

Full Length Research Paper

Semiotics in the Whatsapp conversations of undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Osun State, Nigeria

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Semioticians study signs not in isolation but as part of semiotic 'sign systems' (such as a medium or genre). They study of how meanings are made: as such, being concerned not only with communication but also with the construction and maintenance of reality. Structuralists seek to describe the overall organization of sign systems as 'languages'. However, for this study, we want to consider the structuralist approach which is concerned with the internal relations of parts within a self-contained system, seeking to explore the use of signs in specific social situations. The data were collected from undergraduates at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Osun State. Five conversations were collected from the undergraduate students from their WhatsApp application the first week of January. The instrument to be used for this study is Semiotics. The first three strings of each conversation were analyzed. Altogether fifteen clauses and sentences were analyzed. In this study, it has been discovered that nouns in the selected clauses and sentences cannot have antonyms but can have substitutes of other names on the paradigmatic or vertical axis. According to the structural rules that states that a part cannot function without a whole, in the conversations analyzed, it is revealed that there is internal coherence because the part has linguistic link with the whole. It is revealed that on the axis of chain, there are internal rules with which the structure regulates its behavior. The rules of concord, deletion, substitution, found in both axis of chain and choice modified the behavior of the internal structures of the conversations of the Obafemi Awolowo University Undergraduates, in Ile Ife. We conclude by suggesting that more smileys and emojis be used by conversationalists, since phones even suggest them as conversations are typed. Whatsapp is also used for formal instructions between teachers and students, so more teachers are encouraged to imbibe the culture of using it for passing instructions to their students. Furthermore, we suggest that this topic be added to secondary schools' curriculum in order to increase the students' skill in vocabulary development. Also, that the government should try and help in providing teaching materials or aids that could facilitate the teaching of these relations. Lastly, that though authors of primary schools texts have been trying to include matching of items or objects with words, nevertheless, we recommend that they continue to improve on it. It is a semiotic act.

Key words: Semiotics, Whatsapp, undergraduate students, O.A.U, Ife.

INTRODUCTION

Semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as 'signs' in everyday speech, but of anything which 'stands for' something else. Semiotics is not widely institutionalized as an academic discipline. It is a field of study involving many different theoretical stances and methodological tools. Eco (1976) states that 'semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign'.

Contemporary, Semioticians study signs not in isolation but as part of semiotic 'sign systems' (such as a medium or genre). They study of how meanings are made: as such, being concerned not only with communication but also with the construction and maintenance of reality. Semiotics and semantics (a branch of linguistics) have a common concern with the meaning of signs, but Sturrock (1986) argues that semantics focuses on what words mean, semiotics is concerned with how signs mean.

Osisanwo (2009) worked on 'A Pragma-Semiotic Analysis of Aroko: The Yoruba Means of Symbolic Communication'. The study sees *Aroko*- (a Yoruba traditional way of coding and decoding messages through the use of objects) as one of the varieties and variations in communication. Sotusa (2009) worked on 'Literary – Semiotic Analysis of Drum Poetry'; metaphors, imageries, signs / code were displayed in the use of drum in the study. Hou (2013) worked on the semiotics of Internet celebrity Gangnam style case. The study investigated the internet celebrity in the content of multimodal media representation and super diverse semiotic repertoires. It identifies lyrics, beats, dance-gestures, characters, objects and places as the major semiotic modes of expression in the video.

Ocepek et al. (2000) in a semi-literary journal for women: *Ladies Home Journal* which began in 1983 gave a research report on: 'A semiotic analysis of food related advertisements during the Second World War.' The article examines food in American culture during one poignant era in American History, the Second World War 'food fights' in the study refers to a government badge found on a number of advertisements telling consumers that food was a war material.

Olorunfoba-Oju (1999) worked on understanding semiotics. He really delved into the origin of semiotics, important moments and all the rudiments in semiotics. Oyama (1998) worked on Visual Semiotics: "A study of Images in Japanese advertisement". It investigates various approaches to visual images. Oswald (2015) worked on the structural semiotics paradigm for marketing research: theory, methodology and case analysis.

The study aims to extend the current state of semiotics

for marketing beyond advertising research to the whole gamut of media and consumer touch points in contemporary marketing from strategic communication to retail design and consumer behavior.

According to Chandler (2014), 'semiology' was 'a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life', for the philosopher Charles Peirce 'semiotic' was the 'formal doctrine of signs' which was closely related to logic (Pierce, 1931 to 1958: 2.227). This is seen in the use of emojis on *WhatsApp* conversations. When we speak of the referential uses of language, we are talking about how signs are used to refer to certain items. A sign is the link or relationship between a signified and the signifier as defined by Chandler (2014). The signified is some entity or concept in the World, while the signifier represents the signified.

Signified: the concept table, Signifier: the word "table".

It is the relationship between the two that gives the 'Sign' meaning. The study of signs is the study of the construction and maintenance of reality (Chandler, 2014). Semiotics involves the study of not only what we refer to as signs in everyday speech, but of anything which stands for something else. In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects (Chandler, 2014: 22).

Semiotics is important because it can help us not to take reality for granted as something having a purely objective existence which is independent of human interpretation. It also helps us to be aware of reality as a construction, the reality of individual's role played in a situation, and further help us to know that meaning is actively created according to a complex interplay of codes or conventions of which we are normally unaware (Chandler, 2014).

This study examines how emojis and smileys help in communication, their interpretations and implications. It will further examine the structures in which communication takes place. All these will be carried out using the *WhatsApp* conversations of Obafemi Awolowo University Undergraduate students in order to understand the role of signs as part of social life as Saussure declared in Chandler (2014).

Origin of structural Semiotics

The Swiss Linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 to 1913) was a founder of linguistics, and also of semiotics

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in his *Course of General Linguistics*, 1916. Saussure was a key figure in the early development of semiotics. Others were the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839 to 1914) and later Charles William Morris (1901 to 1979), who developed behaviourist semiotics. Leading modern theorists include Roland Barthes (1915 to 1980), Algirdas Greimas (1917 to 1992), Yuri Lotman (1922 to 1993), Christian Metz (1931 to 1993). Structuralism is an analytical method which has been employed by many semioticians, and which is based on Saussure's linguistic model. Structuralists seek to describe the overall organization of sign systems as 'languages'. They engage in a search for 'deep structures' underlying the 'surface features' of phenomena. However, for this study, we want to consider the structuralist approach which is concerned with the internal relations of parts within a self-contained system, seeking to explore the use of signs in specific social situations.

Saussure semiotics

Saussure postulated language as a system. Also, that language system should be studied synchronically and relationally. He also opines that semiotics can be referred to as the science of signification. Its basic principle is that meaning is made by development of acts and objects which function as signs in relation to other signs. It is about meaning-relations that can exist between one sign and another, primarily relations of contrast and superordination / subordination (for example, Class / member, whole / part). Saussure, when considering language as a semiotic system posits that language is a system of binary oppositions with elements of language occurring in functionally differentiated pairs as in the phonemic pair as in /pit/ - /bit/, /pin/ - /bin/. He also posits that language has two relational axes: the syntagmatic (horizontal) axis and the paradigmatic (vertical) axis. These two axes interact to create meaning. This can be likened to adjacency pairs and turn-taking in conversation analysis.

Piaget semiotics

Piaget is another scholar in structuralist semiotics. According to Piaget (1971), language has a structure. She postulated 'the structure of structure' and that the main properties of structure are wholeness, self-regulation and transformation.

Wholeness

This implies completeness. The parts cannot function without the whole. Semiotics explains the relationship between the part and the whole. Wholeness indicates internal coherence because the part has linguistic link

with the whole. For instance, in a paragraph, the topic sentence carries the main idea in the paragraph and it is around this topic sentence that other sentences rally. Another example is in writing an essay; there must be the introductory paragraph and the supporting paragraphs before the concluding paragraph which must be sequentially arranged for coherence to be possible. One paragraph leads to the other. Furthermore, in conversations, one stretch or string of conversation leads to the other. For understanding to take place, one person should speak at a time and speakers change recurs. This can be likened to what Schegloff and Sacks (1973) referred to as adjacency pairs. The adjacency pair's sequences can be question / answer sequence, complaint / denial sequence, compliment / rejection sequence, etc. This structuralist phenomenon is also seen in turn-taking in conversations.

