A Semantic Study of Oaths in English Ceremonies
دراسة دلالية للقسم في المراسم الإنجليزية

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Abstract
Language is viewed as a tool of communication that includes greetings, requests, threats, commands, thanks, swearing, and so on. Oath is considered a fundamental component of the language that individuals use every day and a linguistic phenomenon that exists in most languages for the same purpose in various structures. The current study intends to examine oath structures and, by demonstrating how they are constructed to communicate meaning, determine the semantic elements of the chosen oaths in terms of language metafunctions and register variables. The study uses a qualitative and quantitative mixed research technique to evaluate and describe four oaths. It has been determined that positive declarative phrases in the present and future constructions are present in English oaths. Furthermore, English oaths show a thematic style that emphasizes the oath's speaker.

**Keywords*:* Oath, Semantics, Language Metafunctions, Register variables

المُستخلص:

يُنظر إلى اللغة على أنها أداة اتصال تتضمن عبارات التحية والطلب والتهديد والأمر والشكرواليمين وما الى ذلك. يعتبر القسم ركيزة أساسية للغه التي يستخدمها الأشخاص يوميا. تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى فحص التعبيرات المختلفة للقسم ومن خلال توضيح بنائها لنقل المعنى، و معرفة الجوانب الدلالية لنصوص القسم المختارة من حيث الدوال اللغوية و متغيرات التسجيل. أُستخدمَ في الدراسة أسلوب البحث المختلط ، النوعي والكمي ، لفحص وتوصيف خمسة

أقسام. توصلت هذه الدراسة إلى أن العبارات التصريحية الأيجابية موجودة في القسم باللغة الانجليزية قُدمتْ بصيغة الزمن الحالي والمستقبل. علاوةً على ذالك، يتَمَيز القسم الأنجليزي بأسلوب موضوعي يُركز على المُتَحدث الذي يُؤدي القَسم. بِناءاً على النتائج تَمَ تَقديم عدد من المقترحاتِ والتوصياتِ للباحثين في عِلم اللغة من أجل تحسينه وتطويره.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القسم ، الدلالات، دلالات اللغة، المتغيرات المسجلة

1.0   Introduction

Swearing is utilized by people from many fields of life, including writers, poets, religious orators, politicians, and everyday people. Unless it originates from mad or intoxicated individuals, no human behaviour, verbal or non-linguistic, occurs in vain. There are reasons for using any language, and swearing is not one of them.

Swearing was common in ancient civilisations, including Egypt, Greece, and Rome. In contrast to ancient Greek swearing, predicated on using God's names such as Zeus or Hercules, ancient Egyptian swearing took the form of self-cursing. It is forbidden in Rome, and the promiser may perish. As a result, it is assumed that it existed before being written down. In the seventeenth century, swearing became generally tolerated in British society, regardless of age or gender (Ljung, 2011, pp. 46-47). According to Schlesinger (2008, pp.16-26), the oath is a desire to perform and act in the future. It is a word that evolves into action depending on the situation. The sensations and emotions evoked by the promise were used to ascribe morality and legality. The semantic structure of oath, vow, promise, oath, and pledge is the same as that of commitment. They are used in the same manner

as graduation, weddings, and court cases. The promiser, promisee, and witnessing the third person are all part of the oath. The third party is the being—whether living or dead—or the entity of God's holy names.

2.0 Theoretical Background

2.1 Oath Meanings

An Oath is a gate to a divine power that connects humans with God. It gives precious value to the name of God. It disciplines the human's behaviour towards their responsibilities. It is worshipping God, making God witness the truth and only the reality to avoid punishment (Gray, 2013, pp. 19-30).

According to Ljung (2011, pp. 1-3), an oath (swearing) is a linguistic behaviour showing a speech's passionate sides. Emotional speech is different from one to another and from one religion to another. For that reason, the language of an oath varies depending on the variety of cultures worldwide.

To Montagu (2016, pp. 190-192), the Oath is a fundamental human behaviour whose purpose is to provide relief. Similarly, it is an instrumental that effectively may be performed if sustained by a significant degree of emotion.

