

安徽大学

硕士学位论文

题目 论语境的意义加工功能  
专业 英语语言文学  
研究方向 英语语言学  
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2003年05月06日

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## **Acknowledgement**

I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the following people for helping me to make this dissertation possible:

Professor Zhu Yue for his patience, kindness, encouragement and good advice. His profound knowledge and noble character will leave a lasting influence on me.

Professor Cheng Yongsheng for his insightful lectures on translation and linguistics, for his providing me with data and his detailed and valuable comments. Without his meticulous instructions, I could hardly have completed my thesis.

Professor Hong Zengliu for his kind ideas, invaluable suggestions and inspiring comments.

Professors Zhou Fangzhu, Hua Quankun, Chen Zhengfa, Zhang Ming, Tian Depei and members of the school of Foreign Studies of Anhui University for years of education.

I would also like to express my indebtedness to my husband, Mr. Liu Jianquan, who has not only given me the necessary moral support but also offered me many good suggestions.

## Abstract

The present thesis starts from the framework concerned with analysis of hierarchical and dynamic properties of context and goes on to brief sketches with regard to how meaning is investigated in semantics on one hand and in pragmatics on the other hand, followed by a brief presentation of Halliday's theory concerned with relationship between context and meaning for one thing and relationship between meaning and lexico-grammar for another. Then efforts are made to combine the four frameworks into one by employing as the basis the framework of context consisting of linguistic context, context of situation and context of culture and by applying Halliday's framework to context of situation exclusively. In the course of analysis, the thesis has applied theory of context of situation to pragmatic investigations and regarded semantic investigation as basis for other meaning investigations. In this way, the thesis succeeds in finding a way out of the embarrassment of facing four different theoretic frameworks that seem to contradict one another. In the last chapter, the paper presents investigations on how linguistic context, context of situation and context of culture function separately as meaning processors and how they join to function as such.

So far in the field of linguistics, the investigations of the hierarchical and dynamic properties of context are basically confined to those as related to context of situation or in abstraction. No mention has been made of whether the analysis of context as a hierarchy can be applied to linguistic context. The thesis holds that linguistic context is also hierarchical in terms of embedding or recursion. The three categories of context join their forces to function as meaning processor. The thesis proposes that meaning processing function of linguistic context serves as the basis for meaning processing function of context of situation to work, and meaning processing function of context of situation serves as the basis for meaning processing function of context of culture to operate. The most deeply embedded context serves as the basis for the second most deeply embedded context. The most deeply embedded linguistic context serves as the most basic starting point in the investigation of meaning.

Owing to the complication of the issue at hand, the thesis does not attempt to exhaust the investigation in this respect. However, it is wished that the thesis could open a new chapter for the investigation along the line.

Key words: meaning processing function; context; linguistic context; context of situation; context of culture

## 摘要

本文从关于分析语境的层次性和语境的动态性的理论框架出发,概要地叙述了语义在语义学和语用学中的研究情况,概述了韩礼德理论关于语境与意义和意义与词语关系的论述。然后,以关于语境以语言语境、情景语境和文化语境构成的理论框架为基础,将韩礼德的理论框架的应用仅限于情景语境,尽力将上述四种有关意义和语境的理论框架结合起来。在分析的过程中,本文将情景语境理论应用于研究语用学问题,将语义学视为其他语义研究的基础。用这种方法,本文成功地找到了一条走出面临四个看上去互相矛盾的理论框架的困境。在最后一章,本文研究了语言语境、情景语境和文化语境是如何起到加工语义的作用的,以及语言语境、情景语境和文化语境是如何形成合力起到加工语义的作用的。

目前在语言学领域里,对语境的层次性和动态性的研究只限于情景语境的研究或笼统性的研究。还没有提及到语境

层次性的分析是否可以运用到语言语境。本文提出语言语境以包含形式也是有层次的。三种语境形成合力起到意义加工作用。本文认为语言语境的意义加工功能是情景语境的意义加工功能的基础，而情景语境的意义加工功能又是文化语境的意义加工功能的前提。包含在最底层的语境是包含在次底层的语境基础。包含在最底层的语言语境是意义研究的最根本的出发点。

由于课题的复杂性，本文并没有穷尽这方面的研究。然而，却希望本文能够在这方面的研究揭开新的一页。

关键词：意义加工 语境 语言语境 情景语境 文化语境

## Forward

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Some people often talk about meaning in terms of semantics and pragmatics while others frequently discuss meaning in relation to context. Still others never talk about meaning unless in terms of denotation, connotation, reference and so on. Leech even believes that the single word *mean* may have seven meanings. All these theories are helpful in that they lead us to a better understanding of meaning. However, they may lead us into a labyrinth if on one hand distinctions could not be made between one theoretical framework from another and on the other all the frameworks could not be related to each other. In the present thesis, distinction is made between context-free meaning and context dependent meaning with the discovery that context-free meaning is mainly covered in semantic inquiry while context dependent meaning is mainly related to pragmatics. In this way, distinction is made between semantics and pragmatics in addition to the fact that both semantic meaning and pragmatic meaning are related to context. In the same light, denotative, connotative, referential and other meanings, and the seven meaning of *mean* could also be related to context. This brief statement will be misleading if the meaning of context is not clarified. In this theoretical framework, context on one hand means context in general, and on the other, it means context of situation.

When it comes to context, or rather context of situation, sociologists often discuss it in terms of 5 *Ws* expressed in a classic formula “*Who* talks to *Whom* about *What*, *When*, *Where* and how?” while Halliday and his school believe that it consists of three variables. The present thesis basically applies Halliday’s theoretical framework but also believes that context is on one hand hierarchical and on the other dynamic. However, the major aim of the present thesis is making investigations into the meaning processing functions of context. In this light, investigation will be made into the three variables of context and into context as a hierarchy and as a dynamic entity, into the five factors that function as meaning processors or filters. The present thesis strongly feels that the success of the investigation of context in relation to meaning or meaning processing functions lies in the possibility of Halliday’s theory with the theory concerned with the theory of hierarchical and dynamic properties of context, and possibly with theory of pragmatics, which in reality, if not in name, also deals with meaning in relation to context, though without systematic reference to context.

In the discussion of context functioning as meaning processor, examples will be quoted from *Hamlet*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and the translated *The Three Kingdoms* and *Journey to the West*. The paper will make contributions to the understanding of a text in terms of hierarchical and dynamic context. Examples will also be quoted from translation works because the author believes that translation mirrors translator’s understanding of the original.

Systemic-functional grammar and linguistics in general pay a great deal of attention to context, to which meaning of text and textual features are related. In this part of the thesis, a sketch will be presented with regard to general features of context and particularly to the book *Translation as a Communication— A Descriptive Theoretical Framework* by Cheng Yongsheng (2001) investigation into two features of context: context as a hierarchy and context as a dynamic entity. The investigation is of great significance in that the focus of the present thesis on meaning processing functions of context necessitates a thorough study of these features of context and of the ways context functions as a meaning filter.

Generally speaking, the first two sections of the present chapter will present a summary of hierarchical and dynamic properties of context. However, in the book *Translation as a Communication— A Descriptive Theoretical Framework* (2001), by context is meant mainly context of situation, for there is not any discussion of linguistic context or context of culture as either hierarchical or dynamic. Therefore, as thesis develops, this paper will make investigations into the hierarchical and dynamic properties of context in general by addition of some investigations into the hierarchical and dynamic properties of linguistic context and context of culture.

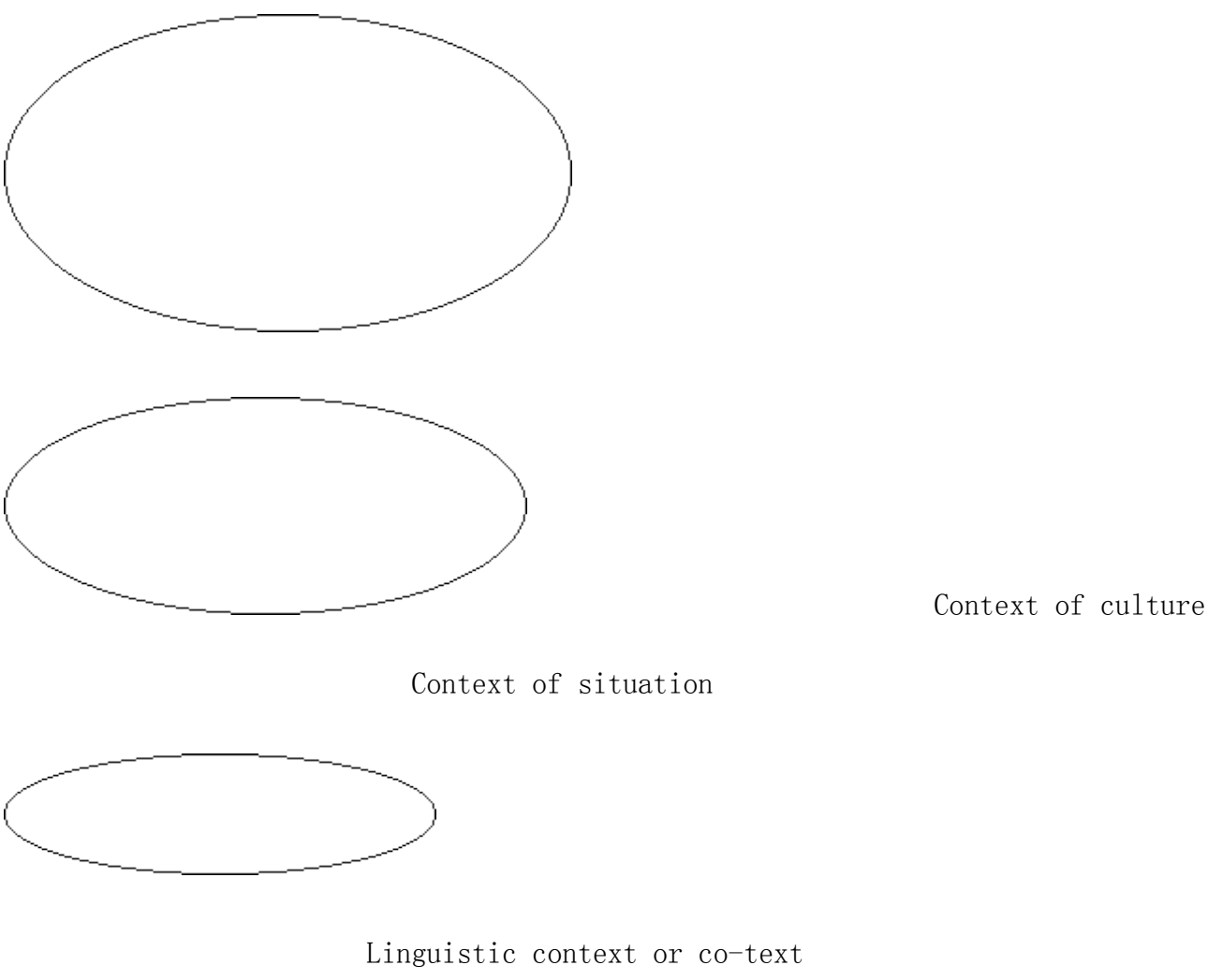
### 1.1 “Content within Context” —Tiers and Variables of Context

The concept of context was first employed by Malinowski, an Polish anthropologist. In interpreting to English readers languages and cultures of Melanesian peoples in the Trobriand Islands, Malinowski had to turn to extended commentary to situationalize the text and refer to it as context of situation, including the culture relevant to the act of text production and reception. Since context of situation can be shortened to context, the two terms become interchangeable. With this convenience, linguists extend context to what goes before and/or what comes after a particular linguistic item, and sometimes refer to it as linguistic context to distinguish with the context meaning context of situation. But others still prefer to use the term context to stand for this linguistic phenomenon although context is also used to refer to context of situation. As for the preliminary studies of the hierarchical properties of context, Firth (1935; Lyons, 1977) offered a classical account by regarding his analysis of meaning in language as “a series of contextualization of our facts, context within context, each one being a function, an organ of the bigger context and all contexts finding a place in what might be called the context of culture.” Apparently, Firth tends to make a distinction between context of situation and context of culture. Firth’s contribution to the investigation in this respect lies in two folds. First, he believes that besides context of situation, there should be context of culture and context of culture contains context of situation. Secondly, context can be classified and one class of context can be embedded within another, although he basically favors binary division of context.

