CHAPTER TWO

CREATION OF MEANING AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis, as stated in Chapter One, is an examination of the creation of meaning as exemplified by selected utterances of a group of second language speakers of English, the Tshivendas. The quality of any linguistic meaning is dependent on the level of interlocutors' communicative competence, hence, the rationale for discussing communicative competence and its related topics in this chapter.

The concept of 'meaning' or 'to mean' can be understood in a variety of ways, even when narrowed to the area of language studies. Lyons (1977: 1-4) has identified at least ten different ways that the words 'to mean' and 'meaning' can be used. Lyons (1977: 2) has gone on to note that although these different meanings are distinguishable they are not unrelated but just how they are related is difficult and controversial. The next section examines the notion of linguistic

meaning since this research focuses on the creation of meaning during verbal interaction.

2.2. MEANING

There is an intrinsic connection between 'meaning' and 'communication', for before a series of words can be pronounced as language or communication they must embody meaning, for both the sender and the receiver. 'It is meaning which must be present for communication to occur', states Lamont Johnson <http//wings.buffalo.edu/philosophy/FARBER/johnson.html>: 14 March, 2002). The meaning of an utterance enables speakers to use language to articulate their intentions such as a request, a statement of fact, an expression of praise, an apology and so on, and enables the hearer to interpret utterances as such. An utterance therefore takes on meaning, first, when the speaker uses it to express a thought; and second, in the receptive act when hearers interpret the utterance and assign meaning to it from their own knowledge and experience. Between the speaker and the hearer, therefore, there is the negotiation of the meaning of an utterance within a communication event.

Communication is 'meaningful language' and an evaluation of people's communicative competence is, in fact, an examination of their meaning-creating potential. A common definition of 'linguistic meaning', by both the writer and the reader will, naturally, facilitate such an examination. The discussion in this

section will, therefore, continue with a review of what ‘meaning’ is in linguistics and how it is created.

Meaning seems the most obvious feature of language and yet the most complex to study because of its subjective nature. It is obvious because it is what we use language for: to communicate with one another, to convey ‘what we mean’ effectively. But the steps in understanding the meaning of something said to us are so nebulous and so difficult to categorise that we have little conscious feel for the principles and knowledge which underlie our meaning-creating ability.

The entry point for my discussions of ‘meaning’ is the ‘word’ level. Words have meaning. This seems a simple enough or straightforward assertion and is frequently stated. However, words are not ‘objects’ that have properties of their own in the same way that concrete objects do:

> Words are relational entities. Which is to say, that words are composed of parts that are not integrated by any form or structure intrinsic to the word itself. The symbols (marks/sounds) which taken together constitute a word, make the word real insofar as it exists outside the mind. All that air or paper can carry is the symbolic representation of the actual form which is understood within the mind and not the form itself (Lamont Johnson <http//wings.buffalo.edu/philosophy/FARBER/johnson.html> : 14 March, 2002).

The meaning of a word is simply projected onto it by the custodians of the language, in their roles as speakers and hearers, writers and readers:

> We cannot assume that there is any God-given meaningful connection between a word in a language and an object in the world. It cannot be the case that we know the meaning of the word *chair*, for example, because this label has some natural 'God-given' connection to the object you are sitting on …. Instead a more reasonable approach would lead us to see the word *chair* as a term which is arbitrary (that is, has no natural connection to the object), but which is conventionally used by English speakers when they wish to refer to that type of object that we sit on (Yule, 1985: 91)

This quotation from Yule (1985), a rephrasing of Plato's debate on 'the real' and 'the really real' is in line with the notion that the meaning of a word is only joined to the word in the mind of the users. Martin (1994: 20) quotes first Aristotle (*De Interpretatione* 16) as saying, 'Spoken words are the symbols of mental experiences' and then Locke (1689, bk. 2, chapter: 3) as noting that 'Words in their primary or immediate Signification, stand for nothing, but the Ideals in the mind of him who uses them'. Meaningful communication occurs between participants, because there is, at least, some inter-subjective agreement as to what a particular word means, in a particular context.

> If one adopts a broad notion of meaning, it follows that words or even sentences, considered as abstract entities do not have meaning. It is communicative acts that have meaning because meaning only becomes attached to words or sentences through the actions of a speaker or hearer.
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> (Johnson <http//wings.buffalo.edu/philosophy/FARBER/johnson.html>: 14 March, 2002).

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2.2.1 LINGUISTIC MEANING

It is customary in linguistic philosophy to recognise three areas within language studies or semiotics. Montague (1968: 68) provides a useful articulation of these divisions as

> syntax, semantics and pragmatics - that may be characterised roughly as follows. Syntax is concerned solely with the relations between linguistic expressions; semantics with relations between expressions and the objects to which they refer; and pragmatics with the relations among expressions, the objects to which they refer and the users or contexts of the use of the expressions.

A discussion of meaning, therefore, within a linguistic context, usually examines meaning as communicated by the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic values of an utterance. This three-fold classification goes back ultimately to Peirce (1931), but was first clearly drawn and made more familiar by Morris (1938: 6). There are slight terminological differences in the way the distinctions are drawn among authors. Carnap (1944: 9) also distinguishes the three branches by outlining what part of an analysis is relevant to each branch:

> If in an investigation, explicit reference is made to the speaker, or to put it in more general terms, to the user of the language, then we assign it to the field of pragmatics….If we abstract from the user of the language and analyze [*sic*] only the expressions and their

> designata, we are in the field of semantics. And if, finally, we abstract from the designata also and analyze [*sic*] only the relation between the expressions, we are in (logical) syntax.

Stalnaker (1972: 383) formulates the connection between syntax and semantics more simply but also extends the definition of pragmatics:

> Syntax studies sentences, semantics studies propositions. Pragmatics is the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed.

While these different authors have all contributed to streamlining the distinctions among the different branches of language study, Morris's (1946: 218-19) revised version 'interpretable within a behaviorally oriented semiotics' is the definition which has general acceptance:

> Pragmatics is that portion of semiotics which deals with the origin, uses, and effects of signs within the behavior in which they occur; semantics deals with the signification of signs in all modes of signifying; syntactics deals with combination of signs without regard for their specific signification or their relation to the behavior in which they occur.

Fillmore (1981:143) is only in partial agreement with these accepted divisions. He believes that although there are some justifications for classifying linguistic meaning under three distinct categories, whether this classification is desirable and should be rigidly applied in linguistic analysis is debatable.

> I assume three ways of looking at linguistic facts, whether the three are viewable as independent from each other or not, depends on whether we are thinking of classes of facts or explanation. In the broadest sense, I believe that syntactic, semantic and pragmatic FACTS can be distinguished from each other but I also believe that some syntactic facts require semantic and pragmatic explanations and that some semantic facts require pragmatic explanations. Put differently, interpreters sometimes use semantic and pragmatic information in making judgements about the syntactic structure of a sentence, and they sometimes use pragmatic facts in making semantic judgements.

