of other words used in the expressions. Only the highlighted words were to be considered.

deduced from words outside the juxtaposed phrases or outside the whole utterance. Regarding question 10C: "Which phrase would paint a negative image of the lady?" one participant said none of the bolded phrases would paint a negative picture of the lady. This information provides some evidence about the importance of context in the interpretation of the word puns. The participant was thinking of what happens in the real world; that it was not going to be the lady's fault if she was going to be touched, hence she would not be blamed.

In Chiasmus, a comparison is made between participants' performance in questions in parts A and B on the one hand and their performance in questions in part C on the other. Parts A and B test general understanding of the word puns, while part C tests participants' ability to paraphrase the statements involving the word puns. In Metathesis, paraphrasing is not included because the utterances are more straight forward than those in Chiasmus. See Appendix 2 for further details. The performance is generally better in parts A and B than in part C. While in parts A and B out of the total number of responses, 65.8% of the responses are congruent, 32.5% incongruent, and 1.6% of the items are not responded to; in part C, 58.3% are congruent, 38.8% incongruent, and 3.3% are not responded to.

The implication of this finding is that there is some variation in terms of the nature of the participants' understanding of the word puns. There are three cases that manifested. The first is one whereby the participants' answers in all the parts (i.e. A, B and C) are congruent with the intended interpretations. In the second case, participants' responses in parts A and B are congruent, while their responses in part C are incongruent with the expected responses. In the last case, participants' responses in either part A or B are incongruent with the expected responses when their responses in part C are congruent. That is to say that much as the participants may have been able to understand the general meaning of the utterances in which the word puns are used, in some cases they were not able to paraphrase the utterances, and vice versa.

5.3 Incongruent responses to part C of questions on Chiasmus

As mentioned in section 5.2, in part C of each question on Chiasmus, participants were required to provide paraphrases of the statements involving word pun. Because there are four options in each question, the pattern of the incongruent paraphrases chosen is interesting. This pattern is presented in this section. The results representing the pattern are found in tables 5, 6 and 7. In these tables, the congruent option in each question is marked *congruent*.

Table 5 shows that in question 1C, there are a total of three incongruent responses: one for option (ii), two for option (iv). In question 2C, there are eleven incongruent paraphrases: five for option (ii), and six for option (iv). Question 3C has the highest number of incongruent paraphrases. Fourteen of these are for option (i), three for option (iii), and three others for option (iv). There are fifteen incongruent responses for question number 4C: three for option (i), one for option (ii), and eleven for option (iii). In question 5C, eight incongruent responses are for option (i), while one is for option (ii).

Considering the questions that have the highest numbers of incongruent paraphrases (i.e. questions 2-5), question 2C presents data that is difficult to interpret, because the incongruent responses are almost equally distributed between options (ii) and (iv), 5 and 6 respectively. However, in questions 3-5 there is one incongruent option which clearly stands out as the most popular among the three options in each question: option (i) in question 3C, option (iii) in question 4C, and option (i) in question 5C. This pattern suggests that the participants might have interpreted the utterances in questions 3C, 4C and 5C in similar ways. This in turn suggests that the participants generally interpreted the word puns in the whole exercise in similar ways, which supports the position that there are some common underlying processes that guide the interpretation of the word puns.

5.4 Results from the follow-up interviews

As already mentioned in previous chapters (1 and 4), there were follow-up interviews that were conducted with some of the participants in order to corroborate the results from the questionnaire, and to probe the process of comprehending the word puns further. A total of twenty three participants were interviewed: twelve males and eleven females. The participants were asked a number of questions regarding the comprehension exercise in the questionnaire. For further details on the specific questions that the participants were asked, refer to Appendix 4. Below are some of the important answers that emerged from the interviews described in general terms.

5.4.1 Participants' experience with poetry

Participants were asked about their experience with poetry. It was envisaged that this would provide some indication of whether they are familiar with the language of poetry, which is different from everyday language use. This was so because the word pun is one example of such special use of language. Each one of the participants has had some experience with poetry at secondary (high) school level of her/his education. A few have even studied poetry at university level. However, while 54.5% of the participants like and enjoy poetry, 26.1% like it even though they do not necessarily enjoy it and 30.4% neither like nor enjoy poetry[17]. Only three participants have ever written poetry, but they no longer do. The one point that featured as paramount regarding the participants' experience with poetry is difficulty of meaning. All the participants acknowledged that meaning is difficult to determine in poetry, but they all said that they were able to understand the meanings in the word puns in the questionnaire. The participants also said that the word puns are good poetic strategies. This introspective assessment does not necessarily correlate with the participants' performance in the questionnaire.

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[17] *Like* implies appreciation of poetry as an art, while *enjoy* implies cherishing the experience of the art.

5.4.2 Level of difficulty of the word puns

The participants were asked to mention which of the two types of word pun in the questionnaire (i.e. Chiasmus or Metathesis) they found easier or more difficult than the other. Fourteen of the twenty three participants (61%) said they found Chiasmus to be easier than Metathesis. Six participants (26%) said they found Metathesis easier than Chiasmus. And, while one participant (4%) said s/he found both types of word pun mentally demanding, two other participants (9%) were not sure about their opinion.