Self-regulation

This refers to the internal rules with which the structure regulates its behavior. English language is a rule-governed language. For instance, there are rules of transformation, rules of concord, deletion rule, substitution rule, insertion rule; all in grammar are used to modify the behavior of the internal structures. Some structures are not acceptable to the grammar of English. For instance; 'The girl sing sonorously' is not an acceptable sentence structure in English grammar. 'The girl' is a singular subject and must be followed by a singular verb 'sings'.

Transformation

This refers to the fact that the structure has mechanisms for constant internal regeneration. Transformational Generative Grammar by Noam Chomsky shows the capacity of language to transform from its basic sentence to varying sentences. The kernel sentence can be transform to have the passive transform, negative transform, interrogative transform, just to mention but a few. In a nutshell, semiotics concerns itself with how a few set of rules account for all the occurrences in the structure.

The two types of Saussure's signification relationship

The two types of signification relationships are syntagm and paradigm. They are systems that produce meaning in language. Culler (1976) writes in *Ferdinand de Saussure* that:

"Paradigmatic relations are the oppositions between

elements that can replace one another ... Syntagmatic relations define combinatory possibilities; the relations between elements that might combine in a sequence (p. 115)".

It can be said that, syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations are co-existing signs in the semiotic system. According to Clarke (2013), the syntagm is a set of interacting signifiers which form some meaningful whole that is governed by the explicit and implicit rules and conventions. Syntagmatic relations refer inter-textually to other co-present signifiers (Saussure 1983). Clarke (2013) further said that paradigm is a set of associated signifiers or signified that are all members of some defining category but which are different to each other.

Syntagmatic relation

This refers to the horizontal association of elements in a text (the axis of chain in linguistics). It has to do with the ordering of elements in a text. A sentence can be referred to as a syntagm of words. Sequences of words are formed by combining them in a recognized order; hence it is linear in nature. For instance, in the sentence; 'The lady sings sonorously'. The four elements in the sentence are related syntagmatically. Syntagmatic relations are governed by selectional rules (collocational rules), such that a sequence like, 'The lady sing sonorously is not permissible. Distinctive elements in a syntagmatic sequence are sometimes referred to as constituting a syntagm. It can also be referred to as the sequence of events that make up a string.

Paradigmatic relation

Paradigmatic relation refers to a vertical relation obtaining between an item present in a sequence and similar items that are not present (axis of choice in linguistics). For instance, in the example aforementioned 'The lady' contracts a paradigmatic relation with she / he / It while 'sings' contracts a paradigmatic relation with "sweeps", "claps", "dances" etc.

This rule is also guided by selectional rule such that only conceptually related items can be chosen as a paradigm, so each related element in a paradigm constitutes a paradigm. For instance, 'The masquerades were dancing at the Palace Square', masquerades was chosen instead of "boys", "girls", "men" and "were" instead of "are" (Saussure and Charles, 1984).

It can also be referred to as where signs get meaning from their association with other signs. In these two sentences; "I see what I look" and "I look what I see" consist of the same units, "I", "see", "what", and "look". However, the meanings of these two sentences are different because the units that compose the sentences

are arranged differently based on the syntagmatic system, the horizontal axis of combination. Paradigm involves selections and is based on contrasts or differences. The choice also refers inter-textually to the other absent signifiers (Saussure, 1983).

The internet

The internet is an electronic medium which presents a channel which facilitates and constraints the ability to communicate in ways that are fundamentally different from those found in other semiotic situations. Originally, when writing of language began during the Egyptian civilization, objects were made to be read. But it was deficient because the meaning usually lies with the person that made the objects. So, the use of language nowadays can be termed revolutionary (Crystal, 2006). Users of the internet usually send mails, check e-mails, search for information on past research works, surf for entertainment, and do some social networking. The internet is one of the greatest things done by human beings.

WhatsApp technology

WhatsApp is a type of technology that is commonly used on specific mobile phones and computers. Since the smart phones became popular, many messaging services were launched but *whatsapp* has become the most popular among all. This application is highly addictive and can create a great impact on regular users and, apart from that, becomes difficult to control and cure.

WhatsApp messenger functionality has recently been improved upon. It is available on Blackberry, Nokia Symbian 60, Windows phone, Android and iPhones. For users to get started, enter the telephone number of the device into the App, it then sorts through the contacts on the phone to figure out who else also has the application already installed. Users can then invite other contacts and start sending messages to those the application discovers.

People often press their phones while walking, in buses, on their beds etc., they are chatting on *WhatsApp*. It is one of the first ten chat applications in the world today. They have thousands of chatting messages, photo, video and audio attachments on their *WhatsApp*. The development of digital technology has facilitated easier communication between people and organizations. *WhatsApp* is used for various purposes like commercial purposes, teaching of students, friendship interactions among others. It allows direct interactions.

WhatsApp was created by Brian Acton and Jan Koum in 2009 (Yeboah et al., 2014). The main objective behind its creation is to make communication and the distribution

of multimedia easier and faster than short messages service (SMS). It is a cross platform mobile messenger that works on an internet data plan. It is cheaper; all that is needed is user's monthly subscription. Good as this App is, it has its disadvantages on the undergraduates since it consumes time, take over their minds from better things and sometimes shift their attention from their studies among others (Kuppuswamy and Narayan, 2010).

Nowadays, messaging can be done not only by texting, we have so many more ways via texts than simply verbal communication: Jpegs, links, animated gifts, smileys and *emoji*. There are literally hundreds of *Emoji* out there, each expressing different moods, variations of thoughts and abstract ideas. It was the Facebook that launched FB Stickers Store to supply even more such icons. These pictorial expressions are called *Emojis*. It is a Japanese word that means picture letters.

Emoji are invented in Japan and most of the *WhatsApp* icon-sets have several icons that have a special meaning in Japanese culture. There is a saying that a picture says a thousand words. Emoticons and *emoji* have become increasingly common among younger generations to convey emotions within their text with the use of characters or images. The first started coming to prominence in old computer-based instant messengers like AOL instant messenger (AIM) which is what is used when one wants to talk to someone but your arms were too tired to lift your coal-burning rotary phone).

It was reported that originally, they were used as punctuations for other thoughts; *emojis* eventually came to be the transmitted thoughts themselves. They have been greatly extended, offering far more nuanced options than the original happy face / sad face / angry face etc. Dictionary.com gives the meaning of emoticon as the following ; "Any of several combinations of symbols used in electronic mail and text messaging to indicate the state of mind of the writer such as to express happiness".

Pragmatism means an interest for human actions, for example, what people do (Goldkuhl, 2004). It was asserted by Blumer (1969) that the essence of society lies in an ongoing process of action – not in posited structure of relations. Most actions, Mead (1934) argues that "the behavior of an individual can be understood only in terms of the whole social group of which is a member, since his individual acts are involved in larger social acts, which go beyond himself and which implicate the other members of the group".

Social actions are also actions directed from an actor to another actor. Both communicative (as the illocutionary force with propositional content), and material acts are generic model of social actions (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969)

Smileys and *Emoji*

Many of the smileys and *emojis* are random objects like a rose, a camera, a foot (for when one wants to end

conversation like the opening credits to Monty Python's Flying Circus), or a piece of Sushi. The smiley faces vary from elated to angry. Most of them don't inherently have anything to do with emotion anymore (Figure 1).

This study aims to find out how *emojis* and smileys help in communication, their interpretations and implications. It will further examine the structures in which communication takes place. All these will be carried out using the *whatsApp* conversations of Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduate students in order to understand the role of signs as part of social life as Saussure declared in Chandler (2014).

Objectives of the research

The objectives of this study are to:

- (1) Examine the signification of smileys and emojis in the whatsapp conversation of undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife;
- (2) Explore the impact of paradigm on the syntagm in the structures of the clauses and sentences in the whatsapp conversation of undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife;
- (3) Consider the functions of sentences and clauses in the whatsapp conversations of undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife.

Research questions

- (1) What are the signification found in the smileys and emojis in the whatsapp conversation of undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife;
- (2) What are the impacts brought about by the introduction of paradigms on the syntagms in the whatsapp conversation of undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife;
- (3) What the functions performed by the sentences and clauses in the whatsapp conversations of undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife.