This quotation is also an indication that the distinction between the different aspects of linguistic meaning is not as definite as one would like it to be. What seems not to be a problem is the syntactic meaning of utterances. However, distinguishing between semantic and pragmatic meaning is an ongoing debate. Bach (1997: 3) also stresses the difficulty in assigning facts exclusively to the domain of either semantics or pragmatics:

> The distinction between semantics and pragmatics is easier to apply than to explain. Explaining it is complicated by the fact that many conflicting formulations have been proposed over the past sixty years. This might suggest that there is no one way of drawing the distinction and that how to draw it is merely a terminological question, a matter of arbitrary stipulation….Although it is generally clear what is at issue when people apply the distinction to specific linguistic phenomena, what is less clear, in some cases anyway, is whether a given phenomena is semantic or pragmatic, or both.

Although language theorists have continued to operate within the three-fold paradigm proposed by Morris (1946), there have been objectors, not only to the

type of meaning apportioned to each section but also to the whole philosophical basis of the notion. For example, Petrofi (1976: 111) notes:

> Concerning the relation of "semantics" and "pragmatics" no such universal or general conception concerning the theory of language can be imagined where these two aspects can be handled separately. In other words the pragmatic aspect cannot be left out of consideration when setting up a theory of language, however it is impossible to handle it independently of the semantic aspect.

Mey (1993: 43) also questions the sharp demarcations particularly between semantic and pragmatic meanings. In his article "The Pragmatization of Semantics" (1999), Peregrin also criticises the sharp three-fold Carnapian distinctions from what he terms 'internal' and 'external' challenges. By internal he means developments within linguistics which extends Carnapian semantics far beyond its original boundaries to swallow up much of what originally counted as pragmatics. In his notions of external challenges, he questions Carnap's (1944) whole concept of language as a system of communication. Some of Peregrin's (1999) concerns had been raised earlier by Searle (1979b) when he challenges the notion that the literal meaning (semantic meaning) of an utterance can be construed as the meaning it has independent of any context whatsoever (when it has 'zero' context or 'null' context). Searle argues that for a large class of sentences there is no such thing as the zero or null context for the interpretation of sentences, for interlocutors understand an utterance only against a set of contexts in which the utterance could be appropriately uttered. Since one of

Morris's (1946) fundamental differences between semantics and pragmatics is the fact that pragmatics deals with language 'use' (which presupposes a role for context), such concerns must be unequivocally dealt with if the whole notion of a three-fold division is not to break down. Peregrin (1999) believes this has not been done, resulting in an absence of a sharp division between two aspects of linguistic meaning: semantic and pragmatic. In attempting to solve this problem recent developments in language are exploring ways in which semantics 'interfaces' with pragmatic knowledge in concrete contexts to determine utterance meaning. In the introduction to the book, *Semantics/Pragmatics Interface,* Turner (1999: 19) notes that:

> [The aim of the volume is] to take some steps to reduce the heat of some of these discussions and to begin to increase the light that might profitably be shed on some of the problems of interdigitating content and context.

Although discussions on how these three branches synchronise to create meaning may well be ongoing, one cannot refute the fact that competence in a language is not a single attribute. Deviance in an utterance is also possible at different levels or branches, as is illustrated by the following sentences:

7. *Each one of the students possess a textbook.
8. ? We really cannot afford to go to the bank.
9. 'You're a bloody jackass, Mr MP', shouted the MP for Limpopo Province.

Sentence 7 is unacceptable at the structural level because of the non-observance of the grammatical rule of concord; sentence 8 is semantically unacceptable because of the lexical ambiguity arising from the word 'bank'; while sentence 9 is pragmatically offensive as such language is frowned upon during formal proceedings (though perhaps, acceptable, between intimate friends, in a particular context). How each of these deviancies was identified and classified is the source of the debate. Although Kachru (1979 and 1982) and his cohorts of the school of New Englishes might take exception to the classification of sentence 7 as deviant, general consensus would have it otherwise. As to whether different criteria were used or needed to be used to evaluate sentences 8 and 9 underpins the controversy surrounding the distinction between semantic and pragmatic meanings. Hopper and Traugott (1993: 68-69) make a similar point:

> There is a vast literature on semantics and pragmatics but as yet very little consensus on exactly where the boundaries between the two areas lie, or even whether there are indeed boundaries. Nevertheless there is a pre-theoretical sense in which it is clear that a distinction needs to be made between the sentence (semantic) meaning of *Can you pass the salt?* (= 'Are you able/willing to pass the salt?'), the expected response to which would be *Yes or No*, and the utterance (pragmatic) meaning (= 'Please pass the salt'), the expected response to which is the non-linguistic action of passing the salt.

The fact that linguistic theory accepts that linguistic competence is not monotype and utterance status is describable using different norms, is a clear indication of

a multifaceted approach to meaning, communication and language. The implication of this is the existence of three distinct linguistic branches all aimed at describing the nature of language. Although, as mentioned earlier, there are calls for linguistic theory to provide an integrated account, particularly for a semantic and pragmatic interface, one must admit that such segmentation of the branches of language predisposes it more readily to theoretical discussion. Analysts can, granted with some effort, identify and interrogate the boundaries (however nebulous) of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic meaning. That is only possible if one operates on the controversial assertions that observations that belong to syntax more or less without question, are observations about the structural organisation of sentences and the distribution properties of lexical items within grammatically defined contexts; semantics, by contrast, is concerned with linguistic forms and their value; while pragmatics combines the two properties within a context that is appropriate to the intention of the utterance.

The sections following will interrogate each of these types of linguistic meaning as outlined by Morris in his seminal text (1938) as the assumption in this investigation is that all three types of meanings need to be accounted for when examining the utterances of second language speakers of English. In other words, the sustained hypothesis in this study is that the creation or miscreation of meaning is possible on various levels or in different areas of language.

2.2.1.1 SYNTACTIC MEANING

The term ‘syntax’ is from the Greek *syntaxis,* a gerund meaning ‘arranging’ or ‘setting out together’. It refers to the branch of language study dealing with the way in which words are arranged to show connections of meaning among the constituents of a sentence. Syntactic analysis of language, using its metalanguage, is usually limited to its objective description of sentences, in relation to the rules. Such an analysis enables language users to determine the status of an utterance, syntactically.

Over the years the expediency of this objective type of analysis has been questioned by the representation of language as ‘social semiotics’ (Halliday 1978: 1). The same concerns had triggered the insistence that proficiency in language should include communicative competence (Hymes, 1972b), a concept which directly challenged some of the ideas of Chomsky (1957, 1965). The notion of communicative competence advocates that a purely syntactic analysis of language is wholly inadequate in describing what goes on with language usage. While syntactic know-how is an indication that the speaker is familiar with the internal arrangements of the elements of a sentence, there is no indication that such competence extends to the use or application of these arrangements. Rather an inclusive picture of language competence is obtained by the exploration, as well, of the semantic and pragmatic properties of the utterance.