This is another point of contradiction in the results of the case study. While the results from the questionnaire show that participants found Metathesis easier than Chiasmus (judging by their performance), the results of the interview demonstrate a different scenario. This contradiction, the inconsistency between general comprehension and paraphrasing of the word puns mentioned in 5.2, and the confusion about context mentioned in 5.2, can be said to be confirmation of Chandler's assertion that "once we employ a trope (in this case word pun), our utterance becomes part of a much larger system of associations which is beyond our control" (Chandler, 1990: 2). That is to say that people come up with all sorts of associations between concepts depending on how they understand the tropes. In the case of this study, the word puns generate imagery with different connotations in the minds of the participants depending on a variety of factors that come into play as they interpret the word puns.

5.4.3 The process of inferring meaning in the word puns and the juxtaposition of meaning

The most difficult part of the interview was for the participants to explain how they go about inferring the meaning of the expressions involving word pun, how the change in meaning in the two juxtaposed phrases is brought about, and whether the juxtaposition is effective. They were unable to explain exactly how they came to understand the meaning. However, they pointed out that it is the order of the words in the phrases that determines the meanings that are presented in the

juxtaposed phrases. They recognised the fact that one phrase grows out of the other. In the words of one participant, "one sets the scene, and the other grows out of it". However, most participants had problems explaining exactly how they came up with the meanings of the two expressions. The extracts from the interviews in Appendix 2 give a clearer picture of what the participants said in this light.

Participants described the change in meaning between the two juxtaposed phrases in the word puns in different ways. However, the general opinion of the participants was that there is a change in meaning depending on the order of the words in the expressions. This change was mainly described by the majority of the participants to involve the movement of meaning from one 'side' to its opposite or from 'positive' to 'negative', although different terminology was used by the participants. Only a few of the participants were able to tell apart the different effects that transposition has on the different expressions. That is, difference in meaning (i.e. antonym) and similarity of meaning (i.e. synonym). But still, most of these were unable to explicate the exact effect; for instance, that because of the transposition some verbs turn into nouns and vise versa. It is interesting to note that all the participants said that the change in meaning from positive to negative or from one 'side' to its opposite is effective.

As far as this study is concerned, it is enough that the participants were able to recognise that transposition initiates change of meaning, which suggests that they used the reverse principle. They were not expected to provide expert explanation of the comprehension process. It is important to mention that the participants also used context in order to determine the meanings of the utterances[18]. Two types of context were used. On the one hand, the general context of the creation of the word puns made participants aware that by transposing the morphological or syntactic order of an expression, the meaning

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[18] Not the original context in which the word puns are used (i.e. the poems or short stories they are extracted from), but that of the statements in which they appear as adapted in the questionnaire.

of the expression is transposed. Additionally, each utterance in which the word puns appear has its own context that is also important in the interpretation of each word pun. In fact, as mentioned earlier, it is context, especially co-text,

which caused confusion for some participants because they read too much into the words that appeared together with the word puns, instead of concentrating on the juxtaposed phrases. The questions in the questionnaire are based on the juxtaposed phrases, and in certain cases, consideration of the words outside the juxtaposed phrases (i.e. co-text) only made the interpretation difficult or even impossible. It is important to note that the word puns were adapted from the poems or short stories in which they originally appear. As such, they are used in an artificial manner in the questionnaire, hence the diversion from everyday communication in their interpretation, especially in terms of the comprehension questions that the participants were asked.

Chapter 6. Discussion of results and conclusions

The case study was conducted as part of this research and it reveals a number of points regarding the interpretation of word puns that are constructed by transposing the morphological or syntactic order of utterances. This chapter presents a discussion of these results by way of highlighting some important trends that manifest in the results and linking the case study to the review of some of the theoretical issues surrounding the concept of meaning that are presented in the earlier chapters of this treatise. Based on the interpretation of the results, relevant conclusions are made in line with the comprehension of word puns that involve morphological and syntactic transposition. Finally, recommendations for further research are made.

6.1 Underlying processes in the word puns

Chapters 1-3 of this treatise provide a general picture of the underlying processes that are involved in the creation as well as the interpretation of meaning in general; and the creation and interpretation of meaning in expressions involving morphological or syntactic transposition in particular. This section presents the processes underlying the interpretation because this is the focus of the research. The processes are summarised under four sub-topics.

6.1.1 Use of *the reverse principle*

One of the main questions of this research is whether people can understand the meaning of expressions in which morphological or syntactic order is transposed. The results of the case study clearly demonstrate that the participants were able to understand the word puns involving morphological or syntactic transposition. The other question is whether people do or can use the reverse principle in order to do so. The study proposes that in order for people to understand the meaning of utterances in which morphological or syntactic order is transposed, they use the reverse principle. The principle states that *the conceptualisation of expressions in which morphological or syntactic order is transposed is the*

transposition of the conceptualisation of the corresponding normal order expressions. The results from the follow-up interview confirm that the participants interpreted the word puns using the reverse principle. Even though the participants did not specifically mention the reverse principle as outlined in this study, their different responses to the question of how they went about the process of interpreting the word puns generally agree with the principle. The participants understood the reversal of morphological or syntactic order in expressions to represent reversal in the meaning of the expressions.