METHODOLOGY

Method of data collection

In order to elicit the data for this study, we got the contact of the willing undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, then, collected their phones to random sample their conversations for selection. The selected conversations were then forwarded to the researcher's phone which was screen shot so as to have the conversations, as they are. The data were collected from undergraduates at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Osun State. Five conversations were collected from the undergraduate students from their WhatsApp application the first week of January. The instrument to be used for this study is Semiotics. The first three strings of each conversation will be analyzed.
















































 winking smiley	 broken red heart	 dizzy smiley	 Listless-whatsapp smiley
 two pink hearts smiley	 two rotating hearts smiley	 triumphant smiley	 smiley winking one eye
 Suffering emoji	 whatsapp emoticon eyes closed	 surgical stretched tongue	 smiley laughing smugly
 disappointed smiley	 Smiley with heart eyes	 smiley tablet	 smiley making grimaces
 smiley with hands	 smiley with halo	 smiley pinches both eyes	 smiley stretched tongue
 smiley laughing with open mouth	 smiley with sunglasses	 Smiley with tongue eat enjoy	 smiley speechless
 screaming smiley	 monkey hands on mouth smiley	 Monkey hands on ears smiley	 monkey hands before eyes smiley
 yellow heart smiley	 sparkling heart smiley	 smiley upside down	 smiley not exited
 smiley looks neutral	 smiley is relieved	 smiley pleased red cheeks	 smiley face is flushed.
 smiley with squint eyes	 shocked smiley	 red heart smiley	 red balloon
 sad smiley	 purple heart smiley	 pouting angry smiley	 pink growing heart
 pine decoration	 nerd with glasses emoji	 tired smiley	 laughing smiley punches eyes

Figure 1. Some of the smileys and emojis used by undergraduates and their meanings (Source of table: APPAMATRIX).

Method of data analysis

The online selected conversations will be examined using the qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the selected threads.

DATA ANALYSIS (SYNTAGMATIC AND PARADIGMATIC)

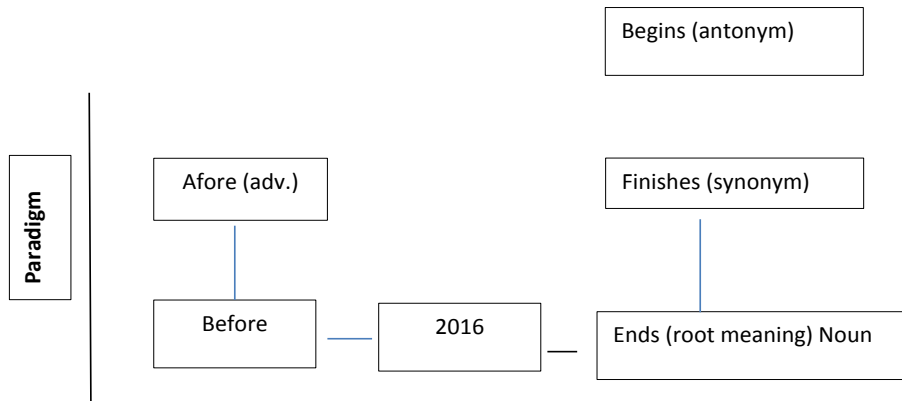
Conversation one analysis

Figure 2a has 9 clauses and two sentences structurally.

Functionally, the whole message is a wish. There are seventeen flowers altogether, of various types signifying and expressing love to the receiver of the message. Two palm trees were included in the emojis used. This signifies 'fruitfulness' in the year 2017. Five smileys laughing with punches eyes expressing joy and signifying happiness. Four pictures of the 'sun' and two pictures of the 'stars' are also part of the signs used to make the message more powerful. They signify and express brightness to be experienced in the year 2017. Six dancing dolls and four clapping hands were also drawn in the message signifying 'jubilation' that people will experience in the year 2017. Another sign used is a heart tied with



(a)



(b)

Figure 2. Conversation one string one (a) message (b) syntagm.

ribbons. This signifies the awesomeness of God and his marvelous power.

Syntagm for conversation one string one

Figure 2b shows paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations are two major operations that produce meaning in any representation. The dichotomy of selection and combination is valid in linguistic representation. Certain words are selected from among many possibilities, and the selected words are combined into a sentence in a certain way depending on the purpose of communication. In

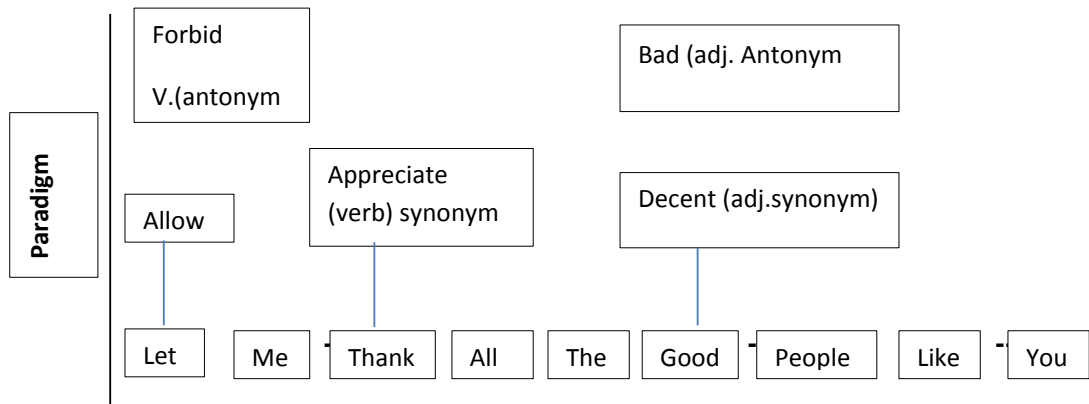
string one of the *whatsapp* conversation one, on the paradigmatic axis, 'before' is replaced by the word 'afore' while 'ends' is replaced by 'finishes' and 'begins' is the antonym of 'ends' on the paradigmatic axis.

Apart from retaining the meaning of the words, the words retained the same class (verb, adjective), the same number (singular or plural) and same tense (present, past, perfect). One different thing is that in the case of antonyms of words, however, the meaning to the sentence or clause will definitely change (opposite). Geckeler (1984) revealed that:

"We shall regard as a paradigm any set of linguistic forms



(a)



(b)

Figure 3. Conversation One String Two (a) message (b) syntagm.

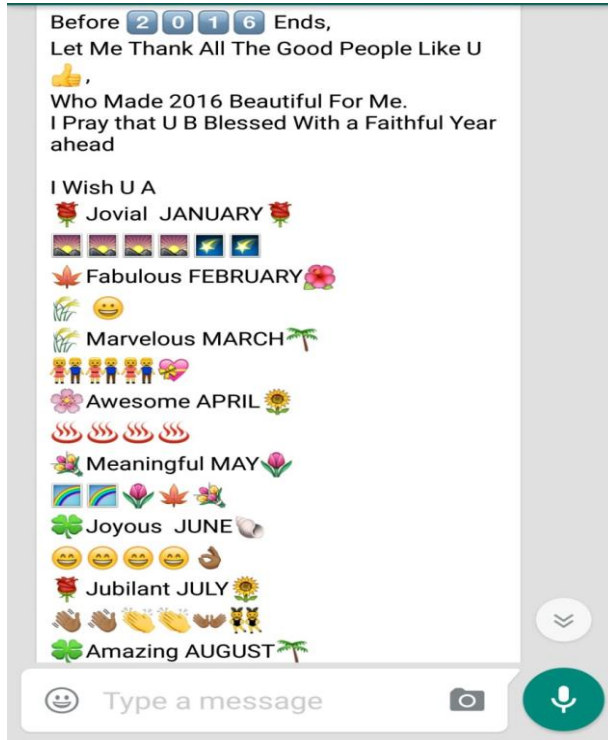
wherein: (a) the meaning of every form has a feature in common with the meaning of all other forms of the set, and (b) the meaning of every form differs from that of every other form of the set by one or more additional features. The common feature will be the 'root meaning' of the paradigm (p. 265)".

On the syntagmatic axis, it is discovered that there is agreement between the words which makes the structure of the clause grammatical. '2016' is a singular phenomenon and so the verb that follows it, 'ends', is singular. This reveals the fact that the

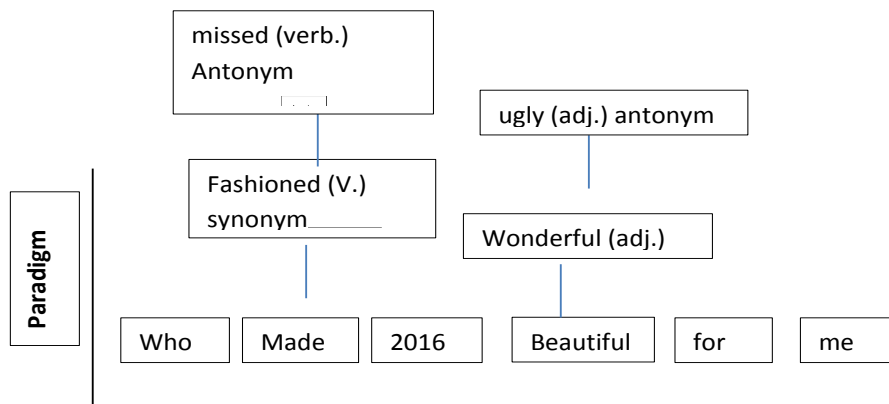
structuralist approach is concerned with the internal relations of parts within a self-contained system.