The following sections differentiate between 'semantic meaning' and 'pragmatic meaning' since the semantic and pragmatic properties of an utterance are, in fact, the variety of meanings possible in an utterance. Discussion of semantic and pragmatic meanings of natural language is, relatively speaking, more complicated than a syntactic one. As mentioned earlier, part of the complication is generated by the debate on the distinctions between the two types of meaning as well as on the relevance or the necessity of a semantic-pragmatic notion of meaning as sometimes a linguistic phenomenon is not straightforward semantic or pragmatic or both. Bach (1997) notes that the distinction has enabled analysts to separate strictly linguistic facts about utterances from those that involve the actions, intentions and inference of language users.

Despite these misgivings, it is an accepted notion in philosophy of language that the conventional or literal meaning of a sentence forms the focus of the study of semantics. The next section explains 'semantic meaning' by illustrating how distinct that area of language study is from the others.

2.2.1.2 SEMANTIC MEANING

> In the tripartition of semiotics, the proper task of semantics is to study relations that exist between expressions in virtue of their linguistic meaning. Thus semantics is only concerned with literal utterances. Every semantic interpretation reduces speaker meaning to sentence meaning … (Daniel Vandereveken, 1990: 71).

Semantics, the second category in the three-part division of language, is usually limited to the study of the meaning of linguistic expressions (as opposed to, for example, their sound, spelling and use). Generally, semantics is the study of meaning and linguistic semantics is the study of meaning as expressed by words, phrases and sentences in conjunction with their syntactic arrangement. Like many theorists, Katz (1977:14) defines semantics by contrasting it with its nearest rival, pragmatics:

> [I] draw the theoretical line between semantic interpretation and pragmatic interpretation by taking the semantic component to properly represent only those aspects of meaning of the sentence that an ideal speaker-hearer of the language would know in an anonymous letter situation…where there is no clue whatever about the motive, circumstances of transmission, or any other factor relevant to understanding the sentence on the basis of its context of utterance.

Cann (1993:1) refines Katz's definition by noting that

> It is however, more usual within linguistics to interpret the term (i.e. semantics) more narrowly, as concerning the study of those aspects of meaning encoded in linguistic expressions that are independent of their use on particular occasions by particular individuals within a particular speech community. In other words, semantics is the study of meaning abstracted away from those aspects that are derived from the intentions of speakers, their psychological states and the socio-cultural aspects of the context in which the utterance was made.

In her book on semantics, Kempson (1988: 139) sums up one of the main assumptions about the meaning of natural /ordinary language: that a complete account of sentence meaning is given by recursively specifying the truth conditions of the sentences in the language or, as Lewis (1972) puts it: 'semantics = truth conditions'. Kempson (*ibid.*) elaborates that, in this truth-conditional view of semantics, the central property of natural languages is that we humans use language to communicate propositions: information about the world around us. A specification of the propositional content of a sentence is a specification of the minimal set of truth conditions under which the particular proposition would be true. So on the view crudely expressed by the equation, semantics = truth conditions, it is assumed that the semantic content is exhausted by determining its propositional content. Kempson (*ibid.*) concludes this section by saying:

> It is uncontroversial that the meaning of a sentence is made up of the meaning of the words which it contains and their syntactic arrangement in that sentence. Accordingly, the semantic component of a grammar is, on this view, assumed to be a formal algorithm which assigns propositional contents to a sentence on the basis of the meaning of the expressions it contains and the syntactic configuration.

Hopper and Traugott (1993: 69) write in the same vein that

> Semantics is primarily concerned with meanings that are relatively stable out of context, typically arbitrary and analyzable in terms of the logical conditions under which they would be true.

Truth-conditional semantics is better understood if one realises that it was a reaction to the logical positivism of Russell's era (1905). Logical positivism is a philosophical system which maintains that the only meaningful statements are those that are analytical or can be tested empirically. Logical positivism therefore was principally concerned with the properties of language the truth or falsity of which can be established, hence the term 'truth-conditional semantics'. Truth-conditional semantics (also known as conventional or conceptual or literal meaning of utterances) therefore covers those basic, essential components of meaning which are conveyed by the literal use of a word or sentence without the benefit of context (Yule, 1996). Truth-conditional semantics is usually contrasted to the more 'flexible' meaning of utterances as used in specific speech settings, or within pragmatic domains. Van Dijk (1976: 69) captures this distinction, in this quotation:

> Taking semantics, firstly in its usual linguistic sense, a semantic theory is to explicate the "meaning" of phrases sentences and texts e.g. in terms of semantic representation or in terms of semantic "interpretations" of lexico-syntactic sentence structure. Such semantics is different from a semantics trying to account for the meaning assigned to expressions in individual communication by speaker and hearer *(pragmatics)*, if these assigned "meanings" do not have some equivalence relation with the "general" meanings of expressions in the language, but are based on ad hoc features of situations.

Although truth-conditional semantics has some obvious logic, it does have some application flaws. The major criticism is that such a theory must be restricted to

statements since it is these that have the property to be true or false. And since not all utterances are used to make statements, other forms, such as imperatives, interrogatives, sentences containing deictic expressions and performatives[3] cannot be accounted for (van Dijk, 1976: 71). Kempson (1979) also takes readers through possible answers to this problem. In the end, she admits that the best solution is to acknowledge these flaws, not to discard the theory totally, while conceptualising a more embracing one.

One such embracing theory of language meaning Kempson (1979: 46) discusses is one that extends logical positivism or truth-conditional semantics. Such a theory will be 'one in which the meaning of sentences includes reference to the beliefs of the speakers'. Once meaning is 'personalised' in the sense that the language users' beliefs or intentions (and by logical extension, the context) are factored into an analysis of meaning, we move into the area of pragmatic meaning, the topic of the next section.

2.2.1.3 PRAGMATIC MEANING

Introducing the study of pragmatics in 1968, Montague (67) had this to say:

> It was suggested … that pragmatics concerns itself with what C.S. Peirce had in the last century called *indexical expressions,* that is words and sentences of which the reference cannot be determined without knowledge of the context of use….

[3] Performatives are explained in Chapter Three.

This early attempt by Montague to formulate pragmatics as a distinct area in the notion of meaning is an indication of the very tentative and uninspiring beginnings of pragmatics. To define means to impose boundaries; defining 'pragmatics' therefore implies determining its frontiers with other adjoining fields of study, within and possibly outside of linguistics. Such definitions of pragmatics were originally quite elusive, with authors either confining themselves to a strictly linguistic definition or incorporating so many contextual and societal factors that the subject became vague, subjective and hence unwieldy.