6.1.2 Composition

The principle of compositionality states that the meaning of utterances derives from the individual meanings of the words as well as the syntactic structure that is used in their construction (Frege, 1891, cited by Jackobson, 1996; Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 1996; and Partee, 2004). The results of the case study demonstrate that the participants were able to 'calculate' the meanings of the word puns, using the lexical meanings of the words, which are stored in their mental lexicon as well as the morphological or syntactic structure used in the construction of the word puns. In Metathesis, they were familiar with both of the phrases that are juxtaposed because they are both canonical and the core words on which the juxtaposition is based are both available in their mental lexicon. Participants used the lexical meaning of the words in the phrases and the syntactic structure in order to interpret meaning of the two phrases. They also used word formation rules (i.e. morphological rules) in order to compute the meanings of the words that actually induce the juxtaposition.

In the case of Chiasmus, one phrase is canonical, while the other is not, even though the two words on which the juxtaposition of the phrases is based are both canonical. Since meaning is constructed conventionally in the canonical phrases, participants used their knowledge of the lexical meaning as well as the syntactic structure in the canonical phrases. However, to work out the meaning of the non-canonical phrases, participants used creativity: both their own and that of human

language in general. They were able to detect that the words and the syntactic structures (argument structures) that were used to construct the non-canonical phrases were very similar to those used in the canonical phrases. As such, they were able to see the meaning relationship between the two. Thus, participants were able to 'calculate' the meaning in the non-canonical phrases using the lexical meanings and the argument structures of the canonical phrases.

Therefore, the participants of the case study depended on the meaning which is stored in the mental lexicon and the way in which the meanings of the words or word parts are put together through the process of composition to interpret meaning of word puns involving morphological or syntactic transposition. As the morphemes or pseudomorphemes are moved from one position to another, they are moved along with that part of meaning that is contained in them, and when they get attached to the meaning of the new environment that they migrate to, they 'inherit' new semantic configurations depending on the morphological or syntactic structures. It is in this way that the word puns illustrate that "various aspects of the syntax [which in the case of the word puns includes the morphology] of a sentence are determined by the meaning of the predicator in the sentence" (Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 1996: 487).

6.1.3 The Cooperative principle

At the heart of the process of interpreting the word puns is the cooperative principle. The principle states that interlocutors should make their contribution in accord with the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which they are engaged (Grice 1989). This implies that when the participants were interpreting the word puns, they assumed that the four maxims of the principle (i.e. quality, quantity, relevance and manner), were observed during the construction of the word puns. As a result of this, they were aware that although one part of the expression (especially in Chiasmus) was not presented in the conventional manner of communicating in everyday language, it was used to mean something; and it meant exactly what the creator intended for it to mean.

So, they used whatever clue they could get from what was said in order to find the meaning, the main clue being the very words that were used in the juxtaposed phrases.

6.1.4 Conceptual metaphor

This is another clue that the participants used in order to interpret the meaning of the expressions. Looking at the two juxtaposed phrases, they noticed a striking similarity in the morphological, phonological or syntactic structure, which initiates a connection between the two in terms of meaning. Consequently, they took into account this connection as they 'calculated' the meaning of the reverse-order phrase. And subsequently, they were able to interpret each expression as a whole. This supports the idea that certain concepts, thoughts or objects are understood or expressed in terms of others as explained in the theory of conceptual metaphor (Chandler, 1995; Lakoff, 1993, 1991; Moravcsik, 1990; Lakoff and Turner, 1989; Pollock, 1982; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Ortony, 1979; Reddy, 1979; Richards, 1936, cited by Condon, 1999).

6.2 Interaction of the language levels

The results of the study clearly demonstrate the interaction among the different levels of the language system with regard to the interpretation of meaning of word puns. As explained in the first chapter, meaning primarily resides in the words and parts thereof that are used in the construction of utterances, which are strings of words. There are some relationships among words or parts of words that are induced by their morphological and or phonological makeup. That is to say that certain words share morphemes and or phonemes. These relationships induce semantic relationships, which people (for example, the punster) can use creatively. In order for word parts to be combined into words, and for words to be combined into utterances, there are certain rules that come into play. And, depending on how the rules are applied, or depending on how the words are combined, different meanings can be encoded using the words. With particular regard to the word puns under study in the current research, the combinatorial

rules are manipulated on the basis of the morphological and phonological relationships that hold between and among the words that are used in the construction of utterances. This demonstrates that in order for the word puns to be created, there must be interaction of the morphology, the phonology, the semantics and the syntax of a language (in this case English).

However, in order for the meaning of any utterance to be correctly interpreted in particular use, the circumstances surrounding the use; that is, the context of the utterance must be taken into account. In the general context of the word puns, transposition of the morphological or syntactic structure of an utterance is understood to be transposition of the meaning of the utterance. Additionally, each specific word pun has its own context in which it appears, which gives the word pun its particular meaning. Participants used both types of context in the process of 'calculating' the meanings of the word puns.

6.3 Factors influencing the understanding of the word puns

There are certain factors that were envisaged to influence people's understanding of the word puns. However, according to the results of the case study, none of these factors presents any discernible pattern that can clearly point to its connection to the process of interpreting the meanings of the word puns. These factors are highlighted in this section.

6.3.1 Gender

The results in the case study do not show any consistent patterns with regards to differences between male and female participants. For instance, while males had a 100% 'pass' rate against females' 87.5%, the highest score came from females. Therefore, it is difficult to draw any concrete conclusions about the differences of the two groups.

