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Editors: Paul Robertson and Biljana Čubrović





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## Foreword

The current issue of the *Linguistics Journal* brings nine innovative articles on different areas of linguistics. We wish to thank our article authors for their diligence, cooperation and trust in our journal. The Editorial Board is particularly proud of the fact that the *Linguistics Journal* is now indexed in SCOPUS, which will extend the scope of its readership and citation opportunities more than ever before.

The first article by Ariel Vázquez Carranza investigates the functions of the Spanish interactional particle *eh* in colloquial Mexican Spanish. The author walks the interested reader through the many different situational contexts where the Spanish particle may be used, thus throwing a new light on the intricate relationship between linguistic units and their users.

El Mustapha Lemghari discusses the metonymic mapping of proverbs with the help of several mechanisms that are at play in proverbial expressions. The semiotics of proverbs is explained in detail, and some innovative proposals on how to improve their linguistic status have been suggested by the author.

The next article, authored by Yiting Hsieh and Barry Lee Reynolds, deals with three nearly synonymous stance adverbs in Modern Mandarin Chinese in terms of their meanings, parts of speech, placement in sentences, and sentence patterns. The corpus study reveals that the three adverbs occur in different sentence locations, but can occasionally be replaced by one other.

In his comparative study of sentence length in education research articles, Tanju Deveci provides a comparison between Anglophone and Turkish authors, and points out the differences between written English as a lingua franca and the English used by native speakers.

Patrizia Giampieri looks into some English discourse markers and their inclusion, treatment and explanations in the dictionaries used by Italian EFL learners. This article proposes an adjustment of dictionary entries to conform to the communicative aspects and purposes of natural conversation.

The next article tackles the use of attitude markers in book reviews on applied linguistics publications. Akram Nayernia and Farzaneh Ashouri's findings reveal clear traces of subjectivity in a sample of academic writing they are looking at, but also claim that objectivity is expressed in these book reviews.

Zaha Alanazi studies the effects of a sentence completion task vs. a sentence generation task on vocabulary learning from the standpoint of the Involvement Load Hypothesis. According

to the author, the sentence generation task was found to be more effective in both types of vocabulary tests she used.

Metaphorical structures in the Hong Kong media coverage during 2013-2014 are the topic of Winnie Cheng's and Jennifer Eagleton's article. A detailed linguistic analysis of the most dominant metaphors is provided with the aim of exploring and explaining the political discourse features of language in that period of time.

And last but not least, John Ehrich and Richard O'Donovan offer some innovative views on the concepts of Morality, Language Use, and Ontogenesis in Vygotsky's and Shotter's theories.

**Professor Biljana Čubrović, Ph.D.**

**Chief Editor**

**The Linguistics Journal**

# The Spanish particle *eh* in talk-in-interactions

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## ARTICLE INFO

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### Abstract

This is an empirical study of the functions of the Spanish particle *eh* in Mexican Spanish talk. In general, *eh* is described as an interactional particle: its production makes next turn relevant some sort of response from the recipient, i.e., it pursues a response: *eh* is a cue to move on to a new topic, it works as a next turn repair initiator, and it can indicate the absence of an answer and request it. *Eh* can also be used to mark self-repair in the production of a turn. In buying and selling interactions, *eh* is used by the customer to index transparency in the business transaction, to call the attention of the seller when resuming the interaction, to interactionally emphasise thanks giving, and to request acknowledgment of a directive. Additionally, the use of *eh* by the customer is one of the elements that exposes a particular relationship between the customer and the seller.

### Keywords

Mexican Spanish, Interjection *eh*, Mobilising response, Institutional talk, Identity

“One of the principal objectives of research concerning institutional dialogue is... to show either that a given linguistic practice or pattern is especially *characteristic* of talk in a given (institutional) setting, or that a certain linguistic feature or practice has a characteristic use when deployed in a given setting.” (emphasis in the original)

Drew & Sorjonen (1997, p. 212)

Some authors have suggested that *eh*, pronounced as [e], is a pervasive linguistic particle in Spanish talk, at least this has been reported for the peninsular variety of Spanish (e.g., Alcaide Lara, 1993; Blas Arroyo, 1995). Spanish language dictionaries (e.g., Real Academia Española,

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2014; El Colegio de México, 2016) and Spanish particles dictionaries (e.g., Santos Río, 2003; Briz, Pons & Portolés, 2008) describe some of its functions: the particle is defined as an interjection or as one that is used to ask for something (e.g., request confirmation of something), to call for someone's attention, to look down on something or someone, to tell someone off, to warn someone of something, to show surprise or admiration, or to hesitate in the production of a unit of talk. From these uses, described in dictionaries, and from the literature that has paid special attention to *eh* (e.g., Blas Arroyo, 1995; Ramírez Gelbes, 2003; García Vizcaíno, 2005; Rodríguez Muños, 2009; Edeso Natalías, 2009), one could state that the particle *eh* functions as an interjection, but also as an *interactional particle*. It is important to highlight that most of the literature on *eh* that I consulted for this investigation reports on its use in the peninsular variety of Spanish (except Ramírez Gelbes, 2003 and El Colegio de México, 2016 which cover Argentinean and Mexican Spanish, respectively); I provide empirical evidence for the functions of *eh* in Mexican Spanish.

I utilise two corpora of Mexican Spanish talk, one corpus of mundane family interactions and one corpus of institutional talk (Drew & Heritage, 1992). The mundane interactions are taken from of a sixty-three-hour corpus of videoed naturally occurring conversations and twelve hours of audio recording of telephone conversations. These video and audio recordings show interactions between friends, family members and acquaintances; they were collected from two families in the city of Toluca between 2008 and 2009. Toluca is located about sixty kilometres west of Mexico City. The institutional talk corpus, which is the corpus that the present analysis is mainly based on, consists of a twenty-five-hour corpus of video recordings of buying and selling interactions in a fruit and vegetables shop, where they also happened to sell chicken and other groceries. The shop is also in Toluca; these recordings were collected in 2015. The shopkeepers, or sellers, are four young men between 22 and 31 years old. They are bilingual speakers of Spanish and Otomi (an Oto-Manguean language indigenous to Mexico). All the interactions they have with their customers are in Spanish. Most of their customers are women from the neighbourhood. The transcriptions are presented following the Jeffersonian Notation (Jefferson, 2004; see appendix); they consist of two lines: the first line is the utterance in Spanish and the second line is the English equivalent.

I use the methodology of conversation analysis that originated from the work of Harvey Sacks in the sixties. Sacks' (1992) research focused on exposing the practices and rules that speakers attend to when interacting with each other. Based on technical analysis of transcripts of



naturally occurring recorded data, Sacks established a research programme to look at how social interactions – or talk-in-interactions – work, i.e., how social actions are structured in talk. Sacks' methods are mainly influenced by the ethnomethodology of Harold Garfinkel (1967); one of its premises is that people, in interaction, methodically display their mutual understanding of each other and their world. The first principle of the conversation-analytic paradigm is that in talk-in-interactions there is order (Sacks, 1984). The second principle is that speakers carry out activities that consist of sequences of actions that are first recognised by the participants and then identified by the analyst. This is why conversation analysts utilise video recordings of naturally occurring interactions which are transcribed in order to capture the *temporal* production of talk (Clift, Drew & Hutchby, 2006). The conversation analytic process follows three basic steps: First, the analyst identifies an interactional element to investigate, which could be a particular action; sequence of talk; a linguistic element such as a question, hesitation, silence, a particle, etc.; an embodied feature such as a gesture, body movement, a type of gaze, etc. or a combination of linguistic and embodied behaviour. Second, the analyst builds up a collection of the interactional element in question and initiates the analysis by asking the analytic question “why that [,] now?” (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973, p. 299). To answer this question, the analyst focuses on the position and composition of the element, i.e., the analyst identifies where the element occurs in the interaction, and what the compositional characteristics are of its occurrence. Here the structural analysis of the element has three levels: turn-constructive units, turns, and sequences. Third, the analyst correlates the position and composition of the element with the social actions, and in this way, the analyst formulates an account of what the element *does* in interaction.

With respect to linguistic particles, there now exists a conversation-analytic literature tradition that informs us about the interactional and social work of such elements in conversation (e.g., Heritage, 1984, 2002; Clift, 2001; Vázquez Carranza, 2013; Heritage & Sorjonen, 2018); this paper is an attempt to do this for *eh*. In what follows, I first distinguish between *eh* as an interjection and *eh* as an interactional particle, then I proceed to show the interactional implications of *eh* in commercial encounters.

### ***Eh* as an interjection and as an interactional particle**

The literature has identified that, as an interjection, *eh* can be used to show a reaction to something and to express an emotion, for example, when the doorbell rings at the end of the school day

children may express their joy with an elongated *eh*: eeeeh. It is also used to express surprise and strangeness, as excerpt (1) shows.

(1) AVC V29 P1 2345 - Extract from videoed face to face interaction

[V is alone in the kitchen, she goes to the fridge and opens it, looks around inside it and says line 01, her husband is in another room of the house.]

01 V: **E::h**

02 (2)

03 V: COMPRÓ OTRA VEZ YOGURT DE FRESA

*He bought strawberry yogurt again*

It can be argued that *eh* functions just as an interjection when it is not addressed to another speaker in particular or when it does not operate, nor is it involved, in the sequential development of the interaction. In these two scenarios, *eh* expresses joy and strangeness, respectively. In the case shown in (1), *eh* was not addressed to anyone and no one could have heard it, i.e., there was no recipient but the speaker. For the school doorbell ringing example, one could argue that the children let their teacher know with *eh* that they are happy about the fact that school has finished. In this instance there is a recipient, but the context does not require intervention from the teacher, i.e., the recipient is not invited to any interactional obligation.

As I will attempt to illustrate, the interactional functions of *eh* are diverse; these functions are intrinsically linked with particular social and sequentially organised actions in interaction. In other words, *eh* does some interactional work in talk: it mobilises a response (Pomerantz, 1984; Stivers & Rossano, 2010). That is, from its production, it may be expected a response or reaction from the recipient. The phonological characteristics of this interactional *eh* may include interrogative intonation (?), initial raising intonation (↑) and/or vowel lengthening (:). Let us look at the following excerpts.

(2) TC9.AVC - Extract from a telephone call

[The speakers will have a get-together on Saturday.]

...

13 C: ...ya no te había oído oye qué bárbaro

*I hadn't heard from you good heavens*

14            (.3)  
 15 C:    Aja  
               *Yeah*  
 16            (.5)  
 17 A:    .h =oye,  
               *Hey*  
 18 C: =>↑**eh**  
 19 A:    .h este:: hh. qué quieres que llevemos para el:: sábado  
                           *what can we bring on Saturday*

In excerpt (2), *eh* is part of a summon-answer sequence which works as a topic shift device that can be described as a pre-sequence (Schegloff, 2007a). *Eh* is the response to the summon *oye* ‘hey’ and indicates a cue to move on, in this case, to a new topic, i.e., *eh* carries the non-terminality property of this type of sequence (see Schegloff, 1968): a summon-answer sequence cannot be the final exchange of conversation; as line 19 of (2) shows, after a response to a summon the interaction does not end but continues, as line 19 of (2) shows.

(3) TC29.AVC - Extract from a telephone call

[The speakers are two friends talking about another friend’s wedding.]  
 ...  
 23 C:    ...y cuándo va `ser?  
               *and when is it going to be*  
 24 G: =>**eh?**  
 25 C:    cuándo va `ser la boda  
               *When is the wedding going to be*  
 25 G:    en agosto...  
               *in August*

Excerpt (3) shows *eh* being part of turn defined as a next-turn repair initiator (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977), that is, the turn indicates that the previous turn, line 23, was not heard or was not clear and requests a repetition or reformulation of it; at line 25, the recipient repeats her previous turn.

(4) V6 P5 1853 - Extract from videoed face to face interaction

[All the speakers are sitting at the dining room except G who is in the kitchen, he is out of frame. V and G are husband and wife respectively.]  
 01 V:    CUÁNTAS CALORÍAS L’ECHAS A UNA TORTILLA, mi amor ((addressing G))

How many calories do you think a tortilla has got,  
darling

02 (1)

03 G: [(Como::)  
About...

04 R: [Yo digo que menos, como veinte calorías  
I say fewer, about twenty

05 (2)

06 R: ( )

07 (1)

08 V:=>↑**EH**, mi amor?  
Eh darling

09 G: Como unas ochenta= cien  
About eighty or a hundred.

Excerpt (4) shows *eh* in a turn that requests some sort of response from the recipient, in this case *eh* is not a next turn repair initiator as it was in (3). In this case, *eh* is part of a turn that is seeking an answer that has been delayed. V asks the question at line 01, however, the answer is not produced right after the question: there are silences and the intervention of another speaker, R. At line 08, with *eh*, the speaker signals that her question is yet to be answered and requests a response. In other words, the turn calls the recipient's attention to the absence of his answer and makes it next turn relevant, i.e., that an answer is expected in the following turn, which is then provided at line 09. *Eh* is accompanied by a vocative, *mi amor* ('my darling'); I suggest that both elements can mark the absence of response and request it. I consider as well that both actions can be achieved solely with *eh*, however, since the recipient is not physically in the same room as the speaker, the latter produces the vocative to explicitly identify the recipient of her turn.

(5) V7 P2 0438 - Extract from videoed face to face interaction

01 V: es que sí como que:: ya **eh eh** ahorita **eh** =como dice  
the this is that yes that already eh eh right now like Juan says

02 Juan como que viven muy rápido  
it is like they live very fast

(6) V7 P1 3531 - Extract from videoed face to face interaction

03 M: Este:: **eh** que te iba a preguntar ((addressing V))



(7) V014.30-29 Tres - Extract from videoed face to face interaction

[The customer has put some apples on the scale.]

- 01 C: ( ) Beto no más te pongo estas y me- quiero dos muslos  
*Beto, I put these here and I want two chicken thighs*
- 02 [((the S starts putting the apples in a plastic bag))
- 04 C: [así así (.) a ver cuánto es ( )  
*just like that just like that ((i.e., without the bag))*  
*How much is it*
- 05 S: Tres  
*Three*
- 06 C: Seis .hh  
*Six*
- 07 S: TRES.  
*Three*
- 08 C: Cuánto.  
*How much?*
- 09 S: Tres.  
*Three.*
- 10 C: Tres. ((nods affirmatively)) y vengo por dos muslos  
*Three and I'll be back for two thighs*
- 11 uno grande y uno chico, sí?  
*one big and the other one small, yes?*
- 12 S: Sí maestra  
*Yes teacher*
- 13 C: y con estos tres que me llevo **eh?**  
*and with these three that I'll take now, eh?*
- 14 S: Sí  
*Yes*
- 15 C: Gracias  
*Thank you*
- 16 (1)
- 17 C: Ahorita vengo, gracias  
*I'll be back shortly, thank you*
- 16 S: Está bien.  
*That's fine*

After a series of repairs concerning the quantity of apples in kilos (lines 04 to 09), the customer announces, line 10, that she will be back for the two chicken thighs that she requests at line 01 and she offers further specification of how she wants the thighs. The customer ends her specifications with a request of understanding, *¿sí?* 'yes?', which is confirmed by the seller in the following turn, line 12. Then, at line 13, the customer produces a turn whose format works in two ways. On the one hand, with *y con estos tres que me llevo* 'and with these three that I take now' the customer points out that the three kilos of apples and the chicken thighs constitute her full order (i.e., all the

things she will buy), and on the other hand, the customer announces that she will take with her, at that moment, only the three kilos of apples. It is important to notice that the business transaction has not taken place, the customer has not paid for the goods she has requested. Furthermore, she is taking the apples with her without paying for them. It is in this interactional context where the customer ends her turn, at line 13, with a second comprehension check but, in this case, it is done with *eh*. The customer could have produced other comprehension check elements such as *sí* or *ok*; however, by using *eh* the customer not only requests confirmation of understanding but also appeals for transparency in the business at hand. *Eh* draws particular attention to the fact that she is taking the apples without paying for them, action that requires acknowledgement and consent from the seller; the seller carries out both actions with *sí* at line 14.

A similar sense of business transparency is shown in (8), here, the customer is paying a previous debt she had with the shop. At line 01, the seller is giving the customer some change to complete the transaction. At line 02, the customer accepts the change and produces a statement indicating that they are now even; the statement is followed by the production of *eh*. In this case, the customer uses *eh* to highlight the restored business terms she now has with the shop and requests confirmation of this from the seller who, in turn, gives confirmation at line 04.

(8) V15.14-50 no me debes - Extract from videoed face to face interaction

- 01 S: veinte treinta cincuenta y cincuenta  
*twenty thirty fifty and fifty*  
 02 C: Ándale. Ya estamos a mano ni te debo  
*Okay. We are now even I don't owe you*  
 03 ni me debes **eh?**  
*you don't owe me eh?*  
 04 S: (Sí)  
*Yes*

These two examples show how in this particular context *eh* is used by the customer to establish the institutional principle of transparency in business. The following excerpt shows the use of *eh* in a different context: it follows a question.

(9) V06.32-37 uva - Extract from videoed face to face interaction

- [The customer is waiting for her order to be ready.]  
 01 C: La uvita a cómo está **eh?**  
*How much are the grapes, eh?*  
 02 S: La uva.

*The grapes.*

03 C: Mh

02 S: Sesenta y cinco la verde o la roja  
*Sixty-five the green ones or the red ones*

The customer resumes the conversation with the seller after a brief period of silence in which the seller was preparing the customer's order. In cases like this one, the production of *eh* at the end of a question is used as an attention seeking device. In other words, similar to the interactional work done by *oye* at the beginning of questions (see Vázquez Carranza, 2015), *eh* calls the attention of the participant to the fact that the interaction is intended to be resumed.

Excerpt (10) shows *eh* preceded by *gracias* 'thank you' which starts the final sequence of the whole business interaction in which the seller and customer have achieved their own institutional goals (i.e., selling and buying goods, respectively). Blas Arroyo (1995) suggests that what *eh* does at the end of a turn of gratitude is to add emphasis. I consider that this emphasis can be described as follows: with *eh*, the customer requests acknowledgment of the fact that he has given thanks to the seller. It is some sort of interactional emphasis because *eh* requests confirmation from the recipient, in this case the seller. One reviewer suggested that adding emphasis in this way is also a type of mobilising response.

(10) V18.3100 - Extract from videoed face to face interaction

[The interaction takes place in a shop, the seller (S) has just given a bag with goods to the customer (C).]

...

24 C:=>((takes the bag)) Gracias **eh?**  
*Thank you eh?*

25 S: Sí para (servirle)  
*Yes you're welcome*

So far, the actions in which *eh* is used in the examples above clearly correspond to the actions that a customer is expected to perform: it is expected that the customer seeks transparency in the business transaction, enquires about the price of products and gives thanks to the seller at the end of the encounter. In the following, I look at a type of sequence in which *eh* is used to index



the emergence of other non-institutional identities, before this, a word on the interactional study of identity is in order.

### **The interactional study of identity**

Sacks (1972, 1992) introduced an interactional method to look at identity in conversations, that is, how speakers establish who they are to one another through talk (Drew, 2005). In this method, identity is seen as something that is interactionally and locally accomplished in talk; in other words, people in interactions orient to the display of particular culturally-rich ‘labels’ or categories that they allocate to themselves and others in their talk (see Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Schegloff, 2007b). Sacks’ method for the study of identity is based on the following arguments: 1) An identity equals a category, and each person can belong to multiple categories; for example, someone can be a male, a husband, a son, a friend, a teacher, a Catholic, a citizen, etc. 2) Each category is associated with culturally designated characteristics such as behaviour, rights, and obligations. For instance, in traditional Western cultures, a husband is expected to be the provider of the family and to practice monogamy, a friend is expected to be trustworthy and someone you have fun with, a teacher is expected to know the answers that their students ask them, a Catholic is expected to attend mass every Sunday, and so on. 3) Categories can be linked together and make collections; each collection is a *membership categorization device* (MCD) that represents a part of the structure of a given society. For example, the categories *son*, *father*, *mother* make the *family* MCD, the categories *parishioner*, *altar boy*, and *priest* make the *mass* MCD, the categories *seller* and *customer* make the *business* MCD, etc. 4) Identities are locally displayed in conversation throughout the organization of social interaction. For example, let us look now at excerpt (11):

(11) [013] V03.3-06-Aguacate - Extract from videoed face to face interaction

[C: Customer, S: Seller]

01 C: Buenos días

*Good morning*

02 S: Buenos días joven

*Good morning young man*

03 C: Aguacate tiene?

*Have you got avocado?*

04 S: Sí

*Yes*

05 C: Me das uno por fa  
*Give me one please*

06 (.8) ((S takes avocado and puts it on the scale))

07 S: para hoy ira joven ((types on the scale))  
*look this is good for today*

08 C: [Sí.  
[Yes.

09 Nueve pesos.  
*Nine pesos.*

10 C: ((takes money out [and pays]))

11 S: [en una bolsa o ayasí  
*[in a bag or that's alright*

12 C: ayasí.  
*that's alright*

13 ((exchange money and avocado))

14 C: Gracia:s ((starts leaving the shop))  
*Thank you*

15 S: Sí ((looks for the change)) ah =un peso de cambio::  
*Yes ah one peso change*

16 C: ((comes back)) (h) sí (h)  
*yes*

17 S: ((stretches hand and gives money)) (h) ya se quiere ir- (h)  
*you want to leave-*

18 C: (h) gracias (h)  
*thank you*

19 S: (h) Sí (h) ((C leaves the shop))  
*yes*

In the commercial setting presented in the excerpt, *seller* and *customer* are the categories that are expected for this type of institutional talk, and its MCD is *business*. From the beginning of the encounter both parties orient to fulfil the expectations of their categories: right after the greetings, the customer initiates a sequence to request a product and the seller, after the request is launched, proceeds to give the product; the seller announces the price and the customer pays for it, then both speakers bring the encounter to closure (cf. Vázquez Carranza, 2017 for a detailed structural analysis of this type of encounters). From the transcript, we can identify other behaviour related to the *seller* category: a seller is expected to please their customers (e.g. Lee, 2011). So, for instance,

at line 07, the seller informs the customer that the avocado is good or ripe for consumption on the day, this information is important to know because it is sometimes difficult to find avocados that are ripe. At line 11 the seller also asks the customer to decide if he wants the avocado in a plastic bag or not; and, even though the customer is leaving the shop without taking his change, line 14, the seller calls him and gives him the change. This last action is linked to the behaviour of an honourable seller which can be considered a desired characteristic in business. From the excerpt, it can be established that the relationship between both speakers is merely a business relationship, they do not seem to know each other; for instance, they do not use their names but vocatives such as *joven* 'young man'. It is important to highlight, that, of course, both speakers can be cast in other categories such as *male* and *young man*, however, these other categories are not made relevant in the encounter. The only identities that both speakers make relevant, i.e., display, in their interaction are the *seller* and *customer* categories.

### ***Eh* as resource for identity display**

Request sequences are one of the most important sequential elements of the buying-selling encounters in question. They are the starting point of the business transaction: the exchange begins when the customer requests some product from the seller as (12), line 03, shows.

#### **(12) [26] V06.1054 al 1350 - Extract from videoed face to face interaction**

- 01 C: Buenos días =tendrán pechuga?  
*Good morning =have you got chicken breast*
- 02 S: Sí.  
*Yes*
- 03 C: sí me das media pechuga por favor  
*Can you give me a half chicken breast please*
- 04 S: ↑Cómo la va a querer.  
*How would you like it*
- 05 C: Este:: nada más partida en dos sin piel  
*just cut in half without skin*

Excerpt (12) also shows how the S requests further detail about the order: at line 04, the seller asks how the customer would like the chicken breast. There are cases, however, when the seller does not request specifications, it is the customer who expands her request, i.e., the customer gives specifications about the way she wants the products. For example, in (13), the customer specifies that she wants a good papaya, line 09 and in (15) the customer stipulates that she wants a papaya

of a certain weight, line 03. As these instances show, it is at the end of the instruction where *eh* is produced.

(13) [08] V15.10-30 Papaya - Extract from videoed face to face interaction

...  
06 S: Una papaya chiquita de [bolsío  
One pocket size papaya  
07 C: [Ah sí sícierto un papaya  
Oh that's right one papaya  
08 (.)  
09 C:=>que esté buena **eh?**  
a good one eh?  
10 S: de bolsío?  
Pocket size?  
11 C: aja  
Yeah

(14) [04] V05.26-00 Que pese 1kg - Extract from videoed face to face interaction

01 C: Quiero un papayita::: me la llevas?  
I want a small papaya can you deliver it to my place?  
02 S: Sí  
Yes  
03 (5)  
03 C:=>Que pese co:::mo u:n kilo y medio o dos **eh?**  
One that weights about one kilo and a half or two eh?  
04 (1)  
05 C:=>**Eh?**  
06 S: Sí  
Yes

In this context, *eh* is requesting confirmation, i.e., the customer checks if her instruction has been received or acknowledged by the seller. In fact, *eh* also indexes that the customer does not expect the opposite of her instruction, that is, the customer interactionally emphasizes her petition by requesting confirmation from the S, i.e., the customer is pursuing a response (Pomerantz, 1984). Furthermore, the use of *eh* indicates a particular relationship between the speakers. To investigate what sort of relationship *eh* indexes, it is necessary to examine the broader social and institutional context of these business encounters and to look at the power relations that are established in this setting and the categories involved.

In the Mexican context of selling and buying interactions like the one presented in this investigation, the power relationship between the customer and the seller may vary; they can be

symmetrical or asymmetrical depending on the circumstances. From an objective perspective, both customer and seller are equal in terms of power because both benefit from the business transaction: the customer obtains goods and the seller makes a profit. However, their power relationship is likely to be affected by the law of the supply and demand. If, for example, a shop is the only place where people can obtain the desired goods, shopkeepers may have higher ground in terms of power; they can sometimes even be rude to customers and still not lose business at all. But, if there are more shops nearby from which people can choose to buy the same products, it is the customer who holds higher ground. It is in these circumstances where customers are much more likely to be treated nicely and be offered extra benefits. This latter context is the one in which the interactions under study take place. The shop, for instance, is flexible in terms of payment as we noticed in (7) and (8), it also offers home delivery of products to people from the neighbourhood and takes orders by phone that can be collected by the customer or delivered to the customers' houses. The expected behaviour for the category *seller* is set in this particular context. The asymmetrical power relationship between the seller and the customer is not only established by the contexts described above, but also by other non-institutional identities or categories determined by the speakers' age and gender differences. The sellers in the shop are all young males and most of their customers are middle age and elderly women. All the customers that produce the *eh* in question have these characteristics. Their age and gender differences establish an asymmetric relationship between them and the sellers, a relationship similar to the asymmetry in terms of power that exists between any older woman and a younger male, such as a mother and her son. In this type of relationships it is expected that the older person, in this case the customer, has dominance over the younger one, in this case the seller.

The action that is accompanied by *eh*, in (13) and (14), is a directive. In these examples, the directive is made of two turns whereas in (15) it appears in one turn, with examples in each of lines 02 and 10. An important characteristic of all the directives that begin with *eh* is that they are all bold directives: there is no mitigation of or going around the directive, they are very straightforward. In some cases, as in the example below, they include the name of the recipient, Ramón. Looking at the responses produced by the seller to the directives, one can confirm the power asymmetry of their relationship because the seller only acknowledges the instructions and complies with them.

(15) V22.0050 Papa no eh - Extract from videoed face to face interaction

01 S: ((the S is chopping some vegetables for the C))  
02 C: Ramón Ramón no le vayas a poner mucha col **eh?**  
*Ramon Ramón do not put too much cauliflower in it eh?*  
03 S: Ah no  
Ah no  
04 C: ni papa. papa tampoco  
*no potato. Potato either*  
05 S: ya le puse  
I've already put it in  
06 C: no papa no Ramón  
*No potato no Ramón*  
07 (3)  
08 S: sí  
Yes  
09 (3)  
10 C: todo menos eso **eh?**  
*everything except that eh?*  
11 (2)  
12 C: Ni papa no col  
*No potaote no cauliflower*  
13 S: Ni papa ni col =todo lo demás sí?  
*No potatoes no cauliflower =everything else is ok?*  
14 C: Sí  
Yes

Giving directives in such format to a younger person corresponds to the characteristics attached to the category *older person*. Line 04 of the following excerpt shows the action of warning performed by the customer; it also includes *eh* as a request of confirmation token at the end of the turn. Warning a younger person about something can also be considered a characteristic of the *older person* category, as it implies a protectiveness that an older person has towards a younger one.

(16) V019.34.00 - Extract from videoed face to face interaction

01 S: ((S is cutting a chicken in parts)) son cinco  
*Five*  
02 C: Sí↑.  
Yes  
03 (3) ((C observes how the S cuts the chicken))  
04 C: Nada más te rebanas un dedo **eh?**  
*Do not slice your finger eh?*  
05 S: No ( ) (°su propina°)  
*No your tip*  
06 C: No Beto, se vaya a cortar un dedo  
*No Beto, you may slice your finger*

- 07 S: Ya va de pilón el dedo  
The finger is your little extra  
08 C: A::h ((smiles)) ah bueno ((takes)) gracias  
Ah ok thank you

The example also shows how the customer shifts from the use of the pronoun *tú* (in *Nada más te rebanas un dedo...* ‘Do not slice your finger...’, line 04), which indexes as well their asymmetrical relationship, to the pronoun *usted* (in *...se vaya a cortar...* ‘you may slice your finger’, line 06) which aligns with an institutional relationship where both, customer and seller, are equal in terms of power. This is an instance of how the shift from one pronoun to the other shows a temporal adjustment of the speakers’ identities (Raymond, 2016), i.e., who they are to each other.

It has been long described in the literature how the relationship that speakers have with one another influences their linguistic choices (e.g., Brown & Gilman, 1960; Ervin-Tripp, 1972; Brown & Levinson, 1987, just to cite the classics); in the conversation-analytic paradigm the important relation between the design of a turn and its recipient has also been shown (e.g., Heritage & Raymond, 2005; Heritage, 2012; Drew, 2013; for an overview); the examples above are instances of these phenomena. The use of *eh* in this institutional sequential context is one indicator of the emergence of categories that are not a formal part of the institutional setting. These categories are made relevant by participants’ linguistic behaviour and the social structures involved in the interaction. Furthermore, the use of *eh* indexes that the customer and the seller are acquainted. That is, their business relationship did not start that day. On the contrary, it shows that the customer is a frequent visitor to the shop which has contributed to a closer and more informal relationship. Their relationship is, evidently, institutional by principle, the more salient categories are *seller* and *customer*; however, the individual categories of the participants and their relationship come into play in the interaction which, as we can see, have an effect on the participants’ linguistic choices.

