

Emergent Lexical Semantics*

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Abstract

In this study, I attempt to show the complex interactional processes that realize the negotiability of lexical meaning. All speaker meanings are shaped for a specific addressee on the basis of the speaker's assumptions about shared knowledge, and in the light of what has already been said, both in the ongoing interaction and in previous interactions. My findings suggest that, to paraphrase Schegloff (1976:269), what is thought of in terms of conventional lexical semantics as the integrity of the lexicon is systematically subordinated to the sequential requirements of talk-in-interaction.

Nevertheless, a more detailed case remains to be made for demonstrating the fixing and semanticization of pragmatic meaning: one would need to show that given that a linguistic form A is a candidate for emergent lexical meaning both because of its semantic suitability and its discourse context, the further condition of frequent use has to apply for conventionalization of meaning to take place. It is frequency of use that leads to fixing, freezing and idiomatization etc. However, that will be a separate study for another occasion.

1. Posing the Problem

In a highly influential paper, Hopper (1987), extrapolating from observations made by the cultural anthropologist James Clifford, argues that the grammar of language is always deferred, always in a process but never arriving, and therefore emergent. "The structure of a language is temporal, emergent and disputed". Like culture, grammar must be viewed as a real time social phenomenon, and therefore emergent; and any decision we make about limiting our field of inquiry is very likely to be a political decision, to be against someone else's interests, and therefore disputed. On this view, the notion of emergent grammar is meant to suggest that structure, or regularity, comes out of discourse and is shaped by discourse as much as it shapes discourse in an on-going process.

In this paper I propose that a natural extension of the idea of emergent grammar would be to argue that meaning is not merely a fixed relation between utterances and objective reality. What we typically regard as fixed meanings, such as those codified in a conventional dictionary, are merely sedimented or stabilized structures that emerge as negotiated recurring patterns that have achieved cross-textual consistency.

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The central project of semantics, then, would be the study, to paraphrase Hopper (1987), not of 'semantics', but of 'semanticization' of negotiated pragmatic meanings - the way in which some of the situated meanings in the collective construction of discourse become eventually recognized as being conventional.

Although meaning acquisition does not and cannot proceed entirely on inductive grounds alone (Quine 1960), this idea of cross-textual (sense) consistency must be taken seriously. It is the guiding principle in the construction of dictionary definitions for words by the lexicographer. If a word (the sense of a word, that is) is believed by the lexicographer to have achieved some semblance of cross-textual sense consistency in a given corpus based on sense frequency, then the word is defined and codified as such, reflecting that observed pattern of consistency. When there is a sufficiently large corpus data, we examine the language word by word and phrase by phrase, and give a clear account of each meaning and use. But a larger corpus means more evidence and enables us to make statements about the meanings and uses of words, and hence their grammars, with much greater confidence and authority, since we can then better observe patterns of sense and even subsense distribution which might have eluded us initially in a smaller corpus.

Now it is important to observe that conventional dictionaries are always more or less committed to a unitary view of the language of a speech community and its vocabulary which is implicitly normative: they tend to present dominant word meanings as the only ones, and deliberately leave out the emergent and thus less frequent meanings as insignificant, giving the false impression that meaning potentials of words are stable.

While the normative view works quite well in some cases, it is misleading in others, especially where meaning potential of a word is implicated in processes of social contestation. As speech participants we are interested in the particularities of speaker meaning, which cannot be stipulated in advance of the work they do within a context, and not in standardized or dominant idealized sentence meaning, since speaker meanings are what really matters in ordinary talk-in-interaction—they are more to the point and context-sensitive than the less determined and amorphous sentence meaning. In achieving understanding, members take note of and utilize all sorts of information available to them in the context. Such details have been called 'indexical particulars' by Garfinkel (1967). Speakers do and must use indexical particulars in making sense of their discourse context; it is an essential property of the way they make interpretations, arrive at sense, decision, and action, etc.

2. Meaning Negotiation

In order to negotiate meaning, however, members must agree on what is shared, negotiated meaning, and what is unnegotiated meaning. Roughly, "given" information is shared, negotiated meaning and "new" information is unnegotiated,

discourse-forwarding, matter-yet-to-be fixed and in need of re-negotiation. (1) contains two instances of meaning being negotiated.

(1) Schema

- 1 A : ..我看那本是^ˆ大陸字。
- 2 B : ...大陸字的哦。
- 3 A : ..因為，
- 4 ..我有××可以^ˆ查嘛。
- 5 ..看不懂可以——
- 6 ...(1.4) 而且，
- 7 ..不會很難看啦。
- 8 ..我今天也是想——
- 9 B : ..(2.1) 想什麼？
- 10 A : ...想買幾本大陸的——

In line 1, 大陸字, which is stressed, carries new information. And in line 2, the speaker expresses the need to be assured of the veracity of that piece of new information, as indicated by her use of the discourse marker (DM) 哦. In line 8, the verb *xiang* 'think' carries new information, and it is this on which the speaker B initiates her repair. (See Schegloff et al. 1977 for the notion other-initiated repair).