In China, similar binary division of context is popularly favored when people distinguish context of situation from linguistic context or co-text. For example, Zhou Fangzhu (1997) distinguishes direct context and indirect context. In his work, by direct context is meant linguistic context or co-text and by indirect context is meant context of situation. Pei Wen (2002) prefers to use linguistic context to refer to co-text and paralinguistic context to refer to context of situation. However, in both theoretical frameworks and others, no mention is made of context of culture. In Cheng Yongsheng’s investigation of translation context, he advocates that there should be three categories of context: linguistic context or co-text, context of situation and context of culture, and relationships lies in the fact that context of culture contains context of situation, which in turn contains linguistic context or co-text, and in this sense context is hierarchical in nature.

His idea with regard to the classification and hierarchical property of context can be illustrated below.

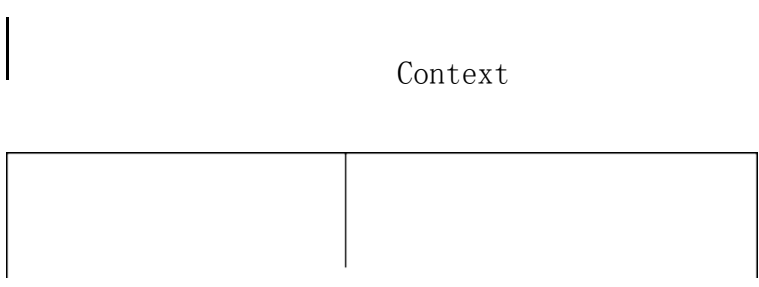
Fig. 1 The Classification and Hierarchical Property of Context



The figure shows that context can be classified into three categories: context of culture, context of situation and linguistic context or co-text, and their relationships are that context of culture contains context of situation, which in turn contains linguistic context or co-text.

The three terms could be shortened into context, and in terms of sense relation, hyponymy can be employed to describe the relationships between the three terms. Specifically speaking, context can serve as the superordinate while the three specific terms: context of culture, context of situation and linguistic context or co-text can serve as co-hyponyms, as illustrated below.

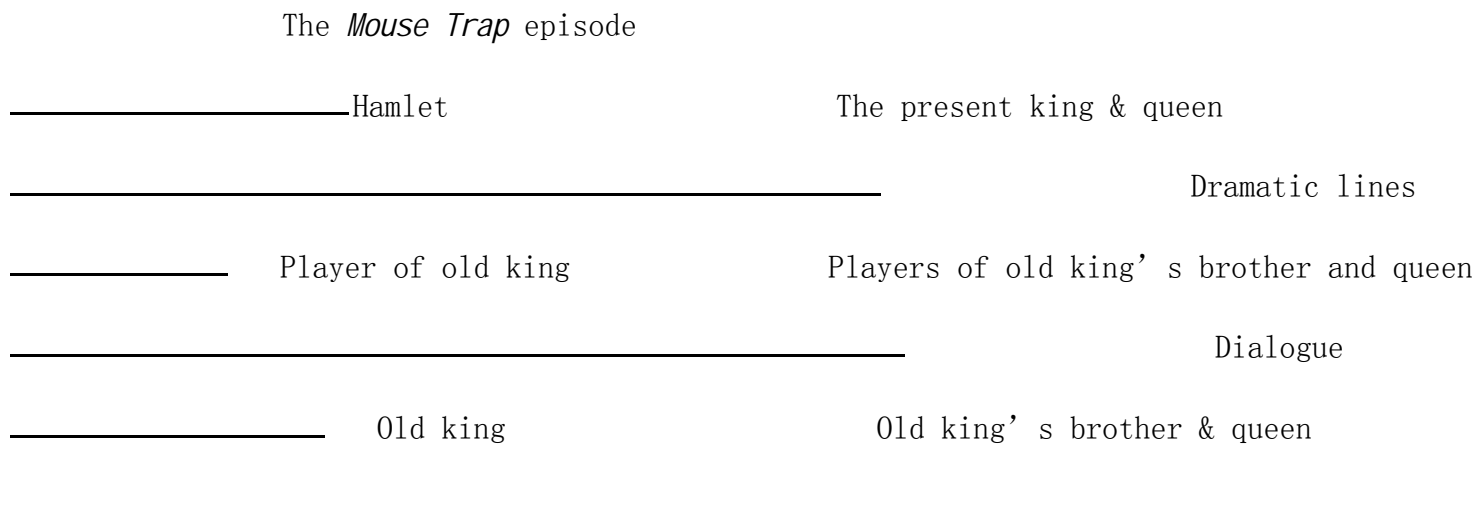
**Fig. 2 The hyponymous nature of context**





within another. The principle developed from this example can apply to any narrative with an embedded episode.

Fig. 4 The Contextual Hierarchy of the *Mouse Trap* Episode in *Hamlet*



The paper also holds that each of a narrative context is typical of context for daily communication. In other words, each tier of a narrative context consists of co-text, context of situation and context of culture. In other words, if a context has X contexts embedded, then the contextual hierarchy may consist of contexts of X multiplied by 3. This simple mathematic operation illustrates that in terms of hierarchy, context is extremely complicated. With the publication of *Translation as a Communication—A Descriptive Theoretical Framework* (2001), people begin to realize that the phenomenon of context within context cannot be denied and the investigation into different tiers of context may shed lights on the understanding of meaning, and the dynamic nature of context and meaning. In this light, it is natural that meaning should always be subject to change and the subjugation of meaning to change will account for different interpretations of the meaning of a particular linguistic item.

Halliday and the systemic-functional school believe that context consists of three variables: field, tenor and mode, and each variable in turn is a system of variables. For example, tenor may be divided into personal and functional; field is always subject to what is going on in a particular communication. And there is always a list of what is going on for the communicators to choose from. This list of what is going on forms the system with regard to field. In Halliday' s framework, mode may fall into manner and channel, which, in turn, consist of a number of variables. For example, in communication, one may select a channel from a list of channels such as the oral channel or the written channel. Moreover, Halliday' s context is quite abstract. In other words, he and his colleagues have not made inquiries into any specific context. If he should have gone so far as to investigate specific contexts, he would have noted that each context may be embedded in another. In other words, if we apply Halliday' s theory to the contextual hierarchy, we will also have to do the mathematic operation of 3 variables multiplied by the tiers a particular context contains to arrive at the complication of that particular context. However, Halliday' s theoretical framework of context also demonstrates that context is hierarchical, since context is a system, containing subsystems, and each of the subsystem may contain its subordinate systems, and so on.

## 1.2 Context in Process—Dynamic Property of Context

The paper also demonstrates that context is dynamic. This idea is not difficult to penetrate since



communication is always a dynamic process. Even if the participants remain unchanged, what one communicates with the other will certainly be subject to change. For example, if A and B are engaged in a communication about life in modern China, they may talk about what life in China was thirty years ago. Then they may go on to talk about how Mao Zedong died and Deng Xiaoping took over the leadership of the Communist Party of China and led China in the direction of opening the door and beginning the socialist reform, and so on. During the communication, they may cite concrete examples to illustrate great changes that have taken place in educational field, for example. In addition, their communication modes are often, if not always, subject to change. For example, in classroom, when a teacher talks about American literature, he may write an outline on the blackboard. In the teaching process, he may also write a number of proper names. On one occasion, he may employ formal language. On another, he may use informal terms. Moreover, in a communication, it is often, if not always, the case that participants do change. On one hand, both participants engaged in a communication may take the floor by turns. On the other, a communication participant may talk now to one and then to another. And occasionally, both participants in a conversation may change simultaneously.

In a narrative, event is constantly being unfolded; time is always advancing; place keeps changing; and character is continuously substituted for. And time, place and character change with the change of event. Event, character or participant, time and place are four major factors that contribute to the dynamics of context. Take event for example. We believe that event is hierarchical in that a large event may be composed of a number of small events, and a small event may consist of a number of smaller events. However, event is linearly unfolded. In other words, one small event develops after another; a small event unfolds itself linearly, too. It means that one smaller event develops after another. This linear development of embedded events indicates that the development process is a dynamic process. Moreover, an event is structured as to be composed of a precipitation, a consequence, a climax and a conclusion. However, the components of an event, of a small event, of a smaller event are all arranged in linear sequence. Again this linear sequencing of the structure of an event demonstrates that event structuring is also a dynamic process. And each event or component of an event takes place in a certain context. In other words, context is dynamic.

Take a love affair for example. The precipitation may be that one day a boy encounters a girl accidentally in a certain place. He believes that she may become his prospective lover and she believes that he may fall in love with her if they spend some time together. This stage of the affair is traditionally called dating but in terms of event structure, it is precipitation. Then they spend some time together and find that they love each other. This stage of the affair is traditionally known as love falling. In terms of event structure, it is consequence. After more encounters and exchanges of ideas, they may feel that they can be engaged to one another, hence the engagement. In terms of event structure, it is development. After some time, they may feel that they are materially sufficient to get married and they decide to hold their wedding ceremony on one day, hence the wedding ceremony or the climax in terms of event structure. Their love affairs come to a close, however, their new life, life as husband and wife, begins. As time goes on, the couple may give birth to a baby, beginning their new stage of life, and so on.

Moreover, every episode of an event may have its own precipitation, consequence, climax and conclusion. Take encounter for example. One day, the boy was reading English on campus while walking. Accidentally, he bumped into the girl and knocked her down. He said sorry to her, helped the girl on her feet and asked for her name to find that the girl came from his native county. Then they looked at each other to find that they each were right for the other. Then they waved each other's good-bye. The bumping can serve as the precipitation, helping her on feet can serve as the consequence, their finding each of the other as right for him- or herself can serve as the climax

and their waving each other's good-bye can serve as the conclusion.