6.3.2 Training and experience

The second factor that did not systematically separate the participants is training and experience. Although the participants have different training and experience, there is no evidence of such differences in the results of the case study. For instance, there was no systematic separation of university lecturers from university students. That is, while some lecturers performed better than students, others were outperformed. Another thing that was difficult to discern from the results is difference of participants' performance in terms of the different disciplines in which the participants are as members of university communities. Also, there was no clear difference in the performance of participants of the two universities from which the sample was drawn.

6.3.3 Type of speaker of English

It was envisaged in this research that another factor influencing participants' performance would be whether they speak English as a mother tongue or as a second language. The results of the case study did not clearly distinguish between these two groups of participants. This could be so because of the small sample size and the fact that mother tongue speakers were grossly outnumbered. The second language speakers were also not differentiated in terms of their mother tongues or additional languages.

6.3.4 Experience with poetry

Another factor in this light is experience with poetry. All the participants have had some experience with poetry, especially during their secondary (high) school education. While this is an indication of the fact that the participants are aware of the language of poetry, the results of the case study provide contradictory clues in attempts to correlate awareness of poetic language and interpretation of the word puns. For instance, some people who enjoy and or like poetry performed better than those who do not, while others were outperformed by them; and some others who do not enjoy and or like poetry performed better than yet others both in their group and in the former group. Thus, the results seem to suggest

that one's awareness of the language of poetry does not necessarily entail that one can easily understand the word puns.

6.3.5 Metalinguistic knowledge of the word puns

The last factor is metalinguistic knowledge of the word puns. The results of the case study show that there was no correlation between participants' metalinguistic knowledge of the word puns and their understanding of the same. That is to say that being able to explain the basic mechanism in the word puns does not necessarily presuppose ability to understand the word puns. While some participants who were able to explain the mechanism performed better than those who were not, others were outperformed by the latter, even though they (the latter) were unable to explain themselves.

In the light of the four points above, the case study seems to suggest that understanding of the word puns is determined by people's natural disposition to understand language rather than any of the factors above. That is to say that people are able to understand the word puns because they are naturally endowed to understand language. Since the word puns are merely adaptations of natural language, it is plausible to suggest that people can understand the word puns, which are 'adaptations' of natural language, just as they can understand other 'language adaptations'. When language is used in such special ways as in the word puns, it evokes imagery beyond the words that are used. People are able to figure out such imagery, by referring to the context for instance. It is important to mention however, that although there is no clear indication of the roles played by each of these factors in the interpretation of word puns, the factors cannot be discounted. This research was not specifically designed to explore these factors.

6.4 The essence of the word puns

The word puns can be explained in terms of minimalist principles, which according to Tappe and Härtl (2003), are subject to economy and explicitness. In

the minimalist framework (Chomsky, 1995; Radford, 2000; cited by Tappe and Härtl 2003), lexical items enter the process of syntactic construction fully equipped with their grammatically relevant features including categorical, semantic, argument structure, and thematic features (Chomsky, 1995; Radford, 2000; cited by Tappe and Härtl 2003). The punster manipulates these and other features, especially morphological and phonological features, at the level of the two basic mechanisms of syntactic construction, *merge* and *move*, in order to achieve different meaning effects.

The word pun in general, and the word puns in the current study in particular, are useful mechanisms that (can) minimise the problem of expressibility on the part of the speaker; and the problem of comprehension on the part of the listener, although the situation is slightly different on the part of the listener. By employing the word pun, the speaker is able to mean a lot while saying a little, rather than having to look for a whole set of words to express the same meaning. The speaker banks on the listener to be able to fill in the gap in the message that is actually encoded in the words used to construct an expression. The problem of working out meaning in the word puns is minimised by the listener's understanding that transposition of the morphological or syntactic order implies transposition of meaning.

Additionally, the study has demonstrated that people understand the world by relating concepts to one another as stipulated in the theory of conceptual metaphor (Chandler, 1995; Lackoff and Turner, 1989; Lakoff, 1993, 1991; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Ortony, 1979; Reddy, 1979; Richards, 1936, cited by Condon, 1999). This also helps a speaker to mean a lot while saying a little, and the listener to be able to read in between the lines, because of the underlying relationships existing between the concepts the speaker encodes through the employment of the word pun, but also, by virtue of the relationships that hold between and among words or word parts. However, as demonstrated by the

study, meaning can be elusive on the part of the comprehender when word puns are used.

6.5 Conclusions

This research set out to investigate a number of issues regarding the concept of meaning especially as it relates to the interpretation of utterances in which morphological and or syntactic order are transposed. A number of conclusions are drawn from the theoretical review of the concept of meaning as well as from the results that were obtained in the case study. They are here summarised into three points that condense the questions as well as the hypotheses of the research. The conclusions are drawn in line with the questions and the hypotheses of the research, but they need to be considered in light of the limitations of the case study cited in chapter 4.

Firstly, the research aims to find out if there are any common underlying processes guiding the comprehension of the word puns under study. It has been demonstrated through the research that indeed there are common underlying processes guiding the comprehension of the two types of word pun studied, Chiasmus and Metathesis. The main underlying principle is that the transposition of the morphological or syntactic order of an utterance affects the meaning of an expression in that while the argument structure of an expression remains intact, the roles played by the different arguments change with the change in their positions in the expression. This in turn effects a juxtaposition of the meaning of the reversed expressions

Secondly, the research probes the questions of how people process the meaning of word puns involving morphological and or syntactic transposition, and whether they use the proposed reverse principle. It has been demonstrated that in order for one to interpret such word puns, one indeed uses the reverse principle. One interprets the reversed-order phrase on the basis of the normal-order phrase by

considering the reversal of the morphological or syntactic order to connote reversal of meaning.