## Conclusions

The present investigation has shown a conversation analytic perspective of the functions of the Spanish particle *eh* in naturally occurring interactions. In general, it has been illustrated how the particle is intrinsically linked to particular social and sequentially organised actions, particularly to mobilise a response (e.g. Pomerantz, 1984; Stivers & Rossano, 2010). For example, *eh*, as part of a summon-answer sequence, indicates a cue to move on and change the topic of conversation. It can also function as a next turn repair initiator or as a self-repair device in the production of a

turn; *eh* is used by the speaker to indicate the absence of an answer to his or her question and at the same time to request that answer. In the institutional context of selling-buying interactions in the fruit and vegetable shop, *eh* is used by the customer to show transparency in the business transaction. In addition, *eh* is used as an attention seeking device when resuming an interaction; to request acknowledgment of a directive; or to add emphasis to the action of thanksgiving, emphasis which is described as interactional because *eh* requests acknowledgment of the thanksgiving action.

The membership categorization analysis of the use of *eh* in the business encounters shows that *eh* is one of the elements that illustrate the emergence of non-institutional identities in the interaction: *older person* and *younger person*. The emergence of these identities is reflected in the speakers' linguistic behaviour and exposes the speakers' relationship in terms of power and familiarity. The study of *eh* in the business encounters also illustrated how the boundaries between mundane and institutional talk are permeable (Schegloff, 1999): in an institutional setting, such as a business encounter, the prior relationship between the participants favours the production of talk that has characteristics of mundane conversation.

The findings of the present investigation have some parallels with those found in previous literature; however, this analysis has shown the social actions that *eh* does in interactions, in concrete interactional contexts, and from a conversation-analytic perspective. In accordance with Wittgenstein's (1958) notion that "the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (p. 20), it is important to consider, when defining any linguistic element, the interactional work that the element in question does in conversation; in that way a holistic understanding of language and its use can be achieved.

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### Appendix: Transcription conventions

=>	Signals the specific part of the excerpt discussed in the text.
(1)	The number indicates a pause in seconds.
(.2)	The number indicates a pause in tenths of a second.
(.)	The dot indicates a micro pause.
[	Square bracket indicates the point at which overlapping starts.
=	The lines connected by two equal signs indicate that the second line is followed the first with no discernible silence between them, or was “latched” to it.
↑↓	Indicate a marked falling or rising intonational shift.
:	Indicates that the prior sound is prolonged, the more colons the greater the extension of the stretching.
...	At the beginning, it indicates that there is omitted presiding talk; and at the end it indicates that the talk continues.
.hh	Indicates in-breath.
hh.	Indicates out-breath.
heh	Indicates laughter the more “hes” the longer the laughter.
(h)word(h)	Words between h’s indicate laughter infiltrated in the speech.
Wor-	It indicates that a word is cut off. Or that a statement or account is cut off.
WORD	Capitals indicate increase of volume.
((word))	Words in double parentheses indicate descriptions of transcription events.
°word°	Degree signs indicate that the talk is soft or quiet.
word?	Question mark indicates question intonation.

# **A Metonymic-based Account of the Semiotic Status of Proverbs: Against the “Deproverbialization Thesis”**

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### **Abstract**

The paper focuses on the central roles metonymic mapping plays in characterizing the semiotic status of proverbs. Two metonymic mechanisms are handled here. The first mechanism is the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy. It concerns the main claim that proverbs are generic statements. Such a metonymy helps account for the paradox of proverbiality, which arises from the distinction literal proverbs/metaphoric proverbs, commonly made in French linguistics. The paper claims that such a paradox can be resolved in terms of the assumption that every proverb involves a metonymic and a metaphoric mapping. We will be led to refine the Great Chain Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Turner, 1989) by accomplishing two specific tasks: replacing the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor by the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy and proposing a LEVEL-FORM metaphor to account for metaphoric mapping between distinct order-levels on the Great Chain of being. The second mechanism is the FORM FOR CONCEPT metonymy. It bears on proverbs as form-fixed expressions. This metonymy, which is grounded in fixed brain circuits, turns out to be crucial in arguing against what is called here the Deproverbialization Thesis.

### **Keywords**

Proverbiality, Deproverbialization, Metonymy, Metaphor, Neural patterns

Linguists and paralinguists are still at pains to define proverbs.<sup>3</sup> Yet, there seems to be a considerable consensus on some characteristics proverbs share at large (Abraham, 1968; Mieder, 1985; Norrick, 1985, among many others). Indeed, such characteristics provide a methodological basis for distinguishing between proverbial and non proverbial statements. The linguistic literature on proverbs converges on the following two important features:

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<sup>3</sup> Gibbs & Beitel (1995, p. 134) point out that “Empirical attempts to define proverbs have revealed as many as 55 different definitions”.

- (i) Proverbs are generic statements.
- (ii) Proverbs, similar to prototypical idioms, are form-fixed expressions.<sup>4</sup>

These characteristics prove to be an interesting subject matter for linguistic investigation because of the crucial questions they raise relative to the semiotic status of proverbs in general, namely the issue of their semantic relationships (polysemy, synonymy, antonymy, etc.)<sup>5</sup> and the issue of their proverbiality.

This paper deals mostly with the latter issue and aims to emphasize some paradoxes relative to the common conception of proverbs as semiotic signs. The main purpose is therefore to address the implications of characteristics (i) and (ii) with respect to two widely shared assumptions.

The first assumption is that two kinds of proverbs are distinguished along two subcategorical features, that is, literal proverbs, subcategorized as [+human], and metaphoric proverbs, subcategorized as [-human]. Such a distinction has given rise to a paradox, subsisting namely in the different way the semiotic nature of proverbs is conceived. We will set out, in the first part of the paper, to deal with this paradox and attempt to resolve it on the premise that each proverb is a two-level mapping, be it [+human] or [-human]. This claim will lead us to refine the Great Chain Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Turner, 1989) so as to account for both kinds of proverbs.

The second assumption amounts to what we would call here the Deproverbialization Thesis. Very briefly, this thesis states that proverbs are deproverbialized, or semantically literalized, on their literal application to given elements, belonging to the order-level forms involved. We will argue, in the second part, on linguistic and neural grounds that proverbs, as generic statements and as fixed-form expressions, resist literalization.

Before going any further, it is important to note two things. First, this research is theoretical in character. Thus, only a small representative sample of proverbs will serve as illustrations. Second, though discussion of proverbs emphasizes their relation to similar formulas (aphorisms, adages, and the like), we will not be concerned with drawing distinctions between them.

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<sup>4</sup> This is one important reason why proverbs are considered “word-like” (Cram, 1983) or “denomination” (Kleiber, 1994, 1999, 2000). Such views have given rise to many criticisms. For critical discussions of both views, see Honeck (1997) and Michaux (1999).

<sup>5</sup> Most researchers (Milner, 1969; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1973; Lakoff & Turner, 1989, among others) focused on discursive polysemy of proverbs. Instead, we tried in Lemghari (2017) to shed light on their lexical polysemy. We argued that some proverbs are lexically polysemous because of the metaphoric pluralism their generic-level schemas entail.

## The paradox of proverbiality

### Literal proverbs/metaphoric proverbs

In the broad literature on proverbs, chiefly in French linguistics, a common distinction is usually made between literal proverbs and metaphoric proverbs. Literal proverbs, such as proverb (1), are literally connected with human concerns. They are inherently considered [+human]. By contrast, metaphoric proverbs, like proverb (2), are considered [-human]. Nevertheless, they apply metaphorically to human beings.

(1) Like father, like son.

(2) The dog always returns to his vomit.

In (1), the higher-order forms *father* and *son* are used literally for human beings. The proverb is considered literal because the forms referred to are higher-order forms. In (2), on the contrary, the form *dog* is a lower-order form. To know why this proverb is considered metaphoric, we just need to realize that the form involved does not apply to dogs, but rather to humans. In short, a metaphoric proverb is linguistically built out of lower-order forms that are mapped onto human forms. The reverse may be possible too: in certain situations, proverbs involving lower-order forms might be applied metaphorically to distinct lower-order forms on the Great Chain of being. Yet, there is no consensus on this topic (see the section Against the Deproverbialization Theory).

Such a distinction is not trivial; rather, it has a considerable bearing on the conception of proverbs at large. Indeed, literal proverbs are conceived of as inherently [+human], hence the reason they function both literally and metaphorically. Conversely, metaphoric proverbs seem to operate only at the metaphoric level. Insofar as they are inherently [-human], they are understood and used only in connection with human concerns. For the sake of comparison, proverb (1) applies not only literally to human beings but also metaphorically to nonhuman forms, say, to a dog and its puppy. Conversely, many linguists hold that proverb (2) does not allow for literal application. It can only be metaphoric when used to describe human affairs. On this view, then, when metaphoric proverbs happen to be used literally – at least theoretically – they lend themselves as mere statements rather than as proverbs. Such a claim is widespread and supported by many researchers, like Kleiber (2000), Schapira (2000), and Anscombe (1994), and many others.



It must come as no surprise that such a functional discrepancy gives rise to a serious paradox which ends up calling into question the notion of proverbiality itself. The paradox at issue is due to the fact that proverbs with the subcategorical feature [+human] apply both literally and metaphorically, whereas proverbs with the subcategorical feature [-human] apply only metaphorically, either to higher or lower forms on the Great Chain of being.<sup>6</sup>

### **Metonymic and metaphoric mappings in proverbs**

To account for such a paradox, we take for granted that every proverb, either [+human] or [-human], is a two-level mapping. This assumption is closely related to the distinction commonly made between metonymy and metaphor at large. In short, both processes consist of conceptual mapping, but they differ with respect to the domains involved. On the one hand, metonymic mapping is achieved in the same conceptual domain (Barcelona, 2003; Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Ruiz de Mendoza, 2003; among others). On the other, metaphoric mapping involves two different domains.

This conceptual difference plays a prominent role in substantiating the premise that any proverb, be it literal or metaphoric, is a two-level mapping. Such a claim has a crucial theoretical implication on the well-known conceptual mechanism Lakoff and Turner (1989) called the *GENERIC IS SPECIFIC* metaphor. Let us briefly outline the framework within which this mechanism is delineated.

The *GENERIC IS SPECIFIC* metaphor is one of the four ingredients that make up the Great Chain Metaphor Theory. To see how it functions, we need to define it in relation to the other ingredients of the ensemble. As Lakoff and Turner (1989, p. 172) put it clearly, the *GREAT CHAIN* metaphor is “an ensemble consisting of the commonsense theory of the Nature of Things + the Great Chain + the *GENERIC IS SPECIFIC* METAPHOR + the Maxim of Quantity”.

The Great Chain of being is an unconscious cultural model which reflects the way people conceive of objects on experiential grounds. It mainly accounts for the hierarchical organization of forms of being. The most typical properties of forms at each order-level on the Great Chain are the highest ones. For instance, human beings’ highest properties are the mental, the moral, the aesthetic, etc., and animals’ highest properties, the instincts.

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<sup>6</sup> This fact, however, is not commonly accepted (see below).

The Nature of Things is a folk theory, that is, a commonsense knowledge that connects typical properties of things with specific functions or behaviors. The folk theory is what makes us know automatically that humans' higher properties are linked with higher behaviors, animals' instincts with instinctual behaviors, plants biological attributes with biological behaviors, etc.

The Maxim of Quantity is generally evoked for restricting information enough to make it meet the communicative purposes. It limits specific-level schemas of proverbs to what is necessary for the application of the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor.

The GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor fulfills a double function. Given a proverb, it extracts its generic-level structure, then uses it for the metaphoric interpretation of any particular situation matching that generic-level structure. A proverb generic-level structure lends itself as a template that can be filled in by a range of particular situations. For this reason, a proverb constitutes a conceptual category.

Proverb understanding calls upon the contribution of all these ingredients. Issues of space prohibit working through a full illustration of how these ingredients come together. Nevertheless, let us briefly consider the following proverb to highlight a few points.

(3) Big thunder, little rain.

Our knowledge that proverbs pertain to human concerns is a key factor in proverb understanding. For instance, proverb (3) is related to humans, though it literally tells something about thunder in causal relation with rain. This knowledge arises in terms of the GREAT CHAIN metaphor, which works, very briefly, in this way:

- First, the Great Chain links the source domain of storms and the target domain of humans.
- Second, the Folk Theory picks out properties and corresponding behaviors of both domains.
- Third, the Maxim of Quantity selects the highest attributes of both storms and humans.
- Finally, the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor extracts a generic structure from the specific structure evoked by storms, and then maps it onto human beings.

It is noteworthy that the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor is not directly concerned with the distinction literal proverbs/metaphoric proverbs, insofar as all proverbs are viewed as metaphoric in character within the Great Chain Metaphor Theory. Evidently, Lakoff and Turner (1989, p. 165) argue that there is always a metaphoric mapping even though no target domain is available:

In the absence of any particular situation (say, when we are reading a list of proverbs [...]), we can nonetheless understand the proverb metaphorically via the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor. The reason is that, in the absence of any particular specific-level target schema, the generic-level schema of the source domain counts as an acceptable target.

However, the paradox of proverbiality remains a serious problem for the distinction between literal and metaphoric proverbs, since the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor does not prove useful in that regard. We will attempt to resolve this paradox by proposing another kind of mapping, in place of the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor, that is, the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy.

### **The SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy**

On the assumption that proverbs have two functional levels, we assume that each level requires a specific mapping: two levels, two mappings. At the literal level, mapping is metonymic. At the metaphoric level, in contrast, it is self-evidently metaphoric. It follows that any proverb is structured by two distinct mappings, which may be thought of as separate yet complementary phases in proverb understanding. We hypothesize, in addition, that metonymic mapping is prior to and thereby serves as input for metaphoric mapping.

We suggest taking metonymic mapping to be carried out by the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy. The central role of this mechanism is to prompt the generic reading of proverbs by making given specific instances stand for whole categories. In other words, specific lower forms, before being mapped metaphorically onto human beings, are assumed to extend to all the members of the categories in terms of the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy. Proverbs with noun phrases in the singular form provide linguistic evidence supporting the importance of metonymic mapping in proverb understanding: a singular specific instance is indeed understood cognitively as a semantically plural instance which denotes the entire category. In the absence of the SPECIFIC FOR

GENERIC metonymy, there would be much difficulty in accounting for the generic-level structure. The reason is that metonymic mapping is an absolute prerequisite to picking out the generic-level information, which is necessary for metaphoric mapping. Furthermore, the mechanism is metonymic in character, insofar as the mapping it achieves occurs within the same source domain at a given order-level on the Great Chain.

Once the generic structure of a proverb has emerged in terms of the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy, metaphoric mapping comes into play, thereby projecting an order-level onto another. However, it must come as no surprise that metaphoric mapping is not indispensable to literal proverbs. For instance, because proverb (1) is literal in applying literally to humans, it does not necessitate metaphoric mapping in terms of the GREAT CHAIN metaphor. The reason is that a given higher-level being serves both as a source and a target domain. Accordingly, only metonymic mapping is required. Notwithstanding, a problem arises: since literal proverbs apply literally to humans, why should the Great Chain be metaphoric in character?

Such an issue may provide further evidence for the claim that any proverb is a two-level mapping, be it literal or metaphoric. But we need to note at the outset that the Great Chain Metaphor Theory is not concerned with the problem because, as shown above, it makes no distinction between literal proverbs and metaphoric proverbs. However, since metonymy and metaphor are distinct mechanisms, there is a need to differentiate between proverbs with respect to the required mapping. It follows that the Great Chain must be refined so as to account for both kinds of proverbs. To achieve this, we suggest replacing the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor by the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy.

However, things are not that simple, because, according to Lakoff and Turner (1989, p. 172), what makes the Great Chain “metaphoric in character is the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor”. In other words, if we accept the premise that generic extension is metonymic, we cannot then invoke metonymy to ensure metaphoric mapping between distinct order-levels on the Great Chain, nor can we appeal to metaphor to extract generic information from specific information. Nevertheless, both mechanisms are essential to proverb understanding, because each one fulfills a specific task within the ensemble. As a result, the Great Chain model needs a considerable refinement: to the extent that generic mapping is no longer considered metaphoric in character, the model is bereft of one of its crucial ingredients, the ingredient that maps an order-

level onto another on the Great Chain. We would suggest calling such an ingredient a LEVEL-FORM metaphor. This refinement produces a new version of the Great Chain model as follows:

(4) Great Chain model, revised:

The Nature of Things + the Great Chain + the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy + the Maxim of Quantity + the LEVEL-FORM metaphor

The remainder of the paper will henceforth rely on the version of the Great Chain model given in (4).

Such an improvement is of great interest. It allows us to separate metonymic projection via the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy from metaphoric projection via the LEVEL-FORM metaphor. In addition, this separation is necessary insofar as each mechanism plays a distinct role in proverb understanding: the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy operates at the literal level and hence prompts the emergence of the generic-level structure. By contrast, the LEVEL-FORM metaphor functions at the metaphoric level and thus maps an order-level onto another on the Great Chain.

In sum, any proverb, irrespective of its subcategorical feature, includes a double mapping:

- A metonymic-generic mapping which makes individual instances stand for entire categories in terms of the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy.
- A metaphoric mapping which projects an order-level onto a distinct order-level in terms of the LEVEL-FORM metaphor.

Consider, for example, the following proverbs:

- (5) a. What is play to the cat is death to the mouse.  
b. The higher the monkey climbs the more he shows his tail.  
c. Where the cattle stand together, the lion lies down hungry. (African proverb)  
d. Better to be a free dog than a caged lion. (Arabian proverb)

To understand these proverbs, we first apply the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy, which gives rise to generic extension of the forms involved. This mapping is metonymic in character because it connects a source to a target within the same matrix domain. In all likelihood, the specific lower forms stand for their entire categories. Second, we use the LEVEL-FORM metaphor (along with the

other ingredients) to accomplish metaphoric mapping between the nonhuman and the human elements.

The distinction literal proverbs/metaphoric proverbs would best be maintained in light of the distinct tasks of the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy and the LEVEL-FORM metaphor. This alternative allows either kind to have an equal semiotic status. Literal proverbs are so labeled because they apply literally to human beings. In most cases, they do not require the LEVEL-FORM metaphor, due to the fact that they are mainly structured via a part-whole metonymy in terms of which individual instances stand for entire categories. Clearly, if the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC was metaphoric in nature, proverbs subcategorized as [+human], like proverb (1), would be exclusively limited to lower-order forms. On the other hand, metaphoric proverbs are so called because they are used metaphorically for human beings. But, in contrast to literal proverbs, they are, of necessity, structured by the LEVEL-FORM metaphor, as their figurative meaning is a result of mapping metaphorically lower-order forms onto higher-order forms.

In either case, however, both mechanisms are required. Indeed, when literal proverbs are used as such for humans, they confine themselves to metonymic mapping. For this reason, it would be better to call them metonymic proverbs, and avoid using the term *literal* which is confusing in that it means commonly *nonfigurative*. Nevertheless, when they apply to lower forms, they are necessarily metaphoric. On the other hand, proverbs with the subcategorial feature [-human] are essentially metaphoric because the lower forms involved are mapped onto distinct order-level forms. On that account, metonymic mapping is taken to be presupposed in metaphoric proverbs. All in all, metonymic mapping in human proverbs – as well as in nonhuman proverbs – must be considered an essential prerequisite for metaphoric mapping. Such a claim has a considerable bearing on proverbiality, as will be shown further on.

### **Against the Deproverbialization Thesis**

Metonymic mapping is of great import to proverb understanding. Most importantly, it helps substantiate the claim that proverbs keep their proverbial status when used literally for elements corresponding to the order-level forms involved. Consider the following proverbs.

- (6) a. Where bees are, there will be honey.
- b. One swallow doesn't make a summer.

- (7) a. Blind blames the ditch.  
b. The girl who can't dance says the band can't play.

There is a growing consensus among researchers that both nonhuman and human proverbs, such as (6a-b) and (7a-b), respectively, lose their proverbiality on their metonymic application.<sup>7</sup> Let us call this claim the Deproverbialization Thesis. To account for such a thesis, we will focus on some assumptions from two representative views, namely the view of Lakoff and Turner (1989) and that of Kleiber (2000).<sup>8</sup>

To begin with, the difference between both standpoints subsists in the way Lakoff and Turner and Kleiber conceive of the scope of proverbs within the Great Chain model. Kleiber's stance appears to be radical in that it entails that proverbiality is exclusively human: any proverb is essentially connected with human concerns. This claim is true to a large extent, insofar as proverbs are cultural products, created and used by humans in social interaction to talk about their affairs. However, the defining feature [+human] is so strong that nonhuman proverbs just cannot be applied to lower-order forms. In a word, Kleiber's stance limits proverbs' application to human beings. Consequently, the nonhuman form *dog* in proverb (8), for instance, stands no chance of being mapped onto distinct lower-order forms, such as *lions*, *bears*, *cats*, and so on.

- (8) A mischievous dog must be tied short.

It follows that the feature [+human] plays a key role in the distinction literal proverbs/proverbs/metaphoric proverbs. We tend to think of the term literal to mean *deproverbialized* or *nonfigurative* rather than *human*.

Lakoff and Turner, on the other hand, do not mention or even allude to such a distinction; they suppose that all proverbs are metaphoric in nature. The reason is simple: since proverbs are structured via the GREAT CHAIN metaphor, in no way could they be literal. Using the term literal to describe a proverb would mean that the latter is nonfigurative. Hence, it would be a mere statement

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<sup>7</sup> What we call here metonymic-level application does indeed correspond to what proponents of the Deproverbialization Thesis think of as literal application of proverbs. It is no surprise that any proverb, irrespective of its fixed form, would be deproverbialized if interpreted literally. This situation holds when we come across a proverb we do not know and interpret it as a mere statement.

<sup>8</sup> This thesis is widespread and well known in French linguistics; we will be referring to it via Kleiber, one of its strong proponents.

rather than a real proverb. On this view, then, given the metaphoricity of all proverbs, there is no reason why the scope of proverbs with the feature [-human] could not extend beyond human concerns and thereby apply to lower-order forms:

The explanation also predicts that “Big thunder / little rain” can be used to characterize more than just ineffectual bragging. In a different context, there might be a different mapping that picks out the same aspects of the thunderstorm schema, preserves generic-level structure, and is also constrained by the GREAT CHAIN. Indeed it might not even be applied to human beings. For example, “Big thunder / little rain” might be applied to a viciously barking dog, as way of saying that there’s no reason to be afraid of him. Such a situation would have the same generic-level structure [...], with animal behavior in place of human behavior. (Lakoff & Turner, 1989, p. 179)

To put it briefly, the main difference between these positions amounts to the way the Great Chain of being is construed. Indeed, both of them agree that the Great Chain permits upward and downward mappings (even if Kleiber says nothing about it). But, for Lakoff and Turner, the direction of conceptual mapping is not constrained.<sup>9</sup> For Kleiber, on the contrary, downward mapping is possible for human proverbs only. Following Norrick (1985), Kleiber makes the main claim that only literal proverbs with the feature [+human] may be applied metaphorically to lower-order forms. As he stated it, given certain contexts, proverb (1), repeated below as (9), may work properly for nonhuman forms.

(9) Like father, like son.

This proverb is literal with regard to the feature [+human]. Nonetheless, it implies a metaphoric application since the human forms *father* and *son* are mapped onto nonhuman forms, such as a dog and its puppy. Accordingly, the distinction literal proverbs/metaphoric proverbs sounds paradoxical in that it assumes that only human proverbs may have a literal and a metaphoric

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<sup>9</sup> Lakoff & Turner (1989, p. 180) state clearly that a proverb such as ““All bark and no bite” cannot be applied metaphorically to dogs, but it can be applied metaphorically to thunderstorms”.



application. It seems, in this respect, that the distinction is essentially evoked for typological purposes.

Given the paradoxical implications of this distinction, the most promising way to describe coherently the semiotic nature of proverbiality would be, as suggested above, to take for granted that any proverb is a two-level mapping. Metonymic mapping is attributable to the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy and metaphoric mapping to the LEVEL-FORM metaphor. We think of this hypothesis as strong enough to point out the weakness in the Deproverbialization Thesis. Let us now turn the spotlight on it.

There is a general consensus in the literature that proverbs are prone to deproverbialization when applied literally to the forms involved. In other words, in relevant contexts, proverbs that we happen to use to comment literally on given elements corresponding to the order-level forms invoked would be mere statements, which describe the states of affairs concerned. In a nutshell, they are said to be deproverbialized.

One drawback of such a claim is that it poses a major contradiction. Proverbs are assumed to be generic statements and to nevertheless be deproverbialized in certain circumstances. This premise is obviously inconsistent since genericity is a *sine qua non* of proverbiality. The remainder of this paper will be devoted to discrediting the Deproverbialization Thesis on linguistic and neural grounds. The first relates to the generic status of proverbs, and thus evokes the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy, as well as the GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy. The second pertains to the assumption that proverbs have relatively fixed forms.

### **Genericity as grounding for metonymic mapping of proverbs**

The reason that any proverb entails metonymic mapping is due to the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy. This mechanism proved essential in showing why proverbs may be applied literally without being deproverbialized. Consider the French proverb (10) for the sake of illustration.

- (10) *Chien qui aboie ne mord pas.*  
'Barking dogs seldom bite.'

To begin with, let us imagine a situation where we come face to face with a barking dog. The question we must ask is: if we utter (10), is there any good reason to conceive of this utterance as a descriptive statement rather than as a proverb? In all likelihood, the answer would be negative.

To provide a piece of evidence in support of this conclusion we need to consider situations where we have to do with more than one dog, as in (11a-b). Obviously, the very use of (10) instead of (11a-b), despite the correspondence between the plural form of the noun phrases and the individual instances, is sufficient enough to corroborate its proverbial status.

(11) a. ?? *Les chiens qui aboient ne mordent pas.*

‘The barking dogs do not bite.’

b. ?? *Ces chiens qui aboient ne mordent pas.*

‘Those barking dogs do not bite.’

Thanks to our shared background knowledge, we can easily retrieve the proverb from long-term memory. By doing so, we point out that we master its meaning and the general conditions of its application. As a result, using it in its fixed form entails referring to the individual instances spatio-temporally entrenched in the relevant context as well as to the entire category. In other words, because the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC mapping is metonymic in character, any form of being stands for its category. Hence, in proverb (10), the individual instance *dog* stands for all the members of the category of dogs. But since metonymy, contrary to metaphor,<sup>10</sup> is reversible, a category is likely to represent a member of the category in terms of the GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy (Radden & Kövecses, 1999; Ruiz de Mendoza, Francisco & Olga, 2003; etc.). Thus, when we use proverb (10) to comment on individual instances belonging to the order-level forms of dogs, we do activate the GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy in terms of which the category of dogs – morphosyntactically represented by a singular form of the lexeme DOG – refers to specific instances. To put it another way, to the extent that genericity is essentially metonymic and furthermore serves as a prerequisite for proverbiality, it comes as no surprise (as a result of metonymy reversibility) that a member stands for a category in terms of the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy, and conversely, that a category stands for a member via the GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy.

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<sup>10</sup> Such a view should be qualified because recent studies have shown that metaphors are reversible every bit as much as metonymies (Schubert, 2005; Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006; Zhong & Leonardelli, 2008). Yet, from the neural perspective, since metaphor arises from an asymmetric circuit, it is fundamentally unidirectional. That is, source and target domains that are activated as separate brain regions end up forming a single circuit as soon as a short pathway is found. Such brain regions are neurally asymmetric because of the difference in weight of their neural synapses: source domains get neurally more strengthened over time than target domains. “The result is an asymmetric circuit that constitutes the metaphor” (Lakoff, 2016, p. 271).

Notwithstanding, proverbs may be deproverbialized in certain cases, namely when they are considerably altered, as in (12).

- (12) *Chien policier qui aboie ne mord pas les criminels.*  
'Barking police dogs seldom bite criminals.'

But there is every chance that even in such situations, proverb (10) remains easy to recognize. The reason is not only a matter of formal fixity but also of neural synapses, as we will see in the remainder of the paper.

### **Fixed brains circuits as grounding for fixed forms of proverbs**

Granted that proverbs have relatively fixed forms (Gibbs & Beitel, 1995, p. 134),<sup>11</sup> the serious problem facing the Deproverbialization Thesis amounts to finding out whether a statement is a real proverb or just a form-similar sentence. Kleiber's contribution toward clearing up this issue consists in arguing for a semantic literalization. According to him, a deproverbialized proverb that keeps its fixed form turns out to be semantically literalized. Such a premise yields a further paradox, to the extent that it entails that fixed forms of proverbs are not associated with stable meanings. Following this line of argument, proverbs would not need to be cognitively processed as being about themselves.<sup>12</sup> As a result, we are led to regard proverbs either as mere statements, constructed online to fit some communicative purposes or as special speech formulas with relatively fixed forms. The latter alternative looks quite promising. In the same way as idioms and other formulas, proverbs evoke some conceptual content which coincides generally with their conventionalized meaning.<sup>13-14</sup> Form and meaning of proverb are linked in such a way that the

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<sup>11</sup> Gibbs & Beitel (1995, p. 134) hold in this way that "Proverbs have relatively fixed form, similar to idioms, clichés, and other speech formulas."

<sup>12</sup> Elaboration of theories for proverb understanding, such as the Great Chain Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Turner, 1989) and the Extended Conceptual Base Theory (Honeck, 1997), is due to the belief that proverbs are semiotic signs. As such, they are first understood in isolation as about themselves.

<sup>13</sup> Conceptual content of proverbs is labeled differently within theoretical frameworks. For instance, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1973) called it "Base meaning," Honeck (1997) "Conceptual base," Lakoff & Turner (1989) "Generic-level information," etc. These theories are indeed context-based, but there is every reason to believe that such a conceptual content is stable enough to make proverbs understandable in isolation.

<sup>14</sup> The conventionalized meaning of a proverb is taken to be stored in the speech community's mental dictionary. White (1987, p. 157) stated in this respect that "In searching for candidate sayings, we discovered that it is quite difficult simply to retrieve proverbs from memory at will. They resist introspective recall. However, given the right set of circumstances, the appropriate proverb seems almost to leap to mind".

former stands unnoticeably for the latter in terms of a metonymic principle Radden and Kövecses (1999) call FORM FOR CONCEPT metonymy.