Just what constitutes 'pragmatics' has been an open question for a long time, even after Morris (1938: 6) defined it as 'a branch of semiotics', or 'the study of the relation of signs and interpreters' as quoted earlier. Today, in less technical and more communicative-orientated terms, one would talk of 'message' and 'language user'. Pragmatics therefore starts out from a basic conception of language as being interactive, or in relation to its 'users'. Mey (1993: 5) underlines the idea of pragmatics being concerned with synchronic usage:

> That is to say, not the science of language in its own right, or the science of language as seen and studied by the linguists, or the science of language as an expression of our desires to play schoolmarm, but the science of language as it is used by real, live people, for their own purposes and within their limitations and affordance.

Whereas the aims of syntax and semantics and their place in language are relatively clear, the task of pragmatics and its contribution to linguistic meaning

are not as clear. Pragmatics, once described by Leech (1993:1) as the 'rag-bag' of language studies is now respected as a study which enables us to understand the nature and structure of language and the way language is used in actual communication. It draws its inspiration mainly from the philosophy of language, as it is an attempt to investigate the nature of meaning creation using natural language. It is an attempt to unravel the process involved when speakers and hearers encode and decode language. It is this aim which ensures a central place in pragmatics for the theory of speech acts as well as conversation principles. The relevance or existence of the study of pragmatics can, thus, no longer be denied.

Literature on pragmatics is vast as authors attempt to articulate what it is that constitutes the study of pragmatics and what pragmatic meaning is as already intimated. Authors on pragmatics include Grice (1957), Searle (1969), Petofi (1976), van Dijk (1976), Levinson (1983), Mey (1993), Martin (1994) and Yule (1996), to name just a few. The common thread in the arguments of these theorists is that pragmatics is a study of 'natural language', in other words, language as used in real or actual life situations.

Although the contributions of these writers testify to the variety of phenomena studied under the guise of pragmatics, most of them view pragmatics as an account of the interrelations between language and the communication situation in which it is typically used. For some authors, this is too restrictive a definition,

for example, Dascal (1983) stresses that pragmatics must not only deal with communicative uses of language, which he calls socio-pragmatics, but also with its mental uses, which he refers to as psycho-pragmatics. Similarly, Tirassa (1999) argues for a theory of cognitive pragmatics that describes what goes on in the mind of interlocutors when they engage in communication. This research views pragmatics more as a philosophical explanation of communication, one kind of social behaviour.

Pragmatics, as a philosophical theory, and as a distinct type of meaning, is a relatively new discipline (compared to syntax and semantics). Brigitte Stemmer (1999) traces the origin of the word 'pragma' from which 'pragmatics' is a development:

> One of the central meanings of the Greek word "pragma" … is action, doing: the other central meaning refers to factual, real. …. A second major meaning area develops around "practical" / "pragmatics", in colloquial language often synonymous to useful, suitable, opportune. The third field is around the notion of "pragmatism" which refers mainly to philosophical ways of thinking such as those introduced by Peirce or Kant.
> (http://cogprints.soton.ac.uk.documents, 7 March, 2002).

Running through this quotation is the notion of action or language as a 'tool' to be used in a real world, one of the reasons usually cited for the development of pragmatics. Perhaps one of the most effective incitements for the development of modern pragmatics was the growing irritation with the lack of overt interest,

among established linguists, for example, Chomsky (1957), in what really goes on in language: in what people actually 'do with words'. Among those who took this concern seriously was Austin, who, in 1962, wrote his classic work on pragmatics, *How to do things with words*. As Mey (1993: 23) says:

> The title of Austin's book contains an explicit question, the answer to which is not, of course, that people should form correct sentences or compose logically valid utterances, but that they communicate with each other (and themselves) by means of language.

The past thirty years have witnessed an ever-growing interest in pragmatic meaning in language. The first tentative efforts at establishing something like a pragmatic approach to linguistic facts date back to the late sixties and early seventies (as seen in the works of Lakoff and Ross). In these works is seen the collapse of earlier theories and hypotheses, particularly the strict syntactic explanation of linguistic phenomena of the syntacticians. It was gradually becoming clear that a fuller meaning of language is only possible with the inclusion of the speaker and the occasion when the utterance was made. This paradigm shift may be said to have initiated the emergence of pragmatics. Levinson (1983: 36) describes the shift from a more technical-linguistic perceptive. He notes that

> …as knowledge of the syntax, phonology and semantics of various languages has increased, it has become clear that there are specific phenomena that can only naturally be described by recourse to contextual concepts.

One of the factors, therefore, which has been instrumental in the elevation of pragmatic meaning, is the renewed interest in the users of the language, as compared to language as a system, or language in the abstract. But along with (and perhaps above) this were other factors, like the internal-linguistic reasons, such as the many mysteries surrounding the very nature of natural language in communication in the 'real world'. The 'users' of language in the 'real world' are, for pragmatics, the very condition of its existence. Once the notions of 'users' and 'real world' are factored into the scenario we can refer to pragmatics as the study of 'contextualised meaning'. That is:

> (A study) in which the users are the paramount features of interest, inasmuch as they are the *primi motores* of the entire linguistic enterprise, both in its theoretical and its practical (usage-bound) aspect (Mey, 1994: 30).

In pragmatics, most discussions on contextualised meaning include a differentiation between literal and intended meaning of natural language, whereby 'literal meaning' is identical to the meaning of a sentence without context (semantics) while 'intended meaning' is reserved to meaning achieved after consideration of context, conversation principles and any implications that may exist (pragmatics). Or as Gadzar (1979: 2) has put it, assuming that semantics (as already noted in reference to Lewis, [1972]) is limited to the statement of truth conditions:

> Pragmatics has as its topic those aspects of meaning of utterances which cannot be accounted for by straightforward reference to the truth conditions of the sentence uttered. Put crudely: PRAGMATICS = MEANING – TRUTH CONDITIONS.

Such a definition is likely, at first, to cause some confusion. Surely semantics is the meaning of a sentence in its entirety, so how can there be any residue to constitute the topic of pragmatics? The reaction of Levinson (1983: 12) to the above definition is that if one adopts ‘simplistic’ and ‘narrow’ theories of semantics and pragmatics then the question above might have some relevance. However, whatever kind of semantic theory is adopted, many aspects of meaning in a broad sense simply cannot be accommodated if the theory is to have internal coherence and consistency. Semantics begins to have recognisable borders because it is classified as the conventional fixed meanings of a sentence while pragmatics is credited with the more flexible context-biased meaning of an utterance in use. In other words, it is a semantic problem to specify the rules for matching up sentences of a natural language with the propositions in a conventional setting. But once the propositions are matched in relation to the features of the context there is a shift into the realm of pragmatics.