The third conclusion is about the nature of the resources that people use in order to interpret the word puns. The study clearly shows that the same resources that are used to process the meaning of everyday language are the resources that are used to process the meaning of the word puns under study. That is, the meaning of the individual words that are used in the construction of the word puns, and the manner in which they are put together. It should be emphasised however, that in the case of the word puns, we talk about the combinatorics at the morphological as well as at the syntactic level.

6.6 Recommendations

Two recommendations can be made as a result of this research. First of all, follow up research needs to be conducted taking care of the limitations cited in chapter 4 so that the results can be more generalisable than those of the current study. Secondly, there should be follow up research that should be designed to investigate the factors that were envisaged to affect people's interpretation of the word puns (i.e. gender, training and experience, type of speaker of English, experience with poetry, and metalinguistic knowledge of the word puns) so as to come up with clear information in this regard.

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Appendix 1: Tables showing the results from the questionnaire

Table 1: Distribution of individual total scores

Total score out of 30	Frequency for males	Frequency for females
26	0	2
25	3	0
24	1	2
23	4	1
22	3	2
21	1	1
20	1	1
19	1	1
18	3	2
17	1	0
16	0	1
15	2	1
14	0	1
13	0	1

Table 2: General pattern of response

Question number	Congruent	Incongruent	No response
1 A	11	25	0
B	11	25	0
C	33	3	0
2 A	19	17	0
B	23	13	0
C	20	14	2
3 A	23	11	2
B	24	11	1
C	11	23	2
4 A	31	3	2
B	32	3	1
C	17	18	1
5 A	31	5	0
B	32	4	0
C	24	11	1
Subtotal	342	186	12
6 A	32	1	3
B	16	14	6
C	19	11	6
7 A	34	2	0
B	33	4	0
C	27	6	3
8 A	29	6	1
B	35	0	1
C	26	9	1
9 A	15	12	9
B	20	8	8
C	24	6	8
10 A	32	4	0
B	29	2	2
C	23	7	6
Subtotal	394	92	54
Grand total	736	278	66

Table 3: General pattern of response in male participants

Question number	Congruent	Incongruent	No response
1 A	4	16	0
B	3	17	0
C	19	1	0
2 A	12	8	0
B	15	5	0
C	12	7	1
3 A	14	5	1
B	15	5	0
C	7	13	0
4 A	17	2	1
B	18	2	0
C	9	11	0
5 A	19	1	0
B	20	0	0
C	17	3	0
Subtotal	**201**	**96**	**3**
6 A	18	1	1
B	8	9	3
C	10	9	1
7 A	19	1	0
B	18	2	0
C	16	4	0
8 A	15	4	1
B	19	0	1
C	15	5	0
9 A	6	7	7
B	10	5	5
C	12	5	3
10 A	17	3	0
B	17	1	2
C	14	3	3
Subtotal	**214**	**59**	**27**
Grand total	**415**	**155**	**30**

Table 4: General pattern of response in female participants

Question number	Congruent	Incongruent	No response
1 A	7	9	0
B	8	8	0
C	14	2	0
2 A	7	9	0
B	8	8	0
C	8	7	1
3 A	9	6	1
B	9	6	1
C	4	10	2
4 A	14	1	1
B	14	1	1
C	8	7	1
5 A	12	4	0
B	12	4	0
C	7	8	1
Subtotal	**141**	**90**	**9**
6 A	14	0	2
B	8	5	3
C	9	2	5
7 A	15	1	0
B	15	1	0
C	11	2	3
8 A	14	2	0
B	16	0	0
C	11	4	1
9 A	9	5	2
B	10	3	3
C	12	1	3
10 A	15	1	0
B	12	1	0
C	9	4	3
Subtotal	**180**	**35**	**25**
Grand total	**321**	**125**	**34**

Table 5: Pattern of incongruent paraphrases

Question number	Response i	Response ii	Response iii	Response iv
1C	0	1	congruent	2
2C	congruent	5	1	6
3C	14	congruent	3	3
4C	3	1	11	congruent
5C	8	1	congruent	0

Table 6: Pattern of incongruent paraphrases in male participants

Question number	Response i	Response ii	Response iii	Response iv
1C	0	0	congruent	1
2C	congruent	2	0	3
3C	10	congruent	3	0
4C	2	1	7	congruent
5C	1	0	congruent	0

Table 7: Pattern of incongruent paraphrases in female participants

Question number	Response i	Response ii	Response iii	Response iv
1C	0	1	congruent	1
2C	congruent	3	1	3
3C	4	congruent	0	3
4C	1	0	4	congruent
5C	7	1	congruent	0

Appendix 2: Extracts from follow-up interviews

INTERVIEWEE A

- I have taught poetry b4, but I didn't like it
- I don't like poetry
- I found the questionnaire very difficult
- 1-5 easier was easier
- There is change in grammatical structure between A and B, e.g. noun to verb
- The change was effected by position of words in sentences
- The phrases are opposites in meaning
- The mechanism is effective
- I misunderstood the instructions, and that resulted into failure to get some of the questions