This example shows that event is always dynamic and the corresponding context is always dynamic.

In terms of character of a narrative or participant of a communication, the same conclusion can also be drawn. For example, if a novel is about how a family bring up five daughters, marry them out one by one and the five each have their own children, then the fiction may begin with the marriage of the old couple, how, when and where they give birth to one after another of their girls, how they send girls one after another to different schools, how different school teachers teach their daughters, how their daughters graduate one after another, find their jobs, work on different positions, encounter their different lovers, get married at different times, and so on.

Take for example a small event from this large event, say, the eldest daughter encountering her first boyfriend, then the second, then the third and finally the boy who is to become her husband. In this series of encounters, the participant on one side keeps changing. However, her life is not totally the encountering of boys. After encountering the first boy, she may go together with him to the supermarket to buy something for her daily life. Then the two friends may be engaged in a dialogue with another girl and her partner. At night, the other girl may talk to her about what impressions her boyfriend left on her, and so on.

The above-mentioned examples show that with the alteration of participants, we may have different communications, and the alteration of participants involves change of contexts. Again, the conclusion is that event is dynamic with the alteration of participants and then the context is unfolded in a dynamic way.

With the change of events and alteration of participants, places in which an event is unfolded may be different. If we regard a person's life as a long event, then he may be born in China, spend his childhood in Canada, receive his education in the United States, get a job in Great Britain and die in France.

It is apparent that the unfolding of any event needs some time. Then it is natural that with the development of event, time keeps changing. So in terms of place and/or time, context turns out dynamic.

Moreover, the four contextual components: event, character, time and place, may change simultaneously. As we know, event always changes with time, although not always with place or character. However, with the developing of a large event, place and participant also keep changing. This illustrates that event with time can contribute to the dynamics of context. However, it is often, if not always, the case that event, time, participant and place may join their forces and contribute to the dynamics of context.

As mentioned above, in the sense of systemic-functional grammar, context consists of three variables: field, tenor and mode, each in turn is a system of variables. In such context, with the change of one variable, all other variables will change accordingly. In this sense, context is also dynamic. However, this is only a brief sketch of the dynamic nature of context in terms of systemic-functional grammar. If we apply the theory of systemic-functional grammar in relation to context as our analysis illustrated of the dynamic property of context, then we will find that the dynamic property of context is multi-dimensional.

### 1.3 Significance of Investigations into Hierarchical and Dynamic Properties of Context

The study of the hierarchical and dynamic properties of context is of great significance in that we often complain that contextual meaning is quite slippery, but we usually do not know why it should be so. If context is revealed as hierarchical and dynamic, the phenomenon could be easily explained. Communication in different tiers of context means that one person communicates with another on different occasions about different things. This general statement suggests that one person communicates with different persons or different persons may communicate with different other persons. The statement may also suggest that one person may communicate different ideas to another or different persons may communicate different ideas to different other persons. It may also suggest that one person may communicate the same idea to the same person but in different places or he may communicate the same idea to different persons in different places or he may communicate the same or different ideas to the same or different persons, in the same or different places but in different modes. In all these cases, it is not a single communication that is involved but different communications. Once context is thought of as dynamic, variables of context will keep changing. In other words, in terms of dynamics, it is not a single communication that is involved but different communications. For example, if you ask your daughter: why should you return so later? It could mean that you are worried about your daughter since she is still young. But if you ask the same question to your wife, the meaning might be totally different. Apparently, this change of tenor results in meaning changes. On one occasion, you talk about one thing to your daughter, but on another, you talk about another thing to her, the meaning will be quite different. On one occasion, you talk to your friend in a formal tone but on another, you talk to him or her in another tone, the meaning will be different. In a word, meaning interpretation depends much on context. But in the past people always took interest in context in general and were reluctant to investigate context in particular. Moreover, the hierarchical and dynamic properties of context are basically neglected. We believe that in the investigation of meaning, we cannot afford to neglect context, especially particular context. In the investigation of context, we cannot afford to neglect the hierarchical and dynamic properties of context, for it is context with its hierarchical and dynamic properties that serves as meaning processor.

Later, we will employ concrete examples to show how context plays the role of meaning processor in detail. At present, we can only present a brief sketch in the respect. Take some deictic terms for example. We have deictic terms because we have to describe and talk about the society and the nature around us. If person A and person B are engaged in a dialogue, and A takes the floor and B plays the role of listener, then A will use *I* to refer to himself and *you* to refer to his interlocutor. However, everybody uses *I* to refer to him- or herself and *you* to refer to his or her interlocutor. To understand *I* and/or *you*, we have to turn to context. On one occasion, the speaker may be an 18-year old girl. On another, it may be an 80-year old man. Moreover, the 18-year old girl and the 80-year old man may take the floor by turns. Every turn of the floor implies a different context. If an 18-year old boy comes and takes over the old man's role, then the taking over implies the change of context. And if another person reports the communication to still another, then we will have different tiers of context. These examples suggest that to understand deixis, we have to turn to the context in which particular deictic items are used.

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## Chapter 2 Meaning

When we communicate, we convey meanings to others and our listeners can understand what we mean by saying this and that. However, in our discussion, we may fail to offer a very clear definition for meaning. Linguists believe that language is social in that what linguistic items used in what ways may convey what meaning is agreed upon by the society in which every member uses those particular linguistic items in those ways. If any person of that society does not use the language in the way which is agreed upon, then the speaker may be at the risk of failing to put himself across to his

interlocutor. For example, when Humpty Dumpty says to Alice: “There’s the glory for you”, Alice fails to understand because by *glory*, Humpty Dumpty means “a nice knock-down argument.” The explanation lies in that Humpty Dumpty does not employ the agreed-upon meaning of the word *glory*. However, when Chomsky uses “Green ideas sleep furiously”, although it serves as an example of nonsense, it still has some grammatical meaning. If the example were arranged this way: “Sleep green furiously ideas”, then it would be an example of nonsense pure and simple. Why should it be so? The account for the phenomenon lies in that the English speaking society does not use English that way although the meanings of the words are still agreed upon. Another example may be that when a person says “it’s cold in here”, it may be interpreted as a complaint, as a polite order, as a polite request or as an assertion. Why should a single clause have so many interpretations?

In linguistics, there are two disciplines that are concerned with meaning: semantics and pragmatics, although some believe that semantics should cover the inquiry scope of pragmatics while others believe that it should be the other way round. This paper prefers to use semantics to refer to the study of context-free meaning and pragmatics to refer to the study of context dependent meaning. Specifically speaking, the paper uses Humpty Dumpty and Chomskyan examples to illustrate that we can study meaning in terms of semantics or in context-free terms. The paper uses the “it’s cold in here” example to illustrate that we can also approach meaning pragmatically or in context dependent terms, although between semantics and pragmatics there is not a clear-cut demarcation.

As you may have noticed, by context-free meaning is meant the meaning that can be deduced in a way free of context of situation and/ or context of culture, but not free of linguistic context or context. Actually, except for single words, other linguistic items such as collocations, phrases and sentences are structured. In other words, words in such constructions are contextualized linguistically and the meaning of such words should be interpreted in relation to their linguistic context. The meaning of collocations and/ or phrases and/ or clauses in sentence should also be interpreted in the same manner.

## 2.1 Meaning as Investigated in Semantics

Semantics is a science that deals with meaning. This section of the thesis will approach semantics in terms of sentential units and of sense relations. In terms of sentential units, a sentence may fall into words, collocations, phrases and clauses. In terms of sense relations, such relations will be focused on as synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, polysemy and homonymy, and sense relations between sentences.

When we discuss meaning of words, we will find that words have semantic properties. Take the word *murder* for example. It means *kill* and *kill intentionally*. Another difference between *murder* and *kill* is that *murder* means *kill a human being intentionally*. However, we can kill an animal or even kill the time. Below are a number of words arranged in a certain order.

tigress	lioness	actress	maiden
doe	mare	debutante	widow
ewe	vixen	girl	woman

All the words listed above are related to one another in that they all denote animate females, either human or non-human. This kind of semantic relationship is traditionally studied in terms of semantic features. Now take the words *father* and *mother* for example. We know that *father* and *mother*

have a great deal in common but are different only in one sense: one is male while the other is female. This relationship between *father* and *mother* can be clearly expressed by the following semantic features.

father	mother
[+animate]	[+animate]
[+human]	[+human]
[+parent]	[+parent]
[+male]	[-male]

However, we know that in the description of *father* and *mother*, a redundant feature has been used, that is, [+animate], because the feature [+human] implies that the word so described must have the property of [+animate].

When two or more words are put together, the meaning of a particular word may change a little bit. Take word *light* for example. It means one thing in *light blue*, another in *light weight*, still another in *light reading*, and so on. The phrase *light blue* is in contrast with *dark blue*, *light weight* is in contrast with *heavy weight*, and *light reading* is in contrast with *serious reading*. These examples illustrate that specific collocations have narrowed the meaning of the word *light*. In terms of context, collocation creates a linguistic context or co-text. However, in the above-mentioned case, neither context of situation nor context of culture is involved. Therefore, we still consider the case as a context-free example.

We know that different words may have different meanings. Moreover, the meaning of a phrase or sentence depends on both the meaning of words and how words are structurally combined. For example, *the book on the table* means one thing, *the dictionary on the table* means another but *the table on the book or dictionary* means something totally different.

When we say *the tiger is chasing the dog*, we mean one thing, but when we say *the dog is chasing the tiger*, we mean a totally different thing.

From this examples, we can draw a conclusion that words in different collocations, phrases and/or sentence structures may mean different things. It naturally follows that we can approach the meaning of words either in isolation or in relation to their specific linguistic environments.

Another property of the meaning of words can be studied in terms of ambiguity, vagueness and fuzziness. In some cases, people often use the term vagueness to cover the phenomena of ambiguity, vagueness and fuzziness with differentiation. Others prefer to investigate the three phenomena differentially. In what follows, the paper will discuss them one by one.

Ambiguity is used when a particular word or phrase or sentence may have more than one meaning. In other words, the linguistic environment enables the linguistic item to be interpreted in more than one way. Take the simple word *book* for example. In “He didn’t bring his book here yesterday and had to go back to get it”, we cannot say for sure whether the *book* means a textbook or an accountant’s book. In other words, the linguistic environment in which the *book* is used allows two interpretations.

Fuzziness is borrowed from mathematics, in which the word *fuzzy* is used to refer to the concept that if there are two sets that are overlapping, then there will be a fuzzy set, whose members can belong to either the first set or the second. In linguistics, when we are talking about complementary opposition, for example, *man* and *woman*, there is a clear boundary between the two sets. In ordinary terms, every member of *man* cannot be at the same time a member of *woman* and neither the otherwise. However, when we are talking about gradable opposition, for example, *the young*, *the middle-aged* and *the old*, there is not a clear boundary between *the young* and *the middle-aged*, nor is there a clear boundary between *the middle-aged* and *the old*.

Words and phrases such as *some*, *a great many*, *a lot*, *a great deal*, *little*, *a little*, *few*, *a few* are vague in that no one knows the exact number or quantity such words or phrases have expressed. In other words, these terms are usually employed to express vague ideas.