One common signal of shared meaning is the backchannel, which is used to reassure the speaker that negotiation is proceeding smoothly and that the current speaker should continue talking (this phenomenon is most prominent in telephone conversation). (2) exemplifies the use of a backchannel expression *m*:

(2) Forest

- A : ..結果他們現在就把那個地啊，
 ..去種什麼山葵啊，
 ..去種 <L 2 wasabi L 2 >啊。
 ...(0.86) a 那種東西對水土保持——
 ..很恐怖。
- B : m。
- A : ..就是根本沒有辦法作水土保持。
- B : m。
- A : ..然後，
 ..去種什麼竹子啦，
 ...(0.8) 種茶葉啦。
- B : m。

Also relatively immune from negotiation is the use of formulaic expressions, which figure prominently in oral discourse, and which, significantly, often coincide with the boundaries of intonation units, where syntactic and pragmatic completion points often converge. Recent research has shown that formulaic expressions are a

pervasive features of spoken language and are probably stored and retrieved whole from memory rather than created in each case (Lambrecht 1984, Hopper 1987, Fillmore et al. 1988, Pawley 1986). This would make it unnecessary for the language production mechanism to exploit fully its cognitive resources for the construction of each utterance, leaving it to attend to the production of non-formulaic speech.

The quintessential formulaic speech is a social institution: a culturally sanctioned and standardized recipe for binding utterance context, function and form, which explains their immunity from negotiation.

Formulaic speech represents pre-packaged information and its cognitive load on the production system is relatively insignificant. In speech production term, then, formulaic speech can be shown to correlate significantly with phases of more fluent speech, with relatively little pausing, and more creative use of language would correlate with phases of more hesitant speech.

Pawley and Syder (1983) have argued that the ability to produce fluent speech depends in part on a large stock of formulas. In the following mini-fragment of conversation are several formulaic expressions, all of which were delivered without pausing (the two dots in the transcription are minimum perceptible pause) and without any need for negotiation.

(3) Tea

- 1 H : …時間到了耶。
- 2 …該吃飯了啊。
- 3 H : …美食街啊。
- {
- 4 H : …美食街
- ((music for 24 seconds))
- 5 A : …嗨。
- 6 …聽眾朋友好。
- 7 …我是安琪。
- 8 H : …我是徐修樂。
- 9 A : …觀迎光臨美食街。
- {
- 10 H : 美食街。
- 11 …安琪啊，
- 12 A : mhm.

Indeed, all of the utterances in (3) are arguably formulaic expressions. There is no need for negotiation, since the entire fragment can be thought of as an extended formulaic discourse, in which one formulaic expression invites another to follow, forming an adjacency pair. Of course, some formulaic expressions are exponents of formulaic constructions that contain some kind of variable. In line 8, X好 is a

formula used by the speaker to address his/her audience, where X can be filled in with a variety of terms depending on who the audience is. Line 11 is an exponent of another speech formula used to welcome recipients to wherever it is that they show up at.

These observations suggest that a natural place to look for meaning being negotiated is to examine pauses, interruptions or repairs in conversation, i.e. those interacts that do not come in preferred adjacency pair. Some pauses or interruptions or repairs focus on clarifying meaning and thus constitute important evidence for lexical semantics. Still even in relatively smooth-sailing stretches of conversation there is much that we can learn about lexical semantics.

The reason that there is much we can learn about lexical semantics in conversation is that though much that is going on in conversation gives the impression that participants appear to talk about events and activities in the world, their understanding of language actually underpin such speech events. This is of course part of the well-known doctrine of "language games". There is no line of demarcation one can draw between a factual (or ontological) question from a semantic one. A semantic question often emerges from an apparently factual question, and the latter can be resolved often only by resolving the former. When the sailing is smooth for a stretch of conversation, it would be necessarily true that participants agree (or seem to agree) on the meaning of the words involved. In everyday conversation, people reach practical agreement on the meanings of almost all the words they use and effective and successful communication can take place as a result. Of course this suggests that all words are understood by speakers as having an indispensable hard core of meaning, though there may be room for disagreement about finer details of the meanings of words around the edges.

3. Natural Kind Terms

Earlier we have suggested that although much of the ordinary talk-in-interaction is punctuated with pauses, interruptions, and repairs, even in relatively trouble-free stretches of conversation there is much that might be fruitfully brought to bear on the nature of lexical semantics. Consider the following dialogue fragment where a natural kind term chaye "tea" is the topic of the conversation among the participants C, H and A, with C, a nutritionist, playing the role of an expert.