One important entailment of the metonymic principle is to assume that stable meaning is conceptually different from dynamic meaning. In the semantic literature, speech formulas that have relatively fixed forms, such as idioms, are largely investigated at the linguistic level. Thus, two types of complex expressions are distinguished: compositional and non-compositional expressions. They differ with respect to meaning predictability: meaning of compositional expressions, contrary to non-compositional expressions, is predictable from the meanings of their sub-constituents.<sup>15</sup> We contend that the FORM FOR CONCEPT metonymy provides a simple and logical explanation for proverbs, as well as for the whole paradigm of non-compositional speech formulas.

Following Radden and Kövecses (1999) the metonymic principle characterizes the nature of human language in general. That is to say, every word stands for the concept it is linked with semiotically. Thus, expressions may have either one single FORM FOR CONCEPT metonymy or many such metonymies, in principle as many as there are words. As a result, compositional expressions are conceptually processed on the basis of a range of metonymies. In other words, each word of a compositional expression is assigned a FORM FOR CONCEPT metonymy because each one contributes to the general meaning of the expression. Therefore, the FORM FOR CONCEPT metonymy has the advantage of ascribing a semiotic autonomy to every word. This semiotic autonomy provides the basis for constructing the linguistic meaning of an utterance. For instance, if we want to draw someone's attention to a state of affairs, say, to an open door, we may utter the following sentence "The door is open". The meaning of this sentence is processed as the sum of the meanings of its sub-constituents. Not surprisingly, this cognitive processing could be achieved only with the proviso that every word is semiotically autonomous. All things considered, meaning calls for semantic contribution of each sub-constituent of the sentence, hence the reason any modification would bring about a different meaning.

Conversely, only one FORM FOR CONCEPT metonymy is at work in non-compositional multi-word expressions. A multi-word expression indeed stands as a whole for the concept evoked, which means that the constituent words are not taken to represent the concepts they express

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<sup>15</sup> Many studies have stressed the flaws of such a semantic definition on account of the non-prototypical or less-prototypical instances of non-compositionality (see Pitt & Katz, 2000).

individually. This can be seen in prototypical non-compositional expressions, such as the idiom *kick the bucket*. Our understanding of such an idiom, either in isolation or in relevant contexts, does not require metonymic mapping between every word of the idiom and the corresponding concept. On the contrary, the whole expression lends itself as one single form for the concept *die*.

It must be noted that the relationship between form and concept of a non-compositional expression is very cohesive, which makes the expression resist semantic literalization. For this reason, addition of any lexical unit to an idiom gives rise to a compositional expression. Strictly speaking, the meaning of “kicked the bucket violently” in (13) is completely compositional. Every sub-constituent activates its own FORM FOR CONCEPT metonymy. By contrast, the meaning of “kicked the bucket” in (14) is non-compositional: the expression is used as a signifier for the concept. Despite its polylexicity, it activates only one single FORM FOR CONCEPT metonymy.

(13) John kicked the bucket violently when he tripped over it in the bathroom.

(14) John kicked the bucket two weeks ago.

It is worth noting here that the principle FORM FOR CONCEPT does not imply the same conceptual mapping for all cognitive linguists.<sup>16</sup> For example, Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999) and Lakoff and Turner (1989) view it as metaphoric in character. In contrast, Radden and Kövecses (1999) consider it metonymic. In our view, the reason why Lakoff, Johnson and Turner argue for metaphoric mapping is that they focus on the linguistic sign as a whole in relation to given concepts. They do recognize that “there is a general metonymy whereby WORDS STAND FOR THE CONCEPTS THEY EXPRESS” (Lakoff & Turner, 1989, p. 108), yet, they mainly call attention to the misleading aspect of metonymy, namely when words do not stand for the concepts they evoke. Accordingly, they put much emphasis on metaphoric mapping rather than on metonymic mapping, which conventionally and, thus, unnoticeably links a form to a concept. For illustration purposes,

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<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to note that divergence of view within Conceptual Metaphor Theory has no effect on the underlying cognitive processes of our conceptual systems. In fact, from the neural perspective, both metonymy and metaphor arise from neural connections that occur between source and target domains. Yet, metonymic connection between a source and a target holds within a matrix domain. The metonymic process is either domain-in-target metonymy or target-in domain metonymy, inasmuch as metonymy, unlike metaphor, is bidirectional. By contrast, metaphoric connection involves distinct matrix domains. Such a difference is taken to be neurally grounded. Neural activation in metonymy spreads from the source to the target within a given matrix domain. In metaphor, on the contrary, neural circuitry covers two matrix domains. There is then every reason to believe that neural co-activation is more considerable in metaphor than in metonymy.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999) considered the word *rise*. They noted that its phonological form /raɪz/ names an upright motion in the sensorimotor source and may also name metaphorically an increase in the target domain of quantity. This mapping is metaphoric because it involves separate domains, that is, upright motion and increasing quantity.

In contrast, Radden and Kövecses (1999) describe the FORM FOR CONCEPT principle as metonymic in nature. They are aware that this pairing may stand as a whole for other concepts but, contrary to Lakoff and Johnson (1999), they conceive of it as fundamentally metonymic. Their standpoint originates in the Reference-Point Model (Langacker, 1993), according to which metonymy consists in using a source entity as a particular reference point for mentally accessing a target entity. There is every likelihood that such a stance focuses attention especially on the internal pairing of a form and a concept within the idealized cognitive model (ICM) of the sign.

Proverbs, like idioms, resist semantic literalization, namely because of the relative fixity of their forms. Most importantly, this claim can be accounted for on neural grounds. Following the neural modeling of language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Feldman, 2006; Feldman & Narayanan, 2004; among others), any conceptualization of a domain in terms of another entails a neural co-activation of the domains involved. Such a neural co-activation arises during the period of conflation, that is, when correspondences are established between two domains (Johnson, 1999). Conflation ends up building up a permanent cross-domain association. From the neural standpoint, this means that a cross-domain association is a permanent connection between the neural networks of source and target domains.<sup>17</sup> In other words, given the neuroscience principle “neurons that fire together wire together”, source and target association is grounded in common neural circuits: neurons of both domains fire simultaneously.

Neural co-activation underlying cross-domain association is at the base of the neural theory of metaphor. Within this framework, the neural basis of conceptual mapping, either metaphoric or metonymic, is mainly reflected in synapses’ plasticity. That is to say, synapses get more strengthened the more regularly they are activated. In this sense, conventional cross-domain associations correspond neurally to strong-permanent synapses.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> This empirical evidence supports the thesis that metaphoric thought is embodied. That is, it is physical in that it is neural in character (Lakoff, 2008, p. 84).

<sup>18</sup> Lakoff (2013, p. 10) stated that ideas, concepts, schemas, and the like, are “fixed brain circuits, with synapses strong enough to make them permanent”.

Neural co-activation is very crucial in showing why it is neurally impossible for proverbs to be prone to literalization. The reason is that each instantiation of a proverb in its fixed form strengthens its underlying synapses. That is to say, proverbs as semiotic signs, that is, as pairings of fixed forms and stable meanings, are grounded in stable neural patterns. Thus, the more frequently proverbs are used, the more likely their neural patterns are to get reinforced.

### **Conclusion**

Investigation of proverbs with respect to their main characteristics as generic statements and as fixed-form expressions helps gather insights into their semiotic status. Studies in the broader literature on this topic have led to a paradox, especially due to the distinction literal proverbs/metaphoric proverbs. Such a distinction hinges on two main subcategorical features: literal proverbs are subcategorized as [+human] and metaphoric proverbs as [-human]. The paradox subsists less in the distinction itself than in its implications. Indeed, only literal proverbs with the subcategorical feature [+human] can apply either literally or metaphorically to distinct order-level forms on the Great Chain. As a consequence, metaphoric proverbs, subcategorized as [-human], are limited in their scope to humans.

To try to resolve the paradox of proverbiality, we argued that both kinds of proverbs have an equal semiotic status. On the premise that each proverb is a two-level mapping, we were led to refine the GREAT CHAIN metaphor in two main respects. First, we proposed to replace the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor by the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy. The latter is metonymic in character because it maps a source onto a target within the same order-level on the Great Chain. Its main function is to make a specific instance stand for an entire category. Further, since metonymic mapping is reversible, just as a specific instance can stand for a category in terms of the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy, so too may a category stand for a specific instance in terms of the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metonymy.

Second, we suggested adding a new mechanism to the Great Chain model so as to account for metaphoric proverbs: the LEVEL-FORM metaphor. This mechanism is metaphoric in nature, to the extent that the mapping it carries out bears on distinct order-levels on the Great Chain. In the light of these refinements, it proved useful to maintain the distinction literal proverbs/metaphoric proverbs, insofar as each kind warrants a specific mapping. We claimed, in order to stress this

distinction, that literal proverbs would be better named metonymic proverbs owing to the ambiguity of the term literal.

Proverbs are semiotic signs. As such, they are best defined on the basis of their structuring mechanisms. We held in this respect that proverbs are pairings of fixed forms and stable meanings which rest essentially on the FORM FOR CONCEPT metonymy. This mechanism is grounded in fixed brain circuits; hence the reason proverbs cannot be subject to literalization.



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# A Corpus Study of Stance Adverbs in Modern Mandarin Chinese – *yexu*, *keneng*, and *haoxiang*

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### Abstract

The present study delves into the idiosyncrasies of three Chinese synonyms – *yexu*, *keneng*, and *haoxiang*, by adopting a corpus-based approach to analyze their similarities and differences. The treatment of *yexu*, *keneng*, and *haoxiang* in modern Chinese synonym dictionaries and published studies is reviewed, synthesized, and discussed in terms of part of speech, meaning, placement in sentences, and sentence patterns. Then drawing upon the *Academia Sinica Balanced Corpus of Modern Chinese* as a data source, the frequency of occurrence and use of the three targeted stance adverbs was investigated. The data reveals that all three stance adverbs are used to express uncertainty when they occur before subjects and function as a cohesive device when appearing at the beginning of sentences. Furthermore, it was found that the functions of three stance adverbs depends on the sentence pattern in which they appear. Other findings were that *yexu* occurs more frequently in rhetorical sentence patterns, *keneng* takes on many more parts of speech and occurs in more varied sentence patterns, and *haoxiang* is used to express the strongest tone and is prevalent in sentences containing similes. These and other similarities and differences found are further discussed.

### Keywords

Corpus, Mandarin Chinese, Stance adverbs, Synonyms

A stance is a pragmatic way of expressing conversational implicature, such as opinion, evaluation, suggestion, or the particular circumstances under which a clause is being spoken or

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written. In Mandarin Chinese, for instance, stance adverbs can be used to reflect the most pragmatic functions of the language (Qi, 2003) and occur in a variety of sentence patterns thereby allowing speakers and writers to express specific emotions. Hence, using a stance adverb properly in discourse can truly enhance and expand the ability to express one's intended meaning. Unfortunately, there is little provided in Mandarin Chinese dictionaries that indicate when it is appropriate to select one stance adverb over another when two or more stance adverbs are considered synonyms.

Stance adverbs have, however, started to gain the attention of Chinese synonym dictionary writers, becoming an integral part of said dictionaries' construction (e.g., Teng, 2009). *Yexu* 也, *keneng* 可能 and *haoxiang* 好像, for instance, three interchangeable or synonymous stance adverbs expressing conjecture with high frequency in Mandarin Chinese, are often discussed and compared in various synonym or function-word dictionaries (e.g., Lü, 1980, 2008; Yang & Jia, 2005, 2007; Jian, 2006; Zhu, 2007; Sheng, 2008). These Mandarin Chinese synonym dictionaries have all been written with a focus on meaning, sentence patterns, and pragmatic functions, but relatively little effort was made to comprehensively compare the real usage through analysis of corpus data. For example, while Lü's (1980, 2008) dictionary includes numerous examples using *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang*, the dictionary does not compare or analyze the differences or similarities of the three stance adverbs. For Yang and Jia's (2005, 2007) dictionary, they went a bit further in their analyses by pointing out the part of speech and placement in sentences for *keneng* and *haoxiang*; however, examples of how or when to use the two stance adverbs are not given. Likewise, Zhu (2007) only analyzed *yexu* without giving much attention to *keneng* and *haoxiang*. Researchers such as Jiang (2006), on the other hand, while providing more thorough discussions about the stance adverbs, have tended to deal with only one or two stance adverbs. Similarly, Sheng's (2008) discussion of the semantic and pragmatic functions of stance adverbs only focuses on one of the three stance adverbs targeted in the current study—*yexu*.

According to the dictionaries and literature reviewed above, dictionary compilers and previous researchers have not provided a comprehensive discussion of *yexu*, *keneng*, and *haoxiang* and instead have only discussed particular aspects of one or two of these three stance adverbs, including their parts of speech (Lü, 1980, 2008; Li & Thompson, 1983; Duan, 1995; Qi, 2003; Yang & Jia, 2005, 2007; Jiang, 2006; Zhu, 2007; Sheng, 2008; Qu, 2010), distribution in different sentence patterns (Lü, 1980, 2008; Li & Thompson, 1983; Duan, 1995; Qi, 2003; Yang & Jia,

2005, 2007; Jiang, 2006; Zhu, 2007; Sheng, 2008; Qu, 2010), placement in sentences (Lü, 1980, 2008; Li & Thompson, 1983; Duan, 1995; Qi, 2003; Yang & Jia, 2005, 2007; Jiang, 2006; Zhu, 2007; Sheng, 2008; Qu, 2010), and meaning (Duan, 1995; Qi, 2003; Jiang, 2006; Sheng, 2008). Hence, to systematically review how scholars have treated *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang*, we examine the four most widely discussed dimensions of these three stance adverbs, including part of speech, meaning, placement in sentences, and sentence patterns.

Firstly, *yexu* has the English meaning equivalents of “maybe” and “perhaps” and is foremost a stance adverb that presents speakers’ attitude and evaluation (Li & Thompson, 1983). Although *yexu* can at times function as an adverbial (Yang & Jia, 2005, 2007), Qu (2010) revealed *yexu* can function as a stance adverb to present a speaker’s opinion. *Keneng* can function as a particle or a noun with the equivalent English meanings of “maybe”, “possible” and “likely.” *Haoxiang*, with the equivalent English meanings of “maybe”, “seemingly” and “apparently”, can function as a verb or an adverb (Yang & Jia, 2005, 2007); however, if *hao* co-occurs with the verb *xiang*, it functions as an adverbial and can also be used in sentences containing a simile (Zhang, 2001, 2003).

Secondly, *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang* can occur at the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence. *Yexu* can be used before adverbs, adjectives, subjects (Lü, 1980, 2008) or verbs (Yang & Jia, 2005, 2007; Zhu, 2007). Furthermore, *yexu* can appear in isolation (Zhang, 2001, 2003) and often this is in an answer to a question (Jiang, 2006). *Yexu* can also occur at the beginning of a sentence to emphasize, annotate, or act as a linking word enhancing the flow of a passage (Jiang, 2006). While *Keneng* can be placed before or after subjects and before particles, *bu keneng* 不可能 is only used after subjects. *Henkeneng* 很可能 can be used before or after subjects (Lü, 1980, 2008; Zhang, 2001, 2003). *Haoxiang* can function the same as *yexu* and *keneng* depending on whether it occurs before or after a subject (Lü, 1980, 2008). In addition, *haoxiang* can be used as an adverbial after subjects (Lü, 1980, 2008; Yang & Jia, 2005, 2007).

Finally, we look at the sentence patterns of *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang* (See Table 1). *Yexu* can co-occur with *shi* 是 (parallel to English ‘is’). It can also co-occur with *bu* 不 and *meiyou* 没有 (parallel to English ‘no’ and ‘not have’) (Yang & Jia, 2005, 2007; Jiang, 2006). Adverbs such as *hen* 很 (parallel to English ‘very’), numerals, *you* 有 (parallel to English ‘have’), *bu* or *meiyou* and *de* 的 (showing possession) usually co-occur with *keneng* (Lü, 1980, 2008; Yang & Jia, 2005,

2007; Zhang, 2001, 2003). *Haoliang* can co-occur with *yi* 一樣 or *shide* 似的 (parallel to English ‘same’ and ‘like that’) (Zhu, 2007).

From the above review, it can be concluded that *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoliang* are usually discussed in the literature using four dimensions, including (1) part of speech, (2) meaning, (3) placement in sentences, and (4) sentence patterns. Table 1 provides an overview of the findings from the literature and dictionary review.

**Table 1**  
*The four dimensions of yexu, keneng and haoliang*

Stance Adverbs / Four Dimensions	<i>yexu</i>	<i>keneng</i>	<i>haoliang</i>
Part of Speech	1. stance adverb 2. judgement adverb	1. particle 2. noun 3. stance adverb	1. verb 2. stance adverb
Meaning	To guess or show uncertainty (i.e., “maybe” and “perhaps”)	To show possibility, probability and likelihood (i.e., “maybe”, “possible” and “likely.”)	To show uncertainty, or indicate something is seemingly or apparently so (i.e., “maybe”, “seemingly” and “apparently”)
Placement in Sentences	1. before subjects, adverbs, verbs or adjectives 2. after subjects 3. single use	1. before or after subjects 2. before particles 3. <i>bu keneng</i> occurs after subjects 4. <i>hen keneng</i> occurs before or after subjects	1. before or after subjects 2. before verbs
Sentence Patterns	1. <i>yexu</i> COP... 2. <i>yexu</i> NEG ( <i>bu</i> / <i>meiyou</i> )...	1. <i>you keneng</i> ... 2. ADV <i>keneng</i> ... 3. numeral <i>keneng</i> ... 4. NEG ( <i>bu</i> / <i>meiyou</i> ) <i>keneng</i> ... 5. ...DE <i>keneng</i>	1. <i>haoliang</i> ... <i>yi</i> 一樣 2. <i>haoliang</i> ... <i>shide</i>

As can be seen in Table 1, although *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoliang* all express meanings of uncertainty, their placement in sentences and sentence patterns are very different. Meanwhile, most

dictionaries indicate that the stance adverbs are interchangeable, but while mentioning the placement in sentences and sentence patterns, few detailed distinctions or even example sentences are provided to illustrate claims made about their functions (Zhu, 2007; Yang & Jia, 2005, 2007).

Taken altogether, all of the examples of *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang* usage found in dictionaries and the previous literature have contributed to our understanding of expressing stance in Mandarin Chinese. Still, a corpus study, different from previous studies, is more beneficial to our understanding of the use of these three stance adverbs because the use of authentic and attested corpus data is likely to introduce more rigor into theory testing than using introspection and isolated sentences (Channell, 2000). Furthermore, Norrick (2009, p. 865) posits that the use of electronic corpora gives pragmatic research “a broader, more secure basis”. Thus, a corpus-based approach can be more beneficial to our understanding of these three stance adverbs.

Zhen (2008) used a Chinese-English parallel corpus<sup>20</sup> to examine the function of stance adverbials in Chinese political texts and their corresponding English translations, finding that the adverbials were flexible in terms of their sentence placement. Ai (2012) also examined a comprehensive set of 34 adverbs occurring in the *Academia Sinica Balanced Corpus of Modern Chinese* expressing certainty, likelihood, attitude, and style across different communicative modes, diverse genres, and media channels, finding that the adverbs possessed nuanced functional and distributional differences that would have possibly gone unnoticed through introspection studies or consulting of existing reference books. While these two studies are steps in the right direction, a systematic and comprehensive large-scale analysis of corpus derived data for synonymous stance adverbs has yet to be done. Therefore, the aim of the current study is to explore the idiosyncrasies and semantic distinctions of *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang* by examining their placement in sentences and sentence patterns found in corpus data. More specifically, the following research questions were investigated:

- (1) Which stance adverb (*yexu*, *keneng*, *haoxiang*) occurs most frequently in Modern Mandarin Chinese?
- (2) Do *yexu*, *keneng*, and *haoxiang* differ in their placement in sentences and appearance in sentence patterns?

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<sup>20</sup> The National Social Science Fund of China funds the Chinese-English parallel corpus employed. It is still being compiled. The corpus has been designed to include 10 million tokens with four sub corpora: international politics, science and technology, economy and trade, and human studies.



## Method and Materials

### Corpus

The corpus used in this study was the ten-million-token *Academia Sinica Balanced Corpus of Modern Chinese*<sup>21</sup> (*Sinica Corpus* hereafter). The *Sinica Corpus* was designed to be a representative sample of modern Mandarin Chinese, containing texts on different topics and classified according to five criteria: genre (narration, argumentation, exposition, and description), communicative mode (written, spoken, written-to-be-read, written-to-be-spoken, spoken-to-be-written), and media (newspaper, academic journals, conversation, interview). All texts in the corpus are word segmented and part-of-speech tagged. This allows one to examine placement in sentences and sentence patterns.

### Procedures

With the purpose of obtaining information about *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang* in modern Mandarin Chinese, we utilized the *Sinica Corpus* to extract lexical data including frequency, placement in sentences, and sentence patterns. The placement in sentences and sentence patterns for *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang* targeted in this study are those that were given the most attention in previous studies and published dictionaries (see Table 1).

To answer the first research question, we ran three queries of the *Sinica Corpus* for each of the three targeted stance adverbs (i.e., *yexu*, *keneng*, *haoxiang*) to calculate frequency of occurrence. Next, to answer research question two, we extracted all sentences containing *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang*. After this, we manually categorized the placement in sentences (see Table 3) and the sentences patterns (see Table 4) for the three targeted stance adverbs. Sentence placement and sentence patterns were based on the findings reported in previous literature. During this process, we checked for inaccuracies and repeated sentences in the raw data and adjusted frequencies when found necessary. Lastly, after calculating percentages for placement in sentences and sentence patterns, representative sample sentences containing the three targeted stance adverbs were selected for discussion.

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<sup>21</sup>Data cited herein has been extracted from the Sinica Corpus Online service (<http://asbc.iis.sinica.edu.tw>), compiled by Institute of Information Science and CKIP group in Academia Sinica in Taiwan. All rights in the texts cited are reserved.

## Results

The results are displayed in Tables 2-4. The frequency of occurrence for *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang* in the *Sinica Corpus* is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
*Frequency of occurrence for yexu, keneng and haoxiang in the Sinica Corpus*

	<i>yexu</i>	<i>keneng</i>	<i>haoxiang</i>
Total	1,666	9,588	2,074

*Keneng* had the highest frequency of occurrence at 9,588, whereas *yexu* (1,666) and *haoxiang* (2,074) occurred only about one fifth the number of times as *keneng*.

Table 3 and Table 4 present the frequency of occurrence of *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang* in the *Sinica Corpus* data with respect to their placement in sentences and sentences patterns. Table 3 shows that *yexu* was found to occur most frequently before subjects, whereas it was the least frequent for *keneng* and *haoxiang*. Table 3 also indicates that *keneng* and *haoxiang* occurred most frequently after subjects, while *yexu* occurred almost equally as frequently in the before and after subject positions.

Table 4 shows that *yexu* occurs most frequently in the patterns *yexushi* while *haoxiang* occurred most frequently in *haoxiang...yiyang*. While the corpus data showed that *keneng* occurred most frequently in the pattern ADV *keneng*, its use occurred in more sentence patterns than *yexu* and *keneng*.

**Table 3**

*The frequency of occurrence for placement in the sentences of yexu, keneng and haoxiang in the Sinica Corpus*

	<i>yexu</i>		% <i>keneng</i>		% <i>haoxiang</i>	%
before subjects	263	46	91	4	51	10
after subjects	261	45	2,096	96	472	88
in isolation	50	9	10	0	13	2
Total	574	100	2,197	100	536	100

**Table 4**

*The frequency of occurrence for sentence patterns containing yexu, keneng and haoxiang in the Sinica Corpus*

	sentence patterns	Frequency	%
<i>yexu</i>	<i>yexu</i> COP	275	88
	<i>yexu</i> NEG ( <i>bu</i> / <i>meiyou</i> )	38	12
Total		313	100
<i>keneng</i>	<i>you keneng</i>	701	20
	ADV <i>keneng</i>	2,231	63
	numeral <i>keneng</i>	37	1
	NEG ( <i>bu</i> / <i>meiyou</i> ) <i>keneng</i>	245	7
	...DE <i>keneng</i>	309	9
Total		3,523	100
<i>haoxiang</i>	<i>haoxiang</i> ... <i>iyang</i>	140	63
	<i>haoxiang</i> ... <i>shide</i>	82	37
Total		222	100

In sum, the data revealed that in the *Sinica Corpus*, *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang* tended to frequently occur in specific sentence patterns (see Appendix A) and their placement in sentences was rather predictable.

### Discussion

Below, we examine the distribution of the three stance adverbs in the data retrieved from the *Sinica Corpus*. In doing so, we consider the similarities and differences of *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang*.

### Frequency of occurrence

*Keneng* occurred far more frequently than the other two stance adverbs. We believe this is because *keneng* can function as a particle, noun, and adverb, whereas *yexu* can function only as an adverb and *haoxiang* mainly co-occurs with *yiYang* or *shide* to form a simile. Moreover, *keneng* can also be found in more sentence patterns than *yexu* and *haoxiang*. Consequently, it is not surprising that *keneng* was found to occur more frequently in modern Mandarin Chinese than *yexu* and *haoxiang*.

### Placement in Sentences

According to the corpus data, *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang* can all occur before subjects or at the beginning of sentences.

(1)

也許只是捕風捉影，但我還是要一吐為快。

**Yěxǔ** zhǐshì bǔfēngzhuōyǐng, dàn wǒ hái shì yào yī tǔ wéi kuài.

**Maybe** ADV GEN just chasing shadows, but 1SG ADV GEN want a spit for fast.

**Maybe** I'm just chasing shadows, but I still want to spit it out.

(2)

可能我在口氣上有明顯的不是之處，使對方頓感驚訝和困惑。

**Kěnéng** wǒ zài kǒuqì shàng yǒu míngxiǎn de bùshì zhī chù, shǐ duìfāng dùn gǎn jīngyà hé kùnhuò.

**Maybe** 1SG PAR in tone of comments have obvious DE incorrect, make other side ADV feel surprised and confused.

**Maybe** my tone of voice sounds inappropriate, which obviously makes the other party feel surprised and confused.

(3)

好像那是史蒂芬史匹伯的電影，錯過可惜。

**Hǎoxiàng** nà shì shǐdīfēn shǐ pǐ bó de diànyǐng, cuòguò kěxí.

**Seems** that GEN Steven Spielberg DE movie, miss pity.

It **seems** to be a Steven Spielberg film, so it would be a pity if you miss it.

Here in (1)-(3), *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang* function as adverbs, with which the speaker strikes a speculative tone emphasizing that something is uncertain. When *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang* are located at the beginning of a sentence as in (1)-(3), they are used to elaborate on a previous utterance, and sometimes used to provide additional information. For example, prior to (1) being spoken by the interlocutor, s/he was hesitating to speak out about something unusual that happened earlier while the person s/he was speaking to was not present. Prior to (2) being spoken by the interlocutor, s/he had stated that s/he needed to prepare for something in advance, so s/he thought maybe his/her tone is inappropriate which makes the other party feel surprised and confused. In (3), the situation is that two people are in a lift. They cannot look at each other, so they must stare at the level number going up which is just like watching a Steven Spielberg movie. Here, *haoxiang* is not only used to mean ‘maybe’ or ‘perhaps,’ but is also used in a rhetorical way. Thus, *haoxiang* takes on a dual role in this sentence. One is to help the speaker express uncertainty, while the other is the use of simile. Thus, if *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang* occur at the beginning of a sentence, they function as an expression of a speaker’s uncertainty or doubt and serve as a linking word enhancing the flow of discourse.

(4)

啄木鳥想，這棵樹**也許**有病了，他要給樹治一治病。

Zhuómùniǎo xiǎng, zhè kē shù **yěxǔ** yǒu bìngle, tā yào gěi shù zhì yī zhì bìng.

Woodpecker thought, tree **maybe** have sick PRT, 3SG want give tree treat disease.

The woodpecker thinks, **maybe** this tree is sick, so he/it needs to treat the disease.

(5)

巨大的雲**可能**使氣溫升高，對印度和東南亞雨季造成影響。

Jùdà de yún **kěnéng** shǐ qìwēn shēng gāo, duì yìndù hé dōngnányà yǔjì zàochéng yǐngxiǎng.

Huge DE clouds **maybe** make temperature rise, to India and Southeast Asian rainy season cause effect.

**Maybe** the huge clouds raised the temperature, which affected the rainy season in India and Southeast Asia.

(6)

太陽昇得更高了，大地**好像**變成一個烤箱。

Tàiyáng shēng dé gèng gāole, dàdì **hǎoxiàng** biànréng yīgè kǎoxiāng.

Sun rise DE higher PRT, earth **seems** become one CLF oven.

As the sun rises higher, the earth **seems** to become like an oven.

In (4), the woodpecker has seen the leaves in the tree dry out and yellow, so it thought to treat the tree. In (5), when huge clouds came up from the burning of an oil well, it was noted by the speaker that this may cause a change in the atmosphere on earth and even affect the climate in India and Southeast Asia. Undeniably, to some degree *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang* all express the English meanings of ‘perhaps’ or ‘maybe’, but substituting *yexu* for *keneng*, *keneng* for *haoxiang* or *haoxiang* for *yexu* will feel unnatural in (4)-(6). Our data suggests that *haoxiang* is used to express a simile, but *yexu* and *keneng* are not used in this way.

While the three stance adverbs are all located after subjects in (4)-(6) to express the doubtful attitude of a speaker, the tone of *haoxiang* is the strongest, followed by *keneng* and then finally *yexu*. For example, if we take the sentence “stance adverb + *xiayu le* (下雨了) (‘stance adverb’ + it’s raining)” to express that it is raining, the use of *haoxiang* would indicate a strong certainty of rain, while *keneng* would indicate a moderate certainty of rain and *yexu* would indicate the least certainty of rain. Thus, if we compare the three, the certainty of the interlocutor will be “*Haoxiang xiayu le.*” > “*Keneng xiayu le.*” > “*Yexu xiayu le.*”

### Sentence Patterns Containing *Yexu*

*Yexu* was found to occur most frequently in the sentence pattern *yexushi*. *Yexu* occurred in isolation least frequently. We suggest *yexu* expresses more intense emotion than *keneng* or *haoxiang*. That is, the subjective emotional tone of a speaker or writer can be increased with the use of *yexu*, a higher level of subjective consciousness. In other words, the use of *yexu* is indicative of a speaker or writer’s weak stance, as in (7).