Syntagm for conversation one string two

Figure 3 shows that in string two of the *whatsApp* conversation one, on the paradigm, 'let'(v) is replaced with 'allow'(v, synonym) and 'forbid' is the antonym, 'thank'(v) replaced with 'appreciate'(v), 'good'(adj.) replaced by 'decent'(adj.). It is discovered that the



(a)



(b)

Figure 4. Conversation one string three (a) message (b) syntagm.

sentence, after some of the words have been replaced, still retains its grammaticality, its meaning, its class, its number, and its tense. The same thing happens on the axis of chain, the words are combined together by grammatical rules. It is also discovered that the words on the paradigmatic axis can sometimes be substituted with synonyms or antonyms. It is discovered that nouns replaced nouns, adjectives replaced adjectives. In other words (same class is maintained), simile 'like' is used to compare the receiver to good or decent people that the writer came across in the year, 2016.

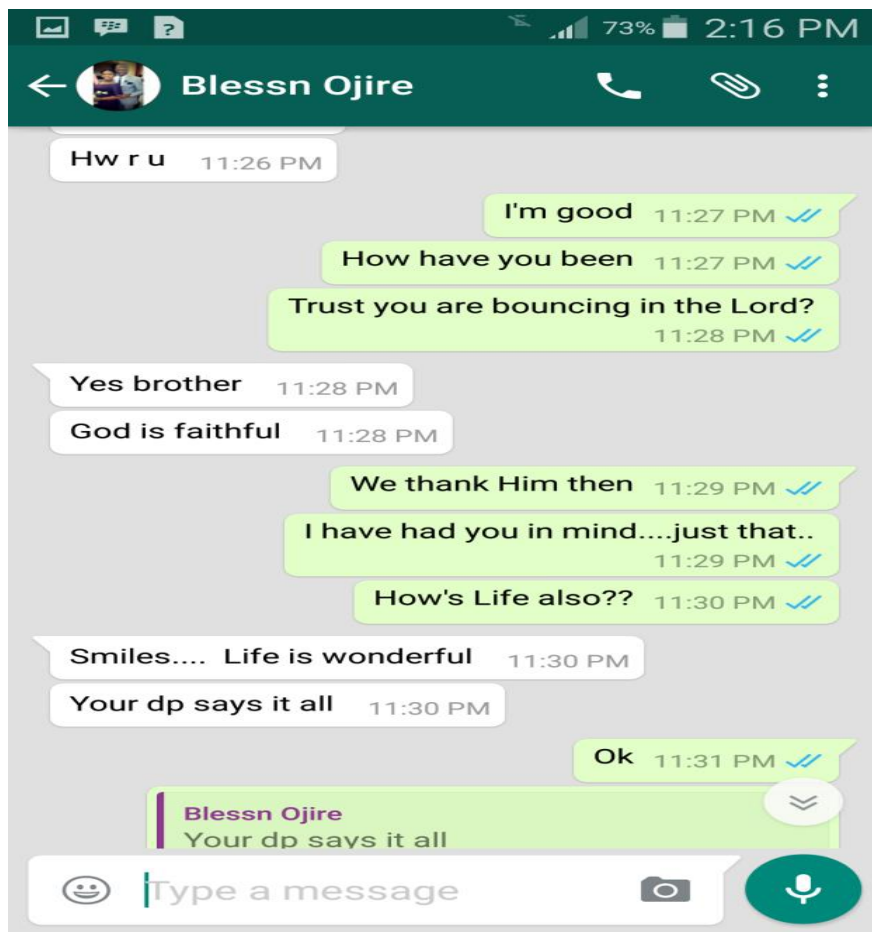
the function of a noun or a noun phrase in this string; it makes reference to the good people in the year 2016. 'Fashioned' is used to replace 'made' on the paradigm, the two words are in the past tense and are synonyms. 'Beautiful' is replaced with 'wonderful' (synonym). They are adjectives used to qualify 2016. Also in the paradigm, 'me', can be replaced by 'us', 'him', or 'her'. On the axis of chain, the words were combined together systematically, obeying the rules of grammar in the relations. It is only the antonyms on the paradigm that changes the meaning of the clause.

Syntagm for conversation one string three

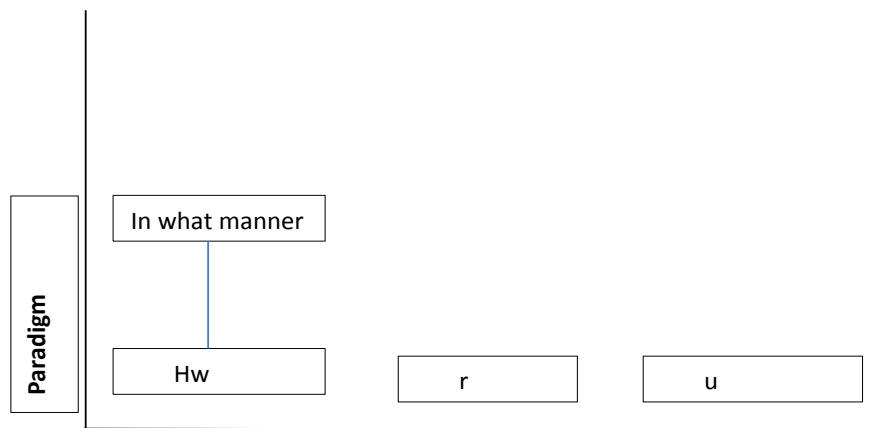
Conversation two analyses

Figure 4 is a subordinate and a noun clause, and it is performing

Figure 5a is a conversation between brothers. They are both



(a)



(b)

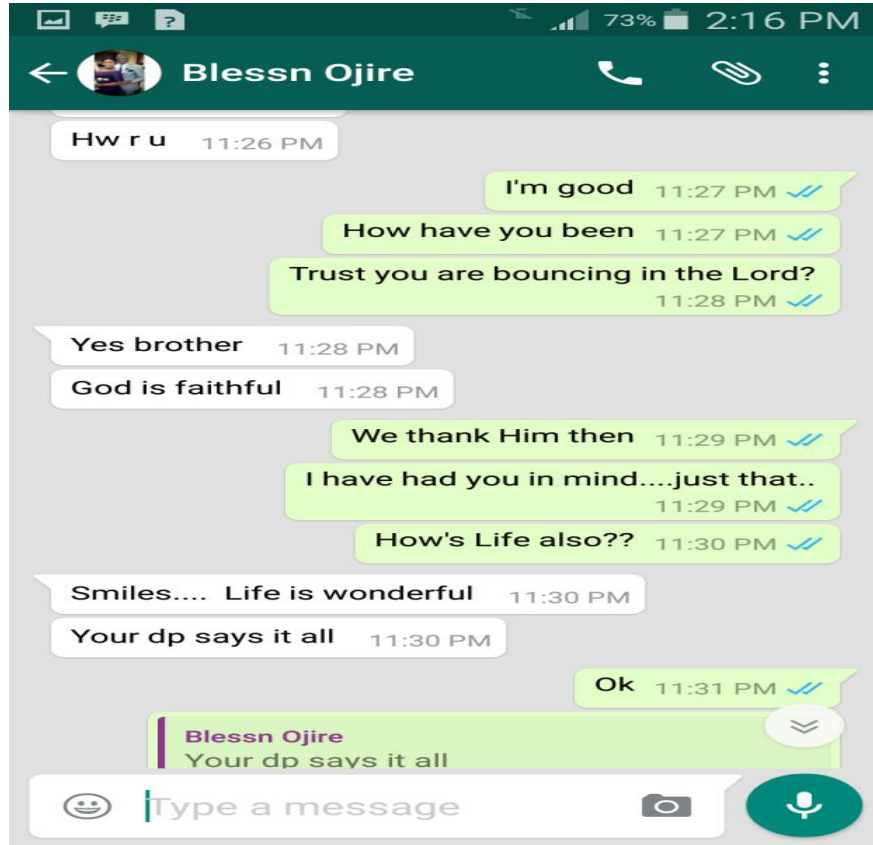
Figure 5. Conversation two string one (a) message (b) syntagm.