(4) Tea

- 631 C : ...茶裡面所含的成分最多的是 = ,
 632 ..叫做 ~額茶素的物質。
 633 ...它又叫做 = ,
 634 ... (0.7) um 我們叫茶單寧。
 635 ..或叫茶柔質。
 636 ..它大概在 = 茶的成裡面 ,
 637 ..可容的成分裡面 hoN ,

- 638 ... (0.8) um 佔了百分之二十左右。
 639 ..那麼，
 640 ..整個——
 641 ..它裡面——
 642 ..它有屬於多酚類的一種物質。
 643 ..所有茶的成分裡面，
 644 ..它含有 70 以上。
 645 ...另外，
 646 ...大概有 = 百分之三的茶鹼，
 647 ..也有百分之三的咖啡因。
 648 ..那它的大概就是，
 649 ..我們一般 = 礦物質，
 650 ..像氟啊，
 651 ..鋅啊，
 652 ..一些礦物質成分
 653 H : you ?
 654 ..茶葉有這麼多我們沒聽過的東西哦。
 655 A : 是啊。

In the framework advocated by Putnam (1975), a complete concept of a natural kind term “chaye” (tea leaf) would have to specify the essential stuff (solid), the essential structure that distinguishes tea leaves from other natural kinds, the key functional properties (e.g. potable when boiled in hot water), and its causal powers. It turns out that C is in the above extract in fact specifying the essential structure of tea leaves to the two laypersons H and A. Their responses in lines 653-655 suggest that their concept of the word “chaye” is incomplete; it may contain the four parameters indicated, but with only partial and imprecise specification. This is exactly to be expected, since there is a division of labor (Putnam 1975) between the expert, whose job it is to discover the essential structure of and thereby fix the extension of, natural kinds, and the layperson, who has the ability both to use and to know, in some sense, the meaning of the word in the language, including natural kind terms.

In the case of a natural kind term like 'chaye', its functional factor is dominant and most familiar to the layperson; but its causal powers as well as essential structure remain largely vague, to be specified by the expert. Indeed, interestingly, in the succeeding conversation between C and H and A, the focus of the talk shifts to the causal powers of tea:

(5) Tea

- 685 A : ..oh 原來是這樣子。
 686 ..eh 像這麼多成份哦，
 687 ..它到底有什麼作用啊。
 688 ..對我們的身體有什麼影響。
 689 C : ..uhNheN，

- 690 ..一般來講，
 ((4 lines omitted))
- 695 ..發現像額茶素在我們身體裡面的作用，
- 696 ..他可以 ^ 殺菌。
- 697 A : ..哇。
- 698 C : ..所以，
- 699 ..事實上喝茶，
- 700 ..um 是可以治療一些感染症狀。
- 701 ..比如說，
- 702 ..腹瀉。
- 703 ..hoN 細菌性的腹瀉。
 ((22 lines omitted))
- 726 C : ..^喝茶的人對於幅射的抵抗力比較強。
- 727 A : oh,
- 728 ..真的哦。
- 729 C : ..對。
- 730 ..那另外就是，
- 731 ..就是它對於一些 ^ 癌症的預防啦，
- 732 ..都是有一些 ^ 功效這樣子。
- 733 H : ..hm.
- 734 A : 哇，
- 735 ..住幅射鋼筋屋的人可要喝茶了。
- 736 H : @@
- 737 C : ..那麼，
- 738 ..另外的話，
- 739 ..像我們——
- 740 ..當然它也有含咖啡因嘛，
- 741 H : ..mm
- 742 C : ..那咖啡因就是一個 ^ 提神的作用
- 743 ..所以，
- 744 ..通常我們喝茶，
- 745 ..可以讓我們精神比較好一點。

Through interaction at this level of detail, both H and A have come to learn something more about the concept of tea. But interaction at this level of detail is demonstrably consequential for participants of any age. One would like to believe that for the children learning their first language, it is even more substantial. Young children who seem to have a characteristic representation for a kinship term like "husband" does not also have a fully developed conceptual representation of the adult meaning--they often attach the wrong concepts and relations to a word initially, and it is interaction like this that is likely to effect the necessary characteristic-to-defining shift typical of child language (Clark 1983).

