*Utterance , Sentence, Tokens &*

*Proposition*

AENG311

* **Definition**: It is any stretch of talk before and after which there is a silence on the part of the speaker
* It is the **use**, a particular occasion, by a particular speaker of a piece of language.
* This may be a single sentence, a series of sentences, a phrase or as single word.
* **Definition continues**: An utterance may be grammatically perfect and complete or it may not.
* It may be said loudly or in a quiet voice.
* It may be said fast or slowly, with a regional accent, in dialect or in any language.
* It is governed by the rules of phonology and prosodic features.
* It may be in the form of a statement, request or question. (very often only the intonation indicates which it is).
* **It is always a physical event**. That is, **it is spoken**
* Which of the following would be considered as utterances?

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| 1. ‘Good day’ 2. ‘Very much’ 3. ‘Utterances may consist of a single word, a single phrase   or a single sentence. They may also consist of a sequence of sentences. It is not unusual to find utterances that consist of one or more grammatically incomplete sentence-fragments. In short, there is no simple relation of  correspondence between utterances and sentences’   1. ‘Pxgotmgt’ 2. ‘Schplotzenpflaaaaaaargh!’ | *Yes / No Yes / No*  *Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No* |

* **Definition**: A sentence is a string of words put together by the grammatical rules of a given language.
* It is neither a physical event nor a physical object.
* A sentence can be thought of as the IDEAL string of words behind various realizations in utterances and inscriptions.
* It need not be spoken.
* State whether the following statements are true about sentences:

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| 1. Do all (authentic) performances of *Macbeth* begin by using the same sentence? 2. Do all (authentic) performances of *Macbeth* begin with the same utterance? 3. Does it make sense to talk of the time and place of a sentence? 4. Does it make sense to talk of the time and place of an utterance? 5. Can one talk of a loud sentence? 6. Can one talk of a slow utterance? | *Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No*  *Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No* |

* The following examples can be classified into utterances and sentences:

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| **“I would like a cup of coffee.”** | **U. also a S.** |
| **“On the hand…”** | **U**. only |
| **Vusi announced that Gugu wasn’t coming.** | **S** only |
| **“Gugu is here!”** | **U**. also **S**. |
| **“Help!”** | **U**. only |

* A sentence is traditionally defined as a grammatically complete string of words expressing a complete thought.
* This definition is intended to exclude any string of words that does not have a verb in it.

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| *I would like a cup of coffee* | is a sentence. |
| *Coffee*, *please* | is not a sentence. |
| *In the kitchen* | is not a sentence. |
| *Please put it in the kitchen* | is a sentence. |

* Non-sentences are a large part of conversation.
* But the abstract idea of a sentence is the basis for understanding and decoding these utterances which are not whole sentences.

**Tea or coffee? (for “Would you like tea or coffee?”)**

**Tea (for “I would like tea please.”)**

**(*not a sentence*)**

**“Dr Jacob Zuma”**

**(*Sentence*)**

**“Who is the President of South Africa?”**

* Utterances of non-sentences, e.g. short phrases, or single words, are used by people in communication all the time.
* These utterances of non-sentences are called

**token** sentences.

* People do not converse wholly in (tokens of) wellformed sentences.
* Given below are some sample conversations. In some cases the utterance is a token of a sentence.
* Write out a full sentence expressing the intended meaning.

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| **“Who is there?”**  **“Vusi.”** Vusi is there. | |
| “Whose pen is this?” | |
| “Mine.” | This pen is mine. |
| “Where shall I…?” “On the floor” | Where shall I put it? |
| Put it on the floor. |

* In semantics, while we deal with such non- sentences, it is easier and more convenient to use whole sentences, because the meaning of a complete sentence, grammatically perfect sentence involves another notion – the proposition.
* **Definition**: A proposition is that part of the meaning of a simple declarative sentence which describes some state of affairs, declares, asserts a fact or gives information.
* In uttering a declarative sentence a speaker asserts a proposition.
* The state of affairs always involves people or things referred to in a sentence as well as situations or actions they are involved in.
* The TRUE/FALSE test can be applied to decide whether two sentences express or assert one proposition only, or two different propositions.
* In any conceivable set of circumstances, if there in one sentence which is TRUE then the other one must be FALSE.