Actually, we have touched antonymy, a sense relation, already. However, in the discussion of sense relations, we will discuss synonymy first, and then antonymy, hyponymy, polysemy and homonymy. Synonymy refers to the phenomenon when two or more words may have same or rather similar meaning. Some linguists believe that there are no exact synonyms since two or more words may belong to different dialects, different styles or registers, may bear emotive or evaluative differences or may be collocationally restricted. Take for example *the Venus*, *the evening star* and *the morning star*. They can be used to refer to the same star, but they each have a shade of meaning difference. Such synonyms as *profession*, *position* and *job*, and *wage*, *pay* and *salary*, also bear nuances of meaning difference.

The term antonymy is usually used to describe opposition in meaning. In terms of opposition, meanings of antonymous opposites can be classified as complementary, gradable and relational. For example, the meanings of *dead* and *alive* are complementary in that when one is dead, he or she cannot be alive. The meanings of *hot* and *cold* are in gradable opposition in that they may be regarded as two terms that can be employed to describe the two extremes of temperature, and between *hot* and *cold*, we can insert *warm* and *cool*, and possibly a number of others. The words *buy* and *sell* are meaningfully in relational opposition in that if one side buys, then there should be the other side that sells. Otherwise, there would be no buying or selling to talk about.

Hyponymy is employed to describe the sense relationship in which the meaning of one word contains the meaning of another in terms of A being a kind of B. For example, *sheep* is a kind of *livestock* while *ram* is a kind of *sheep*, and so on. Since in Chapter 1, we have cited examples to illustrate the point, though in passing, we will not go any farther here.

In fact there is another sense relationship similar to hyponymy, that is, meronymy. However, meronymy is employed to express the sense relationship of A being a part of B. For example, an arm is part of the body, a finger is part of the hand, a fingernail is part of the finger, etc.

Polysemy is used to describe the phenomenon that one word may have a number of meanings. For example, the word *enclosure* may have the following meanings: 1) something enclosed in a letter or parcel; 2) a place shut in, fenced in or otherwise marketed off for a special purpose; 3) a fence or other boundary that encloses an area; etc.

Homonymy is a phenomenon that is concerned with the fact that a word may have the same sound or spelling as another, but different in meaning. *Pupil* (student) and *pupil* (part of an eye) have the same sound and spelling but different in meaning; *minute* (a minute consisting of 60 seconds) and *minute* (meaning very small) have the same spelling but are pronounced differently and have different

meanings. *Tale* (a story) and *tail* (part of the body of an animal) are pronounced the same way but have different spellings and meanings.

It should be aware that meaning is a very complicated phenomenon. Some approach it from the viewpoint of truth value while others deal with it from their stance of function, and so on. From whatever angle we approach meaning; we find that there are many items worthy of our investigation. Therefore, what we have discussed above is only a sketch of semantic studies. From what we have studied, we also know that when we are making investigations into meaning, we cannot do it in a totally context-free way. Therefore, semantics is here defined as a science that deals with meaning free of context of situation and context of culture, and pragmatics as a science that deals with meaning in a way dependent on context of situation and context of culture.

## 2.2 Meaning as Investigated in Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a young discipline of science that deals with meaning. And as we have defined above, it deals with meaning in a way dependent on context of situation and context of culture. Usually, meanings are investigated in pragmatics in such terms as deixis, presupposition, entailment, speech act, conversational implicature, co-operation principle, politeness principle and so on. Actually, pragmatics may cover more than what is listed above. However, in what follows, the paper will deal with the above-mentioned items one by one.

Deixis are terms used to refer to items in context of situation and so the meaning of the items referred to could not be fully understood unless the context of situation in which relevant items are referred to is specified. The general principle for the employment of deixis to refer to items in the world of reality is that the world of reality is a four dimensional entity without a boundary. In saying so, the paper has taken the dimension of time into account. To describe the world of reality, any speaker has to start from where and at what time he or she is. When a particular person speaks, he or she will use *I* to refer to him- or herself, *you* to refer to his or her interlocutor, and *he* or *she* to refer to the person the speaker and the interlocutor know of outside the communication context. When the speaker talks about places, he or she will start from where he or she is and refer to it as *here*, and refer to any distant place as *there*. In the similar manner, the speaker will use *now* to refer to the time at which he or she is, and *then* to refer to the time in the past and in the future. Hence deixis can fall into such categories as personal deixis, time deixis, space deixis, social deixis and relational deixis. In what has gone above, some of the personal deixis have been briefly discussed.

Presupposition, as the name implies, has presupposed meaning. For example, the sentence “His nephew has come” presupposes that he has a brother or sister, who has got married and given birth to a son, who can come. This kind of meaning could only be fully understood by referring to the relevant context.

Entailment requires our efforts to explain. For example, the sentence “He has married a blond woman” entails that “He has married a blond”. In other words, if “he has married a blond woman” is true, then “he has married a blond” must be true. The deduction of the second truth-conditioned meaning depends on the context of situation, though in terms of common knowledge.

Speech act was first put forward by Austin (1962) in his famous book *How to Do Things with Words*. He believes that when we are speaking, we are performing a certain act. In other words, speaking is itself doing. The theory was later developed by Searl (1969 and later) into locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act. By locutionary act is meant that speaking is itself an act

or speaking is doing. By illocutionary act is meant that the act is intended to the speaker's interlocutor. By perlocutionary act is meant that the act is intended for some effects on the part of the speaker's interlocutor. To quote an example from *Translation as a Communication— A Descriptive Theoretical Framework* (2001) may suffice to illustrate the point.

Once during a break in the classroom for on-job master students, a young lady asked Professor Cheng if he knew Hu Xiaojing, her elder sister. Actually Hu Xiaojing was among his colleagues. Then the break ended and so did their conversation. The second day, during the break, Professor Cheng sensed that the girl had the intention to talk to him again. Then Professor Cheng asked her in Chinese: “ni jiao Hu Dajing ba?” Literally, it means, “Is your name Hu Dajing?” In Chinese, the phonetic “xiao” can mean on one hand “know” and on the other “younger”. “Da” in Chinese can mean “older” or “elder”. The question is a joke in that the younger sister should be older than the elder sister. In term of speech act theory, by the question, Professor Cheng performed 3 speech acts. He performed a locutionary act in that he had some utterance uttered. Simultaneously, however, he conveyed his three intentions to his interlocutor. He first conveyed his intention that he was joking. His second intention was seeking information concerned with the lady's name. Since they were still strangers to each other, this way of information seeking helped Professor Cheng avoid any possible embarrassment. Thirdly, Professor Cheng conveyed a phatic communion to his interlocutor, that is, the intention of maintaining personal relationships. What is more, in this way, Professor Cheng also performed 3 corresponding perlocutionary acts, for the illocutionary acts had achieved the intended effects on the part of his interlocutor in that she laughed contently, symbolizing that she took Professor Cheng's question as a joke; she told him her name, indicating that she took the question as an information seeking act; and she gave him her address together with her sister's and asked for Professor Cheng's address, demonstrating that she also took the question as a phatic communion.

Conversational implicature deals with the phenomenon that in a conversation, sometimes, if not always, the speaker's ideas or intentions are not explicitly stated but subtly implied. Then a theory was developed based on the investigation of this pragmatic phenomenon. Therefore conversational implicature stands as an example of the nature and power of pragmatic explanation of linguistic phenomena. The sources of this kind of pragmatic inference can be shown to lie outside the organization of language. An important contribution made by the notion of implicature is that it provides some explicit account of how it is possible to mean what is actually said. The following serves a classic example.

A: Can you tell me the time?

B: Well, the milkman has come.

Superficially, B has not answered the question, but actually B has, and A knows that B has answered the question, though not directly. By inference, A can obtain the idea that B's answer suggests that the common knowledge A and B share concerned with when usually the milkman comes. Now the milkman has come, it should be around the time at which the milkman usually comes. By inference, A can also get the idea that B's answer to the question in that way that may suggest that B has not got a watch with himself and so is unable to answer the question directly, hence the indirect answer. Then B's answer to the question may be interpreted as B feels sorry that he or she cannot tell A the time since he or she has not had a watch with himself or herself. But still B can tell A roughly the time. They know that the milkman comes everyday around that time, and now he has come. So B is sure that it must be around that time.



What is more important is that the investigation into conversational implicatures leads to the discovery of the co-operation principle, a very famous pragmatic principle developed by Grice, who believes that in a conversation, there must be some principle that governs the production and the perception of an utterance. He then made investigations with the discovery that there is a set of assumptions that governs the performance of conversation, and he calls that set of assumptions as “co-operation principle”, which consists of four maxims: the maxim of quality, the maxim of quantity, the maxim of relevance and the maxim of manner, as listed below.

#### 1. Maxim of Quality

Try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically

- 1) do not say what you believe is false;
- 2) do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

#### 2. Maxim of Quantity

- 1) make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purpose of exchange;
- 2) do not make your contribution more informative as is required

#### 3. Maxim of Relevance

Make your contribution relevant

#### 4. Maxim of Manner

Be perspicuous, and specifically

- 1) avoid obscurity;
- 2) avoid ambiguity;
- 3) be brief;
- 4) be orderly

He believes that when engaged in a conversation, usually the speaker observes the co-operation principle and the listener knows that he observes the principle. However, sometimes, the speaker does violate the principle. On one occasion, he may violate the maxim of quality, the maxim of quantity, the maxim of relevance or the maxim of manner. On others, he may violate two or more maxims all at once. On these occasions, the listener will believe that he violates the maxim or maxims, not because he is not aware that he should observe the co-operation principle, but because he knows that the speaker breaks a certain maxim for a special purpose. Then taking the context in which the utterance is performed into account, the listener will arrive at the intended meaning by certain inference. Take the following for example.

“While Mary is adjusting her ideas,” he continued, “let us return to Mr Bingley.”

“I am sick of Mr Bingley,” cried his wife.

“I am sorry to hear that; but why did you not tell me so before? If I had known as much this morning, I certainly would not have called on him. It is very unlucky; but since I have actually paid the visit, we cannot escape the acquaintance now.”

(Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*, Ch. 2)

The general idea of the above quotation is that on hearing that Mr. Bingley is moving to the Netherfield Park, Mrs. Bennet is considering that he may fall in love with one of her five grown-up daughters. Therefore, Mrs. Bennet tells Mr. Bennet of the news and urges Mr. Bennet to make Mr. Bingley's acquaintance, paving the way for their girls to make Mr Bingley's acquaintance. However, Mr. Bennet pretends not to pay any visit to Mr. Bingley. Actually, Mr. Bennet is among the first to pay his visit to Mr. Bingley. However, he does not break any news concerned with his visit to Mr. Bingley until the next day. In this sense, when Mr. Bennet says “Let's return to Mr. Bingley”, he is trying to find an opportunity to break the news that he has paid his visit to Mr. Bingley already. However, Mrs. Bennet has no idea of that and says, “I am sick of Mr Bingley”. In so saying, actually, she has violated the maxim of quality of “trying to make your contribution one that is true”. In answering to Mrs. Bennet's statement, Mr. Bennet says, “I am sorry to hear that; but why did you not tell me so before? If I had known as much this morning, I certainly would not have called on him. It is very unlucky; but since I have actually paid the visit, we cannot escape the acquaintance now.” Apparently, he has also violated the maxim of “trying to make your contribution one that is true”. These purposeful violations of the maxim of quality can be interpreted in two contexts. In the context in which Mr. and Mrs. Bennet are engaged in a conversation, Mr. Bennet knows that what Mrs. Bennet says is an irony, which roughly means she cannot be sick of Mr. Bingley since she urged him to visit Mr. Bingley the day before, but actually she is sick of Mr. Bennet, who refused to visit Mr. Bingley. Mrs. Bennet also knows that what Mr. Bennet says is not true since he knows that Mr. Bennet paying a visit to Mr. Bingley is what Mrs. Bennet really wants.

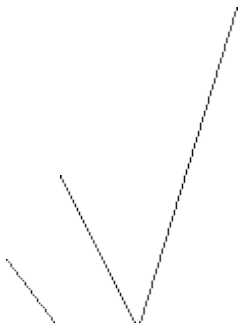
Politeness principles are developed by Leech (1983), in which he treats pragmatic principles as rhetorics. On one hand, he quite agrees with Grice in that there does exist the co-operation principle consisting of number of maxims, each of which in turn consisting of a number of sub-maxims. However, the theoretical framework is inadequate in that there exists a set of politeness principles together with a set of irony principles and probably sets of other principles. On the other hand, he believes that semantic studies should be related to pragmatic investigations, for he has discovered that for semantic presentations, there should be some pragmatic interpretations to match them, and semantic presentations should be related to textual features. Traditionally, polite speeches are known as rhetoric and so he tends to regard the term rhetoric as countable and approach pragmatic principles in terms of interpersonal rhetoric and textual rhetoric, partially based on Halliday's triple division. The overall structure of his discussion is sketched by his Fig .5, as quoted below.

Fig . 5 The Overall Structure

Sub-maxims

Maxim of quantity

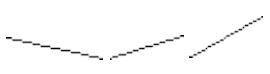
—Co-operation principle Maxim of quality



Maxim of relevance



Maxim of manner



Maxim of tact

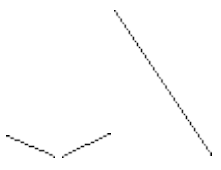


generosity

Interpersonal

Politeness principle

Maxim of

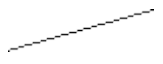


Rhetoric

Maxim of Approbation

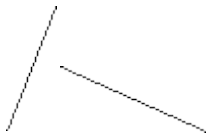
Maxim of modesty

Irony Principle



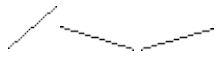
...

End-focus maxim

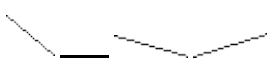


Processibility principle

End-weight maxim



Clarity principle



Textual Rhetoric

Economy principle

Leech believes that politeness principle can serve as a link between co-operation principle and the problem of how to relate sense to force, or in other words, how to relate semantic presentation to pragmatic interpretation. For this reason, he tries to relate illocutionary acts to politeness. He believes that politeness is essentially asymmetrical, for if the speaker is polite, it will suggest that it is impolite on the part of the hearer. In other words, to try to be polite is at the cost of the person who tries to do so. On the other hand, it will be beneficial to the other person. Then being more polite means being more cost from one participant but more beneficial to the other participant of the conversation.

### 2.3 Significance of Study of Meaning as Investigated in Either Semantics or Pragmatics

From what we have investigated in terms of semantics and pragmatics, we can draw some conclusion that we can sometimes discuss meaning without any reference to context of situation or context of culture. However, sometimes we cannot do it at all. Words have meanings. Different words may have different meanings. Different words may have the same or similar meaning. One word may have meaning opposite to another's. One word may have more than one meaning. And the meaning of one word may be related to that of another in one way or another, and so on. This may be considered as the intrinsic property of the meaning of words. However, the meaning of words and the sense relations are agreed upon by the society in which the meaning of words and sense relations are used. Actually, this society serves as the context of culture in a broad sense. This illustrates that semantics is a science that studies meaning in an idealized context.

From the above analysis, we know that when two or more words are put together in a certain collocation, the constituents of that collocation may exercise impacts one on another. When words are arranged in accordance with phrase structure rules into phrases or sentences, the constituents of a particular phrase or sentence may exercise impacts one on another. This points to the fact that linguistic context or co-text may exercise impacts on the interpretation of a particular linguistic item, which lies within the linguistic context in question.

When meaning is investigated in terms of pragmatics, we find that context of situation and context of culture may also exercise impacts on a particular linguistic item, which is used within that context of situation and/or context of culture. For example, when you say, "I hereby name this ship Elizabeth", first you should be empowered to say so; secondly, you should say it on a proper occasion. If a teacher says to a student in the classroom, "I hereby appoint you the battalion leader", then the speech act is understood as a joke, for on one hand, the teacher is not empowered to say so and on the other hand, the teacher says it on a wrong occasion.

Although pragmatics deals with context dependent meaning or meaning in relation mainly to context of situation and/or context of culture, pragmatics is not a science that makes investigations of context in a systematic way, although in the discussion of pragmatic phenomena, context in general is frequently made reference to. Neither does it specify how contextual factors disambiguate ambiguous meanings, make unambiguous meanings ambiguous, narrow wide meanings or widen narrow meanings. In a word, pragmatics does not say anything about how context processes meaning.

Usually, in the investigation of context and meaning, we mainly investigate context of situation and/ or context of culture in relation to meaning, or investigate meaning in relation to context of situation and/ or context of culture. Our discussion, however, tends to accept the idea that in abstract, there are three species of context: co-text or linguistic context, context of situation and context of culture, and that context is on one hand hierarchical and on the other dynamic. This idea may imply that the three categories of context each may have hierarchical property on one hand and dynamic property on the other. However, so far, the investigations of the hierarchical and dynamic properties of context are basically confined to those as related to context of situation or in abstraction. In other words, no mention is made with regard to whether or not the analysis of context as a hierarchy and as a dynamic entity can be applied to linguistic context and/ or context of culture. Theoretically, the application should be plausible. However, the theoretical plausibility awaits verification. In what follows, however, we will present discussions on the hierarchical and dynamic properties of linguistic context and of context of culture.

### 3.1 Hierarchical and Dynamic Properties of Linguistic Context

In either linguistic or semantic or pragmatic literature, no mention is made of the hierarchical or dynamic property of linguistic context or context of culture. However, mention has been made in this respect in terms of embedding or recursion, though confined to linguistic inquiries only. The thesis holds that both embedding and recursion actually deal with the hierarchical property of linguistic context and a lot of linguistic literature has been contributed to the discussion of either embedding or recursion. The relationship between embedding and recursion is that when one linguistic item is embedded within another, in Chomsky' terms, it is usually said that phrase structure rules are recursive. In other words, embedding and recursion are two different terms used in different theoretic frameworks by different schools of inquiry to describe basically the same linguistic phenomenon. This provides the idea that the two terms can roughly be interchangeable. In what follows, the paper will approach the phenomenon in Chomsky' s terms. In other words, phrase structure rules are recursive. Take the following for example.

John' s father' s father' s father' s father' s father... was the president of the United States.

→ Due to the limited space, the tree diagram is not used here to illustrate how the recursive rule of NP NP is applied to generate NPs. Instead, square brackets will be employed to clarify the point.

[John' s [father' s [father' s [father' s [father' s [father...]]]]]] was the president of the United States.

→ Actually, the recursion application of the NP generation rule is not restricted if there is no pragmatic limitation to the application. Similarly, the application of the rule of S S is not restricted unless there is a pragmatic limitation to the application. In other words, the sentence generation rule is also recursive, as illustrated below.

John told Peter, who told Mary, who told Elizabeth, who told Jane ... that the dog market downtown was already opened.

We can also use square brackets to illustrate the recursive property of the S generation rule.

[John told Peter, [who told Mary, [who told Elizabeth, [who told Jane [...]] that the dog market downtown was already opened.]]]]

The two examples suffice to illustrate that linguistic context is also hierarchical whether we approach it in terms of embedding or recursion. Similarly, we can demonstrate that linguistic context is also dynamic. The explanation lies in that in the production of any linguistic sequence either orally or in written form, we generate linguistic items one after another. This shows that the generation process is dynamic in nature. In other words, linguistic context unfolds itself linearly in accordance with the development of time.

We take interest in the hierarchical and dynamic properties of linguistic context in that the revealing of linguistic context as hierarchical and/ or dynamic will shed light on the meaning processing functions of context in general and linguistic context in particular, for any linguistic item used will exercise impacts on what follows and any linguistic unit develops linearly by following the development of time. However, we will not go any further in this respect until the very last chapter of the present thesis, where the paper will present discussions on how linguistic context functions as a meaning processor.

### 3.2 Hierarchical and Dynamic Properties of Context of Culture

It may sound strange that context of culture should be hierarchical on one hand and dynamic on the other. However strange it may sound, the reality is that context of culture is both hierarchical and dynamic. To present a long story short, a few examples will suffice to illustrate the point. First, take the following for example.

Polonius: ...

How does my good Lord Hamlet?

Hamlet: Well, God-a-mercy.

Polonius: Do you know me, my Lord?

Hamlet: Excellent well. You are a fishmonger.

Polonius: Not I, my lord.

Hamlet: Then I would you were so honest a man.

Polonius: Honest, my lord?

Hamlet: Ay, sir. To be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

Polonius: That' s very true, my lord.

Hamlet: For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion.

— Have you a daughter?

Polonius: I have, my lord.

Hamlet: Let her not walk i' th' sun. Conception is a blessing. But your daughter may

conceive, friend, look to' t.

Polonius: ...—What do you read my lord?

Hamlet: Words, words, words.

Polonius: What is the matter, my lord?

Hamlet: Between who?

...

(Hamlet, II.2)

To understand the quotation, the reader of a certain time must make reference to the culture of the time with which the reader is associated. He has to make reference to the culture of the time with which Hamlet or the production of *Hamlet* is associated. The mention of *walk in the sun* and *your daughter may conceive* serves as an allusion to *Fairy Queen*. In this sense, the reader must make reference to the culture of the time with which *Fairy Queen* or the production of *Fairy Queen* is associated. Otherwise, he could not fully appreciate the discourse in which Hamlet communicates with Polonius in such a mad manner. This example illustrates that the quotation, though short as it could be, involves the embedding of one culture within another. In comprehension or appreciation of the quotation, it is a business of association of one culture with another, illustrating that the culture associated with the production of *Fairy Queen* is embedded within the culture associated with the production of *Hamlet*, and the culture associated with the production of *Hamlet* in turn is embedded within the culture associated with the reader's comprehension of the drama. Therefore, a conclusion could be drawn that context of culture does have hierarchical property.