Stalnaker (1972) likewise emphasises the role that syntax, semantics and context play in establishing a pragmatic account of language use. Speech becomes a communication proposition only in the relevant context, not in isolation. Like other writers to follow, he bases the differentiation between semantics and pragmatics on the type of meaning and interaction they have with

language in the communication event. Semantics matches user intention with the appropriate natural language form whereas pragmatics continues the process a step further by extending the appropriateness of meaning to include a comprehensive context. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (1995) provides the following useful definition: 'Pragmatics is the study of language which focuses attention on the users and the context of the language use rather than on reference, truth and grammar'. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (1995) similarly notes: 'Pragmatics studies the use of language in context, and the context-dependence of various aspects of linguistic interpretation…. Its branches include the theory of how one and the same sentence can express different meanings or propositions from context to context'. Jeff Verschueren (1987) also suggests that pragmatics is best conceived of as an adaptive process, as it is a set of rules enabling users of a language to fulfil successfully the functions they want, by matching different linguistic meanings (at all levels) with the environment or context in which they operate.

Annette Herskovits (1997), writing on pragmatic context, language and meaning, reviews the various types of context which interact with a proposition for communication. She suggests that for a linguistic communication to be successful it is not enough for speakers and hearers to know the relevant co-ordinates of the pragmatic context, they must have an infinite sequence of 'mutual' beliefs. This is in reaction to the more restrictive approach to context articulated by Kaplan (1978). Herskovits (1997) broadens context to include

cognitive aspects, 'that portion of an individual's cognitive state which affects a cognitive process'. She discusses the difficulty in establishing a relevant pragmatic meaning as no predefined set of context parameters can contain every possible situation.

> It is not only a matter of rational beliefs as to what is and what is not relevant, but also involves the particular state of the agent's associative memory at processing time…what happens to be activated and to what degree. Relevance cannot be defined "objectively" as simply a property of the relation between a proposition and a knowledge base; it depends on activation, on the "attention state" which in turn does not depend strictly on internal, logical properties of the knowledge base, (<http://boogie.cs.unitn.it/eccs97/Discussion/Archives/0010.html>, 7 March, 2002).

In his book, *Pragmatics,* Levinson (1983: 1-33) devotes a whole chapter to attempts at defining the concept 'pragmatic meaning'. Running through a gamut of explanations, he offers explanations such as those which regard pragmatics as a study of the functional perspective of meaning; principles of language use and the study of context meaning. He also defines pragmatics as being concerned with aspects of meaning which cannot be accounted for by the truth conditions of semantics. Levinson does not seem interested in a one line or one paragraph meaning; rather, his narration hinges on establishing the boundaries of pragmatics in explaining the array of topics that can, philosophically, be explained by a pragmatic approach to language.

Leech (1989: 5) sets up a list of eight postulates in his attempt to isolate some characteristics of pragmatics. In an extensive and systematic manner, he then takes the reader through his arguments, focusing on the theoretical differences between pragmatics and the other aspects of language, particularly semantics. He (*ibid.*) defines 'pragmatics' as 'the study of meaning in relation to speech situations'. His discussions dwell on utterance meaning rather than sentence meaning, hence of necessity he examines the distinction between semantic and pragmatic meaning. His explanations are based on the differences Lyons (1977) makes in his work on semantics between two types of meaning arising from two different uses of the verb 'to mean': '*(a) What does X mean? (b) What did you mean by X?'* (Lyons, 1977: 1-3). He commences his thesis with an overview of the possible contexts where the word, 'meaning', can operate in the area of language. Whereas semantic (grammatical) meaning is defined purely as 'a property of expressions in a given language' (as shown in the first question) he sees pragmatic meaning as 'relative to a speaker or user of a language' (as shown in the second question). He concludes by showing the relation between pragmatics and grammar.

> Language consists of grammar and pragmatics. Grammar is an abstract formal system for producing and interpreting messages. General pragmatics is a set of strategies and principles for achieving success in communication by the use of grammar. Grammar is functionally adapted to the extent that it possesses properties which facilitate the operation of pragmatic principles (Leech, 1989: 76).

Kent Bach (1997) explains pragmatic meaning by also differentiating it from its closest rival, semantics. His reason for invoking a semantic and pragmatic distinction in meaning is to shed light on a number of other distinctions associated with pragmatic thinking. Some of these distinctions are

> Type vs token; sentence vs utterance; meaning vs use; context-invariant vs context-sensitive meaning; linguistic vs speaker meaning; literal vs nonliteral use; saying vs implying; content vs force (1997: 24).

Within these pairs, the first types fall in the domain of semantics while the second are areas in pragmatics. Bach believes that these diverse forms of linguistic meaning are the fundamental differences between semantics and pragmatics. This distinct dichotomy between pragmatics and semantics is a view which is being vigorously challenged as theorists are now advocating an interface between the two branches of language studies. As mentioned earlier, investigations are underway to ascertain how semantics can interact with pragmatic knowledge in concrete contexts to determine a fully-fledged utterance meaning. These developments, it is hoped, will allow a precise analysis of the way semantics and the pragmatic subsystems of language come together in the creation of meaning, as individually the information gained from either does not suffice. Semantic representation, therefore, needs augmentation by pragmatically motivated inferences that draw on contextual and world knowledge. As Turner (1999: 14) puts it:

> As human beings we have developed an ability to speak figuratively, be ironic, understate, speak loosely, create metaphors… and as linguists we have undertaken the task of explaining how all these "special effects" are produced and understood, have taken the path of context or use-bound pragmatic research and have finally got trapped with fuzzy boundaries….So many aspects of language production and comprehension have had to be taken into consideration that eventually pragmatics has ended up with no clear-cut research program [*sic*] apart from manifest interest in the study of context and language in use.

Despite these non-clear-cut boundaries, many researchers have reluctantly acknowledged that no serious analysis of language can be carried out without appealing to some kind of pragmatic meaning. Determining exactly which aspects within semantics and pragmatics can be interfaced is the topic of current workshops, making the whole subject dynamic. For example, the outcome of Asher's (1999) analysis is a cognitive modelling in which discourse structure and speakers' beliefs and goals interact in a fine-tuning of Grice's (1975) theory of conversation. Contributors, like Carston, Kehler and Ward, Jaszczolt and Nemo to the book, *Semantics/Pragmatics Interface* (1999), have all attempted to identify specific areas in pragmatic and semantic meaning which demonstrate the lack of a need to differentiate between the two branches. These range from very narrow topics such as modal verbs, determiners, indefinite noun phrases to more substantial ones such as context, ambiguity and relevance.

Interestingly enough, the mere fact of trying to bridge the great divide is a clear indication that there is a divide and that it is possible to talk of a semantic meaning as distinct from a pragmatic meaning. One therefore has to conclude that there is some credence to the accepted notion that pragmatics is a rule system which defines the relationship of meaning to the context in which it occurs, that is, pragmatics matches functions and meaning to particular language choices, in particular contexts. This view focuses on the fact that we cannot really understand the nature of language unless we acknowledge the existence of pragmatic meaning.