exchanging pleasantries. There are no emojis in this conversation

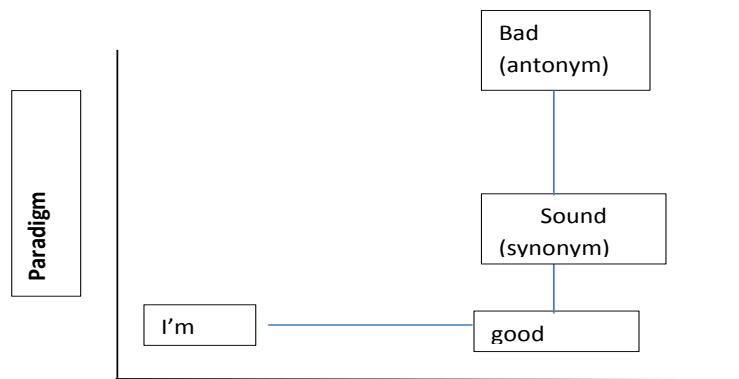
Syntagm for conversation two string one

Functionally, the string of Figure 5b is a question. It is seeking

information. According to Bathes (1977), bi-level reading of messages must take place. The initial level, denotation, is a starting point in which one reads the direct, specific meaning of the sign. The second level is that level in which the meaning that is evoked by the object is read. In this string, the question 'How' can be said to be at the denotative level on the axis of chain and can be said to



(a)



(b)

Figure 6. Conversation Two String Two (a) message (b) syntagm.

be at the connotative level on the axis of choice (paradigmatic level) where 'In what manner' is serving the same purpose with 'how'. The string is written using letters to represent words. 'Hw' stands for 'How', 'r' stands 'are' and 'u' stands 'you'.

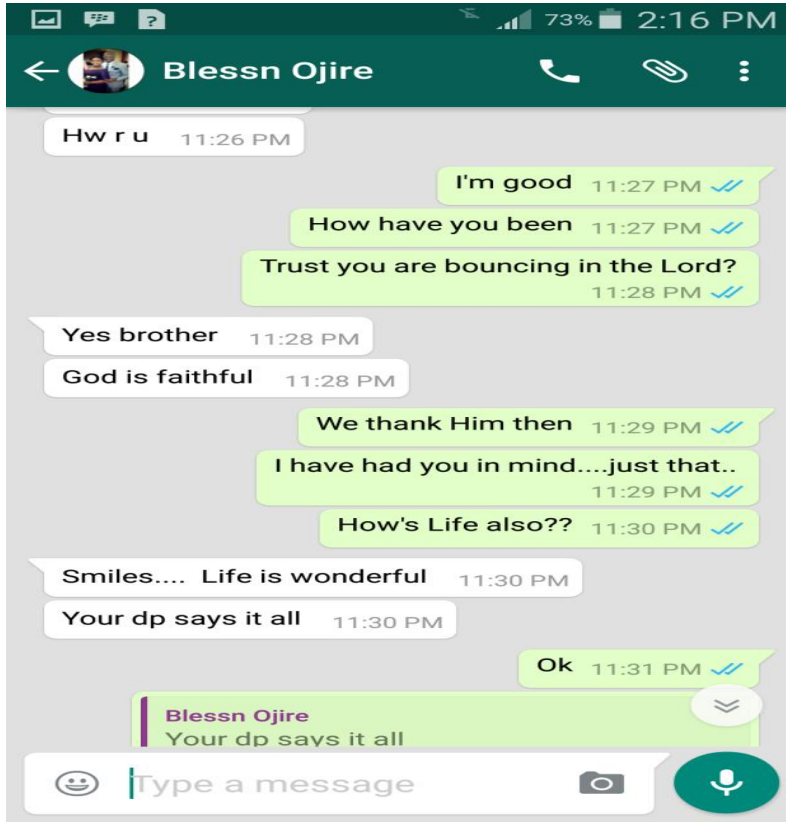
Syntagm for conversation two string two

Figure 6 string is a statement and a response to string one which requires information. Ellision is used in the first word in the syntagmatic axis. In 'I'm', letter 'a' is omitted in the word 'am'. This

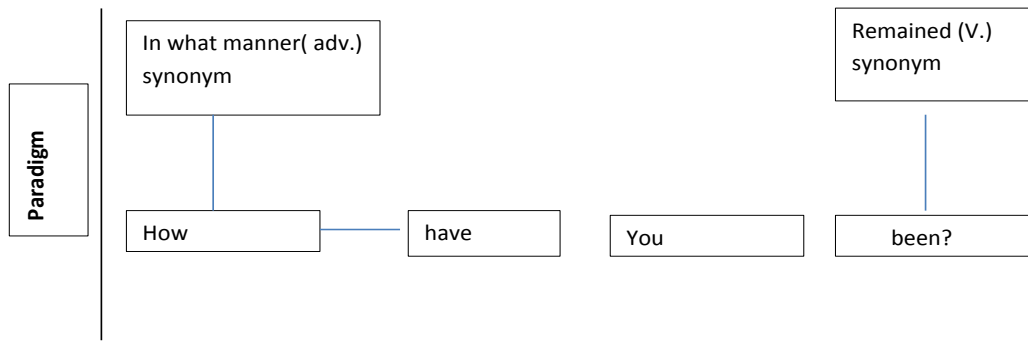
reveals one of the characteristics of conversation. On the paradigmatic axis, it is revealed that both synonym and antonym can be used to replace the words in the syntagmatic axis and the clause or sentence, as the case might be, will still be grammatical.

Syntagm for conversation two string three

Figure 7 string is a question. It also seeks for information from the listener. 'How' is another word replaced by 'In what manner'? The two words are adverbs. 'Been' is replaced at the paradigmatic level



(a)



(b)

Figure 7. Conversation two string three (a) conversation (b) syntagm.

with 'remained'. It is the past tense form of past participle 'be'. The two words are verbs.

Conversation three analyses

Syntagm for conversation three string one

Structurally, Figure 8a string is a statement. Functionally, it is a wish. 'Happy' is the root meaning and 'blissful' is a synonym to it while 'sad', is an antonym to it. The two words 'happy' and 'blissful' are adjectives. Also, 'new' and 'novel' are adjectives and they are

synonyms while 'old' is an antonym to 'new'. Immediately after the string, there is a grinning smiley showing teeth signifying the bliss and happiness in the celebration of the New Year.

Syntagm for conversation three string two

Figure 9 is a statement in Yoruba language. The translation is 'We thank God'. The first word is a first person plural pronoun. At the paradigmatic level, other pronouns can fit in and function there. The second word is 'thank', a verb and can have 'acknowledge' at the axis of choice (paradigm) as synonym. 'God' is a name and cannot

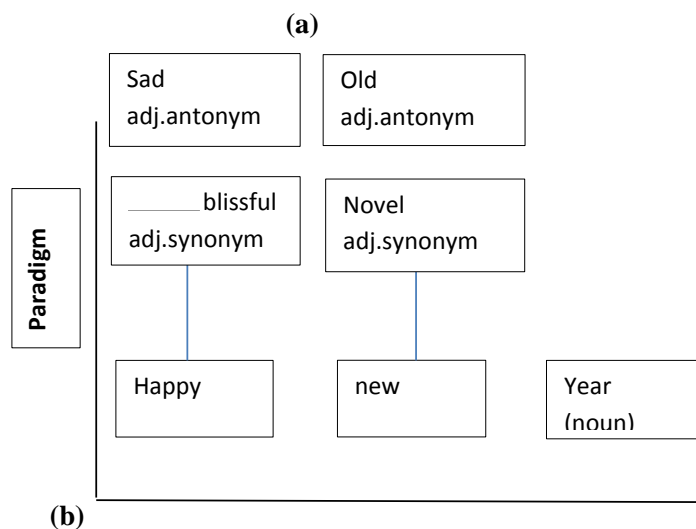
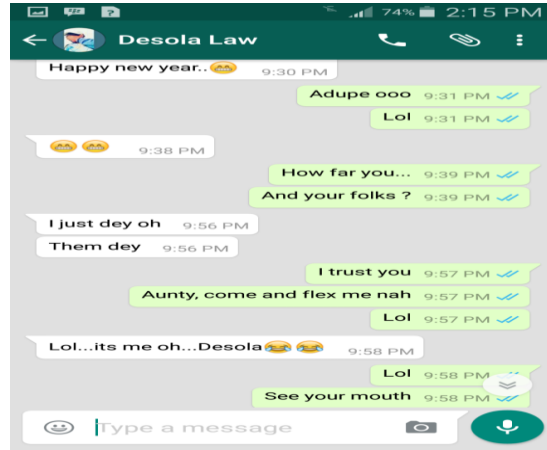


Figure 8. Conversation Three String One (a) Conversation (b) syntagm.

have antonyms

Syntagm for conversation three string three

This string has a slang which is very common to the youth 'Lol' which means 'laughing out loud'. It is an abbreviation.