INTERVIEWEE B

- I have read poetry sometimes, though I have always had problems figuring out the deep meaning
- The questionnaire was nice, but it required to think, especially regarding the reversal of meaning
- 6-10 easier than 1-5
- the change in meaning was from positive to negative
- the exercise brought to him awareness that language which is understood to be plain is not such; it has some meaning behind it

INTERVIEWEE C

- I haven't been so close to poetry, and had difficulties with languages altogether; but I appreciate it
- The exercise required a bit of thinking; some of the questions asked the same thing in different ways
- The change in meaning induces the reader into critical analytical thinking

- You needed to read between the lines to get the exact meaning; not easy to do
- 1-5 was easier than 6-10
- The meaning was the same, but each required a different level of interaction-easy and requiring more thinking
- One of the hardest questionnaires; very critical. There is more to poetry than we know about.

INERTVIEWEE D

- I don't like poetry because it's difficult to understand
- The exercise was tough going, but I managed I hope
- I think 1-5 were easier than 6-10
- The movement in meaning was confusing because it was the same words changed in phrasing
- The meanings were opposites
- The change was effective
- Although it was tough, I enjoyed it because it was thought provoking

INTERVIEWEE E

- I like easy poetry, but I don't like difficult poetry
- The exercise was fun, like playing a game
- I think 1-5 was easier than 6-10
- B is influenced by A; It grew out of A
- A sets the main thought and B grows out of it, although B is opposite

INTETRVIEWEE F

- The exercise was nice and somehow challenging
- I have analysed poetry before, especially in college
- I didn't see the demarcation between 1-5 and 6-10, but at first found 3 and 4 tough

- The meanings counter each other
- Phraseology makes the change effective
- A very good exercise, thought provoking

INTERVIEWEE G

- I have had some experience with poetry; and I find it rather difficult
- The exercise was ok, but it needed concentration
- B added a different part of the meaning given in A
- The exercise was not very easy
- 6-10 was easier than 1-5
-

INTERVIEWEE H

- Some questions were easy, while others were difficult
- I haven't given poetry much of my time; I don't like it because the first poems to be exposed to were too difficult
- 1-5 was easier than 6-10
- The meanings were opposites
- A noun was changed into a verb, hence affecting the meaning; changing words' parts of speech
- The instructions didn't go with the way the questions were phrased

INTERVIEWEE I

- I have been reading poetry since primary school
- The exercise was tough because the words were confusing some times, you were familiar with one, but not the other expression
- I was looking at the deeper meaning of the expressions- connotation
- The meanings were different, but not really opposites, some maybe
- The change was effective
- Both 1-5 and 6-10 needed thinking
- The exercise was interesting; it attracted a lot of attention

INTERVIEWEE J

- I like poetry, even though some is difficult
- The exercise was a bit challenging because it made me think
- The meanings are not really opposite; there is some kind of a link between them
- The change comes about by the order in the statements
- 1-5 was easier than 6-10
- The exercise challenged me; that I should concentrate on what I read. More than just the rhythm

INTERVIEWEE K

- I don't really like poetry, I just read when I chance it
- The exercise made me think and want to read other poems to see if they have such patterns
- The exercise was interesting; made me want to find out more about what you have written
- I guess probably 1-5 was easier than 6-10
- Some were opposites, others synonyms. One a lighter version, the other one the extreme; especially the second part
- The change was effective
- The exercise was fun as indicated; I enjoyed it.

INTERVIEWEE L

- I did poetry in high school, a bit in university. I like contemporary poetry, not classical. I enjoy listening more than reading
- The exercise was mentally challenging
- There is some kind of similarity in meanings of the statements
- The combination of words makes the similarity
- In other cases one meaning was the opposite of the other
- The movement in meaning was effective

- The exercise makes me think of how we take for granted the spoken word
- 6-10 was easier than 1-5
- The exercise was mentally stimulating; it was a bit challenging, though it looks simple. It's not something you go through at once

INTERVIEWEE M

- I like reading poetry, but my experience is limited. I used to write it at some time.
- Word pun is a familiar exercise; not detailed though
- One part is familiar, while the other is new; but they were quite interesting (1-5)
- The same with 6-10; I have seen some of them
- 1-5 was easier than 6-10
- The meaning some times does not necessarily reflect the opposite; B gives another meaning which is not like in A
- The arrangement of words makes the difference in meaning
- I had to link B to A to see the sense it makes
- I didn't want to imply answers where I didn't see any connection; like 6 and 9.

INTERVIEWEE N

- I like poetry, though I haven't read it for years
- I understood all of them, but I didn't feel my interpretation was the same as yours
- The meaning changes such that it goes from a positive image to a negative one
- It doesn't take more than a second to understand the meaning

INETRVIEWEE O

- I enjoy poetry; did lots of it in school
- I had to think of the two meanings as opposites

- 1-5 was easier than 6-10
- The structure and wording used makes the meanings opposite. The meanings come just naturally.