(7)

**也許**是一心在追逐目前的獵物，才疏忽了四周的美好；**也許**是心存敵意，再 也看不出對方的好意。

**Yěxǔ shì** yīxīn zài zhuīzhú mùqián de lièwù, cái shūhūle sìzhōu dì měihǎo; **yěxǔ shì** xīn cún díyì, zài yě kàn bù chū duìfāng de hǎoyì.

**Maybe COP** wholeheartedly PAR tracing present DE prey, PAR neglect PAR surrounded DE beauty; **maybe COP** heart feeling hostile, again also despise other side DE good intention.

**Maybe it is** so busy chasing its prey that it neglects the surrounding beauty; **maybe it is** feeling so hostile that it no longer recognizes the kindness of its opposition.

In (7), in addition to conveying a doubtful tone, the speaker's rhetorical purpose for using this sentence pattern should also be considered. The *yexu* COP...*yexu* COP... sentence pattern may have been used to express a stronger subjective emotional tone or simply an indication of a speaker's personal style.

The use of *yexu* indicates conjecture and judgement; however, according to our data retrieved from the corpus as in (7) above, we also found that when *yexu* co-occurs with COP *shi*, it can serve three other functions. Besides functioning as a cohesive device, if *yexu* is used twice in a sentence, this adds symmetry to a sentence or makes the two sentence halves parallel. In addition, the pattern *yexu* COP...*yexu* COP... allows *yexu* to highlight a choice, where the first occurrence of *yexu* represents one choice and the second occurrence of *yexu* an alternative (see Sheng, 2008).

### **Sentence Patterns Containing *Keneng***

When *you* co-occurs with *keneng*, the tone of the statement becomes stronger in comparison to *you* co-occurring with *yexu* or *haoxiang*. Moreover, this sentence pattern implies high probability that something can truly happen in the near future, as in (8).

(8)

希望所產生的思想**有可能**對未來的文明的命運，產生深遠的影響。

Xīwàng suǒ chǎnshēng de sīxiǎng **yǒu kěnéng** duì wèilái de wénmíng de mìngyùn,  
chǎnshēng shēnyuǎn de yǐngxiǎng.  
Hope PRT produce DE idea **probably** to future GEN civilized GEN destiny produce far-  
reaching DE affect.

Ideas arising out of hope **will probably** deeply affect the future destiny of civilization.

If *you* was not present in (8), the speaker's tone would be weakened and subjectivity decreases. Likewise, since the part of speech of *keneng* in (8) is a noun, neither *youyexu* nor *youhoaxiang* is possible because these are ungrammatical combinations. This is because both *yexu* and *haoxiang* cannot function as a noun.

The most frequently occurring sentence pattern (63%) containing a stance adverb was “adverb + *keneng*”. This is not surprising because *keneng* can co-occur with many different adverbs, but this is not the case with *yexu* and *haoxiang*.

According to our data, the two classifiers *zhong* 種 (parallel in English ‘kind’) and *ge* 個 (parallel in English ‘one’) could only co-occur with *keneng* if *keneng* was functioning as a noun. We also found that when *keneng* is functioning as a noun, only the classifiers *ge* and *zhong* can be used. The numeral and the demonstrative pronouns *zhe* 這 (parallel in English ‘this’) and *na* 那 (parallel in English ‘that’) can also occur before the classifier as shown in (9)-(10).

(9)

一個人**有這種可能**，代表所有的人都有這種**可能**。

Yīgèrén yǒu zhè zhǒng kěnéng, dàibiǎo suǒyǒu de rén dōu yǒu zhè zhǒng kěnéng.

A CLF man **has this kind possibility**, represent all DE men all **has this kind possibility**.

If one person **has this possibility**, that means everyone **has this possibility**.



(10)

只有兩個可能。

Zhǐyǒu liǎng gè kěnéng.

ADV have **two CLF possible**.

Only **two possibilities** exist.

When the classifier *ge* co-occurs with *keneng*, the subject in the sentence is an indefinite noun (i.e., pronoun). If, however, the classifier *zhong* co-occurs with *keneng*, the subjects are definite, and the sentence is more formal than when *ge* is used (compare 9 and 10).

The negative adverbs *bu* and *meiyou* can co-occur with *keneng*. According to our data, there were 213 occurrences of *bukeneng*, making up 87% of the occurrences of the sentence pattern “NEG *keneng*”. In spite of this, we also found that *meiyou keneng* or *mei keneng* as shown in (11)-(12) are also acceptable in oral discourse.

(11)

台灣沒有可能去製作好萊塢式的大眾娛樂電影。

Táiwān méiyǒu kěnéng qù zhìzuò hǎolái wù shì de dàzhòng yúle diànyǐng.

Taiwan **NEG possible** go make Hollywood DE public entertaining movies.

It is **impossible** for Taiwan to make entertaining Hollywood-style films for the general public.

(12)

整個政府部門同時嘗試是不可能的。

Zhěnggè zhèngfǔ bùmén tóngshí chángshì shì bù kěnéng de.

Whole CLF government department same time try COP **NEG possible** DE.

For every government department to try it at the same time is **impossible**.

In (11), the topic is the movie industry and the comment on the topic is that Taiwanese movies cannot be made as entertaining as Hollywood movies. *Bu keneng* in (12) appears within the pattern *shi...de* 是...的, which indicates strong negation. Furthermore, *meiyou keneng* can be

replaced by *bu keneng*, but *bu keneng* is rarely replaced by *meiyou keneng*. We further suggest that this is because the tone of *bu keneng* is much stronger than *meiyou keneng*.

As shown in (13), a frequent sentence pattern containing *keneng* was “*de + keneng*”. However, *de* can occur before or after *keneng*, but the meaning of uncertainty remains the same. If *de* is used before *keneng*, it has to appear in the following sentence pattern “...DE *keneng*” (e.g., 可能成功 = 成功的可能).

(13)

這些船隻很**可能**是明清、宋元、唐末，甚至還有**更早的可能**？

Zhèxiē chuánzhī hěn **kěnéng** shì míng qīng, sòng yuán, táng mò, shènzhì hái yǒu **gèng zǎo de kěnéng**?

These ships very possible GEN Ming Qing, Song Yuan, Tang end, even yet have **earlier DE possible**?

Are these ships **possibly** from the Ming or Qing Dynasty, the Song or Yuan Dynasty, the end of the Tang Dynasty, or **maybe even** from an **earlier** period?

*Keneng* can appear after *gengzao* to form the sentence pattern “*gengzao + de keneng*”. This was not shown for *yexu* or *haoxiang*. In such an instance, *keneng* functions as a noun and the tone is considered formal, as in written discourse. In earlier studies, Yang and Jia (2005, 2007) illustrated that *keneng* can take on several parts of speech including noun, particle, or stance adverb. Lü (1980, 2008) and Zhang (2001, 2003) also observed that *keneng* can be one component of a large number of different sentence patterns. The use of *keneng* by a speaker or writer indicates a stronger emphasis and functions to strengthen the speaker’s conjecture and thereby the speaker’s attitude. As a result, the above reasons might help to explain why the number of occurrences of *keneng* in the corpus data is much larger than *yexu* and *haoxiang*.

### Sentence Patterns Containing *haoxiang*

*Haoxiang...yiyang* is a unique sentence pattern because nouns, complete declarative sentences, or focus sentences (i.e., sentences containing the pattern *shi* 是...*de* 的) can appear inside the pattern. Our data also revealed that this sentence pattern was often used to finish discussion of a topic.

*Haoxiang...shide* also fulfills the same function as the sentence pattern *haoxiang...yiyang*. The adverb of time *jiu* 就 is rarely found to occur before in a sentence containing this sentence pattern. Furthermore, *haoxiang...yiyang* was found to frequently be used in sentences containing literary rhetoric, as in (14) and (15).

(14)

燈光閃亮著，**好像**天空上的星星躲在每一個燈籠裡**一樣**。

Dēngguāng shǎn liàngzhe, **hǎoxiàng** tiānkōng shàng de xīngxīng duǒ zài měi yīgè dēnglóng lǐ **yīyàng**.

Lights are twinkling PAR, **seems like** in the sky DE the stars hidden every CLF lantern in the **same**

The twinkling lights **seem like** stars from the sky are hiding in every lantern.

(15)

這桃子**好像**真的聽到了老婆婆的叫聲似的。

Zhè táozi **hǎoxiàng** zhēn de tīngdàole lǎopópo de jiào shēng shì de.

This peach **seems** really heard PAR old lady DE call voice **like**.

This peach **seems like** it can actually hear the old lady's call.

Meshing nicely with the findings of Zhu (2007) and Yang and Jia (2005, 2007), our study also revealed the functions of *haoxiang* to form similes or to act as a marker to end a topic under discussion. Prior to (14), the speaker has described lanterns hanging in a garden and was astonished by their beauty. (15) is taken from a famous Japanese fairy tale about a child in a peach where after an old woman calls the peach by the river the peach seems to hear her. Besides appearing in literary texts, *haoxiang* was found to be used in these two sentence patterns when speakers or writers were using simile to express their thoughts about a topic. Functionally, *haoxiang* is very different from the stance adverbs *yexu* and *keneng*.

## Conclusions

This paper began with a focused literature review of three synonymous stance adverbs—*yexu*, *keneng* and *hoaxing*—in terms of their meanings, parts of speech, placement in sentences, and sentence patterns. Although a review of how the stance adverbs were used in dictionaries and treated in the literature showed evidence that these three stance adverbs are frequently used and have distinguishing features, the comparative and pragmatic research of stance adverbs was found to be limited and they had not been dealt with systematically in synonym or function-word dictionaries (Jiang, 2006). Following the review, a corpus-based investigation was reported on including the stance adverbs' frequencies of occurrence and appearances in sentence patterns and placements in sentences as shown through the retrieved data. It was revealed that the three stance adverbs occur in different sentence locations and can at times be replaced by one other. Still, while they were found to be interchangeable under certain circumstances, we also observed that the use of one of the three stance adverbs can vary the tone or strength of a speaker's stance. In addition, the three stance adverbs play important roles in enhancing the flow of discourse.

The results of this study also suggest that *yexu*, *keneng* and *haoxiang* perform different functions in different sentence patterns. *Yexu* conveys a speaker's attitude with the richest and most subjective tone. *Keneng* occurs most frequently among the three and co-occurs most often with other adverbs; usually this is when a speaker wishes to express stronger uncertainty. *Haoxiang* is commonly used after verbs to signal a speaker's subjectivity. As with all research, this study is not without its limitations. Future research could build upon this one by examine corpora data of other varieties of modern Mandarin Chinese, for example varieties in mainland China or the Macau and Hong Kong SARs. In addition, the corpus data retrieved for the current study was made up of both spoken and written language. A future study comparing both spoken and written modern Mandarin Chinese used in Taiwan would also be welcomed.

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## Appendix A

### Sentence Patterns

<i>Yexu</i> 也許	<i>yexushi</i> <i>yexu bu</i> <i>yexu meiyou</i>	也許是 也許不 也許沒有
<i>Keneng</i> 可能	<i>you keneng</i> <i>bu keneng</i> <i>meiyou keneng</i> <i>de keneng</i>	有可能 不可能 沒有可能 的可能
<i>Haoxiang</i> 好像	<i>haoxiang...yiyang</i> <i>haoxiang...shide</i>	好像...一樣 好像...似的

## Appendix B

### List of grammatical terms

1SG	first person singular 第一人稱單數
3SG	third person singular 第三人稱單數
ADV	adverb 副詞
CLF	classifier 量詞
COP	copula 是
DE	de 的、之、得、地
NEG	negation 否定
PAR	particle 助詞
PRT	clause final particle 句末助詞



# Sentence Length in Education Research Articles: A Comparison between Anglophone and Turkish Authors

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### Abstract

Members of a scientific discourse community can use a variety of stylistic features to share their research with others in a clear fashion. One such feature is sentence length. Although there has been much discussion about how long the average sentence length in scientific writing should be, limited attention has been given to the ways in which educational scientists write. In the era of English as a lingua franca, it is also useful to identify how Anglophone and non-Anglophone scholars compose their research. To this end, this study adopted a descriptive approach to investigate sentence lengths in 100 education research articles from 26 peer-reviewed journals. Sentence types in long sentences were also studied. Analyses were conducted both manually and using online applications. Results showed that the average sentence length was 24.7 words, and authors used longer sentences in the Discussion (26.24) and Literature Review (26.10) sections. Results also revealed that Anglophone authors used longer sentences. Both groups used complex sentences frequently. Turkish authors used simple sentences more often in the Discussion section, while Anglophone authors opted for complex structures more often. Results suggest that scholars writing education research articles tend to lengthen their sentences in particular sections, and that Turkish scholars lengthen their sentences using an increased number of complex and compound-complex sentences which may not always be necessary. Results are discussed, followed by recommendations for teaching and future researchers.

### Keywords

Sentence length, Academic writing, Discourse community, Education research articles, Sentence types

Perceived as the language of science, English is the language in which scholars most often choose to publish their research. This is generally done with the aim of disseminating research findings to a wider audience. It also helps scholars gain greater visibility in their fields of study around the globe. They also become more employable and enjoy greater promotion prospects. As

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a result, there is a proliferation of journal publications in English from both Anglophone and non-Anglophone countries. While many journals accept publications in English only, some journals in non-Anglophone countries require authors to submit their manuscripts in both English and their native language. One example of the latter in the Turkish context is *Eğitim ve Bilim* (Education and Science). Also, journals published in languages other than English often require authors to write an abstract and/or extended summary in English.

So widespread is the use of English in scientific publications that stylistic features may be expected to vary between authors of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. One such feature which has attracted relatively little attention from researchers is *sentence length*. There is a lack of agreement on how long an average sentence in scientific writing should be. Guidelines prepared for Elsevier journal publication advise that sentences in scientific writing should average around 12-17 words (Griffies, Perrie, & Hull, 2013), whereas other rhetoricians and readability experts suggest aiming for an average of 20-25 words (Garner, 2000). Nonetheless, previous research has revealed a higher average (27.6) in scientific writing (Barber in Gotti, 2008). It is also important to note that authors in different disciplines may behave differently. This results in distinct discourse communities in which authors have their distinct mechanisms of discourse among themselves (Swales, 1990). Therefore, it is beneficial to conduct investigations into stylistic tendencies relative to sentence length in discourse communities.

Much energy has been devoted to this aspect of scientific writing in natural sciences; however, there is a dearth of studies investigating it in social sciences in general or in specific fields. To address this gap, the current study aims to identify the average length of sentences in research articles (RAs) in the education discipline. I have two main reasons for focusing on this particular field. The first is a personal one. As a non-Anglophone education scholar I myself write research articles in English without much deliberate consideration of the average length of my sentences. I undertook this research with the expectation that it would raise my awareness of this aspect of my own writing. The second reason is that identifying educators' writing behavior could inform their teaching and preparation of future scholars<sup>23</sup>. With these motives in mind, this study sought answers to the following questions:

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<sup>23</sup> As a scholar teaching rhetoric and composition myself, this will also help address my own students' needs.

- (1) a. What is the average length of sentences in education research articles?  
b. Does the average length of sentences differ according to section?
- (2) How does the average length of sentences by Anglophone authors compare to that of sentences by Turkish non-Anglophone authors?
- (3) a. Which sentence types commonly increase sentence length in education research articles?  
b. Do sentence types differ according to article section and authors' linguistic background?

## **Literature review**

### **Sentence variety and sentence length**

Authors' use of language can help them achieve an authorial voice. Although they often do this through their choice of vocabulary and sentence types, Dean (2000) notes that their choice of sentence lengths also helps establish a position. Mamishev and Williams (2010) recommend that authors use a variety of sentence types to make their writing more sophisticated. They also suggest that authors avoid writing short sentences consecutively, since frequent short and disconnected sentences reduce readability. On the other hand, Kline (2009) warns that writing complicated sentences increases authors' chances of making grammatical mistakes. Extensive sentences also risk causing readers to lose interest. Research articles with high concentration of long sentences at the expense of content also likely exceed the word limits set by journals, thereby facing the risk of outright rejection (Miller, 2017). All in all, a blend of short and long sentences written in a clear fashion will help establish a rhythm. A wide range of lengths helps avoid stagnation in writing by preventing periods at the ends of sentences from occurring at regular intervals (Alley, 1996). Walter (2017) notes that variety can be established through a mixture of sentence types including simple, compound, and complex structures. This in turn helps writers create a rhythm that feels natural for themselves, resulting in a unique style. As a result, they will be more likely to achieve an authorial voice in their writing.

Clear communication between authors and readers is of great importance. Gopen and Swan (1990, p. 550) posit that

[t]he fundamental purpose of scientific discourse is not the mere presentation of information and thought, but rather its actual communication. It does not matter how pleased an author might be to have converted all the right data into sentences and paragraphs; it matters only whether a large majority of the reading audience accurately perceives what the author had in mind.

To this end, publication manuals provide guidelines on how researchers should write for clear communication. The American Psychological Association (APA) (2009) warns that “short words and short sentences are easier to comprehend than are long ones [although] a long technical term ... may be more precise than several short words” (p. 67). To shorten sentences, APA argues that economy in expression is particularly important to consider. In an effort to be emphatic, some writers end up using redundant language. Elimination of redundancy helps shorten sentences. APA also states that “unconstrained wordiness lapses into embellishment and flowery writing, which are ... inappropriate in scientific writing” (p. 67). APA also draws attention to sentence variety by saying (p. 68):

Although writing only in short, simple sentences produces choppy and boring prose, writing exclusively in long, involved sentences results in difficult, sometimes incomprehensible material. Varied sentence length helps readers maintain interest and comprehension. When involved concepts require long sentences, the components should proceed logically. Direct, declarative sentences with simple, common word are usually best.

Similarly, Matthews and Matthews (2000) warn that using frequent short sentences can be awkward. They suggest that authors consider linking and expanding some sentences if they consistently write sentences of fewer than 12 words, which they claim is rather rare in scientific writing. According to Kallan (2016), academic writing often requires authors to include detailed explanations which increase average sentence length. In the case of research writing in particular, it has been noted that authors in social sciences and humanities tend to write long sentences (Turner, 2008, para. 2) in comparison to other disciplines such as medicine and applied sciences.

### **Scholars as non-Anglophone writers**

As a result of the rich scholarly activities undertaken by researchers around the globe, voluminous literature has been produced in English by non-native speakers (NNSs). Publications by these scholars are often on par with those by native-speakers of English (NSEs) (Buckingham, 2008). However, there is evidence from research showing the difficulties NNSs face when composing scholarly texts. To illustrate, Englander (2014) reported that NNSs find writing in English 21% more difficult on average than writing in their mother tongue. This is often caused by challenges with vocabulary, syntax, organization, and methodological issues. Previous research has also shown that the challenges with writing in English put Mexican Spanish-speaking scientists under considerable stress (Hanauer & Englander, 2011). Similarly, Buckingham found that despite their rich bilingual education background, Turkish scientists felt at a disadvantage when writing in English due to the excessive amount of time they had to spend perfecting their papers. They felt they needed to pay particular attention to stylistic features such as the passive voice, tone, and sentence length. They also faced challenges using articles and punctuation. Collectively, these put extra strain on their scholarly activities. Another study by van Weijen (2014) found that writing in English can be more time-consuming for NNSs than it is for NSEs since it requires more cognitive effort processing the language. This research also showed that NNSs' use of rhetorical styles was not always on par with that of NSEs and the expectations of the English-language research community. Within the Middle East region, Iranian postgraduate students have also been observed to face several challenges when writing their theses in English (Fatahipour & Nemati, 2016). Among these were a lack of clarity in explaining, grammatical errors, organizational inconsistencies and issues with thesis formatting. The researchers attribute these challenges to a variety of causes including students' limited preparation for thesis writing, their lack of experience with APA, and hasty preparations.

As relates to sentence length, many NNSs have been observed to write long sentences prompted by their tendency towards wordiness. Newell (2014) observes that these authors are often asked to shorten their sentences during revision for publication. However, another study found that the average length of sentences in articles submitted to the British Journal of Surgery was higher for NSEs than it was for NNSs (Mertens, 2008). The researcher attributes this to NSEs' tendency to use longer, more complex sentence constructions.

Evidence also points to difficulties faced by non-Anglophone/NNS postgraduate students when required to publish in English. For instance, some postgraduate students in the Turkish context had difficulty expressing their opinions and feelings when they had to publish in English as a graduation requirement (Ozdemir, 2014). When submitting their papers for publication, they often felt reviewers might be judgmental because of grammatical mistakes in their writing. Zhang and Zhu (2016) also point out how inexperienced Chinese authors' poor use of language and writing skills often distressed editors of English journals. Despite this, research investigating the criteria used by journal reviewers indicated that how the English language used was not a strong predictor of acceptance or rejection of a proposal submission (Bocanegra-Valle, 2015). Rather, other factors including theoretical background, adequate focus, organization, and methodology played a role in reviewers' decision. It was found that language problems could be tackled with reviewers' comments and suggestions.

## **Method**

### **Study corpus**

The corpus for this study was comprised of a total of 100 randomly chosen research articles (RAs). Previous researchers have often used SSCI qualification as a basis for including texts in their corpus. However, in this study I did not adopt this criterion as it might limit the represented discourse community to highly selective journals. Also, only RAs published in open-access journals were included. However, one criterion used was that all the journals should be peer-reviewed. This resulted in the inclusion of 26 peer-reviewed education journals, a list of which is provided in Appendix A. Fifty of the RAs in these journals were written by Anglophone authors, and the other 50 were written by Turkish authors using English as a *lingua franca*. For a reliable comparison between the two corpora, special care was taken to choose papers written by Turkish authors affiliated with an institution in Turkey at the time of their publication. RAs co-authored by non-Turkish authors were not included in the Turkish corpus. A similar approach was taken in compiling the Anglophone corpus. Although it was practically impossible to verify the authors' actual identity, a variety of factors were considered including authors' full names, affiliations, and any other relevant information provided about them.

Details of the corpus regarding word count can be seen in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**  
*Corpus size*

Section	Word Count (n=100)		
	Min	Max	Total
Abstract	80	308	17,524
Intro./Lit. Review	547	4,326	167,984
Methods	181	2,875	99,106
Results	162	5,095	180,883
Dis./Rec./Conc.	342	4,304	129,114
<i>Total</i>	<i>594,611</i>		

As seen in Table 1, the corpus consisted of 594,611 words from 100 education RAs. This may not be considered a large size for corpus studies in general. However, given that this study focuses on one particular discipline (i.e. educational sciences), results derived from a 594,611-running-word corpus may be representative. In fact, Evans (n.d.) posits that a small corpus can yield a significant amount of useful data when investigating high frequency items, and he warns that a large corpus can be overwhelming. In addition, even though computer technology allows researchers to examine a large corpus, some practical considerations may not permit this. To illustrate, in this study I had to correct defects caused during the conversion of the texts from .pdf into .doc format. Issues also occurred during the identification of sentence lengths through the use of an online software, details of which are given below. For these reasons, the size of the corpus was kept relatively small. Even so, findings from a corpus of almost 600,000 running words can be generalizable when only a particular aspect of language use is considered, as Evans (n.d.) also notes.

### Analysis

There were several stages of data preparation and analysis. First was the conversion of .pdf files into .doc files using an online software available at <http://pdf2doc.com>. At this stage, format defects such as spelling and punctuation occurred. I corrected these manually. Tables, table captions, acknowledgments, and reference lists were deleted from the texts since the numerical data and the sentences in these sections were kept outside of the scope of this study. Direct quotes from participants or texts analysed in the qualitative studies were also removed from the corpus

unless they were incorporated into authors' own sentences. Second, sections of the texts were identified and put in categories for ease of data analysis. This decision was mainly based on some authors' tendency to combine sections. This resulted in five separate sections: a) Abstract, b) Introduction and Literature Review, c) Methods, d) Results, e) Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion.

The next stage involved the identification of the average length of the sentences in each section. For this purpose, I used an online software available at <http://countwordsworth.com/wordspersentence>. The trial of this software showed that it recognized all of the periods as the end of a sentence. To illustrate, the period in  $p=.0004$  was considered as the end of a sentence, resulting in exaggerated total sentence numbers and reduced sentence lengths. To circumvent such problems, I deleted all the periods in these cases.

To analyse the data for the third research question regarding common types of lengthy sentences, I considered the sentence types identified by Weber and Brizee (n.d.) from Purdue University. These include the following:

- (1) Simple sentence – a sentence with one independent clause and no dependent clause
- (2) Compound sentence – a sentence with multiple independent clauses but no dependent clause
- (3) Complex sentence – a sentence with one independent clause and at least one dependent clause
- (4) Complex-compound sentence – a sentence with multiple independent clauses and at least one dependent clause

To answer the third research question, I established a sub-corpus of 10 RAs with 60,172 running words. I randomly chose these RAs (listed in Appendix B) from among those whose overall sentence lengths averaged above 24.17, the average sentence length identified in the whole corpus. Of this number, five were written by Anglophone authors, and another five were written by Turkish authors. The number of RAs included in this sub-corpus was reduced for convenience. That is, the intensive manual analyses required for this phase of the study together with limited human power available prohibited me from including all 100 texts comprising the corpus.

The analysis of the data for the third research question involved two researchers: myself and another independent researcher with a PhD in language education. Upon completing the analyses separately after a calibration meeting, we compared our analyses, which yielded an inter-coder



reliability of 85%. We resolved any discrepancies through discussion. For statistical comparisons of different data sets, an independent t-test was conducted, and a p-value of lower than .05 was considered statistically significant.

## Results

The first research question aimed to identify the average sentence length of education research articles in English, and whether or not the average length varied between different sections. Results for this question are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Sentence lengths*

Section	Sentence Length (n=100)			
	Min	Max	$\bar{x}$	SD
Abstract	13.88	39.20	23.59	5.4
Intro/Lit. Review	18.22	42.08	26.10	4.15
Methods	13.91	39.23	22.48	4.15
Results	13.22	34.38	22.44	4.63
Dis./Rec./Conc.	14.38	45.39	26.24	5.11
<i>Overall Average</i>		<i>24.17</i>		4.98

As can be seen in Table 2, the overall average sentence length was 24.17. When different sections are considered, it is seen that the longest sentence average belonged to the last section (i.e. Discussion/Recommendations/Conclusion, hereafter referred to as Discussion) with 26.24 words. This was followed by the Introduction/Literature Review (hereafter referred to as Introduction) section with a 26.10-word length. Although the length of sentences within each of these sections varied to a certain extent (SD=4.15 and SD=5.11 respectively), the statistical analysis conducted between the data sets for these two sections yielded no significant difference ( $t=-0.2207$ ,  $p=.4127$ ). The third longest average, 23.59 words, belongs to the Abstract (SD= 5.4). The average sentence lengths for the Methods and Results sections, on the other hand, were quite close—22.44 (SD=4.63) and 22.48 (SD=4.15) respectively—and there was no statistically significant difference between them ( $t=0.026$ ,  $p=.489$ ).

The second research question asked if authors' linguistic background was a factor contributing to the average sentence length in education research articles. Results are summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
*Comparison of sentence lengths between corpora*

Sections	Sentence Lengths								t	p
	Corpus 1				Corpus 2					
	Turkish Authors				Anglophone Authors					
	(n=50)				(n=50)					
	Min	Max	$\bar{x}$	SD	Min	Max	$\bar{x}$	SD		
Abstract	13.88	39.2	22.52	5.23	15.43	34	24.69	5.37	2.1975	.0151
Intro/Lit. R.	18.22	42.08	25.42	4.46	20.05	36.52	26.86	3.7	1.9150	.0292
Method	15.28	39.23	22.25	4.32	13.91	32.92	22.77	3.99	0.8294	.2044
Results	13.22	32.31	21.18	5.11	15.00	34.38	23.75	3.71	2.9058	.0022
Dis./Rec./Conc.	14.38	45.39	26.19	6.09	17.50	37.17	26.32	3.97	-0.231	.4088
Overall average		23.51		5.4		24.88		4.43	3.3618	.0004

Table 3 shows that the average sentence length in the RAs by Anglophone authors was longer than in those by Turkish authors: 24.88 as opposed to 23.51. The difference between the two was statistically significant ( $t=3.3618$ ,  $p=.0004$ ). When the sections were compared, it was found that the Anglophone authors used longer sentences than the Turkish authors in the Introduction section (26.86). This was followed by the Discussion section (26.32). There was no significant difference between the sentence lengths in these two sections ( $t=-0.6791$ ,  $p=.02493$ ). Although the Turkish authors used the longest sentences in these two sections as well, the order was reversed. The average sentence length for the Discussion section was 26.19, while it was 25.42 for the Introduction section for these authors, therefore showing no statistically significant difference between the two sections ( $t=0.7605$ ,  $p=.2243$ ). However, the sentence lengths in the Introduction section differed significantly between Anglophone and Turkish authors ( $t=1.9150$ ,  $p=.0292$ ). On the other hand, the Anglophone authors' slightly longer sentence average in the last section of RAs did not differ significantly from that of Turkish authors ( $t=-0.2310$ ,  $p=.4088$ ). In both data sets, Abstract was the section with the third longest average sentence (24.69 and 22.52). However, the difference between the two average sentence lengths was statistically significant ( $t=2.1975$ ,  $p=.0151$ ), indicating the Anglophone authors' stronger tendency to use long sentences in this section.

The second shortest average sentence by the Anglophone authors was found in the Results section (23.75). Among Turkish authors, however, this section contained the shortest sentences (21.18). The difference between the two data sets for this section was also statistically significant ( $t=2.9058$ ,  $p=.0022$ ). On the other hand, the Anglophone authors' shortest sentences appeared in the Methods section. An average sentence length of 22.77 was identified in this data set. The papers by Turkish authors revealed a similar result with a slightly lower average sentence length (22.25). The statistical comparison lacked a difference at a significant level ( $t=0.8294$ ,  $p=.2044$ ). Despite these similarities between the two corpora, Table 3 also shows a broader range of SD values for almost all the sections in the papers by Turkish authors compared to those by Anglophone authors. This indicates that, compared to their Turkish counterparts, the Anglophone authors displayed more similar attitudes towards writing long sentences.

The third research question was related to the different types of sentences which increased sentence length. To this end, the sub-corpus of ten texts was examined to identify sentences over 24 words in length. These sentences were then analysed in detail. The results of these analyses are summarized in Table 4 below.