4. Nominal Kind Terms

Nominal kind terms are usually believed to be an area where the classical theory of meaning finds its best application, the theory that holds that meanings of terms can be defined by a set of necessary and sufficient returns. But even the purest nominal kind terms may be subject to refinement/renegotiation in the course of talk-in-interaction. Consider the negotiation of the meaning of chuchai in the following extract:

(6) Snake

- 13 A : 他可能以為那邊比較輕鬆啊。
 14 ..做實驗。
 15 ..想不到一去就是出差。
 16 ..一天到晚出差。
 17 B : m
 18 A : ... (3.3) 出差就是 .. 拿一個帳篷啊，
 19 ..一個睡袋，
 20 ..然後就去外面出差。
 21 ..都睡在外面。
 22 B : ...a 幹嘛。
 23 ..去採種子。
 24 A : ...去採種子啊。
 25 ..採葉子。
 26 ..採土壤那些。
 27 ... (0.8) 他都去那種... (1.3) 都沒有人去的地方。

In line 18, A is clearly aware that her current idea of a nominal kind term chuchai 'on a business trip' differs from what a conventional understanding of that term is, so much so that she deems it fit to spell out her understanding, in lines 18-21, in anticipation of the need of her recipient. Her anticipation is justified, as can be seen by B's response in line 22. A conventional understanding of the term chuchai possibly involves such (characteristic) features as making a trip away from the home base to a distant locality by means of vehicular transportation where some form of public business-related activity is engaged in and if the business calls for an extended stay in that locality, then overnight (in-door) lodging is provided at public expense. Although one may dismiss the type of chuchai as identified here in this fragment as not prototypical of the activity in question, that itself constitutes evidence for the claim that meaning potentials of even nominal kind terms are implicated in processes of social contestation, and that chuchai is also a prototype concept, a conclusion in consonance with the work on the semantics of 'lie' by Coleman and Kay (1981).

It is possible for the young child, or even an adult, for that matter, to sometimes seize on an idiosyncratic feature as necessary (and perhaps seizing on several jointly as sufficient). We as adults know better than to attribute such an idiosyncratic

feature to the status of a 'defining' feature. However, if there is sufficiently repeated co-presence of the idiosyncratic feature, word and context, then their cumulative impact might be decisive. What began as an idiosyncratic belief may succeed in constituting the defining feature of a concept. The expression bi sili hai sili "more private than a private school" that occurs in the following fragment has just such a flavor:

(7) School

- 8 W: 是因為那個私立學校，
9 ..它..是很正常。
10 ..媽=是因為它的正常。
11 ..所以才要讓我去讀的=。
12 M: ..這樣喔。
13 W: ..對=。
14 ...它很正。
15 ..它什麼課都有=
16 ..所以，
17 ..為什麼他們〔高中會考不好〕。
18 M: [那，
19 土庫國中不] 正常嗎
20 W: ... (1.7) × × 不正常。
21 ..超級不正常。
22 ..那比私立學校還要私立的學校。
23 ..@@
24 M: ..真的喔。
25 W: ..對啊。

In this fragment, W says in lines 8-11 that she went to a private middle school, but it was because her mother had felt it was a 'normal' school, as far as curriculum scheduling was concerned. The implicature was that private schools are in general 'abnormal' in that respect. In line 18, the topic then shifts to a public middle school, which turns out to be also 'abnormal' in the relevant aspects. Indeed, it is a super-abnormal school, according to W in line 21, so much so that it is worse than a private school (line 22). Our focus of interest here is line 22. Note that what line 22 means depends crucially on the time, place and circumstances in which W used it. W could not have meant just anything by it, and she could only have intended it to mean 'more abnormal than an abnormal private school' for M who W believes to have just the right background knowledge.

The key expression in line 22 is an instance of the more general pattern of more X than X, where the first X is a lexical noun, X_N, and the second X functions as a predicative adjective, X_A. What the pattern means varies from context to context, depending on the type of noun that goes into the first slot, and the knowledge state shared between the speaker and hearer.

Although the predicative adjective X_A is built on the lexical noun X_N and the speaker can in principle allude to one of an indefinite number of properties associated with X_N , the properties realized in the expressions more X than X are typically those that are attached to the noun only incidentally. No truly defining features of the noun X_N can surface as part of the semantics of X_A . The reason for the absence of the defining features of X_N from X_A should be obvious: for if one of the defining features of X_N ever reappeared in X_A , we would get a contradiction in more X than X, which it is not.

5. Meaning and Belief

At this point it seems appropriate to digress in order to review the argument that meaning and belief are intricately interconnected (Huang 1987b). A leading metaphor for language is that it embodies a naive theory of the belief system of a speech community, where 'naive' is taken to be in opposition to an expert theory, such as that constructed by a social psychologist, for example. A theory is naive if the laws and principles which constitute it have to be inferred from the use of the theory in generating predictions and explanations. We produce utterances to put forth our beliefs and desires and the process of understanding a speaker is a process of guessing at and imputing to him beliefs which make sense of his utterances. In all of the conversation fragments presented above, meaning by the participants can be restated in belief terms. Of course we are not directly aware of the beliefs and desires of other participants--these are constructs we attribute to a speaker when we propose a theory of the speaker's language. Since the sentences a speaker holds to be true are determined by what the speaker means by his words and what he believes about the world, belief and meaning are intertwined and cannot be uniquely reconstructed from speech output. What is clear, however, is that such theory construction is holistic, in the sense of Davidson (1973), as opposed to atomistic: our understanding of a language does not proceed sentence by sentence, but is possible only by virtue of having an implicit theory about the speaker's beliefs and desires. We cannot decide how to interpret the speaker's there is a squirrel up in the tree independently of how we interpret there is a mammal and words connected with these, without end. Similarly, we cannot believe that John was lying unless you have some theory about 'truth' and 'falsity'.