The accepted style of defining pragmatic meaning by contrasting it to its closest rival, semantic meaning, has, it is believed, negatively impacted on this area of language study:

> The idea that pragmatics assumes an identity mainly based on the semantic-pragmatic meaning distinction negatively affects an articulation of a formal formulation of pragmatics, explaining some of the difficulty in its emergence as a separate study of language (Levinson, 1983: 3);

or, as Horn (1988 : 114) puts it:

> [Any phenomena that is] too ill-behaved and variable to be treated coherently within the syntactic component … [not] quite arbitrary enough for the lexicon or quite phonological enough for the phonology… must be pragmatic.

Despite these misgivings, pragmatic meaning is a dynamic area of language study in its attempt to contribute to a comprehensive picture of meaningful communication. The ability of interlocutors to create and manipulate these different meanings (syntactic, semantic and pragmatic) rests on their communicative competence. The following sections, therefore, traces the origins, development and components of the term 'communicative competence'.

2.3 COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

The term 'communicative competence' is closely associated with the linguistic distinction between the notions of 'competence' and 'performance' and what knowledge in a language entails. Chomsky (1965: 4) defines knowledge of language 'form' as 'competence' (narrowed down to 'grammar') while knowledge of language 'function or use' is referred to as 'performance'. Competence, therefore, refers to one's underlying knowledge of a system, event or fact. It is the non-observable theoretical ability. Linguistic competence is a language user's underlying knowledge of the system of a language, such as its rules of grammar, its vocabulary and how these are acceptably combined. Performance, on the other hand, is the application of competence in actual linguistic events. This dichotomy has raised tensions as to what knowledge of a language entails: is it knowledge of the underlying mental principles (competence) or the ability to use language effectively in the creation of meaning (performance) or both?

In his writings, Chomsky (1957, 1965, and 1980) has consistently advocated that language is 'a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements' (1957: 13), while knowledge of a language is, first and foremost, an individual's innate awareness of a language system's structural codes and the acceptable ways of combining these codes. Chomsky (1980: 48) stresses this 'mentalist' nature of language when he notes that

> To know a language I am assuming is to be in a certain mental state, which persists as a steady component of transitory mental states. What kind of mental state? I assume further that to be in such a mental state is to have a certain mental structure consisting of a system of rules and principles that generate and relate mental representations of various types.

Chomsky's conception of language as a mental, abstract, scientific attribute is contrasted with an 'intuitive/pre-theoretic or common sense notion of language' Botha (1987: 70). A pre-theoretic notion of language, according to Chomsky 'has a crucial socio-political dimension', a characteristic which prevents such a concept of language from being scientific and coherent. To explain this stand, that language should not be 'contaminated' with 'inessential sociopolitical elements', Chomsky (Botha, 1987: 70) invokes the ideal speaker-listener 'who (lives) in a completely homogeneous speech community, … knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as

memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance'.

Chomsky sees this idealisation as a 'methodological tool', a means of disregarding 'common-sense assumptions that stand in the way of assigning a coherent content to the notion of language' (Botha, 1987: 71-73). What can be understood by 'common-sense assumptions' are the imperfections which would be 'inflicted' on language by humans in normal socio-political linguistic situations.

Language should be envisaged and studied in its 'pure' or 'idealised form'. This same attitude is behind the distinction Chomsky makes between 'grammatical competence' and 'pragmatic competence'. Grammatical competence is characterised as

> …the cognitive state that encompasses all those aspects of form and meaning and their relation, including underlying structures that enter into that relation, which are properly assigned to the specific subsystem of the human mind that relates representations of form and meaning. A bit misleadingly perhaps I will continue to call this subsystem "the language faculty" (Botha, 1987: 82).

The last line of the quotation above is very significant; Chomsky equates 'grammar' with 'language'. Pragmatic competence, Chomsky notes in (Botha, 1987: 82) is a 'system of rules and principles …to determine how the tools can

effectively be put to use' and therefore must be another dimension to language. Chomsky (*ibid.*) also regards language as a 'computational system' (grammar) which is a more sophisticated human attribute in contrast to the 'conceptual system' (pragmatics) which he considered as 'primitive'. Performance, Chomsky notes, is not an accurate reflection of competence as performance is subject to linguistically irrelevant conditions such as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention, all of which prevent performance from providing a coherent account of language and hence the necessity to create the ideal speaker and listener for such a purpose. Chomsky finds such an approach very logical as

> in other scientific approaches the same assumption enters in one or another form, explicitly or tacitly, in identification of the object of inquiry….[which] permits the linguist to deal with convenient abstractions uninhibited by psychological reality (Botha, 1987: 73).

Within this conceptual framework it is not surprising that Chomsky is at pains to separate the 'knowledge' of language from its 'use'.

> Alternatively one might characterize knowledge of a language - perhaps knowledge more generally - as a capacity or ability to do something, as a system of dispositions of some kind, in which case one might be led (misled, I think) to conclude that behavior provides a criterion for the possession of knowledge. In contrast, if such knowledge is characterized in terms of mental state structure, behavior simply provides evidence for possession of knowledge, as might facts of an entirely different order – electrical activity of the brain, for example (Botha, 1987: 51).

Language use is considered to be a case of rule following or rule-governed behaviour and is only one 'indication or evidence' of knowledge of language and not a 'criterion' of knowledge.

> Taking linguistic behaviour to be just one of the possible sources of evidence for having knowledge of language clearly does not warrant the equation 'no behaviour = no knowledge'. This would be a valid equation only if, by contrast, behaviour was taken as a criterion for having knowledge of language (Botha, 1987: 55).

In fact the use of language or 'the ability of humans to produce speech that is appropriate to a situation though perhaps quite novel and to understand when others do so' is considered a 'mystery' by Chomsky (1975: 138) and hence outside the study of language:

> There is in fact a very respectable tradition, which I have reviewed elsewhere that regards as a vulgar distortion the "instrumental view" of language as "essentially" a means of communication or a means to achieve given ends. Language, it is argued, is "essentially" a system for expression of thought.

These views, which draw a distinction between the different competences in language, which also regard the conceptual (pragmatic) system as 'primitive' and 'vulgar' provoked reactions from theorists schooled in a functional and pragmatic approach to language. In non-Chomskyan approaches to language and its study, the primary aim for the study of Language is not to gain insight into the properties

of the human mind but to see it as a functional societal tool. As Searle, in Botha, (1987: 137) notes:

> The purpose of language is communication in much the same sense that the purpose of the heart is to pump blood. In both cases it is possible to study the structure independently of function but pointless and perverse to do so, since structure and function so obviously interact.

The notion of 'communicative competence' introduced by Hymes in the mid sixties (1967) and refined in his later writings (1971, 1972a&b) is a shift of emphasis from the Chomskyan conception of language as a mental attribute. He felt that

> … such a view of linguistic theory was sterile, and that linguistic theory needed to be seen as part of a more general theory incorporating communication and culture (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 70).