**Table 4**

*Sentence types*

Sections	Word Counts	Complex			Complex-Compound			Compound			Simple		
		A <sup>24</sup>	B <sup>25</sup>	Total	A <sup>2</sup>	B <sup>3</sup>	Total	A <sup>2</sup>	B <sup>3</sup>	Total	A <sup>2</sup>	B <sup>3</sup>	Total
Abstract	1,650	9	10	19	3	4	7	2	2	4	3	1	4
Intro/Lit. R.	15,990	100	107	207	17	12	29	13	6	22	9	10	19
Method	8,008	47	58	105	3	12	15	9	16	25	6	2	8
Results	19,582	64	108	172	4	9	13	8	7	15	10	3	13
Dis/Rec./Conc.	14,942	128	107	235	14	19	33	9	6	15	1	6	7
<i>Total</i>	<i>60,172</i>	<i>348</i>	<i>390</i>	<i>738</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>51</i>

Table 4 shows that the most common sentence type was “complex” with a staggering frequency of 738. When analysed according to section, complex sentences appeared most often in the last section (i.e. Discussion) with a frequency of 235. The Introduction section had the second highest number of complex sentences with a frequency of 207. This was followed by the Results section (172).

<sup>24</sup> Anglophone authors

<sup>25</sup> Turkish authors

When the complex sentences were analysed according to the authors' linguistic backgrounds, it was seen that Turkish authors tended to use complex sentences more than the Anglophone authors (390 vs. 348). This was the case in all the sections except for Discussion. Throughout the sub-corpus, the complex sentences included different types of dependent clauses. One of the most common was relative clauses in their full and reduced forms. An example of the former is given in excerpt 1, while an example of the latter is shown in excerpt 2.

- (1) In studies of adult learning beyond work, researchers tend to be more familiar with community owned and managed dedicated learning organisations such as U3A (university of the third age) and ACE (adult and community education) *where* learning, formal literacies, and particularly education, are named as the object of the activity, *where* many of the participants are already relatively educated and committed lifelong learners, and *where* 'enrolment' in 'courses' simplifies the research subjects and sampling methods. (RA 2)

This excerpt shows an example of multiple relative clauses embedded in one sentence, resulting in a quite extended sentence (75 words).

- (2) Finally, with a background in linguistics and teaching English as a foreign language, we, the present author, had insider knowledge of the discourse practices of this discipline, [*which is*] an obvious advantage in data coding and analysis. (RA 6)

Contrast markers were also used commonly to introduce dependent clauses in complex sentences. These included 'although', 'whilst', and 'whereas'. Samples of this appear below.

- (3) ... at third year, students showed a significant increase in their use of deep and strategic learning approaches compared to first year, although surface learning approaches were retained. (RA 3)
- (4) *While* further research is needed into effective pedagogy in the multi-level language classroom, researchers working alongside experienced practitioners could progress this area by providing case studies of the approaches most

commonly used, i.e. teaching groups separately and alternating between them, or teaching groups together using a topic-based approach with differentiated materials for each group. (RA 5)

- (5) 69% of the respondents agreed, *whereas*; 31% of them disagreed with the item, which suggested that the vast majority of the respondents preferred British or American English to the other possible varieties of the English language. (RA 10)

Other examples of long complex sentences included those embedding direct quotes from literature. Excerpt 6 below displays a 60-word sentence.

- (6) In a somewhat similar way, Burke and Jackson (2007) explain that they wrote sections of their book on lifelong learning in narrative style to tell the stories of the participants, in order:

...to challenge the conventions of academic writing and to illustrate the fluidity of the different positionings within lifelong learning and the contested nature of their trajectories and perspectives. (Burke & Jackson, 2007, p 54) (RA 2)

Despite their lesser frequency, “complex-compound sentences” were the second most common type in the sub-corpus with a frequency of 97. The pattern was similar to complex sentences in terms of the sections in which they were used most commonly. That is, complex-compound sentences were more common in the last section (Discussion) with a frequency of 33. Introduction/Literature Review was the section with the second highest number of complex-compound sentences with a frequency of 29. This time, however, the Methods section contained the third highest frequency (15). It was followed by the Results section (13), and then Abstract (7). The Turkish authors were again more likely to use complex sentences compared to the Anglophone authors (56 vs. 41). The frequency of complex-compound sentences in these authors’ writing was higher in all the sections except for Introduction. Below is an example of complex-compound sentences.

- (7) Our sample size is smaller than some other longitudinal studies in this area (Donche et al., 2010; Vermetten et al., 1999), and although repeating a similar survey with more students would be advantageous, the logistics of ensuring students complete surveys at multiple timepoints is difficult as first year health science students at our institution move into a variety of programs that would then expose the students to different learning environments, potentially biasing the data. (RA 3)

This excerpt embeds two main clauses (1- Our sample size is smaller than some other longitudinal studies in this area, 2- the logistics of ensuring students complete surveys at multiple timepoints is difficult), four dependent clauses (1- although repeating a similar survey with more students would be advantageous, 2- as first year health science students at our institution move into a variety of programs, 3- that would then expose the students to different learning environments, and 4- potentially biasing the data). Collectively, they result in a 66-word-long sentence (without the references in parentheses).

“Compound sentences”, those with multiple independent clauses without a dependent clause, occurred 81 times in the sub-corpus. They were used in the Methods section more frequently than in the other sections. The Introduction section received the second most frequent use of compound sentences (22). On the other hand, their frequency was the same in the Results and Discussion sections (15). This time, nevertheless, the Anglophone authors used compound sentences more frequently than the Turkish authors (41 vs. 37). It was only in the Methods section that the Turkish authors used a higher number of compound sentences (16 vs. 9).

The authors used linkers to combine independent clauses, examples of which can be seen in the excerpts below.

- (8) The risk management strategy is very specific, elaborate and [it] involves much formal learning, recording of competencies and testing as well as a check of competencies in a ‘mock run’. (RA 2)
- (9) Research on these important issues can contribute to our understanding of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communication and [it can] help develop effective academic writing programs in English for MA and PhD students (RA 6)

As seen in excerpts 8 and 9, the authors combined two independent clauses using the linker ‘and’. It is also important to note the elision of the subject in both examples.

The least frequently used sentence type was “simple”, which included only one independent clause. It occurred 51 times in the sub-corpus. Although ‘simple’, these sentences were above the average sentence length identified for the whole corpus (24.7). In fact, some were much longer. For example, the simple sentence in excerpt 10 below consists of 117 words (excluding the codes in parentheses).

(10) In general, this factor is constituted of the following sub-factors such as fear of failing the course, forgetting information due to excitement, failure to prepare for exams (M9, M18), being ashamed for family and surroundings, the extension of school time, no self-confidence to achieve a good grade without cheating in the exam (M26), not liking the lesson or the teacher (M7), low self-efficacy perception, high self-handicapping behavior (M8), failure, exclusion, getting low grades (M10, M22), perceived success level (M12, M16), exam anxiety (M16), bringing good grades to the family (M17), habit of cheating in exams, pressure to be successful, inability to memorize (M18), low self-esteem (M23), desire to get high grades, fear of getting low grades, desire to finish school (M26) and noncontinuance, academic postponement, and commitment to the school (T3). (RA 7)

Simple sentences were more common in the Introduction section than in any other section (19). This was followed by the Result section where 13 instances were detected. The Anglophone authors’ overall use of simple sentences was higher than that of the Turkish authors (29 vs. 22). The former group of authors used simple sentences more often in Results, Methods and Abstract. However, the latter group used simple sentences much more frequently in the Discussion section in particular (6 vs. 1).

## **Discussion**

The first research question aimed to identify the average length of sentences in education research articles, and whether it differed according to section. Results indicated that the average length of sentences in the corpus was 24.17, which is significantly above the recommended length (12-17

words) for scientific writing for Elsevier (Griffies, Perrie, & Hull, 2013). Alternatively, Barber (in Gotti, 2008) identified an average of 27.6-word sentence length in scientific writing, which more closely resembles the current study's findings than Elsevier's recommendation. However, the average length of sentences identified in this study is within the readability range (20-25) noted by Garner (2000). The relatively long sentence average found here may be attributed to characteristics of the discourse community on which this study focused. As social scientists, the authors of these texts may be inclined to write longer sentences, an observation made by Turner (2008) as well as Prpic and Suljok (2009).

Data analysis for the second part of the first research question showed that authors tended to write longer sentences in the last section of research articles (i.e. Discussion). The second longest sentence average came from the first section (i.e. Introduction). One possible reason why authors were inclined to write longer sentences in these sections may be their intention to combine different pieces of information from the literature. Hyland (2009) also notes that authors composing advanced academic texts "project themselves into their discourse to signal their understandings of their material" (p. 125). As a result, acts like comparing different positions in existing literature within the same sentence are likely to increase their length.

Similarly, authors may use single sentences in the Discussion section to compare their own results and those from previous research, thereby increasing sentence length. Authors' use of metadiscourse markers when commenting on research findings in this section can also result in longer sentences. In fact, Hyland (2009) points out that metadiscourse signals in scientific writing can stretch to clause or sentence length, increasing the overall average in a given text. The current study's results also speak to the sentence-lengthening effect of metadiscourse markers, consistent with findings from previous research (Crismore & Abdollehzadeh, 2010; Sehwat, 2014).

The results also indicated a shorter average sentence length in the Methods section. This may be due to authors' tendency to be direct and succinct with information describing how results were reached. With this purpose, they may have refrained from using compound sentences and redundant details, a rhetorical recommendation also made by Kallet (2004). Swales and Feak (2012) indicate that metadiscourse features such as hedges, evaluative comments, and citations are used much less frequently in the Methods section. This is a likely reason for the comparatively short sentence length in the Methods section identified in the current study as well.



Similarly, a lower average sentence length was identified in the Results section. A major cause of this was probably the authors' desire to state their results simply and clearly. Day and Gastel (2012) advise that "[t]he results should be short and sweet, without verbiage" (p. 70), and they warn authors not to repeat "in words of what is already apparent to the reader from examination of the figures and tables" (p. 71). The authors of the texts in this study may have been motivated by a similar view, thus (sub)consciously reducing their sentence lengths in the Results section. Another factor contributing to the Results section's shorter sentences may be the nature of the studies. That is, the majority of the studies included in this corpus were quantitative. Singh and Lukkarila (2017) note that in an attempt to present their results briefly in terms of overall length and types of information shared, authors often use tables and figures in quantitative studies. This helps them provide a snapshot of their data. They leave interpretation of their data to the Discussion section. The fact that tables and figures were removed in establishing the corpus of this study, therefore, reduced the number of words and sentences found in the Results section. Direct quotes from research participants in the qualitative studies were also removed from the corpus. Collectively, these are considered to have reduced the average length of sentences in the Results section.

Some authors' choice of the active voice may also have resulted in shorter sentences in the Results section. According to Griffies, Perrie, and Hull (2013), authors' use of the active voice in presenting their results normally reduces the lengths of sentences, "mak[ing] them more dynamic and interesting for the reader" (p. 4). They point out that the active phrase "we found that ...", for instance, is much more concise and to the point than the phrase "it has been found that there had been ... ."

Swales and Feak (2012) also identified similarities between the Introduction and Discussion sections as well as between the Methods and Results sections in terms of stylistic features, which may have also played a role in the authors' (sub)conscious utilization of varied sentence lengths in this study.

The second research question aimed to investigate whether or not the Anglophone and Turkish authors' sentence lengths differed. It was found that the Anglophone authors' average sentence was longer than that of the Turkish authors (24.88 vs. 23.51), and the difference was at a statistically significant level. When the sections of the RAs are considered, it is seen that they followed an overall similar fashion albeit with some slight differences. For both groups, the

average length of sentences was higher in the Introduction section than in the other sections. However, the Anglophone authors tended to write longer sentences in this section. This difference, together with an overall higher sentence length, may have been caused by the Anglophone authors' being relatively less concerned about writing quality due to their familiarity with English (Wallwork, 2016), making them less meticulous about wordiness (Newell, 2014). Compared to their non-native counterparts, English native speakers' tendency to write longer sentences in RAs was also documented by earlier research focusing on biomedical literature (Netzel, Perez-Iratxeta, Bork, & Andrade, 2003). The research found that Anglophone scientists wrote sentences of 27 words on average. There was a distinct discourse community from the one included in this current study; however, this finding may be indicative of native speakers' inclination to write longer sentences in general. It is also important to note the greater SD values in the data set from Turkish authors. The greater difference within the Turkish corpus may be due to the variations in authors' linguistic backgrounds and publication records in English as a foreign/second language, which were beyond the scope of this study.

The final research question aimed to identify different sentence types which increased sentence lengths. It was found that complex sentences were the most common type followed by complex-compound sentences. Turkish authors used both types more frequently than their Anglophone counterparts. On the other hand, the Anglophone authors used compound and simple sentences more frequently than the Turkish authors. These findings are particularly interesting. Given their wider familiarity with the English language (Wallwork, 2016), the Anglophone authors might be expected to use complex and/or complex-compound sentences more frequently. These results are also interesting when the overall longer average sentence length by the Anglophone authors is considered. It is very likely that the compound and simple sentences included more words in the Anglophone sub-corpus than the Turkish one. Motivated to impress journal reviewers with their level of English, the Turkish authors may have felt more inclined to display their ability to write sophisticated sentences, resulting in an increased number of complex and compound-complex sentences. Consistent with this finding, research by Demirel (2017) also identified Turkish language learners' tendency to prefer complex sentences over simple sentences.

Another interesting finding was related to the number of simple sentences used by the two groups of authors. Simple sentences were particularly more popular with the Anglophone authors than they were with the Turkish authors in the Results and the Methods sections. They also used a

greater number of simple sentences in the Abstract. On the other hand, the Turkish authors preferred to use simple sentences more frequently in the last section (i.e. Discussion). In this section, interpretation of findings in relation to literature on the research topic would normally prompt authors to use complex structures more frequently than in other sections. As well, frequent use of evaluative comments, hedges, and citations in the Discussion section (Swales & Feak, 2012) leads authors to use complex sentences. In this section, authors are also likely to use a variety of interactive and interactional metadiscourse to indicate their stance, and “supply additional information by rephrasing, explaining or elaborating what has been said to ensure the reader is able to recover [their] meaning” (Hyland, 2005, p. 52). This likely encourages authors to write longer utterances by employing complex and compound sentences.

### **Implications and recommendations for future research**

The results of this study showed that Anglophone and Turkish authors in the field of education as a social science write both in similar and different ways in terms of sentence length. The first implication of this is related to recommended sentence length. It is important to note that the authors’ average sentence length was 24.17. This is significantly above the recommended sentence length for scientific writing for Elsevier, which is 12-17 words. This indicates that reviewers of education RAs may reconsider their feedback regarding authors’ use of sentence lengths. That is, comparatively long sentences in education RAs may be acceptable as long as meaning is not obscured. Authors may in fact opt for sentences of varying lengths as way of establishing a voice in their writing, which ought to be respected and encouraged.

It is also important to note the particular sections where authors (the Anglophone ones in particular) tend to lengthen their sentences, one of these being the Discussion section. This is particularly important for postgraduate students training to write their theses/dissertations, as well as for those preparing manuscripts for scholarly publications. It is surely important for them to base their arguments on previous theoretical and empirical studies in their disciplines. However, as is clear from the results of this study, it is also essential for them to use a variety of stylistic features in describing their methodology and results and in expressing their arguments. It is essential that their awareness be raised in terms of how they could vary their sentence lengths and sentence types. This task implicates publication manuals which make such recommendations. To this end, not only language instructors but also instructors of other disciplines and student

mentors/supervisors ought to provide students with guidance on how to increase and/or decrease sentence lengths in particular sections of their RAs.

Raising students' awareness of sentence types in particular will help authors achieve rhythm in their writing. One way of doing so is to vary sentence openers. Language instructors could help their students do this through paraphrasing exercises (Deveci, 2019). They can ask students to restate certain sentences using a particular set of sentence openers. This may be particularly useful with in-text citations in the Literature Review and Discussion sections, which appear to include relatively long sentences. For example, students can paraphrase a direct quote using a prepositional phrase (e.g. "*In an experimental study, X found that ...*"), an introductory clause (e.g. "*When this was tested in an experimental study, X found that ...*"), or an infinitive phrase (*To test this experimentally, X did ... and found that ...*). A similar exercise could be in the form of editing. Students can be asked to shorten extended sentences by breaking them into smaller parts. For instance, a long sentence embedding a relative clause can be broken into two smaller sentences. For example, compare the sentence "*The results of this study showed that the Emirati female students were more likely to use politeness strategies than their male counterparts, which was found to be the case by previous research as well.*" to "*The results of this study showed that the Emirati female students were more likely to use politeness strategies than their male counterparts. This was found to be the case by previous research as well.*" As seen in these examples, sentence length is significantly reduced while sentence number is increased. Similarly, a sentence in the passive voice could be shortened by paraphrasing it using the active voice, which helps authors write more dynamic and concise sentences (Griffies et al., 2013).

Another way in which the readability and originality of authors' papers can be improved is through "Grammar Apprenticeship" as suggested by Paraskevas (2006). According to this approach, students are guided to analyse grammatical structures in touchstone texts written by accomplished authors. In this way, their awareness is raised in terms of the stylistic features available to them. When they revise their papers in light of their enhanced awareness, they become more able to increase their papers' readability and achieve originality in writing. Similarly, Krashen (1984) notes that extensive reading of texts written by competent authors help enhance authors' writing skills. Undoubtedly, such an approach improves both NNSs' and NSEs' competence in writing scholarly papers.

In the context of this study itself, however, a number of caveats require mentioning. First, this study mainly investigated average sentence length and sentence types in long sentences without focusing on sentence clarity. It is important to be cautious about the possibility that longer utterances contain redundant words and therefore risk clarity, which is particularly challenging for non-native speakers (Wallwork, 2016). Future researchers can investigate sentence clarity in long and short utterances. Second, this study did not consider the nature of methods adopted in the RAs included in the corpus. It is likely that qualitative papers in particular include different types of sentences impacting sentence length. Future studies can investigate these aspects of authors' writing behaviours in different types of research.

### Conclusion

Just as knowledge creation is central to scientific investigation, so is the way in which this knowledge is communicated to members of particular discourse communities *and* to the wider public. Of particular resonance for authors is APA's (2009) emphasis on the need for clear communication. To this end, voluminous literature has been produced in devotion to identifying stylistic features used by different discourse communities. However, it also appears that in the era of English as a lingua franca *education* scholars' writing behaviours in their distinct discourse community have not received much attention from researchers. "It is indisputable that [Anglophone] scholars enjoy certain linguistic privileges *a priori*" (Buckingham, 2008, p. 2); however, non-Anglophone scholars using English as a lingua franca also have the opportunity to be involved in "the web of global scholarship" despite the possible differences in their approach to scientific English (Hyland, 2016). Following brief comments that authors' tactical strategies of varying sentence lengths help maintain readers' interest and comprehension (APA, 2009) and establish authorial voice (Dean, 2000), I have aimed in this study to identify how education scholars compose research articles in relation to sentence lengths. The results revealed some interesting trends within the discourse community of educators. It was found that the overall average sentence length was 24.17, and the longest sentence length belonged to the Discussion section with 26.24 words. On the other hand, comparatively shorter sentences were used in the Methods and Results sections (22.44 and 22.48 respectively). The results also showed that the Anglophone authors tended to write longer sentences than the Turkish authors (23.51 vs. 22.48). The length of sentences by the former was longer in the Introduction section

in particular (26.86). The Turkish authors, on the other hand, appeared to write longer sentences in the Discussion section (26.19). As for the types of sentences authors used, it was found that “complex sentences” were the most common, and these were used most frequently in the last section (i.e. Discussion). It was also found that the Turkish authors used complex sentences more frequently than their Anglophone counterparts in almost all sections of the RAs except for Discussion. Similarly, “complex-compound sentences” were the second most common type with particular prevalence in the last section. They were again more commonly used by the Turkish authors. On the other hand, the least frequently used sentence type was “simple”; however, they were still above the average sentence length identified for the whole corpus. The Anglophone authors were found to use simple sentences more frequently than the Turkish authors.

The results also revealed that Anglophone scholars and Turkish scholars differed in their sentence lengths in certain ways. However, this is not to suggest that one group’s way of writing is any better than the other’s. Rather, it is important to draw attention to similarities and differences between language use among the members of the education discourse community so that greater mutual understanding can be achieved, and possible routes for further enhancement can be identified.

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## Appendix A

### List of Journals Included in Corpus

#### Journals in Which Anglophone Authors' RAs Appeared

1- Learning and Teaching in Higher Education Gulf Perspectives	4
2- Transformative Dialogues Teaching and Learning Journal	4
3- IAFOR Journal of Education	3
4- Issues in Educational Research	4
5- PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning	2
6- European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults	1
7- Journal of Education and Human Development	5
8- South African Journal of Education	4
9- Contemporary Educational Technology	4
10- Medical Education	3
11- Adult Education Quarterly	5
12- Teaching and Learning Inquiry	6
13- Teaching and Teacher Education	5
<i>Total</i>	<i>50</i>

#### Journals in Which Turkish Authors' RAs Appeared

1- Education and Science	3
2- International Journal of Languages Teaching and Learning	4
3- Journal of Educational Sciences Research	6
4- Journal of Learning and Teaching in Digital Age	2
5- Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies	3
6- Journal of Measurement and Evaluation in Education and Psychology	4
7- Contemporary Educational Technology	6
8- Journal of Foreign Language Education and Technology	4
9- Journal of Teacher Education and Educators	2
10- International Journal of Psychology and Educational Studies	5
11- Journal for the Education of Gifted Young Scientists	3
12- International Journal of Instruction	5
13- International Online Journal of Education and Teaching	3
<i>Total</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Grand Total</i>	<i>100</i>

## Research Articles Analysed for Sentence Types

- 1 Renner, S., & Pratt, K. (2017). Exploring primary teachers' self-efficacy beliefs for teaching dance education. *Issues in Educational Research*, 27(1), 115-133.
- 2 Golding, B. (2011). Not just petrol heads: Men's learning in the community through participation in motor sports. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, 2(2), 165-180.
- 3 McDonald, F. J., Reynolds, J. N. J., Bixley, A., & Spronken-Smith, R. A. (2017). Changes in approaches to learning over three years of university, *Teaching and Learning Inquiry*, 5(2), 65-79.
- 4 Hamshire, C., & Wibberley, C. (2017). Fitting in with the team: Facilitative mentors in physiotherapy student placements. *Teaching and Learning Inquiry*, 5(2), 80-88.
- 5 Ashton, K. (2018). Exploring teacher views of multi-level language classes in New Zealand secondary schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 69, 104-118.
- 6 Kafes, H. (2017). An intercultural investigation of meta-discourse features in research articles by American and Turkish academic writers. *International Journal of Languages' Education and Teaching*, 5(3), 373-391.
- 7 Polat, M. (2017). Why do students cheat in examinations in Turkey? A meta-synthesis study. *Journal of Educational Sciences Research*, 7(1), 203, 222.
- 8 Pinar, E. S., & Yildiz, N. G. (2014). Examining approval and disapproval behaviors of teachers working in inclusive classrooms. *International Journal of Instruction*, 7(1), 33-48.
- 9 Buyukkarci, K. (2014). Assessment beliefs and practices of language teachers in primary education. *International Journal of Instruction*, 7(1), 107-120.
- 10 Ören, A. D., Öztüfekçi, A., Kapçık, A. C., Kaplan, A., & Yılmaz Uzunkaya, Ç. (2017). Building awareness of world Englishes among university preparatory students. *International Online Journal of Education*, 4(4), 483-508.

# Assessing Discourse Markers in Dictionaries for Italian Learners of English as L2

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### Abstract

Discourse markers are one-, two- or multi-words used in natural conversations as well as in written language. The varieties of discourse markers range from response tokens to vague language expressions, speech organizers, face-saving and politeness devices. Discourse markers are used extensively by native speakers and expert users of English. For this reason, learning materials should address these speech parts, in order to cater for second language (L2) learners' communication needs. In light of the above, this paper is aimed at exploring whether dictionaries provide for discourse markers and, if so, to what extent. This analysis will bring to the fore the fact that some discourse markers are not provided for; whereas others are only partly explained. Furthermore, when listed, many discourse markers focus on their textual functions, rather than communicative purposes. This article will finally call for an adjustment of dictionary entries to the communicative aspects and purposes of natural conversation.

### Key words

Discourse markers, Lexical bundles, Lexical chunks, Natural conversation, Spoken grammar, Spoken discourse

### Literature review

Spoken grammar is hallmarked by rules which make it very different from written grammar. Many scholars have underpinned its peculiarities (McCarthy & Carter, 1995; Biber *et al.*, 1999; Leech, 2000; O Keffe *et al.*, 2007; Carter and McCarthy, 2015; Caines *et al.*, 2016) and undertaken corpus research in order to highlight how natural communicative situations are often far from the language taught in the classroom or found in dictionaries. For example, speech is claimed to be

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highly formulaic and repetitive (Biber & Conrad, 1999, p. 188), as well as more simplified and less integrated than written language (Leech, 2000). The communicative process is, in fact, normally carried out by using less canonical grammatical structures (Carter & McCarthy, 2015). Some examples are “approximators”, or vague category markers (VCM) (O’Keeffe *et al.*, 2007, p. 177), which lessens overly-precise statements. What makes spoken language peculiar is, in practice, “the global ubiquity of real-time, face-to-face conversations” (Carter & McCarthy 2015:5 quoting Rühlemann 2006), where long sequences of words are used methodically (Biber & Conrad, 1999, p. 181). Hence, the benchmarks of spoken language are lexical bundles and discourse markers (Biber & Conrad, 1999; Erman, 2001; O’Keeffe *et al.*, p. 2007). Lexical bundles are defined as “words which systematically co-occur with other words” (Biber & Conrad, 1999, p. 181) and are very frequent in conversations with native speakers (*ibid.*, p. 188). Discourse markers can either be single words (such as “well”, “right” or “so”) or phrasal items (such as “you know”, or “I mean”). For the aim of this paper, discourse markers will be considered as both single words and groups of words forming lexical bundles (as in “you know what I mean”, or “and things like that”).

Discourse markers usually have little lexical content (O’Keeffe *et al.*, 2007, p. 39) and tend to be used outside the structure of the clause. They are uttered with the view to monitoring, organizing and managing the speech (O’Keeffe *et al.* 2007:172). They are also aimed at creating coherence (Erman, 2001, p. 1340), organizing the talk and marking shifts or boundaries (O’Keeffe *et al.*, 2007, p. 172). Examples in this respect are “anyway”, or “and then” (Ferrara, 1997; Erman, 2001; O’Keeffe *et al.*, 2007). Other researchers claim that, apart from their textual functions, these spoken items also allow the speaker to hedge a statement and show politeness (such as “I don’t know if”, “(what) do you think?”). Furthermore, they help manifest emotional commitment (e.g., “that’s true”, “is that so?”), or shared knowledge and sharedness (“you know”, “you see”) (O’Keeffe *et al.*, 2007, p. 152, 177ff; Carter & McCarthy, 2015, p. 6). Finally, discourse markers function as vague category markers (“kind of”, “sort of”) (O’Keeffe *et al.*, 2007, p. 177) and are used to avoid pedantic utterances. They can also serve as response tokens (“you never know”), in order to highlight the collaborative interactivity between speaker and listener (O’Keeffe *et al.*, 2007, p. 150).

Other discourse markers pinpointed by literature are non-word utterances, which are hesitation markers (such as “er”) (McCarthy, 2010, p. 10) and minimal response tokens (such as

“mm”, “hmm”, “yeah”) (O'Keeffe *et al.*, 2007, p. 43-44, 142-143, 148; Caines *et al.*, 2016, p. 350).

There are also non-minimal response tokens, such as “so” and “right”. Scholars referred to them as topic launchers (Caines *et al.*, 2016, p. 353 quoting Tao, 2003).

### **Reasons for carrying out the analysis**

Being so frequent in spoken discourse, and in particular in native speakers' discourse (Biber & Conrad, 1999), the use of formulaic expressions is claimed to increase the perception of the oral proficiency of non-native speakers (Boers *et al.*, 2006 quoted in McCarthy, 2010, p. 5). As a matter of fact, it is argued that expert users, or successful users of English (SUEs), use discourse makers extensively in their talk (Carter & McCarthy, 2015). Many scholars, in fact, report that these chunks are “more frequent than the single-word items which appear in the core vocabulary” (O'Keeffe *et al.*, 2007, p. 46).

Unfortunately, very few L2 (second language) learning books generally take discourse markers into due consideration. Moreover, the features of spoken language have been addressed only in a few learning materials (Caines *et al.*, 2016, p. 354-355). It is claimed, in fact, that the small words of spoken language have drawn little attention in language learners' vocabulary (McCarthy, 2010, p. 11), although they are “difficult to access through intuition or reflection alone” (Caines *et al.*, 2016, p. 353).

In light of the above, it can be inferred that discourse markers have probably been underestimated in the process of teaching and learning a second language. Therefore, it is the aim of this paper to explore whether monolingual and bilingual (English-Italian) dictionaries provide for such small words. In this respect, the most recurrent discourse markers referred to in literature will be pinpointed, taxonomized and searched for in dictionaries. In this way, it will be possible to explore whether an explanation and a coherent rendering or translation of their functions are proposed. If so, L2 learners could integrate discourse markers in their mental grammar. In this way, their implicit knowledge would be fostered by noticing (i.e., by becoming conscious of the presence of a new linguistic feature) and comparing (i.e., by comparing the new linguistic feature noticed with their mental grammar) (Ellis, 2002, p. 171). Therefore, L2 learners would rely on dictionaries as useful language learning materials and foster their natural discourse skills.

To this aim, the final part of this paper is dedicated to a trial lesson where twelve L2 learners participated. During the trial lesson, the participants were explained the functions of

discourse markers. Then, they were shown sentences with discourse markers and were prompted to find their meanings in the Hoepli online bilingual dictionary. The sentences were sourced from the COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) (Davies, 2008, 2010).

### **Analysis**

As outlined above, literature abounds in examples of discourse markers which are used by both native speakers and successful users of English (SUEs) in natural conversations. For this reason, the most recurrent discourse markers will be sourced in literature and their functions will be pinned down. Discourse markers will then be taxonomized and grouped by types and functions. Afterwards, they will be searched in dictionaries, in order to verify whether they are listed and explained. In particular, the meanings or explanations provided by monolingual dictionaries will be compared with the functions pinpointed by literature, in order to bring similarities or discrepancies to the surface. In this way, it will be possible to verify whether dictionaries cater for L2 learners' communicative needs.