Conversation four analyses

Syntagm for conversation four string one

In Figure 10 string, there are two words. 'Hello' can have 'Hi' as a paradigm and as synonym, while 'Tolu' is a name and cannot have an antonym but can be replaced by other names or pronoun.

Syntagm for conversation four string two

Figure 11 string has three words. It is a question seeking information. 'How' can be replaced on the paradigmatic axis by 'In what manner', both of which are adverbs. The second word is 'is', a verb and can be replaced on the paradigmatic axis by other 'be'

verbs. Then the last word is 'school' and can have 'institution' as a synonym and a paradigm. It is a noun and a proper noun, so no antonyms.

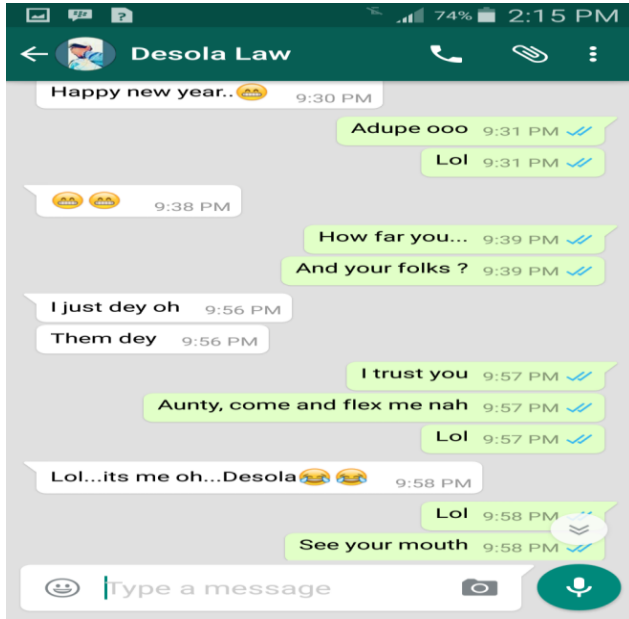
Syntagm for conversation four string three

Figure 12 string has six words. The content words there are four. Functionally, it is a question. 'When' can have 'at what time' as synonym and as paradigm. 'Exactly' can have 'precisely' as a synonym and a paradigm and can also have 'approximately' as an antonym and a paradigm. 'Exam' is another word, though abbreviated, can have 'assessment' as synonym and as paradigm.

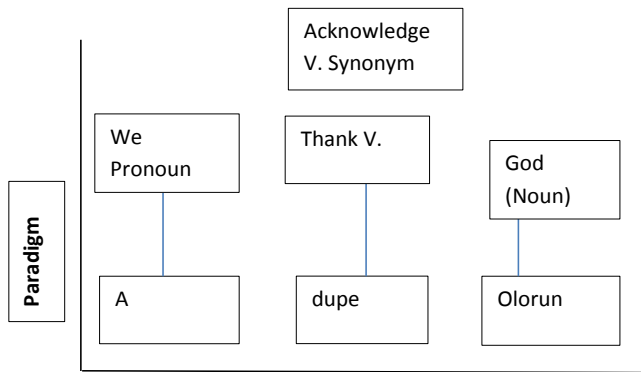
Conversation five analyses

Syntagm for conversation five string one

Figure 13 string has seven words. It is a question. It requires information. The first word 'anything' can be replaced by 'whatever' as a synonym and a paradigm. 'Tell' can be replaced by 'convey / hint' as synonyms and as paradigm. 'Before' is another word that can be replaced by 'previously' as synonym and 'later' as antonym.



(a)



(b)

Figure 9. Conversation Three String Two (a) Conversation (b) Syntagm.

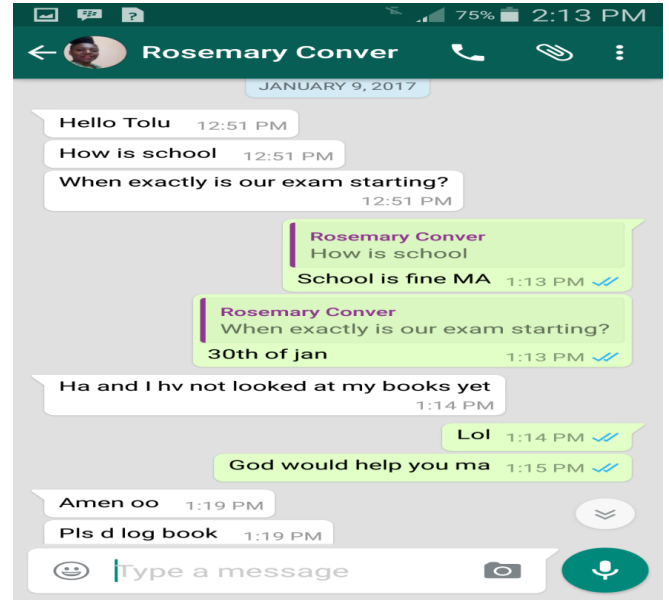
'Ends' is the last word on this string. It has 'finishes as the synonym and 'starts' as the antonym. They can all function at the paradigmatic axis of each as mentioned.

Syntagm for conversation five string two

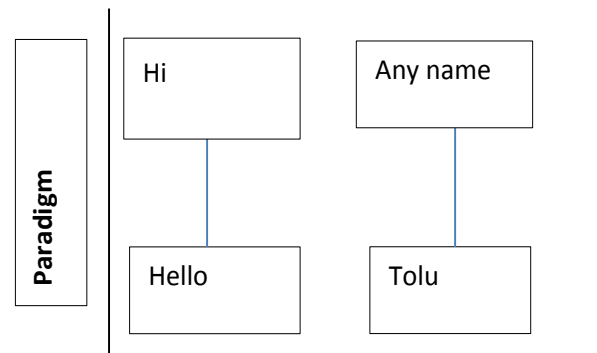
In Figure 14 string, there is only one content word, 'stay'. It has 'remained' as synonym and 'go' as the antonym. 'Remain' can function as a paradigm to 'stay'. 'Go' can only function as the antonym to it depending on the context of the usage. The first, fifth, and the seventh words are pronouns. The fourth word 'between' is a preposition.

Syntagm for conversation five string three

Functionally, Figure 15 string is a command. There are three



(a)



(b)

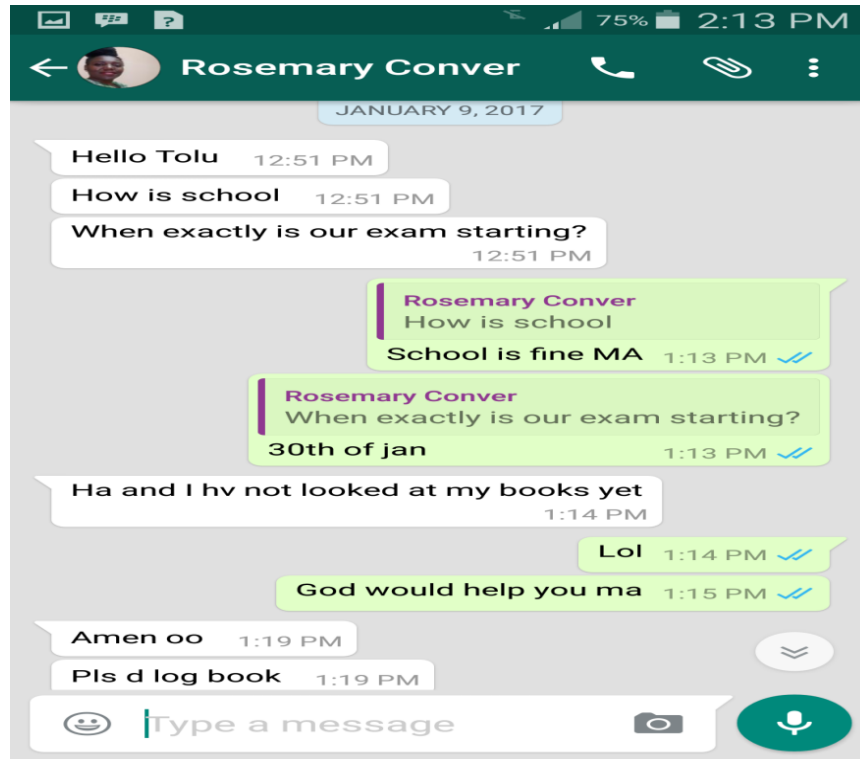
Figure 10. Conversation four string one (a) conversation (b) syntagm.

content words here. 'Send' is the first word and can be replaced by 'refer' (synonym) and 'bring' as the antonym. They can both fit into gaps of those words at syntagmatic axis and still retain their meanings and grammaticality as the case might be.