2.2 Why Oath?

Ljung (2011, pp. 97-100) stated that formal oaths are utilised in solemn events to give the truth to the evidence. This evidence refers to the obligations that commit the promiser, to tell the truth, and no more than the truth.

Some cases need an explicit oath in marriage ceremonies, court, graduation, and public loyalty to the nation. A promise is a contract that interlinks the promiser and promisee in unstable situations (Schlesinger, 2008, pp.16-26).

Gray (2013, pp. 19-30) proclaimed that it is a kind of worship to God. In the holy books, God permits the people to claim by his names for specific issues that are important and severe cases and consider the swear by the mortal creatures forbidden. The creatures do not have the power of punishment, but God has, making the oath a sacred phenomenon.

2.3 Oath Types

2.3.1 Hippocratic Oath

Jotterand (2018, pp.107-128) mentioned that "the Hippocratic Oath, tradition, and more have played a symbolic force as a moral rallying point at different times in the history of medicine.". As a result, the Oath is a powerful societal symbol in medicine. The use of the Hippocratic Oath turns back to the ancient Greece physicians. They swear by the God Apollo to do the best care for patients and treat everyone with the same treatment regardless of their colour, sex, or age (Milles, 2004, pp.4-8).

2.3.2 Allegiance Oath

In medieval England, the notion of loyalty was born. Allegiance, which requires devotion in exchange for protection, binds vassals and lords. Allegiance vows are most commonly taken under oaths of loyalty. In exchange for the King's protection, subjects owed him allegiance (Orgad, 2014, pp.99-122).

John Locke (A Letter Concerning Toleration (Minneapolis: Filiquarian Publishing, 2007) observed long ago, "Faith only, and inward sincerity, are the things that procure acceptance.". When a person is loyal, they consistently express affection for the object of allegiance (Orgad, 2014, pp.99-122).

2.3.3 Office Oath

Oaths of office bind office holders to their responsibilities. They are supposed to ensure that official obligations are carried out, but they also submit the nature of those tasks to external scrutiny (Arony, 2018, pp.195-212).

A moral obligation puts public concerns over personal concerns to serve others in society (Rutgers, 2010, pp.428-444). For example, university graduates take this kind of oath, and the president, upon taking office in the state, the soldier, and other segments of society swear by this oath to be responsible in their practical life.

2.3.4 Pauper Oath

It is sometimes referred to as Illinois Poor-Law. It is utilised by defendants who cannot afford to engage a lawyer to represent them in court. It is only seen in nations that support such a law to defend offenders. The oath is repeated after the repeater demonstrates that he does not own the property and is using it to pay attorneys to defend him.

2.4 Oath in English

An 'oath' is solemn, usually formal, calling God or a god to witness the truth of what one says or to witness that one sincerely intends to do what one says (Merriam-Webster, 1984, p.644). The oath is a direction that directs humans to the power of God. The use of this power of God works as a guarantee in their speeches (Gray, 2013, pp. 19-30). Wild (2006, p. 188) stated that 'Oath' is 'a solemn swearing to the truth of statements delivered orally and in written form-making of false statements while under oath may result in prosecution for perjury.'

2.5 Concept of Semantics

Semantics is the study of how language works at the level of meaning, as well as how meaning is constructed, communicated, and understood. Semantics refers to the study of meaning in language. Even though it is concerned with meaning in general, it is typically restricted to components that are relatively

stable and context-free (Bagha, 2011, p. 1411).

Semantics is a discipline of linguistics that studies language meanings. Linguistic meaning does not necessarily fall within the domain of semantics. Some of these are identified as the substance presented in language-based communication or as a message speakers attempt to convey to listeners. The latter, known as pragmatics, is regarded beyond the domain of semanticists (Olmen, D. & Athanasopoulos, P., 2018, p.185).

2.6 Approaches to Semantics

2.6.1 Referent

It is obvious by referent that the sentence's meaning cannot be comprehended without it. Meaning is not simply defined by reference since the meaning of words and phrases is not reliant on what is pointed out in the real world. This theory emphasizes the idea that meaning is a connection between linguistic objects and occurrences. In some cases, two idioms may refer to the same object or person yet have distinct meanings (Fromkin V. A.et al., 2000, pp.465-469).