### **Literature Analysis**

As stated above, before exploring whether discourse markers are provided for in dictionaries, it is necessary to source the most common discourse markers mentioned in the literature, together with their functions. In this way, it will be possible to verify whether the explanations, translations and/or meanings reported in dictionaries are consistent. For the purpose of this paper, discourse markers will be divided into three categories: one-word, two-word and multi-word. Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3 here below provide a taxonomy of the discourse markers of these types, together with their functions.



**Table 1**

*One-word discourse markers and their functions (in alphabetical order) according to literature*

One-word discourse markers	Function(s)
<i>Anyway</i>	-A tool to: bracket discourse, manage self-digression (Ferrara, 1997, p. 343) and exercise control over the addressee(s) (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 39; 160ff) -A textual monitor to create coherence (Erman, 2001, p. 1340)
<i>Right</i>	-An interactive and flow-sustaining tool (McCarthy, 2010, p. 11) aimed at: eliciting a reaction from or exercising control over the addressee(s) (Erman, 2001, p. 1340; O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 39; 160ff); signalling the end of the topic or to move on - when marked by falling intonation (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 39; 154)
<i>So</i>	-A tool aimed at exercising control over the addressee(s) (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 39; 160ff)
<i>Whatever</i>	-Vagueness and approximation marker (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 160)
<i>Well</i>	-An interactive and flow-sustaining tool (McCarthy, 2010, p. 11) aimed at: exercising control over the addressee(s) (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 39; 160ff); drawing attention, or refining what the speaker says (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 39; 172)

As can be seen from Table 1 above, one-word discourse markers do not only have textual functions (such as “anyway”, which enhances coherence, Erman, 2001), but also empowering and social functions (such as “right”, which both signals the end of a topic and elicits a reaction from the addressee). Most of them are used to keep the conversation flowing (McCarthy, 2010, p. 11), or to keep it relevant and to the point (Ferrara, 1997). Some scholars (O'Keeffe *et al.*, 2007) also see discourse markers from another perspective, as they consider some of them as means to exert influence on the other conversation participants (such as “so”, “right”, “anyway” and “well”). Other discourse markers are defined as vague category markers (VCM), such as “whatever”, used to downtone statements which, otherwise, would be perceived as overly precise (O'Keeffe *et al.*, 2007, p. 160, 177).

Table 2 here below reports some two-word discourse markers and their functions, as claimed by literature. The full list of two-word discourse markers is reported in Appendix 1.

**Table 2**

*Two-word discourse markers and their functions (in alphabetical order) according to literature*

Two-word discourse markers	Function(s)
<i>I guess</i>	-Hedge (face-saving function) (Erman, 2001, p. 1341)
<i>I mean</i>	-A tool used to: monitor shared and nonshared knowledge (Caines <i>et al.</i> , 2016, p. 350 quoting Leech <i>et al.</i> 2001); signal repair or a new direction of the discourse (Erman, 2001, p. 1340); exercise control over the addressee(s) (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 39;160ff); draw attention; refine what speakers say (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 172)
<i>You know</i>	-A tool used to: monitor shared and nonshared knowledge (Caines <i>et al.</i> , 2016, p. 350 quoting Leech <i>et al.</i> , 2001; McCarthy, 2010, p. 4); signal repair or a new direction of the discourse (Erman, 2001, p. 1340); exercise control over and elicit a reaction from the addressee(s) (Erman, 2001, p. 1337; O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 39; 160ff; 172); keep the conversation interactive (McCarthy, 2010, p. 11) -A textual monitor to build up a text and create coherence (Erman, 2001, p. 1337) -Hedge (face-saving function) (Erman, 2001, p. 1341)

The two-word discourse markers mostly referred to in literature are “you know”, “I mean” and “or something” (see Appendix 1). The majority of the scholars agree on the fact that these small words have social and interactive functions. In particular, they elicit shared knowledge, they are flow-sustaining and topic launchers (such as “you know”, “you see”, “or something”) (O'Keeffe *et al.*, 2007, p. 172; McCarthy, 2010, p. 11). Many of them also have a face-saving function (such as “you know”, “sort of”, “kind of”) and can be considered hedging devices (Erman, 2001, p. 1341; Carter & McCarthy, 2006; O'Keeffe *et al.*, 2007, p. 174ff). Some also enhance textual coherence (such as “you know” and “you see”) (Erman, 2001:1337); whereas others are approximators, whose function is to help the addressee draw conclusions or guess a concept from shared knowledge (such as “or something”) (McCarthy, 2010, p. 11).

Table 3 here below reports some of the most recurring multi-word discourse markers claimed by literature. A full list is reported in Appendix 2.

**Table 3**

*Multi-word discourse markers and their functions (in alphabetical order) according to literature*

<i>And things like that</i>	-Vague language token (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 160; Caines <i>et al.</i> , 2016, p. 350 quoting Carter & McCarthy, 2006) -A tool to reduce processing time (McCarthy, 2010, p. 5)
<i>In other words</i>	-A tool to refine what speakers say or to draw attention (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 172)
<i>You know what I mean</i>	-A tool to reduce processing time (McCarthy 2010:5) -A resource for exercising control over the other conversational participants (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 39; 160ff)
<i>You never know</i>	-Response token to come to a collaborative end (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 150)

Some multi-word discourse markers are built on and expand on two-word discourse markers, such as “if you see what I mean”(built on “you see” and “I mean”) and “you know what I mean” (built on “you know” and “I mean”) (see Appendix 2). Multi-word discourse markers serve many purposes. Some of them help the speaker engage actively in a conversation and feel part of it (such as “you never know”) (O'Keeffe *et al.*, 2007). Other discourse markers make the addressee imply the rest of a statement by recurring to shared knowledge (such as “you know what I mean”) (McCarthy, 2010). Some discourse markers allow the speaker to rephrase a statement in order to make it clearer (such as “in other words”, “the thing is that”, or “to put it another way”) (O'Keeffe *et al.*, 2007). Others are approximators, which help communicate efficiently by reducing the words uttered and the conversation time (such as “and stuff like that”, or “and things like that”) (McCarthy, 2010). Approximators are also claimed to be politeness devices, as they tend to lessen overly-precise utterances, which would be perceived as too pedantic in natural conversations (Carter & McCarthy, 2006; O'Keeffe *et al.*, 2007). Examples of multi-word approximators are “and so on and so forth”; “and everything” (Erman, 2001). Other politeness markers are face-saving (such as “I don't know if”, “(what) do you think?”) (McCarthy, 2010). Only a few discourse markers are used to create textual coherence (such as “the thing is that”) (Erman, 2001, p. 1340).

As can be inferred from Table 1, 2 and 3 above, discourse markers are crucial in expert-like conversations. Therefore, understanding and being able to use them is pivotal for L2 learners. For this reason, dictionaries should list and explain discourse markers in order to cater for L2 learners' needs.

## Dictionary Analysis

It is now important to explore whether dictionaries provide for speech elements. For the purpose of this paper, discourse markers have been searched in monolingual dictionaries in order to verify whether an explanation of their functions is provided.

Three online monolingual dictionaries have been consulted, in particular: The Cambridge Dictionary, The Collins Dictionary and The Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary. In the following pages, results will be reported in tables. Each table will show the explanations or meanings, if provided, of the discourse markers outlined above.

In this respect, Table 4, 5 and 6 here below will encompass the one-word, two-word and multi-word discourse markers listed and described in Table 1, 2 and 3 above.

**Table 4**  
*One-word discourse markers in monolingual dictionaries (in alphabetical order)*

One-word discourse markers	Cambridge	Collins	Oxford learners'
<i>Anyway</i>	used as a discourse marker, especially in speaking, to make boundaries in what we are saying (...)	used to change the topic or return to a previous topic (...)	used when changing the subject of a conversation, ending the conversation or returning to a subject (...)
<i>Right</i>	-used to express agreement with someone or to show that you have understood what someone has said  -said when you want to make a group of people notice you, especially so that you can start an activity	-used in order to attract someone's attention or to indicate that you have dealt with one thing so you can go on to another  -used to show that you are listening to what someone is saying (...)	
<i>So</i>	-used as a way of making certain that you or someone else	-used in conversations to introduce a new topic, or to introduce a question or comment	

	understand something correctly  -used as a short pause, sometimes to emphasize what you are saying (...)		
<i>Whatever</i>	-anything or everything  -something that is said to show no respect to someone who is asking you to agree (...)	-used to refer to anything or everything of a particular type  -used when you are indicating that you do not know the precise identity, meaning, or value of the thing just mentioned (...)	-used as a reply to tell somebody that you do not care what happens  -used to say that you do not mind what you do, have, etc. and that anything is acceptable (...)
<i>Well</i>	-used at the start of what we say  -used to show a slight change in topic (...)	-used to indicate that you are about to say something  -used to indicate that you intend or want to carry on speaking  -used to indicate that you are changing the topic (...)	

Before analysing the content of Table 4 above, a few clarifications are necessary. If we did not consider the words in Table 4 as discourse markers, but as mere speech parts, we would find various and multifaceted meanings in dictionaries. Therefore, it goes without saying that these words could all be found in dictionaries. For example, “well” shows many entries. Amongst others, it is, for instance, an adverb whose synonym is “completely” or “carefully” (Collins Dictionary). However, it is the specific function as a discourse marker, which could not always be found. Having clarified this, it can be noticed that not all one-word discourse markers are provided for in monolingual dictionaries. As a matter of fact, frequent response tokens and topic launchers such as “well”, “right” and “so” are not dealt with in one dictionary out of three. On the other hand, as far as “whatever” is concerned, monolingual dictionaries provide an explanation which literature has not accounted for; i.e. the fact that it can be used as an impolite response token (Cambridge

and Oxford Learners' Dictionaries). Further research would be called for in this respect in order to either confute or corroborate such a function.

Discrepancies apart, it can be stated that monolingual dictionaries explain one-word discourse markers as claimed by literature. For instance, “whatever” is defined as a vague language token by scholars (O’Keeffe *et al.*, 2007, p.160). This is fully corroborated by monolingual dictionaries. The same can be said of “anyway”, which is claimed to bracket discourse (Ferrara, 1997). Such a function is fully underpinned by monolingual dictionaries. In particular, the Cambridge Dictionary clearly mentions that “anyway” is “a discourse marker (...) to make boundaries in what we are saying”.

Table 5 here below explores whether the two-word discourse markers reported in Table 2 above are provided for in monolingual dictionaries and, if so, whether their explanations or meanings are consistent with literature findings. Appendix 3 reports a full list of two-word discourse markers.

**Table 5**  
*Two-word discourse markers in monolingual dictionaries (in alphabetical order)*

Two-word discourse markers	Cambridge	Collins	Oxford learners'
<i>I guess</i>	used when you believe something is true or likely but are not certain	used to show that you are slightly uncertain or reluctant about what you are saying	to suppose that something is true or likely
<i>I mean</i>	used to correct what you have just said or to add more information  something that people often say before they start or continue their sentence	used when making clearer or correcting something that you have just said (...)	used to explain or correct what you have just said
<i>You know</i>	used when trying to help someone remember something or when trying to explain something (...)	used to emphasize or to draw attention to what you are saying  used when you are trying to explain more clearly what you mean	

		a parenthetical filler phrase used to make a pause in speaking or add slight emphasis to a statement (...)	
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As can be seen from Table 5 above, when two-word discourse markers are accounted for, most of the times the functions claimed by literature are corroborated. For instance, some are defined as “fillers” uttered before a pause (Collins Dictionary) (such as “you know” and “you see”). Others as rephrase tools (such as “I mean”), used to refine a statement, or “explain or correct what you have just said” (Oxford Learners' Dictionary). Some others are defined as shared knowledge devices (such as “you know”), because the conversation participants know what is being talked about. Other two-word discourse markers are reported to be vague conversation markers (such as “I guess” and “kind of”) (see Appendix 3), because they are uttered when speakers are uncertain of their statements. Furthermore, “you know”, apparently the most researched and quoted discourse marker (Leech, 2000; Erman, 2001; O'Keeffe *et al.*, 2007; McCarthy, 2010; Biber & Reppen, 2015; Carter & McCarthy, 2015; Caines *et al.*, 2016) is not accounted for in one dictionary. The discourse marker “or something” has been found as “or something (like that)” in two monolingual dictionaries, where its rendering is consistent with literature findings (see Appendix 3). In the third dictionary, instead, no entry was found.

Table 6 here below explores whether the multi-word discourse markers listed in Table 3 above are provided for in monolingual dictionaries and, if so, whether their explanations or meanings are consistent with literature findings. Appendix 4 reports a full list of multi-word discourse markers in monolingual dictionaries.

**Table 6**  
***Multi-word discourse markers in monolingual dictionaries (in alphabetical order)***

Multi-word discourse markers	Cambridge	Collins	Oxford learners'
<i>And things like that</i>  <i>(or something like that)</i>	(no entry)  used to show that what you have just said is only an example or you are not certain about it	(no entry)  used to indicate that you are referring to something similar to what you have just mentioned but you are not being exact	used when you do not want to complete a list
<i>In other words</i>	used to introduce an explanation that is simpler than the one given earlier	used to introduce a different, and usually simpler, explanation or interpretation of something that has just been said	used to introduce an explanation of something
<i>You know what I mean</i>	used when you think that the person listening understands and so you do not need to say any more	used to suggest that the person listening to you understands what you are trying to say, and so you do not have to explain any more	used to suggest indirectly that there is also a hidden meaning in what you have said
<i>You never know</i>	there is no way of knowing or being certain, esp. about the future	used to indicate that it is not definite or certain what will happen in the future, and to suggest that there is some hope that things will turn out well	used to say that you can never be certain about what will happen in the future, especially when you are suggesting that something good might happen

To some extent, Table 6 and Appendix 4 underpin literature findings. As a matter of fact, some multi-word discourse markers are used as approximators (such as “and so on and so forth”); some as statement refiners (“in other words”), used to rephrase an utterance; others are word economizers, used to imply further information or meanings (“you know what I mean”). Some other discourse markers are used as textual monitors to create coherence, such as “the thing is that”, which refers to “something that has just been said” (Collins Dictionary). The multi-word marker “at the end of the day” could partly underpin literature findings. As a matter of fact, scholars argue that it is used to exert influence on the addressee(s) (O’Keeffe *et al.*, 2007, p. 39;



160ff); whereas monolingual dictionaries refer to it as a phrase used before introducing “the most important fact of a situation” (Cambridge Dictionary). This, to some extent, corroborates literature claims.

### The Trial Lesson

In order to either corroborate or confute these findings, a trial lesson was organized with twelve L2 learners, who took part in a 2-hour class. During the lesson, the participants were explained the main functions of discourse markers in spoken and written language. They were given a list of phrases and sentences which contained one-word, two-word and multi-word discourse markers. The sentences were sourced from the COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) (Davies, 2008 and 2010). The participants were prompted to translate the meanings of each phrase by using the Hoepli online bilingual dictionary. Some of them preferred using the reverso.com platform, because they considered it easier to deal with. Before looking up for words, participants were prompted to infer their meanings in context.

Table 7 here below reports the inferred meanings of the one-word, two-word and multi-word discourse markers, together with the translations found in the online dictionary and in the online language platform.

**Table 7**  
*The discourse markers addressed by L2 learners during the trial lesson*

Multi-word discourse markers	Inferred meanings	Hoepli	Reverso.com
<i>Well</i>	bene [Back translation: (literal) well, good]	be', bene, dunque, allora [Back translation: OK, so, then]	bene [Back translation: (literal) well, good]
<i>I guess</i>	suppongo [Back translation: I suppose]	suppongo, presumo [Back translation: I suppose, I presume]	immagino, credo [Back translation: I imagine, I believe]
<i>I mean</i>	cioè [Back translation: or rather]		cioè, insomma, volevo dire [Back translation: or rather, in short, I wanted to say]

<i>Kind of</i>	più o meno [Back translation: more or less]	piuttosto, quasi, per così dire [Back translation: almost, so to say]	un po', piuttosto, abbastanza [Back translation: a little, almost, rather]
<i>Or something</i>	qualcosa di simile [Back translation: something similar]	o qualcosa del genere [Back translation: or something similar]	o qualcosa del genere [Back translation: or something similar]
<i>You know</i>	sai [Back translation: you know]	sai [Back translation: you know]	sai [Back translation: you know]
<i>You see</i>	come sai [Back translation: as you know]		vedi [Back translation: you see]
<i>And so on and so forth</i>	eccetera eccetera [Back translation: etc.etc.]	e così via [Back translation: and so on]	e così via [Back translation: and so on]
<i>And stuff like that</i>	e così via [Back translation: and so on]	e cose del genere [Back translation: and things like that]	e cose del genere [Back translation: and things like that]
<i>And things like that</i>	e così via [Back translation: and so on]		e cose del genere [Back translation: and things like that]
<i>As I was saying</i>	come dicevo [Back translation: as I was saying]		come stavo dicendo [Back translation: as I was saying]
<i>At the end of the day</i>	alla fine del giorno [Back translation: (literal) at the end of the day]	in fondo, in definitiva [Back translation: (idiomatic) after all, ultimately]	in fin dei conti [Back translation: (idiomatic) at the end of the day]
<i>If you see what I mean</i>	se capisci che intendo [Back translation: if you understand what I mean]		se capisci cosa intendo [Back translation: if you understand what I mean]
<i>In other words</i>	in altre parole [Back translation: in other words]	in altri termini, in altre parole [Back translation: in other terms, in other words]	ossia, in altre parole [Back translation: or, in other words]
<i>The thing is that</i>	fatto sta [Back translation: the fact is]	il fatto è [Back translation: the fact is]	il fatto è [Back translation: the fact is]

<i>You know what I mean</i>	capisci cosa intendo [Back translation: you understand what I mean]	sai cosa intendo, sai cosa voglio dire [Back translation: you understand what I mean]	capisci cosa intendo [Back translation: you understand what I mean]
<i>You never know</i>	non sai mai [Back translation: you never know]	non si sa mai [Back translation: one never knows]	non si può mai sapere [Back translation: one can never know]
<i>What I was going to say</i>	quello che stavo perdere [Back translation: what I was about to say]		quello che stavo per dire [Back translation: what I was about to say]

As can be noticed, the participants inferred the meanings of almost all the discourse markers. The only two they did not interpret perfectly were “well” and “at the end of the day”, which they translated literally. As far as the Hoepli online dictionary is concerned, it contained most of the terms, although the reverso.com platform performed better, as all discourse markers could be found. Participants were, in fact, more thrilled about this platform than the online dictionary. The reason was that they could find the multi-words easier and more quickly, whereas the Hoepli dictionary was more time-consuming. Nonetheless, L2 learners were warned against the impreciseness of some online platforms which are not implemented by lexicographers.

### Conclusions

This paper brought to the fore the fact that the majority of the one- and two-word discourse markers analysed are provided for in monolingual dictionaries. It was highlighted that, most of the times, their meanings underpin literature findings. For instance, “anyway” and “right” are argued to be uttered when introducing or changing a topic. The two words “you know” and “you see” are clearly introduced as phrase-fillers; whereas “or something” and “kind of” are introduced as approximators. Therefore, as far as one- and two-word discourse markers are concerned, it could be stated that the majority of them are listed in monolingual dictionaries and the meanings provided corroborate literature findings.

Some other discrepancies emerged as far as multi-word discourse markers are concerned. Some dictionaries, in fact, corroborate literature findings, but only partly. For instance, the multiple words “at the end of the day” is argued to be used before introducing the most important topic or aspect of an argumentation; whereas literature claims that it is a tool to exercise control

over the conversation participants (O'Keeffe *et al.*, 2007, p. 39; 160ff). To some extent, the two functions could be considered equivalent, although dictionaries focus more on the text-bound, deictic function of the multiple words. Some discourse markers, instead, show completely different meanings. For example, in some cases, textual (or explicit) meanings prevailed over pragmatics (or implied meanings) (Carter & McCarthy, 2006; O'Keeffe *et al.*, 2007, p. 174ff). The multi-word discourse markers “(what) do you think?”, for example, is explained to be used strictly in order to elicit an opinion. Literature findings, on the contrary, classify it as a politeness, face-saving device (O'Keeffe *et al.*, 2007).

In conclusion, it could be stated that monolingual dictionaries generally provide for discourse markers, although some improvements are called for. On the one hand, dictionaries should list more discourse markers, as they lacked some. On the other hand, improvements would be called for as far as pragmatics, hedging and politeness are concerned. In this way, L2 learners' communicative needs could be better catered for. Therefore, it would be advisable that dictionaries sourced their entries from more natural communicative situations and adjusted the word meanings to the purposes of natural conversation. At the same time, however, it should be taken into account that dictionaries are devices for referencing through definition and denotation. They do not necessarily attempt to pin down meaning, which is impossible because all words are essentially arbitrary. Furthermore, dictionaries cannot address multiple layers of meaning; therefore, they cannot be accountable for faithfully representing meanings in discourse markers.

As far as the trial lesson is concerned, it can be stated that the participants enjoyed the 2-hour class as they dealt with examples of natural spoken language. Therefore, the trial lesson described in this paper can be proposed to L2 students in order to help them become acquainted with multi-word discourse markers and real language.

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## **Internet Resources**

### **Monolingual Dictionaries**

The Cambridge Dictionary <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/>

The Collins Dictionary <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english>

The Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionaries <http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>

### **Bilingual Dictionary**

Hoepli online dictionary <http://dizionari.repubblica.it>

### **Translation platform**

## Appendix 1

Two-word discourse markers and their functions (in alphabetical order) according to literature

Two-word discourse markers	Function(s)
<i>And then</i>	-A textual monitor to create coherence (Erman, 2001, p. 1340) -Aimed at exercising control over the addressee(s) (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 39; 160ff)
<i>Hang on</i>	-A tool to signal repair or a new direction of the discourse (Erman, 2001, p. 1340)
<i>I guess</i>	-Hedge (face-saving function) (Erman, 2001, p. 1341)
<i>I mean</i>	-A tool used to: monitor shared and nonshared knowledge (Caines <i>et al.</i> , 2016, p. 350 quoting Leech <i>et al.</i> , 2001); signal repair or a new direction of the discourse (Erman, 2001, p. 1340); exercise control over the addressee(s) (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 39; 160ff); draw attention; refine what speakers say (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 172)
<i>Kind of</i>	-Hedge (face-saving function) (Erman, 2001, p. 1341)
<i>Or rather</i>	-A tool used to signal repair or a new direction of the discourse (Erman, 2001, p. 1340)
<i>Or something</i>	-Vague language token (Caines <i>et al.</i> , 2016, p. 350, quoting Carter and McCarthy, 2006); with face-saving function (Erman, 2001, p. 1341), inviting the listener to fill in absent members of categories from shared knowledge (McCarthy, 2010, p. 8) -An interactive and flow-sustaining marker (McCarthy, 2010, p. 11)
<i>Or whatever</i>	-Vague language token (Caines <i>et al.</i> , 2016, p. 350 quoting Carter and McCarthy, 2006)
<i>Sort of</i>	-An interactive and flow-sustaining marker (McCarthy, 2010, p. 11) -Hedge (face-saving function) (Erman, 2001, p. 1341)
<i>You know</i>	-A tool used to: monitor shared and nonshared knowledge (Caines <i>et al.</i> , 2016, p. 350 quoting Leech <i>et al.</i> , 2001; McCarthy, 2010, p. 4); signal repair or a new direction of the discourse (Erman, 2001, p. 1340); exercise control over and elicit a reaction from the addressee(s) (Erman, 2001, p. 1337; O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 39; 160ff; 172); keep the conversation interactive (McCarthy 2010, p. 11) -A textual monitor to build up a text and create coherence (Erman, 2001, p. 1337) -Hedge (face-saving function) (Erman, 2001, p. 1341)
<i>You see</i>	-A textual monitor to build up a text and create coherence (Erman, 2001, p. 1340) -Shared knowledge and topic launcher (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 172)
<i>Wouldn't it</i>	-A social monitor eliciting a reaction from the addressee(s) (Erman, 2001, p. 1340)

## Appendix 2

Multi-word discourse markers and their functions (in alphabetical order) according to literature

<i>And so on and so forth</i>	-Vague language token (Erman, 2001, p. 1341; O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 177) -Face-saver (Erman, 2001, p. 1341)
<i>And that sort of thing(s)</i>	-Vague language token (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 160, 177; Caines <i>et al.</i> , 2016, p. 350 quoting Carter and McCarthy, 2006)
<i>And things like that</i>	-Vague language token (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 160; Caines <i>et al.</i> , 2016, p. 350 quoting Carter and McCarthy, 2006) -A tool to reduce processing time (McCarthy, 2010, p. 5)
<i>And stuff like that</i>	-Vague language token which invites the listener to fill in absent members of categories from shared knowledge (McCarthy, 2010, p. 8)
<i>And everything</i>	-Vague language token which invites the listener to fill in absent members of categories from shared knowledge (McCarthy, 2010, p. 8) -Face-saver (Erman, 2001, p. 1341)
<i>As I was saying</i>	-A tool to refine what speakers say or to draw attention (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 172)
<i>At the end of the day</i>	-A resource for exercising control over the other conversational participants (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 39, 160ff)
<i>I don't know if / whether</i>	-A tool to reduce processing time (McCarthy, 2010:5) -A face-saving and politeness device (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 73ff, 160)
<i>If you see what I mean</i>	-A resource for exercising control over the other conversational participants (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 39, 160ff)
<i>In other words</i>	-A tool to refine what speakers say or to draw attention (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 172)
<i>Is that so?</i>	-Response engagement token (minimal clause) (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 143, 152)
<i>That's true</i>	-Response engagement token (minimal clause) (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 143, 152)
<i>The thing is that</i>	-Textual monitor to build up a text and create coherence (Erman, 2001, p. 1340)
<i>To put it another way</i>	-A tool to refine what speakers say or to draw attention (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 172)
<i>You know what I mean</i>	-A tool to reduce processing time (McCarthy, 2010, p. 5)



	-A resource for exercising control over the other conversational participants (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p.39, 160ff)
<i>You never know</i>	-Response token to come to a collaborative end (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 150)
<i>(what) do you think?</i>	-A face-saving and politeness device (O'Keeffe <i>et al.</i> , 2007, p. 73ff, 160)
<i>What I was going to say</i>	-A tool to signal repair or a new direction of the discourse (Erman, 2001, p. 1340)

### Appendix 3

Two-word discourse markers in monolingual dictionaries (in alphabetical order)

Two-word discourse markers	Cambridge	Collins	Oxford learners'
<i>And then</i>			
<i>I guess</i>	used when you believe something is true or likely but are not certain	used to show that you are slightly uncertain or reluctant about what you are saying	to suppose that something is true or likely
<i>I mean</i>	used to correct what you have just said or to add more information  something that people often say before they start or continue their sentence	used when making clearer or correcting something that you have just said (...)	used to explain or correct what you have just said
<i>Kind of</i>	used when you are trying to explain or describe something, but you cannot be exact	somewhat; rather  used to express reservation or qualified assent	slightly; in some ways
<i>Or rather</i>			
<i>Or something (like that)</i>	used to show that what you have just said is only an example or you are not certain about it	used to indicate that you are referring to something similar to what you have just mentioned but you are not being exact	-
<i>You know</i>	used when trying to help someone remember something or when trying to explain something (...)	used to emphasize or to draw attention to what you are saying  used when you are trying to explain more clearly what you mean  a parenthetical filler phrase used to make a pause in speaking or add slight emphasis to a statement (...)	
<i>You see</i>	used when you hope someone else will	used when you are explaining something to someone, to	used when you are explaining something

	understand what you are saying or asking	encourage them to listen and understand  a parenthetical filler phrase used to make a pause in speaking or add slight emphasis	
<i>Wouldn't it</i>			

## Appendix 4

### Multi-word discourse markers in monolingual dictionaries (in alphabetical order)

Multi-word discourse markers	Cambridge	Collins	Oxford learners'
<i>And so on and so forth</i>	together with other similar things	and other such things; etcetera	used at the end of a list to show that it continues in the same way
<i>And that sort of thing(s)</i>	used to show that what you have just said is only an example from a much larger group of things		a group or type of people or things that are similar in a particular way
<i>And things like that</i>  <i>(or something like that)</i>	(no entry for “and things like that”)  used to show that what you have just said is only an example or you are not certain about it	(no entry for “and things like that”)  used to indicate that you are referring to something similar to what you have just mentioned but you are not being exact	used when you do not want to complete a list
<i>And stuff like that</i>			
<i>And everything</i>		used after mentioning a particular thing or list of things to indicate that they are only examples	and so on; and other similar things
<i>As I was saying</i>			
<i>At the end of the day</i>	something that you say before you give the most important fact of a situation	used when you are talking about what happens after a long series of events	used to introduce the most important fact after everything has been considered
<i>I don't know if / whether</i>			
<i>If you see what I mean</i>	(if you know what I mean)	(if you know what I mean)	(do you see what I mean) (if you see what I'm saying)

<i>In other words</i>	used to introduce an explanation that is simpler than the one given earlier	used to introduce a different, and usually simpler, explanation or interpretation of something that has just been said	used to introduce an explanation of something
<i>Is that so?</i>	used to say that a situation mentioned earlier is correct or true*		used to refer back to something that has already been mentioned*
<i>That's true</i>			
<i>The thing is that</i>	used to introduce an explanation or an excuse	used to introduce an explanation, comment, or opinion, that relates to something that has just been said. (...)	used to introduce an important fact, reason or explanation
<i>To put it another way</i>			
<i>You know what I mean</i>	used when you think that the person listening understands and so you do not need to say any more	used to suggest that the person listening to you understands what you are trying to say, and so you do not have to explain any more	used to suggest indirectly that there is also a hidden meaning in what you have said
<i>You never know</i>	there is no way of knowing or being certain, esp. about the future	used to indicate that it is not definite or certain what will happen in the future, and to suggest that there is some hope that things will turn out well	used to say that you can never be certain about what will happen in the future, especially when you are suggesting that something good might happen
<i>What I was going to say</i>			
<i>(what) do you think?</i>	to believe something or have an opinion or idea*	if you think that something is the case, you have the opinion that it is the case*	to have a particular idea or opinion about something / somebody; to believe something*

\*N.B. In these cases, the discourse markers were not listed, but their meanings were inferred by sample sentences.