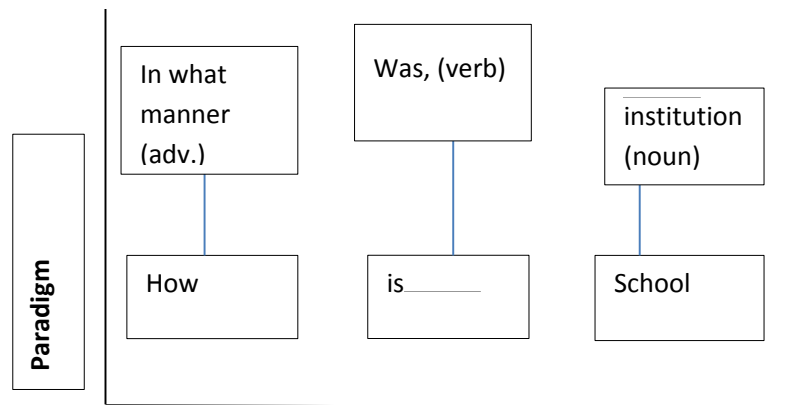
DISCUSSION

Altogether fifteen clauses and sentences were analyzed. In this study, it has been discovered that nouns in the selected clauses and sentences cannot have antonyms but can have substitutes of other names on the paradigmatic or vertical axis.

According to the structural rules that states that a part cannot function without a whole, in the conversations analyzed, it is revealed that there is inter coherence because the part has linguistic link with the whole. It is



(a)



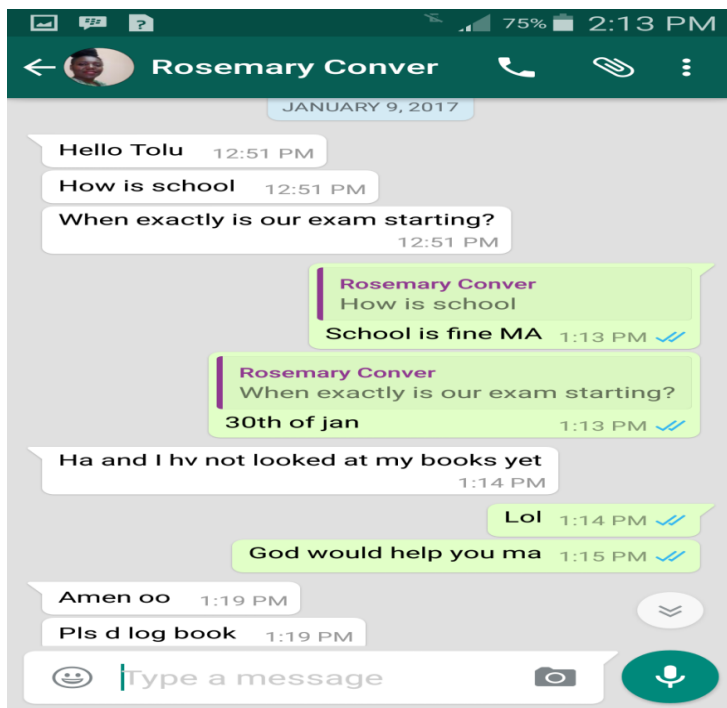
(b)

Figure 11. Conversation four string two (a) conversation (b) syntagm.

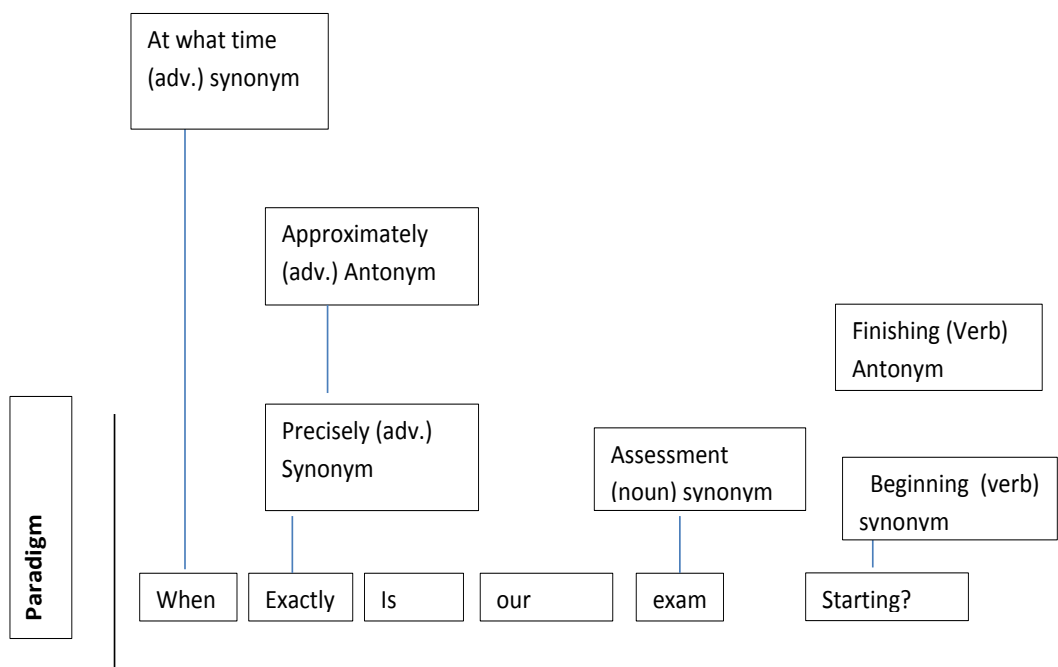
revealed that on the axis of chain, there are internal rules with which the structure regulates its behavior. English Language is a rule governed language. The rules of concord, deletion, substitution, seen in both axis of chain and choice are used to modify the behavior of the internal structures of the conversations of the Obafemi Awolowo University Undergraduates, in Ile Ife.

The meanings of the root words in the axis of chain are the same with the paradigm and so, retains the sentential meaning or the clausal meaning e.g. conversation 1,

string 1. The two axes, the root word and the suggested paradigm retained the same class (adjective, verb, noun), and they retained the same number (singular and plural). It is also noted that they retained the same tense. Furthermore, it is only in the case of when an antonym is in the paradigm that the meaning of the sentence or clause is negated (Opposite). It is also discovered that when talking about paradigms, content words are very important. It is discovered that in this relations, context is important in giving meaning to words, for instance in



(a)



(b)

Figure 12. Conversation four string three (a) conversation (b) syntagm.

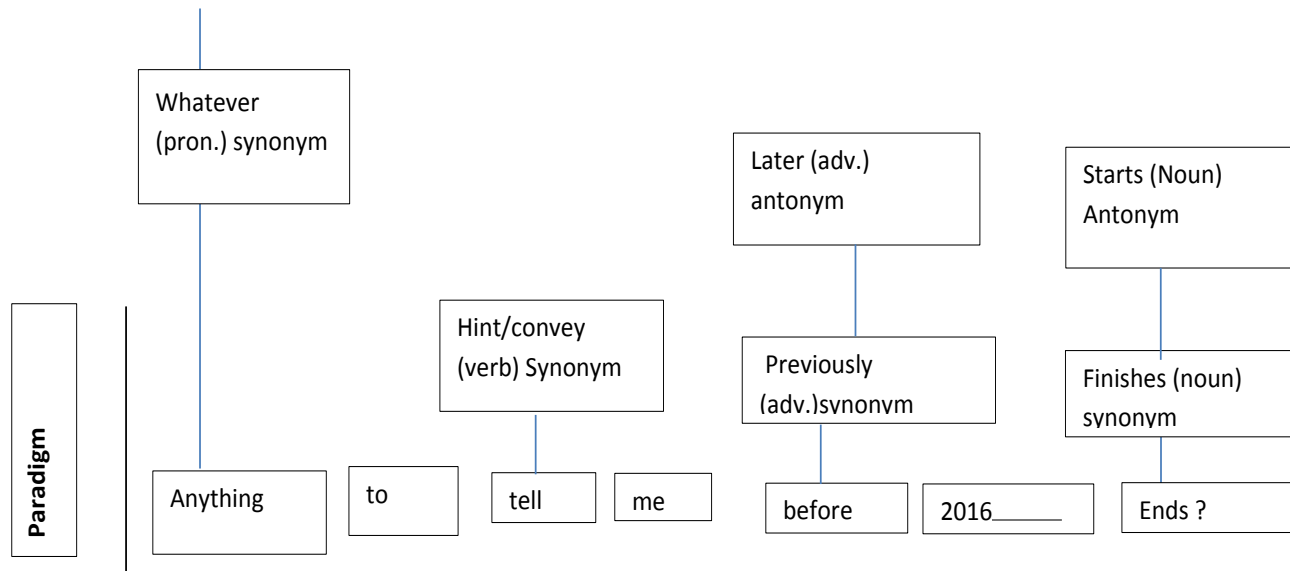
conversation 3, string 1, a sentence like 'Happy new year' on the axis of chain, if antonyms of words are supplied on the axis of choice, it will be 'Sad old year'. The meaning is the opposite of the original statement.