With the emergence, also, in the philosophy of language, of theories of speech functions (Searle, 1969: 22-23), there was a movement away from the abstract definition of language. H. Giles and E.B. Ryan (1982: 210), also dissatisfied with a situation where performance is considered a residual category, comment that the Chomskyan attitude conceives language competence as a concept where:

- independent speech variables are concocted in a social, psychological and linguistic vacuum;

- listeners feature almost as nonentities;
- aspects of context are socially and subjectively sterile; and
- dependent variables are devised without recourse to their situational, functional and behavioral implications.

In the above quotation, Giles and Ryan criticise the notion of language and language knowledge that is not interactive, or creative. This was the same concern that led the anthropologist and linguist, Hymes (1967), to take issue with the Chomskyan definition of language competence and the employment of an ideal or competent speaker-listener in the scientific study of language. For Hymes (1967), such a person or scenario was a non-existent abstraction; hence he remained unconvinced of the necessity of such a 'methodological tool' for language study. He insists that the 'real speaker-listener' exists in the aspect of language to which Chomsky gives no account: the real world of social interactions. Language, as an interactive tool, draws on a functional or a communicative aspect to language competence as well as the structural knowledge that Chomsky describes. This widening of the criteria for language competence provided the rationale for the introduction of the communicative approach to language competence. In Hymes's (1972b: 281) view, a person who acquires communicative competence acquires both knowledge and ability for language use.

Included in the non-Chomskyan notion of communicative competence, is a view of language as one of the many symbolic systems that members of a society use

for communication among themselves, not as an individual's mental attribute. People and the languages they use are viewed, not in isolation, but in their social contexts or settings, hence de-emphasising the restricted individual grammatical competence as an indication of a person's overall language competence.

People's language ability, according to Hymes (1967), is demonstrated by their control over the structural codes (form) in addition to control of the language in actual performance (function). Hymes (1971: 6) found the failure by Chomsky to take into consideration the functional or socio-cultural dimension of language too restrictive, as this stance only provided a partial account of the knowledge required for language use; 'The grammatical factor is one among several which affects communicative competence'. What this means is that other types of knowledge, in addition to that of knowing how to compose grammatically correct sentences, are required for communication. In other words, communicative behaviour relies on 'the rules of use, without which the rules of grammar would be useless' (Hymes, 1979: 15). For Hymes (1972), knowledge of these two aspects of language competencies – form and function – indicates an individual's level of language knowledge.

In combining these competencies, form and function, in one term, communicative competence, Hymes (1979) redefines the notion, by stressing the importance of 'use' in the classification of language competence, as he believes in the appropriateness as well as the grammatical correctness of utterances. The

introduction of the notion of ‘appropriateness’ or ‘acceptability’, into the definition of competence expands the concept to comprise the rule-systems of language use, hence according a role to socio-cultural factors in contrast to Chomsky’s degrading of ‘common-sense assumptions about language. Therefore, much of what, for Chomsky (1965), is extraneous to a consideration of language and what competence in it entails, is, for Hymes (1967), an integral part of a theory of communicative competence. Defined in such a manner, communicative competence is more comprehensive as it is an amalgamation of theories: linguistic, action and culture.

Van Dijk (1977a: 167) similarly says:

> The use of language is not only some specific act, but an integral part of SOCIAL INTERACTION. Language systems are CONVENTIONAL SYSTEMS. Not only do they regulate interaction, but their categories and rules have developed under the influence of the structure of interaction in society. This FUNCTIONAL view of language, both as a system and as a historical product, in which the predominant SOCIAL role of language in interaction is stressed, is a necessary corrective to a “psychological” view of language use, where our competence in speaking is essentially an object of the philosophy of mind. To be sure, our knowledge of the language is a complex mental system. But to this mental system, like all conventional systems, on the one hand has been formed by the requirements of effective social behaviour and on the other hand is used and changes under these constraints.

This illustrates the fact that communicative competence is an integrated concept which includes aspects from a person's 'psychological view of language' and the knowledge of 'the requirements of effective social behaviour'. The psychological view, operating at a level of abstraction, accounts for the user's rule awareness and manipulation. Van Dijk (1977a) supports Hymes (1967) when he states that knowledge of structural codes is not the only requirement for the creation of linguistic and social meaning, for non-linguistic factors: historical products of cultural and social features of language users are among the list of requirements for the creation of linguistic meaning. All these considerations, therefore, need to be integrated into any notion of communicative competence.

Brown (1987: 199) reiterates the point:

> Communicative competence, then, is that aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts.

Hymes's works and Brown's quotation above exemplify the shift away from the study of language as a system in isolation, towards the study of language as means of communication. Such a stance portrays the intimate relationship between knowledge of language codes and the extralinguistic factors that make language competence a social asset. In agreement, Savignon (1983: 9) writes, 'communicative competence is relative not absolute, and depends on the cooperation of all the participants involved'. Language knowledge is not so much

an intrapersonal ability as Chomsky (1972) defines its limitations in his early writings, but rather an interpersonal construct that can only be examined by means of the overt performance of individuals in the process of creating meaning (Brown, 1987: 227). Richards & Rodgers (1986: 71) include in their discussion on communicative competence a summary of some of the characteristics of a communicative view of language.

1. Language is a system for the expression of meaning.
2. The primary function of language is for interaction and communication.
3. The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
4. The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but also its categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse.

These features are in line with the approach to language and communicative competence adopted by this study. The following sections analyse the notion of communicative competence by scrutinizing the various abilities inherent in the notion.

2.3.1 COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Michael Canale and Merrill Swain (1980, 1983), as well as Chomsky view competence in a modular or compartmentalised manner, rather than as a single

global factor. Canale and Swain see the main components of communicative competence on two levels: linguistic and psycholinguistic.

2.3.1.1 LINGUISTIC COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

On the linguistic level communicative competence includes four inter-related areas of competence: grammatical, discourse, socio-linguistic and strategic competencies.

2.3.1.1.1 Grammatical competence

The grammatical level describes mastery of the formal constructs of the language and is closely aligned to the grammatical competence in the more restricted approach of Chomsky. This is the competence associated with expertise in the grammatical codes of a language and is concerned with the knowledge and skills required to understand and express the literal meaning of utterances. Describing language competence in this manner is to categorise the formal features, at sentence level, of interlocutors' language and how these sentences are acceptably combined.