Another point worthy of our investigation is that in our daily communication or writing or translation, mention is often, if not always, made of the case in which foreign culture is necessary for the perception of the linguistic product. Take the following for example.

In ancient China, people divided the universe along the time axis in such a way that 129,600 years make up a *yuan*, which in turn falls into twelve *hui*, each consisting of 10,800 years and named respectively after the Twelve Earthly Branches, namely, *Zi*, *Chou*, *Yin*, *Mao*, *Chen*, *Si*, *Wu*, *Wei*, *Shen*, *You*, *Xu*, *Hai*.

Similarly, a day, including the night, was divided into twelve Chinese hours, each equal to 2 hours in the International System and again named after the Twelve Earthly Branches respectively, taking the positions of the sun, supplemented by other phenomena, as their markers. At *Zi*, the sun departs the previous night; at *Chou*, the cock crows; at *Yin*, it is not quite light; at *Mao*, the sun rises; *Chen* covers the time after breakfast; *Si* sees the sun traveling about half way in the east; *Wu* witnesses the sun just overhead while *Wei* sees the sun off to the west; *Shen* sees the sun half way to the west while at *You* the sun sets; *Xu* is the time of dusk while *Hai* sees everything deserted.

(The opening paragraph of *Journey to the West*, translated by Cheng Yongsheng)

The quotation serves to illustrate that the culture of a nation may be embedded within the culture of another nation. It is clear that the quotation is mainly about how ancient Chinese people divided and named the time. The naming system is based on the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches. The terms

involved in the quotation is based on the Earthly Branches. For an English reader to understand the quotation, he will probably try to comprehend the ideas contained in the passage against the background of the English culture of his time. It is in this sense that we say that in the reader's understanding of the quotation, the Chinese culture that passage is about is embedded in the English culture of the time when the English reader reads the translation.

As our readers may have been aware, for the Chinese reader's comprehension of the translation, he will probably employ the Chinese culture of the time at his reading as the background together with the English culture of the time at his reading of the translation. However, in comprehension of the translation, he will also have to turn to the ancient Chinese culture the quotation deals with. As for the comprehension of the ancient Chinese chronological system and of the terms such as *Yuan* and *Hui*, and *Zi*, *Chou*, *Yin*, *Mao* ..., he has to turn to the Chinese culture that gave birth to the ancient Chinese chronological system and the relevant terms.

In process of translating, the translator should first try to comprehend the original by turning to the relevant ancient Chinese culture and by employing the Chinese culture of the time at his translating as the background for the comprehension. In the stage of rendering the translation, he has to turn to the English culture of the time at his translating for his reader's sake and turn to the Chinese culture involved in the translating act.

Again, the example illustrates that one context of culture may be embedded within another either diachronically within the overall culture of a nation or synchronically within the culture of another nation or both diachronically and synchronically.

As for the dynamic property of context of culture, a single statement will be sufficient for the purpose. It is self-apparent that both culture and history are always dynamic in their processes of development.

### 3.3 Significance of Investigation into Hierarchical and Dynamic Properties of Linguistic Context and Context of Culture

The significance of the investigation into hierarchical and dynamic properties of linguistic context and context of culture lies in that first, such investigations will complete the overall investigation that can be made into hierarchical and dynamic properties of context in general. If we do by confining our investigation to the investigation into hierarchical and dynamic properties of context of situation only, then the investigations will be apparently incomplete. And the incompleteness may suggest that linguistic context and context of culture are not hierarchical in nature, nor are they dynamic.

Taking this paper's present purpose into consideration, as will be revealed later, it is the hierarchical and dynamic properties that enable linguistic context and context of culture in addition to context of situation to function as meaning processors. It would be strange if we went directly to investigation into meaning processing functions of linguistic context and context of culture without probing into their hierarchical and dynamic properties.

## Chapter 4 Context and Context, and Meaning and Meaning

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In the book *Translation as a Communication—A Descriptive Theoretical Framework*, an abstract context



consists of linguistic context, context of situation and context of culture. Halliday's context, mainly refers to context of situation, although he tries to associate context of situation with relevant society and culture. However, in his framework, society and culture only serve as the background of context of situation. Semantics investigates meaning without any reference to context. However, as the paper mentioned briefly before, any semantic meaning, in final analysis, is the agreed upon meaning for a particular language society. Pragmatics studies meaning in relation to context. However, in their analysis, only concrete contexts or even segments of concrete contexts are mentioned here and there. That explains why pragmatists are reluctant to study context systematically. For the above brief analysis, we can conclude that different schools take different attitudes to context: some ignore context all together, some mention context in their randomly, but others approach context systematically though in different theoretic frameworks. That is why we say there are contexts and contexts.

As mentioned before, different contexts in different frameworks seem to deny each other. For example, Halliday believes that his systemic-functional grammar is pragmatic in nature and hence tries to deny the existence of pragmatics. Some semanticists believe that pragmatics should be included in semantics while some pragmatists believe that semantics could not find its existence without reference to pragmatics, although Leech believes that semantic presentation should be related to pragmatic interpretation and vice versa. Cheng Yongsheng's and Halliday's frameworks seem to be contradictory in that Halliday's context is basically context of situation, and abstract context of situation only while Cheng Yongsheng tends to investigate concrete contexts for his own purpose.

The existence of a great many contexts in different theoretical frameworks and the existence of the intrinsic differences of so many different contexts would throw us into trouble if we could not find a way out.

The above, however, is only part of the story, for different attitudes toward context are without exception closely associated with their different attitudes toward meaning or different ways to investigation meaning, hence the contribution to the already complicated chaos. In what follows, we will examine how different theoretical frameworks approach meaning from different angles, aiming again to find a way out of the compound trouble.

As we have mentioned in previous chapters, semantics investigates meaning mainly independent of context of situation and context of culture, although in final analysis, meaning is social. Pragmatics, on the other hand, approaches meaning in relation to specific contexts that are involved in their case studies. That accounts for the reason that semanticists take interests in the investigations into meaning in various linguistic units such as words, collocations, phrases, clauses and sentences. And they also take interests in investigations into sense relations such as synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, polysemy, homonymy and so on. On the contrary, pragmatists approach meaning in terms of deixis, presupposition, entailment, speech act, conversational implicature, co-operation principle, politeness principle and so on.

Halliday investigates meaning in a systematic way and that is worthy of our explanation in some detail. In Halliday's theoretical framework, context consists of three variables: field, tenor and mode. Moreover, the three variables of context correspond to the three variables of meaning: ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning. The three variables of meaning in turn correspond to the variables of lexico-grammar. Specifically, ideational meaning is realized by transitivity; interpersonal meaning is realized by mood and modality while textual meaning is realized by thematic structure, information structure and cohesion. The correspondences between

context, meaning and lexico-grammar can be listed in the following table.

**Table 1 Correspondences between context, meaning and lexico-grammar**

Context	Meaning	Lexico-grammar
Field	Ideational	Transitivity
Tenor	Interpersonal	Mood Modality
Mode	Textual	Thematic structure Information structure Cohesion

From the viewpoint of systemic-functional grammar, it is apparent that from what is going on in terms of field, we can clearly obtain information in terms of ideational meaning by decoding the lexico-grammatical features in terms of transitivity; from what is concerned with tenor, we can predict the interpersonal meaning expressed by lexico-grammatical expressions in terms of mood and modality; from what is about mode, we can arrive at the conclusion concerning the meaning expressed in term of thematic structure, information structure and cohesion. On the other hand, we can analyze the lexico-grammatical features of a text to arrive at the ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning, and arrive at conclusion with regard to the context in terms of field, tenor and mode. In other words, we can see that field determines ideational meaning, tenor determines interpersonal meaning and mode determines textual meaning. The ideational meaning in turn governs the choice of lexico-grammar in terms of transitivity; the interpersonal meaning in turn governs the selection of lexico-grammar in terms of mood and modality; and the textual meaning in turn sets restrictions on the realization of lexico-grammatical features in terms of thematic structure, information structure and cohesion. However, if we want to obtain the total meaning of the quotation, we can analyze the text in terms of transitivity to arrive at the ideational meaning, analyze the text in terms of mood and modality to arrive at the interpersonal meaning, and analyze the text in terms of thematic structure, information structure and cohesion to arrive at the textual meaning. Then from the three obtained meanings we can reach a conclusion with regard to the three variables of context. Take the following for example.

In vain Elizabeth endeavored to check the rapidity of her mother's words, or persuade her to describe the felicity in a less audible whisper; for to her inexpressible vexation, she could perceive that the chief of it was overheard by Mr. Darcy, who sat opposite to them. Her mother only scolded her for being non-sensical.

“What is Mr. Darcy to me, pray, that I should be afraid of him? I am sure we owe him no such particular civility as to be obliged to say nothing he may not like to hear.”

“For heaven's sake, madam, speak lower. - What advantage can it be to you to offend Mr. Darcy? - You will never recommend yourself to his friend by so doing.”

Nothing that she could say, however, had any influence. Her mother would talk of her views in the same intelligible tone. Elizabeth blushed and blushed again with shame and vexation. She could not help frequently glancing her eye at Mr. Darcy, though every glance convinced her of what she

dreaded; ...

(Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*, Ch. 18)

If we were to employ Halliday's framework to analyze the quotation in terms of transitivity, mood and modality, thematic structure, information structure and cohesion, it would be a very complicated business. Briefly, it is clear that the quotation consists of two paragraphs of narration and a dialogue between Elizabeth and her mother. Every bit of the vocal evidence of the narration indicates that the narrator stands by Elizabeth's side. The rough idea of the quotation is that Mrs. Bennet does not like Mr. Darcy, who looks very proud. Therefore, she said something loudly to express her dislike of the young man. Why should she speak out loud of her mind? The explanation lies in that she intended her speech to be overheard by Mr. Darcy. This illustrates that Mrs. Bennet is a person of shallow mind. Elizabeth, on the other hand, is not only good-mannered, but also much more sophisticated than her mother. However, Elizabeth and Mrs. Bennet are in a mother-and-daughter relation, and so she could not compel her mother to stop but by requests and persuasions.

Professor Cheng has not presented any sensible theory with regard to investigation into meaning. In his work (2001), we can sense that he tries to apply Halliday's theory to his own framework of context.

From the very brief sketch of the theoretical frameworks that are concerned with meaning inquiries, it is clear that either semantic, pragmatics or Halliday's systemic-functional grammar, though each with its complete theoretic framework, has exhausted meaning inquiries. Semantics has covered part of and has the potential to cover the rest of meaning independent of context of situation and context of culture. However, it does so at the cost of pragmatic meaning. Pragmatics, on the other hand, has covered part of and has the potential to cover the other part of pragmatic meaning. However, it does so at the cost of semantic meaning, though by referring to semantic meaning occasionally.