Signification of the emojis and smileys

It is revealed in this study (Table 1) that signs played a very important role as part of social life. Conversation 1



(a)



(b)

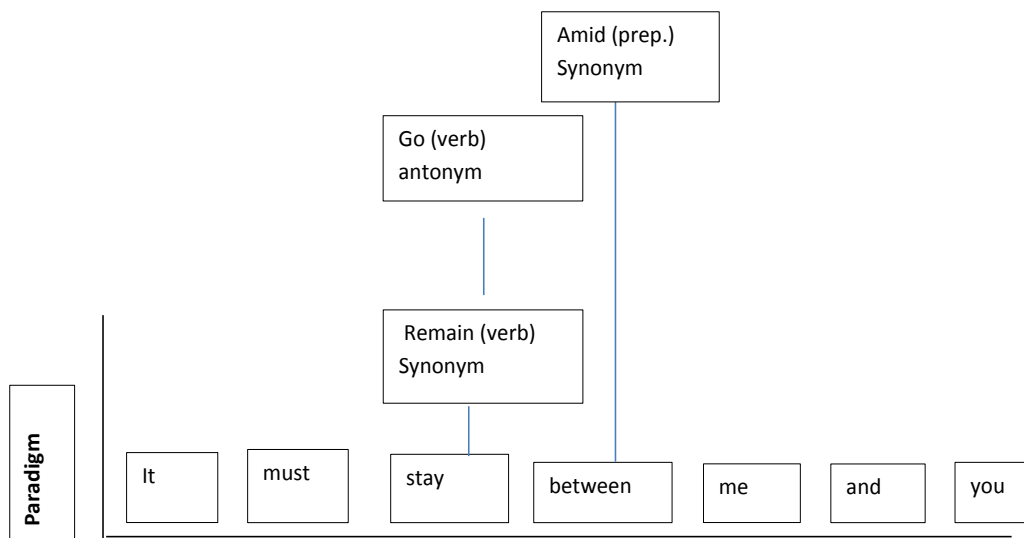
Figure 13. Conversation five string one (a) conversation (b) syntagm.

has seventeen flowers signifying 'love'. Two palm trees signifying 'fruitfulness', Five smileys laughing with punches eyes signifies happiness, Four pictures of the Sun and two of the stars signifies brightness. Six dancing

dolls and four clapping hands signify jubilation in the year 2017. Conversation two has no pictures or emojis. Conversation three has five smileys signifying happiness and joy to be experienced in the year 2017. Conversation



(a)



(b)

Figure 14. Conversation five string two (a) conversation (b) syntagm.

four has no emoji, nor smiley. Conversation 5 has five emojis and smileys signifying happiness, the stars signifying brightness and radiance on people’s faces.

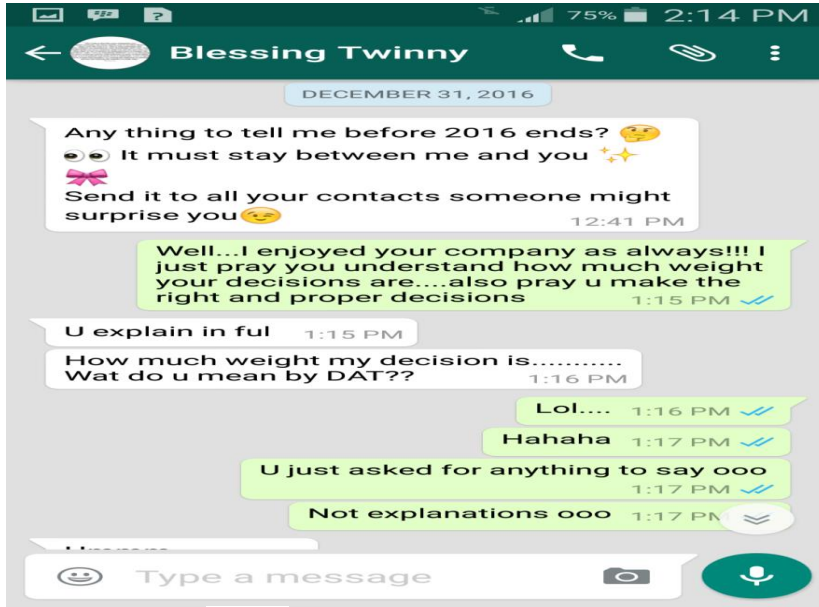
RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) We want to suggest that this topic be added to

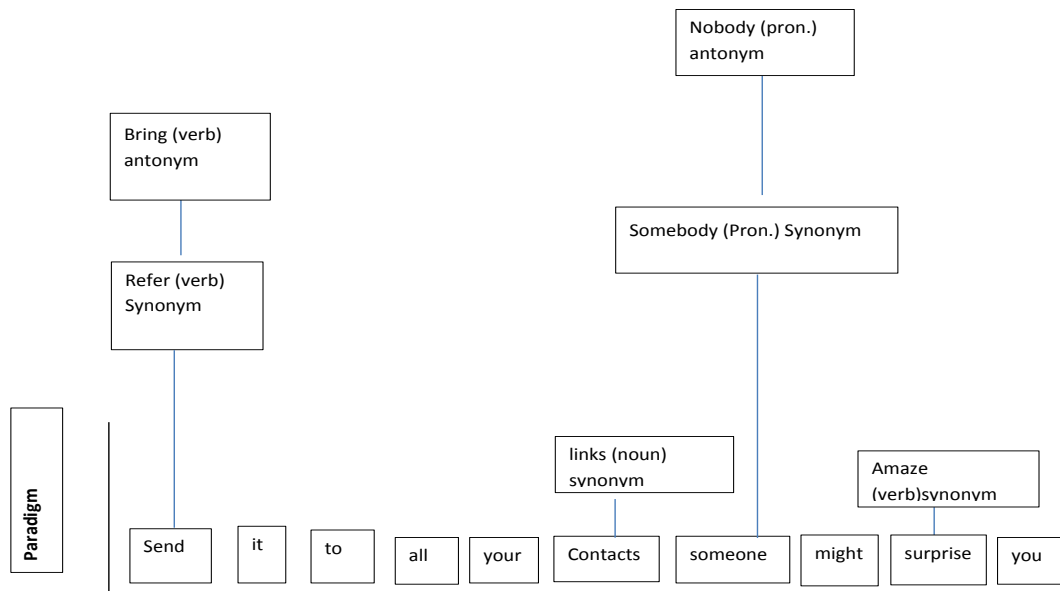
secondary schools curriculum in order to increase the students’ skill in vocabulary development.

(2) The government should try and help in providing teaching materials or aids that could facilitate the teaching of these relations.

(3) Though authors of primary schools texts have been trying to include matching of items or objects with words, nevertheless, we recommend that they continue to



(a)



(b)

Figure 15. Conversation five string three (a) conversation (b) syntagm.

Table 1. Summary of the analysis.

Conversations	Sentences according to structure	Sentences according to function	Emojis and smileys used
1	2 clauses and 1 sentence	3 statements	51
2	3 sentences	2 questions and 1 statement	Nil
3	2 sentences a and 1 clause	Wish	5
4	3 sentences	1 statement and 2 questions	Nil
5	3 sentences	1 Question, 1 statement, and 1 command	5

improve on it. It is a semiotic act.

(4) The *Whatsapp* application users are encouraged to increase their use of *emojis* and smileys because they go a long way to reveal what is unsaid by the speaker to the interactant.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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