INTERVIEWEE P

- The two meanings are not always necessarily opposites; sometimes they mean the same thing
- Switching the words around necessitated the change in meaning
- 1-5 was easier than 6-10
- I read poetry and I write poetry; I am very fond of it

INTERVIEWEE Q

- 6-10 is easier than 1-5, they have got two words which are naturally opposites and they are common; while in 1-5, the second part is not familiar
- In most cases the two meanings are opposites
- The technique is effective
- I do like poetry, especially when it comes with rhymes- capturing African scenes
- I enjoyed the exercise; it excited my mind especially being mathematics oriented

INTERVIEWEE R

- The exercise was not really bad, it just needed some time
- 1-5 was easier than 6-10
- The two meanings are opposites
- It was easy to get the meaning of B from A, of course reading the whole statement
- The technique is effective somehow, though not very much
- I love contemporary, but not classical poetry; though the latter is of higher quality

- The exercise was very wisely done

INTERVIEWEE S

- The exercise was tricky, a bit problematic, especially determining which part of the statement reflects which part if the meaning
- In most cases the meanings are opposites
- *Somehow it was easy to get the change in meaning*
- The arrangement of the words effect the meaning changes; in some cases it's the meaning of individual words
- 1-5 was easier than 6-10
- I like poetry; it says a lot in few lines. The way meaning is generated in the exercise generally reflects how it is generated in poetry- the placing and choice of words, thus one has to work to get the meaning

INTERVIEWEE T

- The exercise was stimulating. It shows how some times words can be used with two senses- positive and negative
- The movement in meaning would reflect a revolution from the Elizabethan language
- One meaning is more like the reverse of the other, like a negation
- 1-5 was easier than 6-10
- Generally I like poetry because it expresses a mystery which we fail to express plainly
- The strategy is effective for writing poetry, but a poem can't exclusively be based on it
- The mechanism can best be understood by certain group of people, a certain clique with the mental capacity; but for others it would be difficult

INTERVIEWEE U

- I wouldn't say I like poetry, but I have had a chance to read some
- It wasn't an easy exercise

- The meanings are opposites, A talks about the positive, while B the negative
- The words used effect the change in meaning
- 1-5 was easier than 6-10 because its C part was easier
- I felt free to do the exercise. And it taught me that words can be played around with

INTERVIEWEE V

- I have had experience with poetry and I like it very much
- The exercise was difficult
- 6-10 was easier than 1-5
- In most cases, one meaning was the opposite of the other; one the negative of the other (1-5). 6-10 was a contradictory sort of scenario
- I can't really say how I worked out the two meanings, but I just was able to
- The language used in the exercise is something familiar, however, for one to get acquainted to that requires a certain level of understanding. And one cannot assume that they will arrive at the intended meaning of the writer. We just have to guess.
- Generally it was challenging.

INTERVIEWEE W

- I have had a lot of experience with poetry and I like it very much
- I did poetry in my undergraduate degree as part of my studies in English courses
- I used to write poetry
- The exercise was nice, but tricky because it required thinking
- 1-5 was easier than 6-10
- The trick is that one statement is positive, while the other is negative.
- Generally it was challenging.

Appendix 3: The questionnaire for the case study

CONSENT FORM

You have been chosen as one of the subjects for the project mentioned below as per your earlier indication of willingness to participate in my study. May you please carefully read through the contents of this form and confirm/disconfirm your participation in the study by filling in your name and signing in the spaces provided.

PROJECT TITLE

Meaning in "Neaming": Processing Word Puns Involving Morphological and Syntactic Transposition using the "Reverse Principle"

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AIM OF THE PROJECT

The aim of this study is to explain how meaning is constructed and comprehended in word puns.

TASKS IN PARTICIPATION

Your participation in the study will involve answering a questionnaire based on expressions involving word puns. Thereafter, you will be required to answer a few follow-up questions explaining some of your responses. The questionnaire will take fifteen to twenty minutes, while the interview will take about twenty minutes.

OTHER DETAILS

- There are no specific financial or material benefits in the participation, but sharing in the experience of the word plays will be fun.
- The interview will be audio-tape-recorded.
- The information you give as well as your identity will remain anonymous and be treated with utmost confidentiality.
- You have the right to withdraw from the study at any point without any repercussions.

DECLARATION

Having read through the contents of this consent document and understood their implication,

I.. hereby declare that I will participate in the study.

Signature: **Date**

QUESTIONNAIRE ON MEANING IN "NEAMING": THE PROCESSING OF WORD PUNS INVOLVING MORPHOLOGICAL AND SYNTACTIC TRANSPOSITION USING THE "REVERSE PRINCIPLE"

PART ONE: Preliminary Information

Please provide the relevant information by circling the response that best suits you or by writing short responses where appropriate. You are also free to add any relevant information you feel required for any item. Thank you for your kind assistance.

(I) Sex: **M   F**

(II) Age: **15-25   25-35   35-above**

(III) Home language:

(IV) Other languages you speak:

(V) Occupation:

(VI) A-I read a lot of poetry   B-I have read poetry before, but no longer do
C-I have never read poetry before   D-I read only a little of poetry
E-Other (specify)

(VII) How do you find the reading of poetry in terms of understanding? A-Very easy   B-Fairly easy   C-Very difficult   D-Difficult   E-Other (specify):

(VIII) What is your level of proficiency of spoken English? **A**-Mother tongue **B**-Very good   **C**-Fairly good   **D**-Poor   **E-Other** (specify):

(VIIII) What is your level of proficiency of written English? **A**-Mother-tongue **B**-Very good   **C**-Fairly good   **D**-Poor   **E-Other** (specify):

(X) Do you write poetry? **A**-Yes   **B**-No   **C-Other** (specify):

PART TWO: Word Puns

The italicised statements in the sentences numbered 1 to 10 below are paraphrases of extracts from my poems or short stories. Please answer the questions <u>based on the bolded phrases</u> by circling the responses that best suit your understanding of the statements just as they are.