To see that meaning and belief are intricately interconnected, consider the social activity term mianzi (面子). It is impossible to talk about the meaning or the criteria for the application of this term without getting into a debate over rival theories and their attendant methods of classifying reality. The English concept of face is probably Chinese in origin and the term 'face' is a literal translation of the words lian and mianzi. These two Chinese concepts of face can be distinguished by appealing to two distinct set of criteria for judging conduct. Mianzi is the self-esteem which a person can claim for himself, by virtue of his position in his social network. Lian, on the other hand, is moral face, representing both a social sanction enforcing moral standards and an internalized sanction. Correspondingly, there are

two types of loss of face. Among the college students I tested on (Huang 1987a), loss of mianzi was more definitely tied to failure to measure up to one's sense of self-esteem or to what was expected by others, whereas loss of lian was closely tied to transgression of social codes.

Every belief about language or the world is subject to revision. A belief is given up on the strength of new (counter-)evidence, under the pressure of refutation, or under the influence of adult criticism. Sometimes a belief is repudiated because it is simpler, in terms of the overall simplicity of the system, after a point to count it false rather than readjust the existing system. A belief system, then, can be self-correcting when an earlier belief conflicts with later beliefs that are believed to better explain the past and predict the future.

Why is it critical to understand the beliefs of other people? Just as the mobile need to know about support, so must the socially mobile know about the mental states of their peers. A sound psychological understanding of others makes an important contribution to the overall fitness of a social animal, since there are substantial evolutionary pressure on social animals to become more efficient natural psychologist. To quote Humphreys (1983):

"Selective advantage will accrue as much to genes that fashion brains that understand mental states as to genes that make brains that have them."

Though our beliefs about the world changes continually, some of our false beliefs about the world may go undetected for decades, even centuries. Thus the very existence of color blindness was unbeknownst to anyone until the late eighteenth century. Before then, the color blind and the normal must have always been at loggerheads with each other about the correct color of an object without anyone apparently knowing who was in the right. The cause of belief about the color of an object, if the causal theory of reference is to be believed, comes from some remote and continuous chain of usage. We use green or red to refer to whatever our informant said green or red is and we never suspect the correctness of our belief until we are challenged, prompting us to wonder about it ourselves and to start seeking evidence for our belief. Now, the discovery of color blindness is significant for a number of reasons. It allows us to say, truthfully, "X is color blind" if X is indeed color blind. It also explains the quirks of someone who insists on labeling something which is red as green. The world now seems to make much more sense (to both the normal and the color blind), and there is now an adequate explanation for the past squabbles. What this means is that we expect the world to conform to our own principles of explanation, and appropriate explanations are specified in terms of our beliefs about the world and about language.

There is one further observation that must be made. Before the discovery of color blindness, we might wish to say that the entire community of the language

users had seemed wrong, to those who were color blind, about color differentiation, that they were confused over the applications of some color terms or the concept of identity (X is the same as Y in color). Nevertheless, as a pragmatic matter we surely tend to be rather cautious about accepting such a conclusion. The fact that an entire community behaves differently from what we do who may or may not be members of that community is likely to alert us to the possibility that we have misunderstood its language and to prompt us to reexamine their language more closely. When one individual's practice diverges from that of the community at large, explanatory parsimony inclines us toward suspecting him of misapplying his concepts.

Explanations can, equivalently, be specified in terms of meanings, but there is no real distinction, for instance, between our beliefs about color blindness and our meaning of the expression color blindness. The only difference, if any, between belief and meaning, is that, in the words of Sampson (1980:66):

"We are tempted to assign a principle of interpretation to the semantics of a language rather than to knowledge of the world when it is one of relatively long standing. So of course it is true that the kind of beliefs implicit in a typical essay at semantic description by a linguist changes less often than the sort of beliefs which the linguist ignores. It is tautologous to say that beliefs which remain constant for long periods do not often change."

Quine (1960; 1970) of course has gone one step further in contending that there are no such things as meanings associated with words, where meanings are understood as belief-independent entities.