2.3.1.1.2 Discourse competence

The second subcategory, discourse competence, is a complement of grammatical competence, though it is not concerned with the interpretation of

isolated sentences. It is the ability of language users to connect sentences in stretches of discourse and to form a meaningful whole. The connections that exist between sentences may be physical and explicit (for example, pronominalisation, synonyms, ellipses, conjunctions, parallel structures) or implicit where there may not be an overt structural expression of a link between one proposition and another. Such relatedness may then be established through participants' general knowledge of the world and each other, communicative functions and attitude as well as familiarity with a particular linguistic and physical context. Canale and Swain (1983) see discourse competence therefore, as including cohesion and coherence in the structure of texts, in the organisation of different speech events and the interpretive rules for creating linguistic meaning. While grammatical mastery focuses on sentence level structural arrangement, discourse competence hinges on inter-sentential relationships. Anna Trosborg (1994: 11) also takes discourse competence to include discourse management, for example, turn-taking, use of gambits and discourse phases, such as opening and closing of conversations, aspects not introduced by earlier writers like and Hymes (1967, 1972a) and Canale (1983).

2.2.1.1.3 Socio-linguistic competence

The last two linguistic components - socio-linguistic and strategic competencies - concentrate more on the functional aspects of language interaction. Socio-linguistic competence is concerned with the socio-cultural rules as well as

contextual factors which determine the appropriateness of a given language event. The contextual factors refer to items such as, setting, speaker-hearer role relationship, channel, genre, key and so on. They highlight language appropriateness: meaning and form, and include not only rules of address and questions of politeness, but also selection and formulation of topic and the social significance of strategies like indirect speech acts, gestures and other non-verbal strategies. Only with such a comprehensive picture, communicative competence advocates believe, can participants make appropriate linguistic choices. According to Savignon (1983: 37):

> This type of competence requires an understanding of the social context in which language is used: the roles of the participants, the information they share, and the function of the interaction. Only in a full context of this kind can judgements be made on the *appropriateness* of a particular utterance.

2.2.1.1.4 Strategic competence

Canale and Swain (1980: 30) describe strategic competence as

> The verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to the performance variables or due to insufficient competence.

Savignon (1983) paraphrases the same notion as the strategies that one uses to amend and supplement imperfect knowledge of rules, or limiting factors in their

application, such as, fatigue, distraction and inattention. In short, it is users' ability to cope, by repairing and sustaining communication through linguistic props like paraphrasing, circumlocution, repetitions, hesitations, avoidance, guessing, as well as shifts in register and style. Strategic competence occupies, relatively speaking, a more pivotal position in discussions of communicative competence. Brown (1987: 200) believes that definitions of strategic competence that are limited to the notion of 'competence strategies' fall short of encompassing the full spectrum of the construct. He believes that all communicative proficiency arises out of a person's strategic competence, as it is the way that participants manipulate language in order to meet everyday communicative goals. Sophisticated users of the language are those who deftly manoeuvre their way through the linguistic challenges that confront them. Lyle Bachman (1990) also acknowledges the immense significance of strategic competence, and even goes on to amend the accepted categories of communicative competence, according strategic competence a separate identity within a general notion of language proficiency. Strategic competence, as suggested by Bachman (1990), is a set of general abilities that utilise all of the elements of language competence, and of psychomotor skills as well, in the process of negotiating meaning or in the determination of an individual's language.

2.3.1.2 PSYCHOLINGUISTIC COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

On the psychological level, there are two dimensions to communicative competence: a knowledge component and a skills component.

2.3.1.2.1 Knowledge

Knowledge denotes what one knows (consciously and unconsciously) about language and about other aspects of communicative language use. Knowledge, as part of the psycholinguistic component of language, is in line with the Chomskyan notion that language is an innate ability of individuals. Grammatical mastery of language falls within the knowledge aspect and is therefore part of the non-interactive feature of language competence.

2.3.1.2.2 Skills

A combination of the two units in the psycholinguistic level, knowledge and skills, emphasises that the notion of communicative competence involves knowledge as well as skills of usage in actual communication. Skills refer to how well one can apply one's theoretical knowledge in everyday situations. It covers what is traditionally referred to as the four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Clearly this aspect relates closely to the Chomskyan notion of performance. Actual performance is the realisation of an individual's language ability under

performance constraints like memory and perceptual constraints, fatigue, nervousness, distraction and other interfering factors. The communicative notion of language competence therefore identifies the skills component as an integral part of competence, not as a separate concept as is articulated by Chomsky.

2.3.1.3 COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN SOCIO-CULTURAL DOMAIN

Language, as portrayed in the above discussion, is the property of a particular social entity which uses it in their daily businesses. Speakers of a language, as social beings, see language as the vehicle which allows them to co-exist by enabling them to articulate their needs and wishes. Language is seen as functional and of immediate relevance, or as Halliday (1978) terms it, language is a social-semiotic tool. In other words, language comprises of semiotic codes or signs into which any particular social group can infuse its values and use to create its own meaning. Communicative competence, defined in this context, is the ability of social beings to accurately formulate and interpret their intentions within their social reality. Structural codes or semiotic signs are needed to encode and decode the messages during a speech event however the appropriate meaning to the socio-cultural setting is paramount. Evaluation of competence rests on the meaning-creating potential of users of a language in such a way that their position and membership in a particular social group is enhanced. For instance studies suggest that different cultural groups encode their messages differently, so that whereas going straight to the point of a message and not dwelling on supposedly extraneous points might be important

to certain cultures being 'superfluous with words might be a virtue revered in other cultures. See section 3.2.1.1.8 for more discussion on the notion of 'language'.

The debate about what constitutes communicative competence in language has been ongoing since Chomsky (1965) and Hymes (1967) first outlined their views. Some of the criticism against the concept is based on the tendency to treat some components, for instance, awareness of socio-linguistic norms, as of less significance than grammatical mastery. Such an attitude, a residue from the earlier approaches to language competence, may create some misconceptions. First, it gives the impression that grammatical correctness is more important than the appropriateness of utterances in actual communication. Secondly, this view overlooks the fact that successful interaction presupposes knowledge of social norms and values, roles and relationships between individuals. Inability to be socio-linguistically correct may have a profound effect on the language event, despite the participants demonstrating more than adequate grammatical competence. Language is, first and foremost, an interactive tool meant to convey interlocutors' intentions, that is to say, language is for communication. Thomas (1983), for example, notes that unsatisfactory socio-linguistic skills may result in a participant appearing impolite, unfriendly and boorish even when the utterances show no deficiency, grammatically.

Another criticism, this time against the focus on a socio-linguistic definition of language competence, is that it may devalue structural accuracy in language. Such a criticism may arise from a mistaken notion of the number of factors involved in a successful communication. Communication results when there is a balance between the knowledge and skills components of competence. This is not achieved when a gain in one area is at the expense of the other; in other words, grammatical mastery is not at the expense of socio-linguistic mastery. This criticism, though rather dated, is still a bone of contention between linguists schooled in the opposing views of language and how proficiency is demonstrated.

2.4 SUMMARY

Chapter Two, the first part of the theoretical orientation, has focused on what is meant by 'meaning' by identifying the different categories of linguistic meaning, namely, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. Interlocutors' creation of these different meanings during a communication event is controlled by their levels of communicative competence. In the second part of this chapter, therefore, an introduction to the concept of communicative competence and its components is provided.