2.6.2 Sense

It is described as the relationships between linguistic expressions and other expressions within the language in two ways: syntagmatic and paradigmatic. Syntagmatic links address the grammatically coherent relationship between the words, whereas paradigmatic relations relate the statement with other expressions in the same categories in a specific language. The synonym, a phrase with identical senses or meanings, is one of the paradigmatic categories (Olmen, D. & Athanasopoulos, P., 2018, p.190).

2.6.3 Synonymy

Lyons (1968, as cited in Al-Omari, S. K.; Abu-Melhim, A. R. H., 2014, pp.2619-2626) contended that two words are synonyms if they have the same meaning or sense. He asserted that there are just a handful genuine related meanings for two terms in the English language. Their interpretation depends upon the context, usage, and the circumstances in which they occur. According to this definition, synonymy words should be able to replace each other in all contexts. The replacement means that the two words are absolute synonyms.

2.7 Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a linguistic methodology created in the 1960s by Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday and his followers. It is not about how language is generated and constructed but how language functions in communal situations to achieve a certain aim

(O'Donnell, 2012, as cited in Al Murshi, 2016, p.71).

According to Halliday (Fontaine, 2013, as cited in Endarto, 2017, p.3), "a theory of linguistics must encompass language functions in use." According to this assertion, the function of language is more important than grammar in attaining the goal of communication and language development. Banks (2002 pp.3-4) mentioned that Halliday stated three semantic metafunctions of language:

1. Ideational metafunctions It is the sort of meaning that is of interest with methods of conveying the text's exterior aspects. They are (a) experiential in the sense that they are what the speakers/writers have in their real world, their internal feelings, beliefs, and thoughts that have contributed to their selection expressions under specific circumstances; and (b) logical in the sense that they interpret and conduct links between the events (Hoang, 2021, pp.8-12).

2. Interpersonal metafunctions According to the nature of communication, they are the source of forming and creating a relationship between the speakers/writers and the listeners/readers. Language is employed as a source of deeds through words.

3. Textual metafunctions are the third class of semantic metafunctions and are regarded as the source on which speakers/writers rely to generate conversational text in a given circumstance (Hoang, 2021, pp.8-12).

2.8 The Concept of Register

Language is functional. Halliday (1989, as cited in Bartlett, 2021, pp.3-16) stated that function is a "fundamental property of the language itself." It can be interpreted by relations with register (situation's context) and genre (culture's context). To SFL, context and situation are at the heart of deciphering text meaning. It is thought to be deterministic since it influences the language in use and, as a result, the lexical form of the text's words in written or spoken form. In other words, lexicology is the semantic and morphological study of words, and it may be utilised in context by showing the coherence of the text's language. Register to Halliday (1989, as cited in Adinlou, 2012, p.207), contains three situations: semiotic functions, field, tenor, and mode. The field is what the subject is about. In other words, what the content of the text or the subject matter is. Halliday (1994, as cited in Ling, 2013, pp.164-166) stated that "field is the social activity in which the text is produced, the subject being its special manifestation.".

3.0 Methodology
3.1 Nature of the Study

The researcher adopted qualitative and quantitative research methods to complete each other in analysing data to give more strength to the study's outcome than qualitative or quantitative methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007 as cited in Creswell, 2009, pp. 211-112). So, the type of this research is mixed research (triangulation method), the exploratory sequential method is used, and its notation is (QUAL→quan). The process is started inductively, and then the theory is enhanced qualitatively and accomplished quantitatively (Morse, 1991, pp.120-123). There are seven aims in adopting the mixed-method research in analysing data found by Tashakkori and Newman (2010, as cited in Hafsa, 2019, p.47); *Complementarity, Completeness, Development, Expansion, Corroboration/confirmation, Compensation,* and *Diversity.*

3.2 Data Collection

This chapter is set up to achieve the study's aims and answer the research questions. The data are collected using the following steps:

1. The researcher chooses *five* oaths in English for various purposes in various situations, and the sample size is collected carefully to fit the research hypothesis to avoid repetition.

2. Converting some authorities of oath ceremonies in English from the official websites into texts to analyse.

3. The researcher is trying to identify the semantics aspects of the oath's formation, aiming to clarify how the words, phrases, clauses and sentences are formed to decode the meaning semantically concerning the language in use and the functions of register variables in identifying the meaning.