6. Meaning Adaptation

Though conversations are full of grammaticized and lexicalized pre-patterned sequences, conventional syntax is always subject to local constraints and local management in turns-at-talk. Similarly conventional semantics of words are always adapted to their environment in talk-in-interaction. Schegloff (1989:143) makes the following observation:

"If the conduct of language as a domain of behavior is biological in character, then we should expect it (like other biological entities) to be adapted to its natural environment. What is the primordial natural environment of language use, within which the shape of linguistic structures such as grammar, have been shaped? Transparently, the natural environment of language use is talk-in-interaction, and originally ordinary conversation. The natural home environment of clauses and sentences is in turns-at-talk. Must we not understand the structures of grammar to be in important respects adapted to the turns-at-talk in a conversational turn-taking

system with its interactional contingencies? Must we not understand the constitution of a lexicon, at least in part, by reference to the organization of repairs that operates in the natural environment in which the elements of the lexicon are in the first instance deployed?"

To see that the semantics of a word can be adapted to its environment in talk-in-interaction, consider the emergence of discourse synonymy in the following fragment where the speaker L uses another predicate tongshi "colleague, office mate" to reiterate the prior speaker G's use of a seemingly novel predicate peida :

(8) Tea

- 138 L : .. < @ oh 垂垂 @ > 。
 139 .. 妳好
 140 ... 嗯另外這位呢。
 141 G : ... 我姓鄭，
 142 .. 叫鄭淑娟。
 143 .. 我是她的配搭。
 144 .. 就是跟她 ^ 一起
 145 L : ... 同事就對了。
 146 G : ... 對。
 147 ... 對。

Here the lexicalization of the expression peida is hearable as equivalent to tongshi, since the utterance of G in line 146 confirms L's understanding that they are indeed equivalent. Notice that the expression itself is taken by G in her mind as a novel lexicalization, since after the utterance in line 143 he then proceeds to paraphrase it with the utterance in line 144. Were it an ordinary expression, there would be no point for her to provide a paraphrase.

The fragment in (9) is an analogous example of discourse synonymy involving expressions in lines 177-178.

(9) Jobs

- 172 S : ... 編譯是——
 173 ... 編譯就是這樣子。
 174 C : 可是
 175 .. < × 總幹事 × >
 176 .. 她裡面的人
 177 .. 不是很有 [成就感] 。
 178 S : [不是很有] 滿足感。

Sets of discourse synonymous expressions have been termed existential valid paradigms (McCarthy 1992). It is clear that such existential paradigms may

sometimes include semantic relations not customarily thought to inhere in the abstract lexicon of the language. Thus the two predicates peida and tongshi in the fragment (8) are probably rarely thought of as conventional synonyms. But the purpose of language use is not to endorse conventional meanings, but to achieve interactional ends--understanding of the particularities of speaker meaning. In the said fragment, both participants have clearly succeeded admirably well in making sense of each other, and that is what really matters in their talk exchange.

Repairs prove to be a rich source for understanding the nature of lexical contrast and linguistic scales; here the concept of repair is taken in the sense in which it is usually understood in the conversational-analytic tradition.

(10) Tea

- 61 X : ...大概三十歲吧。
 62 ..三十歲出〔頭〕。
 63 Y : 〔oh〕
 64 X : ...左右啦。

The repair in (10), an instance of appropriateness repair (Levelt 1983), provides interesting information on the structures utilized in the language. First, it separates out a relevant unit, an extent adverbial (出頭, 左右) followed by a final particle from the stream of speech. Second, it shows where the unit can be added to the predicative NP (三十歲). Third, it locates one place in the NP where such an addition is permitted. Finally, and most importantly, repairs provide for significant differences in form to be displayed within a context of quasi-elaboration. They give clear information about contrasts within the language system that are significant to its users. In this fragment, the contrast is one of appropriateness and also one of scales: on a scale of age that includes chutou "a wee bit more" and zuoyou "around", zuoyou is a weaker claim about age than chutou, relative to some reference point.

The following extract from a Taiwanese conversation is completely parallel:

(11) M&T

- 587 M : ...人 ying 老父幾歲沒去。
 588 T : ... (1.3) 六十倂啊。
 589 ... (1.5) 六十四——
 590 ..六十三四，
 591 ..四五 e 款
 592 M : ... (2.0) chima 六十一——
 593 ..chima 六十一——
 594 ..六十四五算沒 t—
 595 ..不是長——
 596 ..沒長命啊。

Line 588 is a most rough statement about someone's age when he passed away and each succeeding line gives a further specification of his age. Note the conspicuous absence of any editing expressions in line 589 though line 591, despite the speaker's several attempts at repair, as is characteristic of appropriateness repairs in general.