Halliday is creative in the development of his theoretic framework into a triple division system with correspondences between contextual variables and meaning variables, and correspondences between meaning variables and lexico-grammatical variables. However, his investigation into meaning has not exhausted meaning inquiries either. Take the above quotation for example. As the paper has analyzed, the narrator takes Elizabeth's side. However, if we analyze the narration in terms of transitivity, mood and modality, thematic structure, information structure and cohesion, we cannot arrive at the conclusion that the narrator stands by Elizabeth's side. Again as the paper shows, the opening paragraph of *Pride and Prejudice* sounds like what is going on in Mrs. Bennet's mind. In other words, the paragraph is mainly in Mrs. Bennet's tone. However, if we analyze the paragraph in terms of transitivity, mood and modality, thematic structure, information structure and cohesion, we cannot arrive at such a conclusion.

In addition, Halliday's theory is inadequate in that for one thing there is no mechanism by which we can arrive at the total meaning of a text and we do not know either how the three meanings match one another in the text to arrive at meaning totality. For another, the meaning of a text is associated with the culture of the time of the production of the text on one hand and associated with the culture of the reader at the time of his reading on the other. Moreover, there should be some meaning of the text that lies between the lines. However, of the four theoretic frameworks, Halliday's is the most adequate with regard to our purpose of investigation of meaning in relation to context, though it is inadequate to the above-mentioned extent.

In face of context and context, and meaning and meaning, and different associations of context with meaning, we have to find a way out. One possible way for us to get out of the embarrassment is to select one theoretic framework out of the four and discard the others. Another possible way is to combine two or three of the frameworks and discard the other or others. Still another way is to combine the four. In what follows, the paper will try to combine the four with modifications made. However, the paper will take Cheng Yongsheng's framework as the base, trying to apply Halliday's theory to his framework and applying semantic inquiries and pragmatic investigations as two important supplements.

So much effort is spent on analysis of inadequacy of each of the frameworks because we believe that the answer to the question may lie in the inadequacy, for the inadequacy of each of the theoretic frameworks with regard to context associated meaning suggests that they may be complementary in the two aspects. In other words, they may have the potential to be combined into one and be employed to describe how contexts serve as meaning processors.

We find that the solution lies in that however contradictory the four theoretic frameworks may seem to be, if we employ Cheng Yongsheng's framework as the basis and apply, as we have mentioned in passing, Halliday's framework to context of situation, then we might have a unified framework that relates context to meaning and meaning to context in a systematic way. However, in so doing, we have to modify Cheng Yongsheng's framework slightly, by regarding the framework consisting of a horizontal plane and a vertical plane. Specifically speaking, on the horizontal plane, context consists of linguistic context, context of situation and context of culture, forming a horizontal hierarchy. On the vertical plane, each of the three contexts may have embedded contexts, each forming a vertical hierarchy. In addition, each of the three contexts may develop in accordance with the alteration of participant, event, time and/ or place, each forming a dynamic entity. Then in the discussion of context of situation, we can still apply Halliday's theory of three variables and other theories of his to the above-mentioned combined theoretic framework.

As for semantic framework, we know that the semantic framework, however inadequate as it may seem to be, can serve as the basis for investigation in whatever way. For example, as implied above, in its investigation into meaning in relation to the context associated with the case in question, the pragmatic framework employs implicitly the semantic framework as its basis for the investigation. In other words, in pragmatic case studies, semantic meanings are presupposed. Otherwise, pragmatics cannot approach meaning at all. In the same manner, semantic framework can serve as the basis for investigation into meaning in any other framework. In other words, in other frameworks, semantic meaning is also presupposed.

Since pragmatic framework is concerned with meaning in relation to or mainly to context of situation, we can conveniently include pragmatic investigations into the investigation under the heading of meaning instigated in the light of context of situation.

## **Chapter 5 Meaning Processing Function of Context**

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The analysis of the last chapter may have suggested that we will investigate meaning processing function of context in the light that context consists of linguistic context, context of situation and context of culture. Actually, we will make investigations into meaning processing function of linguistic context, of context of situation and of context of culture respectively, and then the

three respective investigations will be combined to see how the three contexts mesh to wheel out meaning. In the process, hierarchical and dynamic properties of each of the three context and the two properties of context in general will be investigated in accordance with the specific necessity of inquiry to see how the two properties of context or of each of the three contexts contribute to meaning processing function.

## 5.1 Meaning Processing Function of Linguistic Context

As we have mentioned before, in a certain text, what goes before and/ or comes after a particular linguistic item under investigation will serve as the linguistic context. This definition of linguistic context implies that linguistic context develops linearly with the development of time and the syntactic structure of linguistic context is hierarchical. Specifically speaking, there will be such syntactic units as word, phrase, clause and sentence subject to investigation. In such a light, a text may develop from the smallest syntactic unit to the largest syntactic unit, and in the process, meaning associated with each of the development stages will certainly change. A meaning wide in scope may be narrowed, a meaning narrow in scope may be widened, an ambiguous meaning may be disambiguated and an unambiguous meaning may become ambiguous, emotive, ironic and humorous. Since the smallest syntactic unit is word and the second smallest is phrase, then we will start our investigation with analysis of how words change their meanings in phrases. Below is an example to illustrate the point.

a. provincial

b provincial life

In the example, the single word *provincial* may have a number of meanings. However, the *provincial* in *provincial life* could mean only *country life*. This illustrates that a collocation may disambiguate an ambiguous meaning.

In the discussion above, the paper has cited how the meaning of *light* changes with *blue*, *weight*, or *reading* added to the right of the word. But usually, a word or phrase is added to the left of another and the addition may change the meaning of the word in question. For example:

a. girl

b. a girl

c. 18-year old girl

d. an 18-year old girl

e. a girl standing

f. a girl standing at the door

g. an 18-year old girl standing

h. an 18-year old girl standing at the door

i. ...

In each of the above example, the meaning of the word *girl* changes with the addition of another word or a phrase. The single word *girl* may mean any girl or young lady. The meaning of *a girl* may mean on one hand any girl or young lady and on the other one girl or young lady only. The phrase *18-year old girl* may mean any girl of the age and the phrase *an 18-year old girl* may mean on one hand any girl of the age and on the other one girl of such an age, and so on. In addition, we find that each addition of a word or phrase to the word *girl* either makes the unambiguous meaning ambiguous or narrows the meaning originally wider in scope.

If we go further in this line, we will find that any juxtaposition of two or more words together grammatically will change the meaning of the words before the juxtaposition. However, we may also sometimes find that ungrammatical juxtaposition of two or more words may add meaning to the otherwise grammatical juxtaposition.

a. a grief ago

b. The satellite was directed into an area known as Manhattan (named after the great Venusian astronomer Prof. Manhattan, who first discovered it with his telescope 20,000 light years ago).

( Art Buchwald, *Is There Life on Earth?*)

Usually, *a grief* does not collocate with ago, nor does 20,000 *light years* collocates with *ago*. However, the meaning of such mal-collocation is intelligible ,because besides the usual meaning, such a collocation aims at humorous effects. However, *ago*, though it is an adverb, may be considered as the one that has its argument structure. Therefore, it would be better if I had put it under the heading of argument structure serving as context.

So far, we have not touched sentence, the largest syntactic unit, when it serves as linguistic context and functions as meaning processor. However, it is predictable that it does have such a function. Take the following for example.

And yet, while most of us are only too ready to apply to others the cold wind of criticism, we are somehow reluctant to give our fellows the warm sunshine of praise.

(Janet Graham, *Profits of Praise*)

This is an example of a sentence consisting of two parallel clauses. This way of arranging a sentence has exercised great impacts on the meaning of the constituents of the sentence, as illustrated below.

most of us $\pm$ us; somehow—only too; reluctant—ready; give=apply to; others=our fellows; warm sunshine—cold wind; praise—criticism

In the above analysis, the paper uses “ $\pm$ ” to indicate that on both sides of the sign, the words have similar meanings; the paper uses “—” to indicate that on both sides of the sign, words have the opposite meanings; the paper uses “=” to indicate that on both sides of the sign, words have the same meaning. However, they are all meanings in linguistic context, not their intrinsic meanings. For example, in dictionaries, *give* does not have the same meaning as *apply* to does.

In terms of subcategorization, in English, some verbs usually take animate subjects while others usually take inanimate subjects. For example, the verbs *know and think* always require not only the subjects subcategorized as [+animate], but also as [+human]. Otherwise, such a “subject +

predicate” construction would probably serve as an example of personification. On the other hand, verbs such as *interest and surprise*. usually take inanimate subjects. Subcategorization is a very complicated subject for syntactic inquiry and examples as used above are inexhaustible. However, these examples may suffice to illustrate that words have their intrinsic syntactic and semantic properties and when they are organized in a syntactic structure, the intrinsic properties will impose restrictions on the syntactic properties and semantic properties of others.

In terms of argument structure, it is our common knowledge that a verb may have one argument, another verb may have two and still another may have three. These intrinsic properties of verbs impose impacts on both the syntactic structure and the semantic structure of the syntactic construction in question. In addition, we find that prepositions may be associated with argument structure. A preposition may have one argument while another may have two. These intrinsic properties of prepositions may exercise impacts on the syntactic structure and semantic structure of the prepositional phrases concerned. Moreover, some adjectives may have some unique argument structures and so the syntactic and semantic structures of the adjective phrases concerned may be strongly restricted. Some linguists even believe that some NPs may be studied in terms of argument structure, although others may not accept the idea. To whatever syntactic construction the theory concerned with argument structure may apply. The fact is that meaning processing functions of linguistic context may be investigated in terms of argument structure. In other words, argument structure may serve as linguistic context.

In Chapter 3, we have presented discussions on recursive application of phrase structure rules or on syntactic embedding. However, we have not mentioned anything concerned with meaning processing functions of linguistic contexts with hierarchical property. To see the functions, we may repeat the examples concerned here.

- (1) John’ s father’ s father’ s father’ s father’ s father... was the president of the United States.
- (2) John told Peter, who told Mary, who told Elizabeth, who told Jane ... that the dog market downtown was already opened.

From Example (1), we know that *John’ s father* refers to one person, *John’ s father’ s father* refers to another, *John’ s father’ s father’ s father* refers to still another, and so on. In Example (2) *John told Peter that ...*, the statement states that John passed on some information to Peter. In *John told Peter, who told Mary that ...*, the statement aims to make clear that Peter passed on some second hand information to Mary, and so on. These examples illustrate that linguistic context with its hierarchical property has meaning processing functions.

Another example concerns disambiguation function of embedded linguistic context functioning as meaning processor.

- (1) He was then a bachelor.
- (2) He was then a bachelor and remained single all his life.

In Example (1), the word *bachelor* may be interpreted ambiguously. However, in Example (2), it means only a single man. The example serves to illustrate sufficiently that embedded linguistic contexts may disambiguate ambiguous meanings.

The linguistic contexts involved in the above examples develop linearly, showing that the contexts are dynamic. In addition, embedding after embedding or repeated application of a phrase

structure rule is a dynamic process, showing again, embedding is a dynamic process. In other words, in all the above examples, dynamic property together with hierarchical property contributes to meaning processing function of linguistic context.