4. Using statistics for accounting the frequency of pragmatic aspects found in the oaths.

3.3 Theoretical Background

The semantic analysis seeks to determine the link between the expressions' constructions in light of a certain context to determine the meaning. The language is explored through its meaning/function. The study adopts Halliday's (1994) model analysis of semantic characteristics obtained from the link between words, phrases, clauses, and sentences with their context.

3.4 The Procedures of Analysis

The researcher has steps to follow in the process of analysing:

1. Providing textual and contextual analysis for the selected English oath ceremonies.

2. Providing the semantic analysis based on the aim of

uncovering the formation of the speech in order to send and receive the meaning of oaths

adopting Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) model.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework of the Model Analysis. [adopted from Halliday's (1994)].
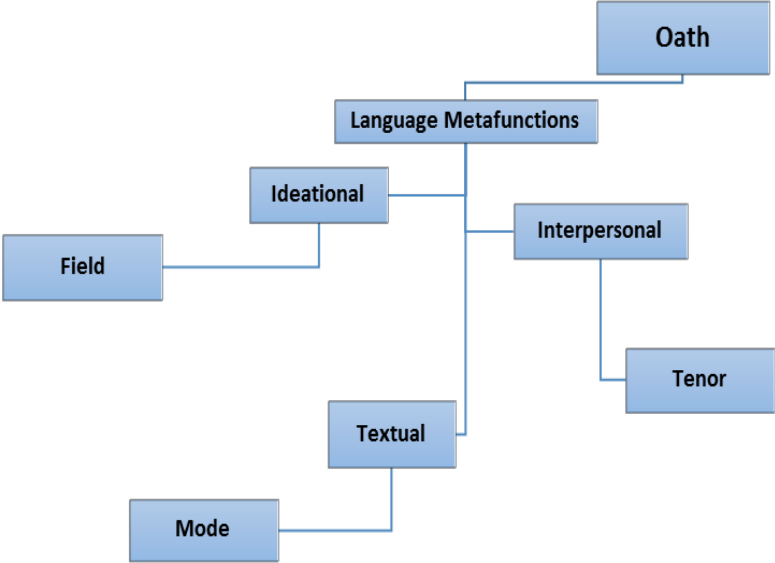
4.0 Data Analysis

4.1 Semantic Metafuntions Oath Analysis

4.1.1 Ideational (Experiential) Metafunctions of Oath

It explains the sentence and how the speakers organise it via the transitivity link between the verb (the action) and the rest of the clause. Logical, as the name implies, is concerned with the relationship between these concepts and ideas. The structure of the texts must be broken down into three components: the process 'what is going on,' which includes (material/mental and relational process); the participant 'who and what,' and the

circumstances 'where, when, and why' (Halliday, 2000).

(1) "I pledge to respect how people become patients to recognise the whole person who encompasses for than disease.".

According to the ideational function analysis of the preceding phrase, the type of process is a material one. The subject of the phrase performs the agent's function, demonstrating its goal through the construction of (to+ infinitive). The commitment is made by the event attendees, presenters, and audience members. The speakers hold themselves account table for taking people's lives as seriously as the patient's. Semantic meaning realizes that they are obligated to seek humane therapy with others first in order to recover themselves from their ailment.

(2) "I faithfully execute the office of the president of the United States and well the best ability to serve, protect and defend the constitution of the United States."

The subject pronoun (I) serves as the agent in the process of (execute). The process's function is a predicator; its parameters are the subject (I) and the direct object (the office). The procedure is deemed mental since the adverbial notion of swearing is given (faithfully). It demonstrates the addresser's loyalty mindset. The addresser and the power to defend the items of the American constitution are the factors engaged in this clause. The fulfilment of this pledge will occur during his presidency. See Table (1).

Table (1)

Ideational (Experiential) Function Analysis of Oaths in some English Ceremonies

No.	The process	participants	Circumstances
1	Pledge (material)	-I -People -Patients	for than disease.