It is interesting to listen out for these contrasts and scales when people are engaged in talk-in-interaction. Since anything meaningful is contrastive and anything we utter implies its opposite, conversational data are full of cases which embody the speaker's choices from alternatives. Consider the fragment in (12):

(12) Fortune-telling

- 112 C : ...基本上
113 ..我以為說在一些過敏度，
114 ..敏感度方面，
115 ..妳需要在你的專業裡面，
116 ..去專業。

Here 過敏度 and 敏感度 stand in a contrastive relationship. The speaker C appears to be abandoning the expression 過敏度 in line 113 in favor of what she thinks is the more appropriate 敏感度 in line 114. But to say of speaker C that she is abandoning an expression in favor of another is not only to impose a contingency relation between the two immediately adjacent utterances, but also to impose a strong psychological interpretation on the behavior of the speaker. Such an imposition would be appropriate to the extent that it matches the behavior of the speaker, based on cues that she produces. In the present fragment, the cues are, however, ambiguous. We, as analysts, are not sure whether the speaker is in lines 113-114 engaged in repair work or in providing an equivalent expression. The preferred repair interpretation is suggested by the (possible) display of a trouble source -- a beat of silence -- in line 114.

Another instance of appropriateness repair can be seen in the following extract:

(13) Housing

- 49 H : ...他也須要經歷一個衝擊，
50 ...或是說，
51 ...經歷一些——
52 一個——
53 一個什麼=...挫折，
54 ..或是怎麼樣。

The speaker senses an underspecification with the use of the word chongji in line 49 and proceeds to give an additional specification, preceded by the appropriateness - editing expression huoshishuo "alternatively; more precisely" and three false starts. Even then, line 54 suggests that the speaker is not completely satisfied with his choice of cuozhe "setback", preceded by a hedge shenme in line 53. Repairing for

inappropriateness, however, does not involve rejection, as in the case of error repairs, as much as it involves (a search for) alternative specification. In other words, speaker H is not rejecting chongji in favor of cuoche, but is suggesting that the latter is the more appropriate choice of the two.

Lexical contrast also emerges from the following fragment between 潛能 and 潛力：

(14) School

- 195 W：··我一定一定會記得非常的瘋。
 196 ··就像紫菱一樣。
 197 ··紫菱其實——，
 198 ··紫菱潛能——，
 199 ··潛力很高。
 200 ··但是，
 201 ··他就是讀聖心他就——，
 202 M：··潛（ / ㄍㄨㄛˊ / ）力。
 203 ··〔第二聲〕。
 204 W：〔潛力〕
 205 ··好。
 206 ··他就是看小說啊，
 207 ··玩這玩那。
 208 ··然後，
 209 ··參加社團，
 210 ··搞這搞那的。

The point in this fragment is that M and W are in full agreement on the contrast between the two expressions, while M's attention is momentarily drawn to the phonetics of the word 潛力, correcting W in the process, which W readily acknowledges. Again there is no evidence of any use of editing expressions.

Construction of discourse synonymy is shown in the following extract:

(15)

- 75 A：··我所看到的美慧，
 76 ··和他所看到的美慧，
 77 ··（0.8）都不一樣。
 78 B： 〔不一樣〕。
 79 A：··都截然不同。
 80 ··兩極化。

Here A appears to be providing the expression liangjihua in line 80 as equivalent to the expression jieran butong in line 79, both of which are synonymous to the expression buyiyang in line 77. What we have in (15), then, appears to be an instance of the three-item list construction (see Jefferson 1990). The argument is this:

The turn construction unit in progress strongly projects what sort of unit part has been left unsaid or has not yet been said. The talk leading to the silence in line 77 projects a next part that will be taken up with characterizing how the two personas of Meihui differ. And it is the next unit part, minimally a single word, that will bring A's turn construction unit to a first possible completion point. The silence can thereby be considered to be a pause within A's turn at talk and not a gap after its completion.

But the long beat of silence provides a place for anticipatory completion. Indeed B starts to talk within the turn space of the prior speaker. B produces something that could properly come after line 76. It is fitted to the prior TCU as a continuation and possible completion. Finally, A could have finished at line 77, and yet, clearly in response to B's utterance, he produces further talk to acknowledge B's utterance in a delicate manner by producing lines 79-80, thus giving us a series of three synonymous expressions. List construction, then, can be seen as a receipt-slot alternative to simple acceptance or rejection, thus providing procedures that contribute to the preference for agreement in talk-in-interaction (see Lerner 1994).

The fragment in (16) has very much the same structure as a list construction:

- (16)
- 391 U : ..不作生意的意思，
 392 ..就是說，
 393 ..因為—
 {
 394 A : 比較煩惱
 395 U : 因為你作生意的時候，
 396 ..比較容易出差錯，
 397 ..比較賺不到錢。

A number of researchers have demonstrated that both cognitive and interactional factors are heavily involved in the production of clauses and clause combinations (Ford 1994, Goodwin 1981, Lerner 1991, Ono and Thompson 1995). Since these are factors which emerge at the moment of speech, much of the syntax-for-conversation is vulnerable to local constraints and local management. But since syntax is strictly syntax of meanings, not (just) of words, the way syntax emerges from discourse is *prima facie* evidence that lexical semantics emerge from discourse.