1. *Democracy is not* **bridging the communication gap**_A *between the government and the people as they said it would; it is actually* **gapping the communication bridge**_B *between the people and the government.*

(a) Which statement suggests the existence of a bridge? A   B

(b) Which phrase suggests the existence of a gap? A   B

(c) Which statement means the same as the sentence (1) above?

> (i) Democratic governments ensure the building of bridges to enable communication among people.

> (ii) Democracy leads to the breaking of bridges, which negatively impacts on communication.

> (iii) Instead of democracy enhancing communication between government and the masses, it hinders it.

> (iv) Instead of democracy hindering communication between the government and the people, it enhances it.

2. *The democratic system we have embraced* **leaves a lot to be desired**_A*; at the same time, it* **desires a lot to be left**_B*.*

(a) Which phrase suggests the inclusion of the undesirable in the system?

A   B

(b) Which phrase suggests the exclusion of the desirable in the system? A   B

(c) Which statement means the same as the sentence (2) above?

> (i) The system has some undesirable traits that it need not

have and it does not have some desirable traits that it has to have.

(ii) The undesirable traits in the system outweigh the desirable traits in the system.

(iii) The desirable traits in the system outweigh the undesirable traits in the system.

(iv) The system has both desirable traits it has to have and undesirable traits it need not have.

3. *In theory, democratic election equals* **the people in government**$_A$, *but in practice, democratic election equals* **the government in people**$_B$.

(a) Which phrase suggests that in practice, the electorate and not the elected have a right to decide the affairs of government? **A   B**

(b) Which phrase suggests that in practice, it is not the electorate, but the elected that have the right to decide the affairs of government? **A   B**

(c) Which statement means the same as the sentence (3) above?

(i) Although theory is a guiding principle of practice, practice turns out to be different.

(ii) Although democracy entails the people ruling themselves, it is only a few selfish people that rule.

(iii) Although every electorate would like to participate in government affairs, there are only a few positions in democratic government.

(iv) Although only few people occupy government positions, they serve the interests of the electorate.

4. *I think it is not only that* **the young man is beyond redemption**$_A$, *but also that* **redemption is beyond him**$_B$.

(a) Which phrase suggests that it is redemption's fault that the young man cannot be redeemed? **A   B**

(b) Which phrase suggests that it is the young man's own fault that he cannot be redeemed? A B

(c) Which statement means the same as the sentence (4) above?

> (i) It is not only difficult for the young man to save himself, even other people cannot save him.

> (ii) It is not possible for the young man to be saved because he does not want to be saved.

> (iii) While the young man has the desire to save himself or be saved by others, salvation does not come his way.

> (iv) The young man has passed the point of possible redemption.

5. *If I am the one you love to hate*_A, *then you are the one I hate to love*_B.

(a) Which phrase suggests that [I] hates [you]? A B

(b) Which phrase suggests that [you] hates [I]? A B

(c) Which statement means the same as the sentence (5) above?

> (i) If you hate me, then I love you.

> (ii) If you love me, then I love you too.

> (iii) If you hate me, then I hate you too.

> (iv) If you love me, then I hate you.

6. *These people don't* **teach our children**_A *any more; they only* **cheat our children**_B.

(a) Which phrase paints a negative image of teachers? A B

(b) Which phrase would suggest a negative impact of democracy? A B

(c) Which phrase entails the wish of the producer of this statement? A B

7. *The girl might be of* **cheap quality**_A *by your youthful eyes, but she might be just the* **peach quality**_B *that you deserve my son.*

(a) Which phrase suggests that the girl can make a good wife? A B

(b) Which phrase would suggest that the girl is not fashion conscious? A B

(c) Which phrase would suggest that the son will not marry the girl? A B

8. *Pick a man from the many that you see and keep him*$_A$; *don't try to keep many and pick one*$_B$; *you will be dead before you do.*

(a) Which phrase paints a negative image of the lady receiving the advice? A B

(b) Which phrase would suggest that the lady receiving the advice will contract HIV/AIDS? A B

(c) Which phrase would suggest that the lady receiving the advice is promiscuous? A B

9. *I don't think the man can coach the team*$_A$; *he is only going to choke the team*$_B$.

(a) Which phrase suggests that the team would win trophies? A B

(b) Which phrase paints a good image of the man? A B

(c) Which phrase would suggest that the man would be fired before the end of his contract? A B

10. *I have only permitted you to chat her*$_A$; *if you touch her*$_B$, *I will strangle you.*

(a) Which phrase suggests intrusion of somebody's territory? A B

(b) Which phrase suggests that the producer of the statement is jealous? A B

(c) Which phrase would paint a negative image of the lady? A B

Appendix 4: Guiding questions for the follow-up interviews

1. What is your experience with poetry like?

2. What is your general observation about 1 to 5?

3. What is your general observation about 6 to 10?

4. Comment about the change in the image created by the A part and the image created by the B part.

5. What makes this change effective or possible?

6. Which are easier to understand between the two types of word play?

7. How did you go about inferring the meaning in general terms?