# Attitude Markers in Book Reviews: The Case of Applied Linguistics Discourse Community

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### Abstract

The current study aims to explore the representation of Attitude resources of Appraisal theory in English book reviews published in academic journals in the field of applied linguistics. To this end, three subcategories of Attitude resources, including *appreciation*, *judgment*, and *affect* were coded in a corpus of 49 book reviews published in seven academic journals. Frequency counts and percentage values were used to measure reviewer usage of evaluative language resources and identify the most frequent subcategory of Attitude resources. The results of the analysis demonstrated the prevalence of *appreciation* resources; i.e. the reviewers revealed a strong tendency toward using *appreciation* resources when commenting on scholarly works published by counterparts in their field. They tended to put forth their overt evaluation of the books rather than judging the authors or involving their personal feelings. Although the findings revealed clear traces of subjectivity in a sample academic genre, i.e. book reviews, they also demonstrated the existing swing of the pendulum between subjectivity and objectivity in academic writing. However, as an evaluative genre, employing resources of evaluative language seems inevitable in book reviews even when they circulate in academic settings. The findings of the current study seem to expand the available literature on Appraisal Theory. Moreover, they seem to bear some implications for applied linguistics courses and academic writing and reading skills of the students.

### Keywords

Affect, Applied linguistics, Appraisal theory, Appreciation, Book reviews, Judgment

Knowledge is created by publishing a piece of academic work (Bazerman, 1998) and professional and novice members of academic discourse communities present their findings in the

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form of academic papers as “the main vehicles” to produce new knowledge (Russell, 2010, p. 54). To communicate their findings, members of each community own an established set of rules on which evaluations shed light (Hatipoğlu, 2007; Hunston, 2003).

As Itakura and Tsui (2011) maintain, writers in academic discourse mostly use evaluative language in order to “evaluate and comment on other researchers’ academic contributions” (p. 1366) which is realized in Appraisal Theory, introduced by Professor James Martin. Appraisal theory encompasses three main domains including Attitude, dealing with feelings (*affect*), emotional reactions (*appreciation*), evaluation of behaviors (*judgment*), Engagement (*monogloss* and *heterogloss*), dealing with the existing voices and viewpoints in a text and Graduation (*force* and *focus*), dealing with strengthening or softening the judgment and appreciation (Martin & White, 2005).

Book review as a long-standing academic genre (Ortezay-Miranda, 1996) is aimed at evaluating knowledge production (Motta-Roth, 1998) and seems to be “an ideal candidate for investigating criticism in academic context” (Babaii, 2011, p. 56) since its main function is evaluation (Itakura & Tsui, 2010). Book reviews try to assess “how valuable their contribution may be to the development of the field” (Suarez & Moreno, 2008, p. 147) and aim both “to inform readers about new books in a given discipline” and “to evaluate the scholarly work of a professional peer within the scholarly community” (Lindholm-Romantschuk, 1998, p. 40).

Evaluative language is very important in academic book reviews since they present an explicit evaluation of “the authors’ academic merits and standing by peers” and also “indirectly influence the reputation of the author” (Itakura & Tsui, 2010, p. 1366). Although this genre has long been neglected in applied linguistics research (Hyland, 2000), the last decade has witnessed scholars’ giving more attention to unfolding its features and variations and “academic review genres” (Hyland & Diani, 2009, p. 1), i.e. review articles, book blurbs, and literature reviews have gained more prominence. Evaluation in academic discourse has recently received enormous attention (Hunston & Thompson, 2000) and a burgeoning body of research has been devoted to analyzing academic genres in light of Appraisal Theory including research articles (Thetela, 1997; Tutin, 2010), research article abstracts (Hyland & Tse, 2005; Stotesbury, 2003), research article introductions (Hood, 2004), journal forums (Dressen, 2003), and referee reports (Fortanet, 2008). However, as White (2014, p. 1) reiterates, “there are numerous registers and discourse domains to which the theory has not been applied”. One such genre might be academic book reviews which

mainly strive to evaluate knowledge production (Itakura & Tsui, 2010; Lindholm-Romantschuk, 1998; Motta-Roth, 1998) which seems to be “an ideal candidate for investigating criticism in academic context” (Babaii, 2011, p. 56).

Today, book reviews are published in most journals across different fields of study. Accordingly, it seems worth investigating evaluative language features in this important academic genre as the locus of presenting scholars’ praise and criticism on newly published academic works. Academic book reviews have been scrutinized with regard to their structure (Motta-Roth, 1998), transitivity (Babaii & Ansary, 2005, cited in Babaii, 2011), cross-cultural interaction (De Caralho, 2001; Tejerina, 2003, cited in Babaii, 2011; Moreno & Suárez, 2008), gender (Tse & Hyland, 2008, cited in Babaii, 2011), and cross-disciplinary variables (Babaii & Ansary, 2005; Hyland, 2000; Salager-Meyer et al., 2007, cited in Babaii, 2011; Motta-Roth, 1998).

On the one hand, the academic book review has been a neglected genre in applied linguistics research (Hyland, 2000; Junqueira, 2013), and on the other, no study has yet touched upon evaluative language use in book reviews. Hence, the main purpose of this study is to shed light on the use of attitude markers in book reviews in the field of applied linguistics. Specifically, the current study aims at exploring attitude markers in book reviews published in academic journals in the field of applied linguistics. The present study, thus, intends to answer the following research question: What are the Attitude markers of Appraisal Theory in book reviews published in academic journals in the field of applied linguistics? This question was further divided into three more questions: What are the affect resources of Attitude markers in book reviews published in academic journals in the field of applied linguistics? What are the judgment resources of Attitude markers in book reviews published in academic journals in the field of applied linguistics? And, what are the appreciation resources of Attitude markers in book reviews published in academic journals in the field of applied linguistics?

## **Review of Literature**

### **Appraisal Theory: Theoretical Background**

Appraisal Theory is the extended and refined form of the aspect of situation, *tenor* (Fowler, 1996, p. 192) that investigates the stance in terms of the values and voices of the text and interpersonal meaning. Interpersonal functions of language are related to “the social, expressive, and conative



functions of language” and includes the speakers’ “attitudes and judgments” and “their encoding of the role relationships in the situations” (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, p. 27).

White (2014) defines Appraisal theory as “an approach to exploring, describing, and explaining the way language is used to evaluate to adopt stance, to construct textual personas, and to manage interpersonal positioning and relationships” (p. 1). Hood (2004) believes that this theory underlies “a comprehensive study of evaluation that represents the construct as more than the contribution of one or more specific grammatical resources, or even as the sum of a range of grammatical parts” (p. 49). It is “a system of semantic resources” (White, 1998, p. 74) and shows the single or multiple inter-subjective positions and attitudes. From White’s (1998) perspective, Appraisal is “an array of interpersonal resources variously concerned with authorial attitude, social evaluation and positioning of both reader and authorial voice” (p. 75).

Martin and White (2005) present a definition of the three main domains of Appraisal theory, i.e. Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation, as follows:

ATTITUDE is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behavior and evaluation of things. ENGAGEMENT deals with sourcing attitudes and the play of voices around opinions in discourse. GRADUATION attends to grading phenomena whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred (p. 35).

Attitude entails “three semantic regions covering what is traditionally referred to as emotions, ethics, and aesthetics” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 42) and includes three subcategories: affect, judgment, and appreciation. Affect is related to “registering positive and negative feelings” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 42) and have some resources in order to establish “emotional reactions” (p. 35) and “emotional response” (White, 1998, p. 75). Judgment involves “attitudes towards behavior, which we admire or criticize, praise or condemn” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 42) and has some resources in order to evaluate behaviors based on different “normative principles” (p. 35). It entails “evaluation of human behavior, e.g. *corruptly*, *skillfully*” (White, 1998, p. 75). Appreciation includes resources “for constructing the values of things including natural phenomena and semiosis” (p. 36) and deals with “evaluation of semiotic and natural phenomena” (p. 43) and “evaluation of entities, e.g. *beautiful*, *striking*” (White, 1998, p. 75).

The second main category of Appraisal theory, engagement, is defined as follows (Martin & White, 2005, p. 36):

Engagement is concerned with the ways in which resources such as projection, modality, polarity, concession and various comment adverbials position the speaker/writer with respect to the value position being advanced and with respect to potential responses to that value position-by quoting or reporting, acknowledging a possibility, denying, countering, affirming, and so on.

According to White (1998), engagement includes “resources for negotiating various convergent, alternative, and counter socio-semiotic realities or positions activated and referenced by every utterance” (p. 78). Monoglossic utterances entail no “reference to other voices and viewpoints” and heteroglossic utterances leave space for “dialogistic alternatives” (Martin & White, 2005, pp. 99-100).

The third main category, graduation includes resources “for scaling interpersonal force for sharpening/blurting the focus on value relationship (*very, really, sort’v*)” (White, 1998, p. 75) and aims to strengthen or soften the judgment and appreciation. It includes two subcategories: *force and focus* (Martin & White, 2005). Force aims at “grading according to intensity or amount” and focus aims at “grading according to prototypicality and the preciseness by which category boundaries are drawn” (p. 137).

### **Appraisal framework: Empirical Studies**

Coffin (1997) attempted to examine the written discourse of learning areas in secondary education (English, history, science, mathematics, and geography) and the discourse of workplace (the science industry, media and administration). She found out that students’ essays including appraisal would influence their grades and came to the conclusion that improving the students’ ability to unpick the value *judgments* and the way they are included in a text are very crucial factors.

Page (2003) used the appraisal framework to scrutinize childbirth narratives. The findings revealed different story-telling styles between men and women due to making use of a different number of the *affect* and *appreciation* resources. He found that women’s narratives were more personalized and had a higher degree of interpersonal involvement than those of men. Moreover, men and women were different with regard to characterizing themselves through employing the *judgment* resources.

Similarly, Hood (2004) analyzed the introduction section of academic research articles regarding the writer's evaluative stance in both published and ESL undergraduate students' research papers. The analysis of both published and students' texts revealed the presence of explicit attitude resources and the writers displayed their feelings, judgments, and appreciation of phenomena. Nevertheless, the most frequently used category of attitude resources was *appreciation*. Hood attributed these findings to the same social purpose underlying the published texts writers and the students, i.e. "to position and argue for the writer's own study" (p. 127).

Birot (2008) also investigated three subcategories of *attitude* in three major news networks: BBC, CNN, Aljazeera and found some variations in the use of *attitude* markers among them and referred to the *appreciation* of things and entities as the most frequently used element while expression of personal feelings and emotions were the least common phenomena.

Moreover, Gallardo and Ferrari (2010) investigated the resources of appraisal in a doctors' discussion forum and explored their attitudes toward their own health and professional practice. The findings demonstrated that the doctors mostly expressed negative attitudes and their awareness of the risk-taking nature of their job as well as their professional issues. The doctors had a negative *judgment* of social esteem considering their health and overlooking it. Besides, they had a *judgment* of social sanction considering the healthcare system and their higher-rank colleagues.

Mur-Duenas (2010) also aimed to see how disciplinary values would explain the existing culture-language values in a discourse community. He examined a corpus of research articles from the field of Business Management in international American and local Spanish contexts with regard to their attitude markers and found that the authors made similar use of attitude markers in order to reach their intended purposes. He drew the conclusion that the scholars had similar values and their socio-cultural contexts would not make an impact on them while they wanted to present the findings of their research.

As it can be understood from these studies, the use of attitude markers appears to be highly affected by the discipline and the context. Also, authors in different genres employ different attitude markers. However, it is interesting to note that within a given discourse community, authors make use of similar attitude markers across different genres.

## **Studies on Book Reviews**

In the first study to explore the features of this significant academic genre, i.e. book reviews, Motta-Roth (1998) tried to identify the rhetorical moves of English book reviews using Swales' (1990) approach to unfold the moves of 180 academic book reviews in various disciplines, namely chemistry, economics, and linguistics. According to the results of her study, an academic book review entails four moves: 1) Introducing the book, 2) Outlining the book, 3) Highlighting parts of the book, and 4) Providing closing evaluation of the book.

Hyland (2004) scrutinized 160 book reviews from 28 academic journals in different disciplines including science, the social sciences, and humanities. He found that in soft disciplines, evaluations were longer, more detailed, and more discursive. Moreover, they included more cases of criticism than those of praise. However, the book reviews of the hard disciplines had a higher number of praise evaluations. He attributed these cross-disciplinary differences to different roles that the book reviews play.

Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz Ariza (2004) conducted a contrastive study of English, French, and Spanish medical book reviews in terms of the existing criticism. They found that Spanish book reviews included a higher number of critical comments. Moreover, mitigation devices were frequently used in Spanish and French book reviews to soften the critical comments. In addition, English book reviews included a higher number of direct criticisms. The findings of their study also demonstrated that the authors of French book reviews had a more authoritative and expert way of presenting critical comments while Spanish book reviewers made more use of sarcastic language. However, their English counterparts provided critical comments as personal opinions.

Moreno and Suarez (2008) presented a methodological framework for exploring the evaluative resources in academic book reviews and compared their frequency in English book reviews and those in other languages in a particular discipline. They proposed three planes for evaluative resources: propositional, metadiscoursal, and rhetorical.

Suarez and Moreno (2008) compared 20 English and 20 Spanish literary book reviews and found new steps within the identified moves and concluded that academic book reviews could be considered a distinct genre across different cultures. Moreover, they found that the Spanish book reviewers made less use of critical comments while presenting their evaluation of the books and tried to present negative comments less than their English counterparts.

Itakura and Tsui (2011) compared English and Japanese book reviews to see how criticism was managed in academic book reviews of the field of linguistics. They found that praise was more frequently utilized in English book reviews while apology and self-denigration were more prominently used in Japanese book reviews. The former resources contributed to the authors of English book reviews to build rapport and establish solidarity. With regard to Japanese book reviews, the authors took advantage of “rhetorical questions”, “self-denigration”, “recasting problems” as a potential for further research and “attributing problems to the next generations”.

Babaii (2011) analyzed 54 book reviews published in leading physics journals using the Appraisal framework. She concluded that although book reviews included more impersonal criticism than subjective ones, the presence of personal comments, mockery and sarcasm, and unhedged and blunt criticism would lead to doubts over the hard science claims considering being objectivity. She discussed that the stable position of the book review authors in their field led them to put forth harsher criticisms without considering the possible consequences of their critical comments.

More recently, Junqueira (2013) tried to examine cross-cultural rhetorical patterns of academic book reviews in the field of applied linguistics in English and Brazilian Portuguese. The results showed that the academic book reviews included the moves identified by Motta-Roth (1998), with the exception of the third evaluative move, which was used cyclically. In addition, it was shown that English book reviews were more critical than their Brazilian Portuguese ones. The English book reviews referred to the books shortcomings while this was less frequently seen in Brazilian Portuguese book reviews.

The review of the literature reveals that most of the studies conducted on book reviews focus on cross-linguistic differences in the use of attitude markers. These studies show differences among languages in this regard which can be attributed to some extent to cultural factors. Other studies also employ a comparative methodology for analyzing book reviews published in different disciplines. No study so far has exclusively considered the application of Attitude resources of Appraisal Theory within a single discipline to find out the persistent framework. In this regard, the present study attempts to investigate the representation of Attitude resources of this theory in English book reviews published in academic journals in the field of applied linguistics.

## Method

### Corpus

The corpus of the study consisted of a sample of 49 book reviews published in seven international, peer-reviewed applied linguistics journals comprising a total of 77,160 words. First, a comprehensive list of professional and highly prestigious journals was prepared using The Modern Language Journal (Weber & Campbell, 2004), Egbert's (2007) evaluation of applied linguistics, Jung's (2004) examination of the frequency of appearance of ELT journals and Lazaraton's sample (2000). Afterwards, four PhD holders and university instructors with research experience of more than five years and active in the field of applied linguistics were asked to comment on the provided list of journals. The seven first rated journals were selected and their archives were scrutinized in order to ensure that they had book reviews published. The ultimately selected journals were: *Applied Linguistics*, *ELT*, *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *Journal of Language Learning*, *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Journal of Second Language Writing*, and *TESOL Quarterly*.

A total of 49 book reviews (seven book review articles from each journal) were collected from the archive of the above journals. In order to avoid the possible influence of time on the book reviews, only those book reviews published between 2005 and 2015 were included in the sample. Moreover, in order to avoid the influence of an author's style on the final results, only single-authored ones were selected. Furthermore, the authors were affiliated with European or American educational institutions in order to ensure their command of English and avoiding the influence of English proficiency on their use of appraisal resources.

### Analytical Framework: Appraisal Theory

In order to find the attitude resources, Appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2003) was employed. Hood (2004) maintains that most of the studies suffer from a shortcoming, i.e. "theoretically motivated linguistically-based models for discourse semantic options in interpersonal meaning" (p. 49). From her viewpoint, Appraisal theory contributes to a comprehensive study of evaluation that represents the construct as more than the contribution of one or more specific grammatical resources, or even as the sum of a range of grammatical parts" (p. 49).

Appraisal theory is the representation of the aspect of situation, *tenor* in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in the extended and refined form (Fowler, 1996, p. 129). Martin and

White (2005) present a definition of the three main domains of AT, i.e. Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation, as follows:

ATTITUDE is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behavior and evaluation of things. ENGAGEMENT deals with sourcing attitudes and the play of voices around opinions in discourse. GRADUATION attends to grading phenomena whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred (p. 35).

Attitude entails “three semantic regions covering what is traditionally referred to as emotions, ethics, and aesthetics” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 42) and includes three subcategories: Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation. Affect is related to “registering positive and negative feelings” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 42) and have some resources in order to establish “emotional reactions” (p. 35) and “emotional response” (White, 1998, p. 75). Judgment entails “evaluation of human behavior, e.g. *corruptly*, *skillfully*” (White, 1998, p. 75). Appreciation includes resources “for constructing the values of things including natural phenomena and semiosis” (p. 36) and deals with “evaluation of semiotic and natural phenomena” (p. 43) and “evaluation of entities, e.g. *beautiful*, *striking*” (White, 1998, p. 75).

### **Procedure and Data Analysis**

Each book review was scrutinized and the resources of three main categories of attitude resources were coded. Then, to ensure the frequency of the coded attitude resources in book reviews, half of the data (25 book reviews) were randomly selected and coded by the second coder and inter-coder reliability was calculated ( $r=0.89$ ). The second coder was an MA graduate of TEFL who was quite familiar with Appraisal theory, its main categories and subcategories. Following that, the frequencies were determined for all the resources of attitude and its three categories.

In order to answer the major research question and three minor research questions, the frequency and percentage values were recorded and the raw frequencies were normalized to 1000 words since the book reviews were of various lengths and normalization would make them comparable (Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998). In order to normalize the obtained frequencies, each raw frequency was divided by the number of words in that corpus and multiplied by the basis of normalizing (in this study 1000) (Nur Aktas & Cortes, 2008).

## Findings

The major research question and its sub-questions addressed the frequency of the attitude markers, including *affect*, *judgment*, and *appreciation*, of Appraisal theory in book reviews published in academic journals in the field of applied linguistics. To this end, the book reviews were analyzed in terms of three subcategories of the Attitude markers (Martin & White, 2005). Table 1 represents the frequencies of attitude resources in book reviews in seven professional journals in the field of applied linguistics.

Table 1

*Frequencies of Attitude resources in book reviews*

Attitude Resources	Total Frequency	Normalized Frequency
<b>Affect</b>	28	0.362
<b>Judgment</b>	46	0.596
<b>Appreciation</b>	717	9.292
<b>Total</b>	791	10.251

As Table 1 displays, the results of the analysis of English book reviews in professional journals in the field of applied linguistics revealed that authors made the most use of *appreciation* resources of attitude resources followed by *judgment* and *affect* subcategories. Out of 791 identified Attitude resources, 717 (90.64%) were *appreciation* in comparison to 46 (5.82%) *judgment* and 28 (3.54%) *affect* resources.

Among attitude resources, the authors included the highest number of *appreciation* resources (717 (90.64%)). Some examples are presented below.

(1) Overall, this book which presents an ***interesting*** collection of texts, will without any doubt serve as a ***useful*** resource for readers to ...  
(*International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2013)

(2) The book constitutes an ***interesting*** and ***well-edited*** collection of research....  
(*International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2013)

(3) Crusan's writing is ***clear, easy to read***, and ***enjoyable***.



*(Journal of second language Writing, 2012)*

(4) ... which make it sometimes **difficult** to apply to other types of formulaic sequence...

*(International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 2013)*

(5) ... this I found a particularly **rewarding** chapter....

*(International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 2010)*

(6) It is certain that the book will be an **important source of inspiration** for teachers.

*(TESOL Quarterly, 2011)*

(7) The tone is **supportive** and **reassuring** and this book is likely to make **a very good companion** for all...

*(Language Learning Journal, 2010)*

(8) Overall, this book is **worth reading** for its coverage of the complexity and...

*(TESOL Quarterly, 2011)*

(9) It's also a **useful** reference for material designers...

*(TESOL Quarterly, 2011)*

(10) The web has done an **outstanding** job of presenting a wide range of areas related to research.

*(TESOL Quarterly, 2012)*

(11) The book is written in a very **clear** and **organized** style.

*(TESOL Quarterly, 2012)*

(12) His discussion is quite **ambivalent**.

*(Journal of Pragmatics, 2013)*

(13) ...the author of the book has made an **invaluable** contribution to the study .....  
(*Journal of Pragmatics*, 2010)

(14) .....the work is **well-structured** and **user-friendly**.  
(*Journal of Pragmatics*, 2012).

(15) This **outstanding** and highly **accessible** book should definitely be **useful** for ....  
(*Journal of second language Writing*, 2013)

In all these examples, the authors took advantage of *appreciation* resources of attitude resources to present the value of things and evaluate the natural phenomena and entities. The *appreciation* resources were included to express and construct the authors' feelings towards products (Example: 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 14, 15), processes (Example: 3, 4, 10, 12, 13), and entities (Example: 1, 7, 9, 11) (White, 1998).

The second most frequent sub-category of attitude resources was *judgment* resources (46 (%5.82)). Some examples are presented below.

(16) **He fails to state explicitly** ....  
(*Journal of Pragmatics*, 2013)

(17) **The author rightly argues** that.....  
(*International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2013)

(18) **He had a vague notion of this concept**....  
(*Applied Linguistics*, 2015)

(19) .....**those academics and practitioners have largely failed** to examine the .....  
(*International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2012)

(20). ..... **Ken Hyland is remarkably diligent and productive** .....  
(*Journal of second language Writing*, 2015)

In Example (16), the book review author criticized the writer of the book for failing to clarify his/her point. In Example (17), the book review author appraised what the writer argued about. In Example (18), the book writer was accused of holding an unclear understanding of a concept. Example (19) included the book review author's judgment about the academics and practitioners and criticism of his/her unsuccessful experience of investigating an issue in the field. In Example (20), the book review author appreciated one of the prominent figures in the field of applied linguistics. The least frequent subcategory of Attitude resources in English book reviews was *affect* resources (28 (%3.54)).

(21) I'm not **sure** whether this tension can be resolved in such a way as to ....  
(*Journal of Pragmatics*, 2010)

(22) I particularly **enjoyed** the chapters on the demands of project-based learning.....  
(*Journal of Language Learning*, 2010)

(23) I am not **convinced** that either of the volumes fits the bill, even if they have their merits.  
(*Journal of Pragmatics*, 2013)

(24).... but I'm not **sure** if it is completely secure.  
(*Journal of Pragmatics*, 2010)

(25) ...., if one is **interested** in learning more about ....  
(*Applied Linguistics*, 2015)

In these examples, the authors used *affect* resources in the form of “mental processes of reaction” (Example: 21, 24), and attributive rational of Affect” (Example: 2, 23, 25) to present the authors' positive and negative feelings toward individuals (White, 1998, p. 75).

## Discussion and Conclusions

The results of the analysis of the English book reviews in academic journals of applied linguistics in terms of Attitude resources revealed that the authors of academic book reviews took more advantage of *appreciation* resources followed by *judgment* and *affect* resources. The application of attitude resources in general and the *appreciation*, in particular, confirmed that even the academic writers would appeal to some resources to both inform and persuade their readers of the value and truth of their claims (Hyland & Tse, 2005). The function of *appreciation* resources, as the most frequent resources in English book reviews, is invoking “academic persuasion” (Hyland, 2008, p. 2) which challenges defining academic writing as a “dispassionate description of truth” (Penrose & Katz, 1998, p. 169, cited in Zhang, 2015, p. 9).

Contrarily, the lowest frequency of *judgment* and *affect* resources in comparison with the *appreciation* resources might refer to the authors’ tendency not to violate the academic norms completely through avoiding extremely subjective comments and criticisms. It might also point to their awareness of their status in the field as mostly novice members of the academic discourse community and the necessity of being cautious about expressing their personal judgments and overt evaluations of the writers of the reviewed books.

In general, the results of the current study pointed to the presence of subjectivity in the academic interaction among the members of academic discourse communities (Babaii, 2011) and demonstrated that book reviews can be considered a potential locus of inserting subjective comments and evaluations into academic criticism. Indeed, “the evaluative and argumentative functions of the book review” (Babaii, 2011, p. 74) seem to call for inserting such resources.

Accordingly, the statement that “academic writing is purely objective, impersonal and informational” (Hyland & Tse, 2005, p. 123) seems to be challenged in the current study. As the results of the current study revealed, book reviews entail subjectivity and the authors overtly present their evaluation of academic works through employing Attitude resources of Appraisal theory including *appreciation*, *judgment*, and *affect*.

The application of attitude resources in general and the *appreciation*, in particular, reveals that academic writers employ some resources to both inform and persuade their readers of the value and truth of their claims (Hyland & Tse, 2005). The results were in line with those of previously conducted studies in which interpersonal resources were coded in academic writing (See Zhang, 2015) and the highest frequency of *appreciation* subcategory of attitude resources

(Hood, 2004). Indeed, *appreciation* resources were employed to bring about “academic persuasion” (Hyland, 2008, p. 2). The use of attitude resources calls into question considering academic writing as “dispassionate description of truth” (Penrose & Katz, 1998, p. 169, cited in Zhang, 2015, p. 9).

However, the lowest frequency of *judgment* and *affect* resources in comparison with the *appreciation* resources might result from the authors’ academic background and their tendency not to provide their evaluation of academic works subjectively. Rather, it seems that the authors try to stick to the objective norms of the academic community by avoiding extremely subjective comments and criticisms and present their opinions about the books rather than their writers.

Based on some status-related information (Babaii, 2011) and short bios at the end of the book reviews and taking into account this usually held belief that inexperienced and novice academics mostly write book reviews (Hyland, 2000; Mackiewicz, 2007; Motta-Roth, 1998), one might notice that book reviews are not necessarily written by established members of the discourse community. Hence, the authors tend to be more cautious about expressing their personal judgments and overt evaluations of the writers of the reviewed books.

The results of the current study might point to the presence of subjectivity in academic interaction among the members of academic discourse communities (Babaii, 2011). As a result, the findings are incompatible with results of studies which argued for an impersonal tone of academic criticism and revealed the emotion-ridden comments and criticisms in recent book reviews (Salager-Meyer, 1999). Moreover, the results were at odds with those of Babaii (2011) which revealed the impersonal criticism available in physics book reviews which was attributed to the possible disciplinary variations.

Book reviews can be considered a potential locus of inserting subjective comments and evaluations into academic criticism. Indeed, “the evaluative and argumentative functions of the book review” (Babaii, 2011, p. 74) seem to require including interpersonal resources.

The findings of the current study confirmed the application of evaluative resources for examining and evaluating “other researchers’ academic contributions” to the field of applied linguistics (Itakura & Tsui, 2011, p. 1366). Accordingly, the statement that “academic writing is purely objective, impersonal and informational” (Hyland & Tse, 2005, p. 123) seems to be no longer valid. As the results of the current study revealed, book reviews entail subjectivity and the

authors overtly present their evaluation of academic works by employing attitude resources of Appraisal theory including *appreciation*, *judgment*, and *affect*.

The results of the study seem to enrich the available literature on Appraisal theory and book reviews. The study would result in conducting numerous studies on various genres and subgenres in light of Appraisal framework to see how evaluative language is represented in the available persuasive and argumentative genres in academic discourse communities across various disciplines. The findings of the study can also be used by the English academic course instructors (EAP instructors) in order to raise their learners' consciousness about the way academics put forth their critical comments and thereby, to enhance their critical thinking. Moreover, the results of the study call upon applied linguistics instructors to increase their learners' understanding of the various resources used by academics for evaluating the contribution of their counterparts to the field of applied linguistics. They could design and implement numerous activities and tasks for their learners to practice making academic comments and criticisms (Bloch, 2003; Hood, 2004).

With regard to the EFL context of Iran with limited opportunities for the learners to be linguistically and academically socialized (Cook, 2001), instructors are recommended to pay particular attention to the use and application of evaluative resources in English book reviews and raise their learners' consciousness about the conventional discursive practices (Hyland, 1998).

The study suffered from some limitations which would lead to further studies. It focused on English book reviews published in academic journals in the field of applied linguistics. Several studies can be conducted on academic book reviews in other fields of study in order to unfold the possible disciplinary variations. Moreover, a contrastive study can be conducted to investigate the possible commonalities and discrepancies among book reviews written in English and other languages and Persian in particular to see if native and non-native authors employ the same set of evaluative resources to comment on their counterparts' contributions to the field.

Book reviews can also be studied through a genre analysis perspective to find the common moves and steps. A critical discourse analysis of the book reviews can be carried out to explore the possible hidden agenda underlying the evaluative resources. The corpus of the study was small. Further studies can be conducted on a larger sample of book reviews taking the authors' gender into account to find out if their gender would influence their use of

evaluative resources. The authors' status in the field in terms of power relations between the author(s) of the book reviews and the author(s) of the reviewed books can be considered in further studies.

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# **The Effects of a Sentence Completion Task vs. a Sentence Generation Task on Vocabulary Learning: an Exploratory Study**

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### **Abstract**

Research has shown that deep mental processing is needed for retention of linguistic forms. While the Involvement Load Hypothesis (ILH) has been introduced to account for depth of processing using measurable motivational and cognitive constructs of tasks' induced involvement, there is still insufficient research, especially in the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) context. This exploratory study attempts to examine the assumptions underlying the Involvement Load Hypothesis by comparing two tasks with different levels of involvement: sentence generation vs sentence completion utilizing the iBook format. Four ESL females participated in a one-day research session. The Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS) was used as an immediate and delayed post-test along with a post-test interview. In line with the prediction of Involvement Load Hypothesis, the results revealed that sentence generation, being a more cognitively demanding task, led to better retention of vocabulary on both immediate and delayed post-tests. The findings point attention to some shortcomings of the ILH and illuminate useful pedagogical implications and suggestions for CALL-based task designs, particularly with the iBook format.