In this connection the syntax and semantics of the utterance-final discourse marker (DM) kong in Taiwanese is particularly instructive, since its semantics shows the force of pragmatic inference at work and its syntax instantiates the well-known phonology/syntax mismatch in a language system as a result of sequential requirements of talk-in-interaction (Tao 1998, this volume).

The utterance-final DM kong, a counter-expectation marker, is derived historically from the utterance-initial kong via reanalysis when the proposition following the initial kong is a conversational implicature of some prior utterance and can thus be left unsaid. My proposal is that kong in (17) and (18) started out as an utterance-initial DM:

(17)

A : 伊日語講及真好。

B : 伊對日本轉來 e kong。

(18)

M : 曉 < L2 錄起來 L2 > hio。

C : ... < L2 啊那十點開始啊 L2 >。

A : ... < L2 那帶隨身聽去啊 L2 > kong。

A's utterance in (17) conversationally implicates that he is surprised at someone's fluency in Japanese, but to B, that someone's fluency in Japanese is nothing out of the ordinary since he knows that someone came from Japan. By thus accounting for that someone's fluency in Japanese, B's utterance (minus kong) conversationally implicates that he is surprised at A's surprise. But since B's content of surprise is mutually manifest to both A and B in the sequential context of the talk exchange, there would be no need for B to spell it out. The only marker used to register his surprise, though not the content of his surprise, is the DM kong, yielding the utterance-final kong construction (for further discussion, see Chang 1995, Huang 1994).

Further evidence that clausal syntax is subject to local constraints and local management comes from an interesting study on the behavior of adverbial causal clauses in English by Ford (1993). One type of causal clauses, called final causal clauses which occur following an ending intonation, regularly arises in the contexts of self-editing and the negotiation of understanding between participants. According to Ford (1993), "in addition to representing the editing of a speaker's talk based on her/his own thought process, such final adverbial clauses may also be the products of speaker-recipient negotiation specifically aimed at achieving interactional ends" (1993:102), and she calls them post-completion extensions (PCEs). She distinguishes four types of PCEs: (a) extensions prompted by pauses, or recipient turns; (b) accounts of dispreferreds; (c) extensions of first pair parts and (d) self-edits. Exactly the same range of behaviors has been found with causal clauses in Chinese (Wang 1998, this volume).

As an example of the type(d) PCE which is not prompted by the recipient turn or by a dispreferred response, but by a speaker-based attempt to edit her own talk, consider the fragment below (Wang 1998: 15):

- (19)
- 102 C: ..她從美國回來，
 103 ..< E counseling E > 方面，
 104 ..她可以開始用。
 105 ..因為，
 106 ..她本來出國就是唸這個。

Here the speaker attaches an explanatory material introduced by yinwei in line 105 to the end of a turn-construction unit in line 104. The speaker could have finished then and there, but she chooses to add another elaboration, possibly as a strategy to forestall interactional trouble, or to structure information.

As an example of the type(c) PCE, consider the following fragment of conversation (Wang 1998: 14):

- (20)
- L: ..那平常你們是不是除了聊天啊，
 ..或是研究功課之外 ho，
 ..是不是還有 ^唱唱歌。
 ..因為，
 ..我〔看〕，
 C: [常]常
 L: ..還有吉他，
 ..常常是不是。
 C: ..mm

Here the conjunction yinwei does not modify any of the prior material, but is an extension of the speaker's own first pair part, namely, a question. The speaker is adding a causal PCE which functions to provide a rationale for her own question. In other words, yinwei is functioning as a metalinguistic conjunction.

There are thus clearly identifiable negotiations between participants leading to the use of causal clauses in PCEs. This is in sharp contrast to the more edited end of texts where causal clauses regularly emerge after rhetorical relations of contrast and negation (Ford 1994).

7. Conclusion

In this study, I have shown the complex interactional processes that realize the negotiability of lexical meaning. All speaker meanings are shaped for a specific addressee on the basis of the speaker's assumptions about shared knowledge, and in the light of what has already been said, both in the ongoing interaction and in previous interactions. My findings suggest that, to paraphrase Schegloff (1976:269), what is thought of in terms of conventional lexical semantics as the integrity of the

lexicon is systematically subordinated to the sequential requirements of talk-in-interaction.

Nevertheless, a more detailed case remains to be made for demonstrating the fixing and semanticization of pragmatic meaning: one would need to show that given that a linguistic form A is a candidate for emergent lexical meaning both because of its semantic suitability and its discourse context, the further condition of frequent use has to apply for conventionalization of meaning to take place. It is frequency of use that leads to fixing, freezing and idiomatization etc. However, that will be a separate study for another occasion.

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