2	Swear (mental)	-I	the president of the
		-the office of the president of the United States	United States
		-ability to serve, protect and defend	
		-the constitution of the United States	

4.1.1.2 Field

The meaning of the oaths is constructed by the relationship between the verb, noun, adjective, adverb, and so on. The content of the oaths is revealed by language and non-linguistic components (context in which the oaths are delivered). So language's purpose is to expose the meaning of situations, and situations' role is to show the language in use. This diversity results in dialect differences. So, the speakers of oath take the part of speaking, trying to show the others that they will fit their professional positions in the future. The public takes the part of listening to and interacting emotionally with the speech.

4.1.2 Interpersonal Metafunctions of Oath

The language used by the speakers/writers reveals their attitude and style while engaging with others. The clause is examined in terms of how it is structured as declarative, interrogative, or imperative sentences based on the sequence of Subject, Finite, Predicator, and Complement. The declarative is either positive as in the following samples or negative. The subject's job is to provide information on who is the actor, responsible, and doer of the activity. In the following English oath ceremony statements, the subjects are pronouns that allude to who says the oath. It does not utilise the addressers' names since the pronouns (I and we) relate to the speaker's own identities, and the present simple and future tense are utilized to convey the facts and the time of activities. These

two sorts of structures combine to generate the declaration sentences in which the addresser asserts something. In the following samples, I put the declaration structure in *italic* see table 2:

(3) **"I *will remember* that medicine is an art as much as it is a science."**

(4) **"We *join* our profession in a changing world with challenges."**

(5) **"I solemnly *pledge* to always respect and uphold the rule of law,"**

(6) **"I will *support* and defend the constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign"**

Table (2)

Interpersonal Function Analysis of Oaths in some English Ceremonies.

Clause NO.	Type	Subject	Finite
3	Declaration	I	Future(will remember)
4	Declaration	We	Simple Present (join)
5	Declaration	I	Simple present (pledge)
6	Declaration	I	Future (will support and defend)

4.1.2.1 Tenor

This section demonstrates how oaths are tailored to be given to general people at various social levels. Because they represent the whole society, the speaker/writer engages with people of all ages and genders. The addresser's function is to utter the oath and address the individuals who listen and hear the message, attempting to convince them through language. The listeners' role is to envision the addresser's behaviour as a professional in their industry. The relationship is official between the professional and the clients.

4.1.3 Textual Metafunctions of Oath

Textual function analysis investigates the structure of the message and how the

speaker/writer arranges it through language. Thematic principles are used to analyse the sentence. The Theme is the sentence's core concept, and the Rheme is everything that follows the Theme that explains it. The link between the Theme and Rheme demonstrates the text's coherent construction to provide meaning.

 (7) **"Together, we will not be bystanders to the status quo. We will reimagine the future of health care, never forgetting how far medicine has come and how far it still has to go."**

According to the textual analysis, the Theme is stated with the adverb 'Together' to represent a circumstance in which not only one person takes the oath, but all of the experts are unified in this field of labour. The Rheme is distinguished into two sentences 'will not be bystanders to the status quo' and 'will reimagine the future of health care, never forgetting how far medicine has come and how far it still has to go' are separated by a period to show the latter is the opposite of the former since the former gives a negative message, and the latter gives the positive message. Even though they are separated, the Theme is one 'we', and they complete each other.

 (8) **"I pledge to use the privilege of my white coat to advocate for my patients and to amplify unheard voices with respect and honour strive to recognise and dismantle forms of injustice that contribute to health inequities."**

 According to the textual interpretation of this line of the oath, the Theme is the personal pronoun 'I.' It shows who made the promise. The speakers' commitment is based on the Rheme. It is constructed using conjunction words 'and' to provide a sense of sequence for the obligations for which the speakers are responsible. The concept of "Given" is expanded inside the Rheme "I pledge" to convey the idea that pledging is a recognized behaviour, but the "New" is what the pledge-doer pledges about. A Rheme item that refers to the Theme, such as (my), connects the New and Given information. See table 3.

Table 3

The Textual Analysis of some English Oath Ceremonies

No.	Theme	Rheme
7	Together	1. we will not be bystanders to the status quo. 2. we will reimagine the future of health care, never forgetting how far medicine has come and how far it still has to go.
8	I	pledge 1. to use the privilege of my white coat to advocate for my patients, and 2. to amplify unheard voices with respect and honour, strive to recognise and dismantle forms of injustice that contribute to health inequities.