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| **Bongani put the cat out. Bongani put out the cat.** | **Same proposition. Both TRUE or both FALSE** |
| I gave her that car.  I gave that car to her. | Same proposition. Both TRUE or both FALSE |
| Thanda talked to Gugu. Thanda didn’t talk to Gugu. | Different propositions. If is TRUE the other must be FALSE |
| Vusi loves Gugu. Gugu loves Vusi. | Different propositions. Both could be TRUE or both FALSE |

* In the following pairs of sentences say whether there are any circumstances of which one member of the pair could be true and the other false.

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| 1. *Harry took out the garbage Harry took the garbage out* 2. *John gave Mary a book Mary was given a book by John* 3. *Isobel loves Tony Tony loves Isobel* 4. *George danced with Ethel George didn’t dance with Ethel* 5. *Dr Findlay killed Janet*   *Dr Findlay caused Janet to die* | *Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No* |

* True propositions correspond to facts, in the ordinary sense of the word *fact*.
* False propositions do not correspond to facts.

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| **In the present world** | |
| 1. “Is it a fact that South Africa is a democracy?” 2. Is the proposition, “There is democracy in South Africa.” a TRUE proposition? 3. Is the proposition, “There are elephants in Africa.” True? 4. Is, “The sun is made of green cheese.” a true proposition? | YES YES  YES NO |

* Only true propositions can be known, though one can entertain false propositions. i.e. one can mistakenly believe that something is a fact.

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| 1. If John wonders whether Alice is deceiving him, would it seem reasonable to say that he has the proposition that Alice is deceiving him in his mind,   and is not sure whether it is a true or a false proposition?   1. If I say to you, ‘If Mary came to the party, Phyllis must have been upset’, do I thereby put in your mind the proposition that Mary came to the party, without necessarily indicating whether it is true or not? 2. If I say to you, ‘Was your father in the Navy?’, would it seem reasonable to say that I have the proposition that your father was in the Navy in my mind, and   wish to know whether this proposition is true or not? | *Yes / No*  *Yes / No*  *Yes / No* |

***Presenter***

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* Is there something odd about the following sentences?

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| *Pamela considered the fact that her mother was alive and realized that it could not possibly be true*. |
| **Yes, there is a kind of contradiction here, in that the same thing is said to be both**  **‘a fact’ and ‘not possibly true’.** |
| *Pamela considered the proposition that her mother was alive and realized that it could not possibly be true*. |
| **No, there is nothing odd about this sentence, because we stated that**  **propositions can be either true or false.** |

* Declarative sentences were particularly mentioned when defining propositions, but propositions may be involved in other types of sentences – interrogative or imperative sentences.
* Normally, when a speaker utters a simple declarative sentence, he commits himself to the truth of the corresponding proposition: i.e. he asserts the proposition.
* By uttering a simple interrogative or imperative, a speaker can mention a particular proposition, without asserting its truth.
* In saying, ‘John can go’ a speaker asserts the proposition that John can go.
* In saying, ‘Can John go?’, he mentions the same proposition but merely questions its truth.
* We say that corresponding declaratives and interrogatives (and imperatives) have the same propositional content.
* Therefore, to arrive at the propositions expressed by such sentences, transform the sentences, remembering that a declarative sentence asserts a proposition.

**Interrogative: Can Gugu come? Transform to: Declarative: Gugu can come. Proposition.**

**Imperative: Keep quiet, will you! – transform to: Declarative: You will keep quiet. Proposition.**

**In the above examples, there is the same propositional content in different grammatical forms of the sentences.**

* Propositions do not belong to any particular language.
* While there are few really perfect translations from one language to another, one can assert the same proposition in different languages if the translation has the same propositional content as the original.

**English: I am poor. isiZulu: Ngichakile.**

**The above examples correspond to the same proposition – they have the same propositional content.**

* Any thing that can be said about a proposition, can be said about an utterance, but not necessarily the converse.
* Any thing that can be said about a sentence can be said about proposition but not necessarily the converse.
* The same proposition can be expressed by different sentences.
* The same sentence can be realized by different utterances.
* A proposition is an abstraction which can be grasped by the mind of an individual person. (It is not the same as thoughts which are a private process – propositions are known facts accessible to everybody)
* An utterance is a physical event produced by someone at a particular time. It may be a sentence or not; it may be proposition or not.
* A sentence is an abstract entity that has no existence in time, but is part of the language system. It may be a proposition or not. Unless it is spoken, it is not an utterance.
* Fill in the chart below with ‘+’ or ‘-’ as appropriate.

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| Can be loud or quiet | Utterances  + | Sentences  - | Propositions  - |
| Can be grammatical or not | + | + | - |
| Can be true or false | + | + | + |
| In a particular regional accent | + | - | - |
| In a particular language | + | + | - |