## 5.2 Meaning Processing Function of Context of Situation

As for context of situation serving as meaning processor, Halliday and his school of linguistics have discussed thoroughly with their triple division framework, and the paper will not repeat the discussion here. In what follows, however, the paper will present a brief discussion of context of situation serving as meaning processor as ignored in the investigation of pragmatic case studies. Take deixis for example.

He promised that he would come here tomorrow with her by the 12 o' clock train.

To understand this piece of discourse, the speaker and his interlocutor must share some knowledge about who *he* is, who *she* is, where *here* refers to and what train is *the 12 o' clock train*. Otherwise the communication would not be successful. The speaker and his interlocutor share sufficient knowledge for the communication to be successful because they are engaged in the communication in the shared context of situation. Otherwise, they would not have enough shared knowledge for the successful communication. Take the following for example.

A: Li Ping is to be married to Wang Wei next Sunday.

B: Which Li Ping?

A: Why? Are there more than Li Ping?

B: Yes. Li Mei' s sister, Li Weigang' s daughter and Li Zhiming' niece are all named Li Ping.

A: I was nor aware of that. But did you not remember that the other day you met a number of girls in my sitting room? The tallest girl in blue was Li Ping.

The example illustrates that the first two rounds of communication between A and B are not successful because B does not know who A refers to by Li Ping since in B' s knowledge, there are a number of women who are named Li Ping, and that knowledge B does not share. This example illustrates that shared knowledge, or rather, shared presupposed knowledge is necessary for successful communication. Moreover, in terms of hierarchical property of context of situation, the presupposed shared knowledge actually is associated with contexts of situation embedded within the context of situation for A and B to communicate with each other.

Presupposition serves as another project for pragmatic investigation. However, no one mentions what is essentially presupposed. To me, presupposition presupposes shared knowledge or rather, shared embedded context(s) of situation. Take the following for example.

He died before his son was born.

In pragmatics, usually we say that the example presupposes that the man got married and his son was born after his death. However, the paper tends to extend presupposition to the shared knowledge for the participants engaged in the communication concerned with who *he* was in addition to the presupposition concerned with the man and his son. In addition, the paper believes that the presupposed knowledge or information is associated with the presupposed contexts of situation. In



other words, the communication of the information that he *died before his son was born* depends much on the presupposed contexts of situation embedded in the context of situation associated with the communication of the information.

Similarly, entailment also presupposes shared knowledge and embedded context associated with shared knowledge. Take the following for example.

a. He has married a blond woman.

b. He has married a blond.

As far as entailment goes, if *he has married a blond woman* is true, then *he has married a blond* is true. The shared knowledge for the successful communication is that the word *blond* in English is usually used to describe a pretty lady with blond hair, though this knowledge is common knowledge for English speakers. However, in the paper's framework, associated with the common knowledge is the context of situation known to all English speakers, though.

For co-operation principle to operate successfully, context of situation or embedded contexts of situation will always be necessary. Take the following classic example for example.

A: The telephone is ringing hard.

B: Sorry, I am in the bath.

In pragmatics, interest is often taken in the necessary inference to arrive at the intention with which B says: "Sorry, I am in the bath". In the paper's framework, the common knowledge involved in the answer lies in that when a person is in the bath, he or she cannot answer the phone. This implies that in response to A's statement, B hopes that A understands that B cannot answer the phone and hence hopes that he or she would like A to answer the phone. Associated with this common knowledge is the embedded context of situation.

As is clear, the politeness principle is based on co-operation principle. Therefore, it is expected that the same analysis can apply to politeness principle, too. However, since how to be polite is strongly associated with culture, we will leave the discussion to the next section.

When it comes to dynamic property of context of situation, we have discussed it before. However, a brief statement about the property is still necessary. Our statement in this respect is: when a context of situation and its embedded contexts of situation are arranged linearly or on a plane, the dynamic property of the contexts will be self-evident, since going from one context of situation to another is a dynamic process.

Through above analysis, we can reach conclusion that context of situation, with its hierarchical and dynamic properties, has meaning processing functions. Specifically, context of situation may disambiguate an ambiguous meaning, may narrow a meaning wide in scope or the otherwise, and so on.

### 5.3 Meaning Processing Function of Context of Culture

Similar to linguistic context and context of situation, context of culture, with its hierarchical and dynamic properties, also has meaning processing functions. Take the following for example.

(1) He took the state test, failed, went to Yangzhou and stayed there the rest of life.

(2) He took the state test, failed, went to Huizhou and became a businessman.

The meaning of the word *Yangzhou* in Example (1) and that of the word *Huizhou* in Example (2) could not be fully understood if contexts of the specific culture are not referred to. In ancient China, Yangzhou is a place notorious for its prostitution. Therefore, Example (1) states that the man in question failed in the state test and was so disappointed that he decided not to fight to the top any more and went to Yangzhou to enjoy his life with the girls. The man in Example (2) also failed in the state test. However, he took a different attitude toward life, decided to become a businessman and went to Huizhou, a place in ancient China, very famous for its commercial and trading activities and businessmen.

In Chapter 3, the paper has cited a passage of translation to illustrate that context of culture may be embedded. Here the paper would like to quote another passage of translation, again from Chinese into English, to illustrate that context of culture with its hierarchical and dynamic properties has meaning processing function.

Ancient China tended to alternate between long division and long union. At the end of the Warring States period of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty, seven powerful states survived until the State of Qin prevailed by conquering the other six and establishing the Qin Dynasty, a united empire. However, the Qin Dynasty was soon overthrown by peasant uprisings, which were suppressed with the establishment of the two kingdoms Chu and Han. Through numerous battles against each other, then Han prevailed and united China. The Han Dynasty can be traced back to the uprising led by Liu Bang, the First Emperor, who killed the white serpent. The dynasty remained united for more than 200 years until Wang Mang's usurpation, which later aroused a peasant uprising. Taking advantage of the uprising, Liu Xiu, later Emperor Guangwu, took over the throne and re-established the Han Dynasty. Liu Xiu moved the capital from Xi'an to Luoyang, a city to the east of Xi'an, and so historically the dynasty established by Liu Bang is known as the Western Han while that re-established by Liu Xiu is known as the Eastern Han. The dynasty remained united until the last emperor, Emperor Xian and then the united empire fell into three kingdoms, hence the Three Kingdoms period in Chinese history.

(The opening paragraph of *The Three Kingdoms*, translated by Cheng Yongsheng)

The translation is unique in that in the translation, a great amount of missing information concerned with the history is supplied. Therefore, in the original, there are information gaps to be filled by the reader. In the translation, the translator has filled the gaps for his reader's sake. The example illustrates that in reading the translation, the reader has to study the Chinese culture of the period from the Warring States period to the beginning the Three Kingdoms period in Chinese history and he has to do this against the English culture of the time at his reading, and possibly against the Chinese culture of the time at his reading. In this sense, the English culture of the time of his reading and the Chinese culture of the time at his reading will both exercise impacts on the meaning the passage is about for the reader.

The fact that the translator has filled the information gaps lies in that he considers that to fill the gaps, the English reader should be familiar with the history in question. The gap filling supplies necessary information for this sake.

To demonstrate how politeness principles work as meaning processor, the paper would like to cite a joke here to illustrate that foreigners often try to learn Chinese against Chinese culture. However, the Chinese culture is so profound to penetrate if a foreigner has mastered a pragmatic rule and

tried to apply it to another similar situation, he may make a mistake. The joke goes like this.

Once a foreigner came to China on business and the host treated him to lunch. At the table, every time a dish came, the host would try to show his politeness and let the guest help himself to the dish first. He did this by saying with gestures in a Chinese dialect “ni qing xian dao”. What he said literally means “Please use your chopsticks to take the dish first” or “Please help yourself to the dish first.” However, the translator translated it into “After you.” Then to show his politeness to the host, every time a dish came, the guest would say “ni qing xian dao.” The guest and the host enjoyed the dishes for some time and then they went to the bathroom together. To show his politeness, the guest said to the host: “ni qing xian dao.” Everybody present laughed.

This example illustrates that the basic politeness principles apply to every culture alike. However, how to be polite is culture specific. If a foreigner has not familiarized himself with another culture thoroughly, he may make a mistake very easily. Part of the explanation for the foreigner to make that mistake is that in trying to master the politeness expression “ni qing xian dao”, he equalizes it with the similar English expression “after you”. However, he was not aware that “after you” has a much wider application than “ni qing xian dao”.

In English, there is a term “culture shock”. Why should there be a culture shock? The paper believes that a culture shock occurs when a foreigner tries to understand the meaning of an unfamiliar phenomenon associated with the native culture against his own culture.

#### 5.4 Meaning Processing Functions of Context

From the analysis conducted in this chapter, we know that linguistic context, context of situation and context of culture can function as a meaning processor. However, it is for the convenience of our inquiry that we have made investigation of each of the three categories of context separately, for actually the three categories of context work by their joint forces. In other words, in the world of reality, the three categories of context join their force to function as meaning processor rather than each on its own. Since context of culture contains context of situation, which in turn contains linguistic context, then the paper would like to propose that meaning processing function of linguistic context serves as basis for meaning processing function of context of situation to work, and meaning processing function of context of situation serves as basis for meaning processing function of context of culture to operate. Another principle the paper would like to propose is that the most deeply embedded context serves as basis for the second most deeply embedded context. The combination of the two principles means that the most deeply embedded linguistic context serves as the most basic starting point in the investigation of meaning.

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### Chapter 6 Conclusion

The present thesis starts from the framework concerned with the analysis of hierarchical and dynamic properties of context and goes on to brief sketches with regard to how meaning is investigated in semantics on one hand and in pragmatics on the other hand, followed by a brief presentation of Halliday’s theory concerned with relationship between context and meaning for one thing and relationship between meaning and lexico-grammar for another. Then efforts are made to combine the four frameworks into one by employing as the basis the framework of context consisting of linguistic context, context of situation and context of culture and by applying Halliday’s framework to context of situation exclusively. In the course of analysis, the thesis has applied theory of context of situation to pragmatic investigations and regarded semantic investigation as basis for other meaning investigations. In this way, the thesis succeeds in finding a way out of the

embarrassment of facing four different theoretic frameworks. In the last chapter, the paper presents investigations on how linguistic context, context of situation and context of culture functions separately as meaning processor and how they join to function as such.

From the investigation, the thesis concludes that meaning is agreed upon by language speakers. However, this is only part of the story, for the way people arrive at the meaning of the language in use is also agreed upon by speakers of that language. The agreed-upon meaning of a language is the intrinsic property of that language. For convenience, the intrinsic meaning of a language is usually investigated under the heading of semantics, a science that studies meaning independent of context of situation and context of culture. The non-intrinsic meaning or the meaning concerned with the uses of a language is usually investigated under the heading of context situation and context of culture. This paper investigates the meaning of a language by employing the intrinsic meaning of that language as the basis and by investigating how this intrinsic meaning changes with the development of linguistic context, context of situation and context of culture or with the development of context in general, that is, the context that consists of linguistic context, context of situation and context of culture.

Owing to the complication of the issue at hand, the paper does not think that the paper has exhausted the investigation in this respect. However, the paper does believe that the investigation could open a new chapter for the investigation along the line.

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