4.1.3.1 Mode

Mode is the register variable displayed in texturing. It emphasizes language as a medium of action through which the oath is performed in written or spoken language. The structure of the language influences the semantic meaning layers. It distinguishes the Theme of the sentences and demonstrates the connection between the beginning and the rest of the paragraph. The study discovers that the Rheme plays a part in comprehending the meaning of the vows by containing reference objects to the sentence's Theme, such as "I will attempt to understand my patients' lives." The theme draws the addressees' attention to the addresser first since the personal pronoun is employed as a subject in English swears, then to the actions and New information linked to the topic to complete the purpose of the speech.

5.0 Conclusion

Semantics is the study of meaning and the relationships between words, groups of words, or

sentences, to determine how these combinations influence the meaning of language. Synonymy is one of the semantic components. The researcher discovers the usage of the synonym 'pledge' for the term 'swear' in English oaths, which is more frequent than the others and seldom utilizes the phrase promise. They both relate to the official pledge to take an oath. Other terms synonyms for swearing, such as 'recognize, accept, and support,' are used to convey the pledge indirectly. The researcher discovers that English oaths do not begin with swearing expressions such as (I swear by God), but rather with (I promise, I accept, I will, I recognize) and end (not all of them) with a vocative sentence (So help me God). The tense of the text's structures is the future simple tense (I will +base v.) to allude to the obligations that the addresser will do in the professional area and the addresser's promises. The oath features are more practical and human than theological. They are a series of tasks, one after the other, designed to form the professional's behaviour on the working side, on which the professional's job is based.

Table (3)

Frequency of swearing Expressions in English Oaths Ceremonies.

No.	English Expressions	Frequency
9	I pledge	4
10	I solemnly swear	2
11	So help me God	2
12	I will+ base verb	29
Total		37

Percentage		7.4%

Note: the table shows the frequency and percentage of five English oath ceremonies

Table (3) shows that English oaths include swearing expressions in a percentage (7.4%) mentioning vocative sentences only twice, referring to the fact that the oath is out of the religious region but within the human and practical boundaries.

The interconnectivity of the sentences as one piece of thought distinguishes the oaths in English. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), conjunctions are cohesive instruments that accidentally link the preceding phrase with the succeeding one, and they are viewed as "linguistic techniques that produce cohesiveness." The frequency of conjunction item is present in the English oaths (that). Its purpose is to connect two clauses, the independent (primary) clause and the dependent (secondary) clause. This function combines what is spoken in one clause with what is about to be said in another. Subordinate clauses can never stand alone with complete and accurate information. If they do, their meanings will be clouded with ambiguity or misunderstanding.

Table (4)

Frequency of the Conjunctions in English Oaths

Conjunction	That	And	Total	Percentage
Frequency	13	30	43	8.6%

Note: the frequency and percentage of five English oaths ceremonies

Table (4) shows the frequency of the conjunctions used in English oaths. It refers to the result that the use of 'and' is more than the others to add more cohesion quality to it.

Another semantic aspect the researcher finds in analysing data is that the type of English oath is a declaration. In English oaths, the subject can be uttered within the phrases' structure and followed by the finite.

Table (5)

The Frequency of Declarative Sentence in English Oath Ceremonies.

The Language	The Frequency of Declarative Sentence	Percentage
English	49	9.8%

Note: the frequency and percentage of five English oaths.

The declarative sentence reveals the kind of the speech as formal. The context in which it occurs specializes in the vocabulary choices and the shape of the structures.

English oaths are thematic containing unmarked and marked Themes. The personal pronouns form Unmarked as 'I, we' focusing on the speaker of the oath, and Marked is presented by the adverbial 'together' to focus on the case of the situation. See table 6.

Type of Theme		English language
Textual		2
Interpersonal		3
Topical	Marked	3
	Unmarked	40
Total		48
Percentage		9.6%

Table (6)

The Frequency of Type Theme in English Oaths.

Note: the frequency and percentage of five English oaths.

Table (6) shows that the English oaths have the quality of unmarkedness. The most frequent is the topical Theme focusing on the speaker of the oath.

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