### **Keywords**

Involvement Load Hypothesis, Vocabulary learning, Vocabulary Knowledge Scale, EFL learners, iBook

Vocabulary learning is the basic building block of L2 knowledge. L2 learners are, however, overwhelmed by the need to acquire about 8000-9000 word families for reading comprehension and approximately 5000-7000 for oral discourse (Schmitt, 2008). The limitations of acquiring vocabulary as a byproduct of learning and the growing awareness of the value of attention in language learning in general, and vocabulary retention in particular, have motivated new strands of research. A considerable number of second language acquisition (SLA) studies have explored

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various awareness-raising strategies, including reading with glossing and hypertexts (Chen, Hsieh & Kinshuk, 2008; Prince, 2012; Tylor, 2013; Yang & Xie, 2013) and frequency of exposure (Chun & Plass, 1996; Chun & Payne, 2004; Koyama & Takeuchi, 2007). The majority of studies examining the effectiveness of glossing on vocabulary learning, however, found that their effects were non-durable (Yun, 2011).

Another, less prevalent strand of research has focused on the role of elaborative processing on vocabulary retention rather than ways of enhancing input per se. Despite the supporting evidence from psychological literature about the value of cognitive elaboration for retention and recall of linguistic forms (Anderson, 1995; Baddeley, 1997), little attention has been paid to this aspect in vocabulary research, especially in CALL-based mediums. One reason might be the lack of a unified criteria for evaluating and measuring the extent of cognitive involvement in tasks pertaining to vocabulary learning. Realizing this theoretical and empirical gap in vocabulary learning research and attempting to encapsulate the notion of elaborative processing into a measurable construct, Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) developed the ILH. Drawing on Craik and Lockhart's (1972) Depth of Processing Hypothesis and Schmidt's (1990, 2001) work on attention, this model distinguishes tasks based on their induced depth of processing.

The cognitive assumptions underlying the ILH are purported to be in line with cognitive approaches to task-based teaching (Robinson, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2005; Skehan, 1996, 1998; Swain, 1985; 1998; VanPatten, 1996, 2002) which contend that cognitively demanding tasks are important for language learning and retention of linguistic forms. Given the cruciality of attention to L2 vocabulary knowledge and the assumption that different modalities yield different effects, there is an increasing need to test cognitive SLA hypotheses in computer-based settings. With this in mind, this paper attempts to examine the assumptions of an underexplored cognition-based hypothesis, namely the ILH, by comparing the effects of two tasks of presumably different cognitive load on short- and long-term vocabulary retention using the iBook format. iBook is an electronic book that can be created using free software called iBook Author and can be viewed on an iPad without internet connection. Needless to say, their portability and their ubiquity among learners has made mobile devices, including iPads, very appealing in second language learning research (Wang & Smith, 2013; Yang & Xie, 2013).

Pertaining to vocabulary learning, the first section of this paper will briefly review how SLA research perceives vocabulary knowledge. As considering relevant theoretical and empirical

research on the ILH is crucial for a balanced evaluation and better interpretation of results, the second section will illuminate the theoretical assumptions of the ILH in light of cognition-based task approaches. Empirical studies on task-induced involvement on vocabulary learning will then be discussed.

## **Literature review**

### **Vocabulary knowledge**

The knowledge of the various aspects of a lexical item does not occur simultaneously; some aspects might be mastered before others. Recognizing the complexity of vocabulary knowledge, Nation (1990, p. 31) has identified eight different kinds of vocabulary knowledge: “knowledge relating to a word’s meaning, its written form(s), its spoken form(s), its grammatical behavior, collocations, associations, and frequency”. Nevertheless, all of these aspects should be perceived as related because the development of one aspect leads to the development of the others (Schmitt, 2000).

By and large, there is no evidence on how the process and the gradation of the various aspects of vocabulary develop (Schmitt, 2010). Schmitt (2000) suggested that with single exposure, the learner would only remember the sense encountered in that particular context. Only frequent encounters in various contexts would consolidate other aspects of the word, with variations in the degree of mastery for each aspect. Hulstijn (2001), however, indicated that there is general agreement among researchers of memory and language representation that high cognitive elaboration, i.e. paying attention to various aspects of lexical items (e.g. pronunciation, grammatical category, semantic meaning and association with other words), leads to better retention than processing one or two aspects only.

Despite the variety of aspects constituting vocabulary knowledge, a great deal of research on vocabulary has focused on receptive or declarative forms of knowledge at the expense of procedural vocabulary knowledge, i.e. the ability to use words in discourse (Schmitt, 2010). According to Schmitt (2010, p. 29), this research “bias” can be attributed to the ease of measuring declarative or definitional knowledge as opposed to procedural knowledge, and to some extent, to the belief that word knowledge is largely receptive and that receptive knowledge precedes productive knowledge. He concludes, however, that the ease of measuring declarative knowledge is probably the main impetus. Consequently, he calls for further research that takes both aspects

into consideration. Similarly, Read (2000) has emphasized that it is not enough to test learners' knowledge of meaning; they need to also demonstrate how well they can use it. Thus, the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS) designed by Paribakht and Wesche (1993) was proposed to capture the incremental nature of vocabulary knowledge that ranges from total unfamiliarity to the actual ability to use a word.

To sum up, there is a general consensus that knowledge of vocabulary comprises various aspects and that higher elaboration with frequent exposure leads to better retention. The critical question, however, remains: what kinds of tasks can best contribute to vocabulary knowledge? Building upon SLA research on the role of elaborative processing in L2 learning, Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) have argued that the ILH may bridge a gap between research and theory in SLA literature as it “simulates both theoretical thinking and empirical research in the domain of L2 vocabulary learning” (p. 2). Evaluating the potential contribution of the ILH to SLA task-based instruction necessitates examining its assumptions in light of other cognitive-based task approaches that address factors influencing focus on form, as will be discussed in the coming section.

### **Cognitive-based task approaches and Involvement Load Hypothesis**

It is contended that cognitively demanding tasks with more cognitive elaboration lead to better attention and, consequently, better learning and retention of linguistic forms (Doughty, 2001; Ellis, 2003; Schmidt, 2001, Robinson, 1995, 2001a, 2001b, 2005; Skehan, 1998, Swain, 1985, 1998). Although agreeing with Swain's (1998) theory that producing output forces learners to process semantic and syntactic features of language, researchers believe it does not directly lead to the cognitive processing needed for acquisition (Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 1998). In fact, attention is considered to be contingent upon a myriad of internal factors (including motivation, processing abilities, and L2 knowledge) and external factors (including complexity of the input, the context of interaction, instructional treatment, and task demands) (Schmidt, 2001, p.11). To this end, VanPatten (2002) has claimed that attending to form while focusing on meaning is not sufficient and that learners should make overt attempts to incorporate these elements of the input in their interlanguage. Researchers, however, differ in their perspectives of what factors contribute to greater cognitive involvement with form and how they affect the development of different linguistic aspects.

Skehan (1996) distinguishes between pre-, during-, and post-task pedagogic choices, each

of which affects the degree of focus on form. Pre-task factors include consciousness-raising activities and planning. Consciousness-raising activities promote focus on form while the lack of the planning increases the cognitive load. During a task, cognitive load can be increased by adding surprising elements, e.g. “additional evidence in a 'judge' task” (p. 55), or decreased by providing contextual support, e.g. visual cues. Post-task elements (e.g. tests, public performance) promotes attention to linguistic features encountered in previous stages. In agreement with VanPatten (1996), Skehan (1998; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Skehan & Foster, 2001) nevertheless emphasizes the difficulty of simultaneously attending to form and meaning in processing the input or the output.

In congruence with Skehan, Robinson (1995, 2001a, 2001b, 2003; Robinson & Gilabert, 2007) stresses that the extent of noticing which affects SLA is dependent on a task’s attentional demands and individual differences in memory and attentional resources. Unlike Skehan, however, he believes that learners are able to have concurrent attendance to complexity and accuracy because they draw on different pools of attentional resources. In his Cognition Hypothesis (Robinson, 2001a, 2001b, 2003), Robinson has argued that task complexity can be manipulated in two major dimensions: resources-directing dimension and resources-depletion dimension. The first, as the name suggests, promotes attention to linguistic aspects of input needed for performing the task. It refers to complexity in terms of reference to few vs. many elements, reference to here and now vs. there and then events, and no reasoning vs. reasoning demands. The second dimension refers to increasing complexity in the conditions under which the task is performed, i.e. planning vs. no planning, prior knowledge vs. no knowledge, and single vs. dual task. In his view, increasing task complexity along resource directing dimensions and decreasing it along resource depletion dimensions will push learners to produce more accurate and complex language, increase attention and subsequent learning from the input, and maximize retention and automaticity of the used forms.

Unlike other cognitive approaches to tasks, the ILH does not restrict cognitively demanding tasks to production tasks per se, but to the load that a task (be it input or output) induces. Focusing primarily on vocabulary learning, Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) propose that the cognitive complexity of a task is contingent upon three factors: need, search and evaluation. These aspects constitute the load of involvement. Involvement is defined as a “motivational cognitive construct which can explain and predict learners’ success in the retention of hitherto unfamiliar words”

(Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001, p.14). As such, tasks with higher involvement load are perceived to result in better vocabulary retention. Involvement load is measured by the sum of its constituents, search, need and evaluation. Any of the three components can be either present or absent in a task. The absence of a component means a zero score. The task has search (1 point) if it requires looking up the meaning or the form of a word or a concept, e.g. looking up the definition in a dictionary. However, there is no search (0 point) if the meaning is provided. The need and evaluation can be either strong (2 points) or moderate (1 point). The need or the motivation to look up the meaning is strong if it is self-generated, such as when a learner needs to know the meaning of a word or how the word is used to write a composition or to understand a reading passage. The need is moderate, however, if it is externally imposed, i.e. by the teacher or the task itself.

Evaluation (a cognitive factor) refers to the act of comparing a word with other words or with its various semantic senses in order to use it in a particular context. Evaluation is strong when learners need to assess how a word would fit in a new original context (e.g. when using words in writing original sentences or a composition) and moderate when identifying the differences in meaning between the words in a given context (e.g. identifying which word(s) fits in the provided context) (Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001). For example, the involvement load of the task of reading a passage with the unknown words glossed is (1 point) because the need to use the glosses is moderate (1 point) as it is imposed by the task, and there is no actual search (0) for meaning and no evaluation (0).

On the whole, the theoretical grounds of the ILH are concurrent with other cognitive approaches to tasks which consider allocating learners' attention to structural properties of input to be of paramount importance to language learning. It is worth noting, however, that there are some major differences. The definition of task in the ILH is more general than that adopted by most cognitive approaches which emphasize real-life communicative tasks. In their definition of task, Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) adopt Richards, Platta, and Weber's (1985, p. 289) general definition: "an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language (i.e. as a response)."

Furthermore, the ILH was developed with vocabulary retention in mind, whereas cognitive hypotheses have primarily targeted production tasks, especially speaking tasks, and have been interested in grammatical features rather than vocabulary retention per se. Cognitive approaches in general consider conditions under which the task is conducted, e.g. planning, participation and



even learners' perceptions, and they also perceive attention to be largely dependent on working memory capacity. The ILH, however, focuses mainly on the task's inherent features rather than individual differences. Acknowledging the infancy of their hypothesis, Laufer and Hulstijn called for further empirical research to refine and broaden its scope. As will be fleshed out below, there is nonetheless a paucity of research on the ILH with inconsistent results besides.

### **Empirical research on ILH**

One can discern two types of studies relevant to the ILH: studies that directly examine the construct of involvement as postulated by the ILH (Folse, 2006; Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001; Keating, 2008; Kim, 2008; Laufer, 2003; Nassaji & Hu, 2012; Yang, Shintani, Li, & Zhang, 2018; Zou, 2017) and studies that zero in on word-focused tasks with or without reading. Although the findings of the second path of research are generally in line with the predictions of the ILH (for a more detailed review see Laufer, 2005), the studies were not intended or designed to test the ILH. Therefore, this section will focus only on the studies that are directly relevant to the ILH.

Laufer (2003) has found that writing sentences (high load) with the target words explained led to higher retention than reading only with the target words glossed (low load) on both immediate and delayed post-tests. Similarly, Hulstijn and Laufer's (2001) findings fully support the ILH as the task of writing a letter using the target words was superior to reading with marginal glosses and to reading with a word bank of targeted words.

In partial replication of Hulstijn and Laufer (2001), Keating (2008) investigated the effectiveness of three types of tasks with different levels of involvement: reading with the target words glossed (low load), reading with the target words replaced by blanks obliging learners to fill in the blanks from a list of words (moderate load), and finally, writing original sentences with the target words (high load). The last task, which had the highest involvement load, proved superior to other tasks in improving learners' retention of the vocabulary. The delayed test, however, showed that the third task was no more effective than the other activities. Kim (2008) examined the ILH with different proficiency levels. The findings partially support the ILH as the three tasks—reading only (low load), reading with a fill-in-the-blank activity (moderate load), and composition (high load)—showed significant differences in the delayed test. Nevertheless, no significant difference between the reading only and the reading with blanks was found on immediate post-test.

Nassaji and Hu (2012) found that tasks with high load (reading plus derivative changes of

the target words) led to more use of inferencing strategies and retention. However, the low task (reading with multiple choice glosses) led to higher delayed retention than the moderate task (reading with contextual inference); this was attributed to the use of enhanced text (glosses).

More recent studies have revealed partial support to the assumptions of ILH (Yang, Shintani, Li, & Zhang, 2017; Zou, 2017). Yang et al. (2017) reported higher retention of vocabulary with post-reading activities of high involvement load. The study also examined the extent to which learners' working memory mediates the effect of ILH. Participants were assigned to one control group (taking the test only) and three experimental groups: 1) gap-fill, 2) sentence writing, and 3) comprehension only. As predicted by ILH, the sentence writing group had the highest mean of vocabulary retention followed by gap-fill on the immediate post-test. While scoring higher means in the delayed test than the comprehension and the control groups, those assigned to sentence generation and gap-fill tasks attained equal vocabulary retention in the delayed test. Participants' working memory was found to be a statistically significant predictor of the immediate test scores of comprehension and gap-fill tasks suggesting, therefore, an interaction between working memory and task types.

Focusing on the cognitive load involved in the evaluation component of the ILH, Zou (2017) used three groups of participants to compare three types of tasks, two of which have the same involvement load: 1) cloze exercise of moderate involvement, 2) sentence writing of strong involvement, and 3) composition writing of strong involvement. The writing composition group achieved the highest vocabulary score on both the immediate and delayed post-tests, followed by the sentence writing group. Both groups displayed significantly greater retention of vocabulary than their peers performing the cloze exercise. Building on participants' think-aloud and interview data, Zou attributed the differences between sentence generation and composition writing tasks—posited by ILH to have the same involvement load—to the higher pre-task planning and information organization induced by composition over sentence generation tasks.

Contrary to this evidence, Folse (2006) concluded that depth of processing is not the main contributor to learning vocabulary, arguing that frequency of exposure is more effective. The study found that three fill-in-the-blank tasks led to significantly more immediate vocabulary retention than a sentence generation task. However, delayed retention was not tested.

A critical look at the empirical research on the ILH points to several limitations. Although all the aforementioned studies reported better retention with tasks of high cognitive load on

immediate post-tests, the results regarding the impact of task-induced involvement on long-term vocabulary learning remain relatively inconsistent. More importantly, no study to the best of my knowledge has investigated the ILH in CALL contexts, especially with the iBook. Claims of SLA research “need to be matched by research with computer and web-based materials to confirm or not that similar effects do in fact operate in these changed contexts” (Skehan, 2010, p. 409). The literature on the ILH also indicates that none of the previous studies investigated students’ perceptions of how different tasks facilitate retention of vocabulary. Eckerth and Tavakoli (2012) emphasized that future research should “find out how tests and tasks are perceived and accomplished by learners and what factors they perceive as facilitating or inhibiting their vocabulary learning process” (p. 245). These limitations necessitate further research on ILH potentials in designing cognitively demanding tasks in a CALL-based medium. In the next sections I will discuss the research questions, study design, and results. The final section will conclude with a discussion of pedagogical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

### **Research questions**

This study aims at testing the assumptions underlying the ILH using the iBook format. The construct of vocabulary knowledge is operationalized in this study as the self-perceived and the demonstrative knowledge of vocabulary meaning. Unlike self-perceived knowledge, demonstrative knowledge refers to the recognition and/or use of the target words in a grammatically and semantically correct manner. Therefore, this study aims at answering the following questions:

- (1) Does a sentence generation task lead to better immediate gain of vocabulary than a sentence completion task?
- (2) Does a sentence generation task lead to better delayed retention of vocabulary than a sentence completion task?
- (3) How do participants perceive the effectiveness of each task in improving their vocabulary knowledge?

### **Methodology**

The study used a pre-experimental methodology, particularly a within-subjects design, since all participants received the same treatment (Creswell, 2003). The use of such a design is driven by the fact that a within-subjects design does not require a large pool of participants. Moreover,

having the same level of treatment allows each subject to be his or her own control group, thus eliminating the effects of individual differences on the final results. Nevertheless, having consecutive treatment is not without “testing effect”, particularly “order effects”: learner performance on the second task might be influenced by the first one, or they might simply become fatigued from the first treatment. Therefore, to counterbalance and control the “order effect”, the participants were divided into two groups with the order of assigned tasks in the first group reversed for the second group.

### **Participants and setting**

The subjects of this exploratory study were four non-English major female students, 18-20 years old, recruited from the intensive English program at a major Midwestern university in the USA. All participants were native speakers of Arabic. Based on their performance on the program’s placement test, the participants all had an intermediate reading level. In other skills (writing, speaking), their levels were heterogeneous. They shared the same L1, they all had studied EFL for twelve years in public schools, and none of them had spent more than six months in the US. Informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to the start of the study. The sample selected was a convenience sample (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009), i.e. non-randomized, since the participants were contacted by the researcher and agreed to volunteer in the study.

### **Instruments**

#### **Materials**

The reading passage and target vocabulary. The 778-word reading comprehension passage entitled *You are Getting Very Sleepy* was adapted from *Inside Reading 4* (Richmond & Zimmerman, 2009), a reading textbook for intermediate to upper-intermediate learners (see Appendix A). The text was introduced in the iBook format with the target words glossed in the L2 and both the definition and examples of use were provided. The topic of the reading was considered interesting and relevant to personal as well as common knowledge experiences. The appropriateness of the passage was evaluated based on two criteria: first, the passage was adapted from a reading comprehension book for intermediate to upper-intermediate learners and it was further run through Vocab Profiler (Cobb, 2005) to ensure the appropriateness of its frequency level. Vocab Profiler is a free software used to measure the frequency of vocabulary used in written texts. It draws from words pertaining

to the top one and two thousand most common words in English, the Academic Word List (AWL) of English, and the remainder or the ‘off list’. As for the target lexical items, the Frequency Test showed that all the target words were among the ‘off list’, i.e. of low frequency with the exception of *comprise* and *diminish* which were among the AWL. The list of target items was then shown to three other students, not among the participants but in upper levels from the same program, who were asked to translate the words or provide an explanation in English. The words were labelled as unknown by all three students and were hence confirmed as target words. The target words were a selection of verbs, nouns and adjectives highlighted in colored, bold font and glossed in the L2.

**Tasks.** The same reading passage was used for both groups, but with the tasks in reverse order: group A commenced with sentence completion from a word-bank task followed by a sentence generation task, whereas group B started with the sentence generation task followed by the sentence completion task. Each task comprised six question items targeting six lexical items. Both the reading passage and the tasks were computer-based. Learners used iPads to read the required text with the glossed target words. The first task (see Appendix B) required participants to generate original sentences using each of the six target words in a semantically and grammatically correct manner. The second task (see Appendix B) was a word bank-based completion task. In this task, learners were required to complete sentences by selecting the appropriate lexical item from a list of eight options, six target words with two distractors.

Based on the ILH, involvement is measured by the sum of its three components (need, search, evaluation). A strong variable receives two points and a moderate variable receives one point. Hence, as shown in Table 1, the motivational variable (need) is moderate (1 point) in both tasks, as the necessity to understand the meaning of the target words is task-imposed rather than self-motivated. The first cognitive factor (search, or looking up the meaning) is absent (0 points) in both tasks as the target words are glossed. The only difference between the two tasks is in the second cognitive factor, i.e. evaluation. In sentence generation, the evaluation is strong (2 points) as learners are required to compare the target word meaning with other words in an original context. However, evaluation in sentence completion is moderate (1 point) since learners need to compare the target word meaning with the provided context. In sum, the overall involvement load of sentence generation is  $(1+0+2=3)$ , whereas that of sentence completion is  $(1+0+1=2)$ .

**Vocabulary test.** The Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (see Table 2) was used as both an immediate and a delayed post-test to assess learners’ vocabulary knowledge after the reading-

based tasks. The test consisted of five levels, aimed at detecting even the early emergence of vocabulary knowledge (Wesche & Paribakht, 1996). The scores of the VKS, based on Paribakht and Wesche's (1993) description, reflect the gradual levels of vocabulary knowledge: level I denotes total unfamiliarity and II indicates familiarity without knowledge of meaning. Level III, however, is used to elicit scores of two different levels. Level IV indicates the use of correct synonyms while level V is assigned when a respondent thought he/she knew the word, but then provided the wrong meaning. Level VI was divided into: level VI which means that the learner uses a word in a semantically appropriate sentence and level VII which signifies that the word is used in a semantically and grammatically correct sentence. Ungrammatical features other than the target form were ignored.

To avoid the "learning effect" of a pre-test, a test of prior knowledge was administered with the immediate post-test; learners were asked to indicate whether they knew the target words before the experiment. If two or more words had been signaled as known, the results of that subject would have been discarded. Data collection also involved individual interviews with the participants, during which learners were asked to reflect on their perceptions of the tasks and how effectively the tasks drew their attention to the target forms.

### **Analysis of data**

Data from the immediate and delayed post-tests were analyzed quantitatively, whereas interview data were analyzed qualitatively. To pinpoint the effectiveness of different tasks on immediate and delayed vocabulary retention, the means and standard deviation of learners' retention of the target words in each task were compared holistically for all participants. The scoring followed the procedures outlined by Paribakht and Wesche (1993) with scores ranging from I, i.e. total unfamiliarity with the word, to VII, which represents semantically and grammatically correct use of the word. Consequently, the range of scores in each task is from 6 (the number of items 6 multiplied by the minimum score 1) to 42 (the number of items 6 multiplied by the maximum score 7).

### **Procedures**

Participants' consent was obtained before conducting the experiment. Before testing and to identify any potential influence of background differences among them, participants were required to complete a short open-ended demographic form (age, language background, and computer

literacy skills). The study was conducted in a non-regular class session and was scheduled for about fifty minutes. To avoid attracting their attention to the target words, participants were informed in advance that this study was part of a course project, but the research goals were not revealed. The iPads were distributed and subjects were familiarized with the use of iPads for reading the iBook. They were also shown how to use the glosses and how to proceed from one task to another. Participants were then divided into two groups (A and B). Both groups received the same reading passage, followed by some computer-based true or false reading comprehension questions. The reading comprehension questions were intended to engage the subjects in meaning-focused reading and were not included in the evaluation of vocabulary knowledge. After answering the reading comprehension questions, participants were required to complete both the sentence completion and the sentence generation tasks.

To exclude the effect of time on the final results, the participants were given as much time as they needed to finish the tasks. Once all the subjects finished the assigned tasks, the VKS was administered as an immediate post-test. Participants were asked to indicate their level of knowledge for each lexical item on the VKS. The instructions for answering the test were provided both in English and in the learners' first language to avoid potential misinterpretation. After the immediate post-test, the researcher interviewed the subjects individually and with their permission, the session was recorded for further analysis. After one week, a delayed VKS test was also administered in a second non-regular class session.

## **Results**

To answer the first and the second questions regarding which task contributed more to immediate and delayed vocabulary learning, the means of learners' scores on the VKS were calculated for each task. As shown in Table 3, the results revealed that sentence generation had a higher mean score than that of sentence completion, with 18.5 as opposed to 11.75. Scores of sentence generation items, however, dropped considerably in the delayed post-test to a mean of 12, whereas the mean of scores on sentence completion remained relatively the same.

The means in the VKS, however, do not show how learners performed on the demonstrative level of vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, following Kim (2008), the number of items that scored IV and above in each task was calculated. Scores IV, V, and VI, as mentioned earlier, reflect the ability to provide a word's meaning or to use it in a semantically and/or grammatically correct manner. As shown in Table 4, in the sentence generation task, seven of the

24 total items (six items per task multiplied by the number of participants, i.e. four) scored IV and above, whereas only two items out of 24 from the sentence completion task received a score of IV or above. In the delayed test, the number of items with a score of IV or more dropped to two in the sentence generation and to (0) items in the sentence completion task.

To answer the third question, which addresses participants' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of either sentence generation or sentence completion on their vocabulary learning, the participants were interviewed individually and their responses were recorded. All participants labelled sentence generation as more effective for remembering and thinking more about the meaning of a particular word. Participant (2) attributed her opinion to the confusion she experienced in choosing the correct item for completing a sentence. Participant (1) commented that writing a sentence makes the "word [stick] in [her] mind". In response to a question regarding the type of tasks that they would like to see more often in their reading and vocabulary books, participants varied in their preferences. Two subjects (3 and 4) indicated that they prefer to see both types, however participant (4) emphasized that sentence generation should be, in her words, "more basic". Participant (2), nevertheless, preferred to see more sentence completion types of tasks, as she found them more confusing and desired more practice with them, whereas participant (1) expressed preference for tasks of writing new sentences.

When asked whether glossing helped them recognize the meaning and whether they preferred other methods, like dictionaries or guessing from the context over glossing, two participants (3 and 4) voiced their preference for glossing. Subject (4) responded, "With glossing, I'm sure the meaning is correct; dictionary has many similar meanings." The other two subjects (1 and 2) however, found that looking up the meaning of a word in a bilingual dictionary made them remember the meaning better. Participant (1) attributed her preference for dictionaries to the fact that they provide L1 translation. Participant (2) emphasized the mental effort needed when using a dictionary: "When I check it myself, I remember the meaning, but when I looked it up in a book, I might forget it." As to whether they preferred to see glossing in L1, L2, or both, all subjects commented that they wanted both.

The main purpose of this study was to explore the relative effectiveness of sentence generation versus sentence completion tasks on vocabulary learning through the medium of iBook. Building upon the assumptions of the ILH, it was hypothesized that since writing original sentences requires more elaborative processing than is needed for fill-in-the-blank tasks, the



former task would probably lead to better immediate and delayed retention of vocabulary. The results showed that the mean scores of the sentence generation task were higher than those of sentence completion on both immediate and delayed post-tests. Hence, the results of the current study support previous findings that tasks with higher cognitive load lead to better vocabulary retention than those of lower cognitive load (Keating, 2008; Laufer, 2003; Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001). However, in congruence with the findings of several other studies (e.g. Folse, 2006; Keating, 2008), the effects of tasks with higher cognitive involvement did not hold over time. The effects of task-induced involvement faded after one week, which is even less than the two-week period reported by Keating (2008).

However, despite the higher mean of retention achieved in sentence generation tasks, the number of items retained is still slightly below expectation. One possible reason for such a result could be the unwanted cognitive load imposed by the modality, i.e. the iBook. In fact, some participants resorted to using paper to write down the target words and the generated sentences before transferring them to the iBook. Although investigating such possibilities is beyond the scope of this study, it may shed light on a critical limitation of ILH, namely that it overlooks the conditions (including the modality or instrument of instruction) under which the task is conducted and learners' learning strategies. This is to some extent supported by the variations in learners' perceptions and approaches to the tasks. The participants who received the highest scores in the sentence generation task in the immediate test (participants 3 and 1) indicated that they prefer to see more sentence writing tasks in their textbooks, whereas the other two participants (2 and 4) preferred having both types because they find fill-in-the-blanks to be somewhat challenging. Hence, one might wonder whether learners' characteristics and the learning strategies they utilize in approaching each task impact their level of vocabulary retention. It seems that completion tasks, especially from a list of words, are to some extent difficult and confusing, especially to lower intermediate learners, even with the precise meaning of the target words provided. The subjects remarked that they seemed more confident about the accuracy of their answers when writing original sentences.

As a matter of fact, the participants' performance on the sentence completion task reflects legitimate reasons for their concerns, since they used several target words incorrectly in the sentence completion task. Unfortunately, the possibility of erroneous choice in sentence completion tasks, even with glossing of the target words, is overlooked or at least not reported in

previous studies. One important conclusion from this study that is strongly supported by SLA literature is that no matter how deep the processing is, it may not compensate for repeated exposure to the target forms. Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) emphasized that words' meanings are likely to fade if not consolidated through multi-exposures.

## **Discussion**

### **Pedagogical implications**

The differences in means between sentence writing and sentence completion is supported by the unanimous agreement among participants regarding the effectiveness of using newly learned items in original sentences. This seems to consolidate depth of processing's contribution to vocabulary learning. However, deep processing may not be sufficient for long-term vocabulary retention; hence tasks should be designed to take into consideration both depth of processing and repeated exposure. The two factors might be fruitfully viewed as complementary, rather than being dichotomous.

Tasks of higher involvement load could be directed at words that might be less frequent, but still in high demand in academic settings. CALL software and vocabulary-dedicated websites are invited to reconsider the use of more mentally demanding types of tasks that take recycling into account, rather than focusing on receptive types of activities. The affordances of new technology make it possible, to some extent, to include some open types of tasks where the computer or the teacher can provide feedback to learners using either asynchronous or synchronous computer-mediated tools. For example, it is possible for teachers using the iBook to create a room through which learners can check their answers with the teacher or with other learners. Although providing glosses with the exact meaning accompanied by examples of use seems more beneficial to learners, learners' responses show that it may not be the preferred tool for accessing meaning, as some learners prefer bilingual dictionaries. Learners' preference for dictionaries is in line with the assumptions of depth of processing because looking up a word in a dictionary requires more mental effort than glossing, where no search is required. However, when considering the use of dictionaries, the possibility of erroneous choice of meaning cannot be excluded, especially for beginners and lower intermediate learners.

Another feature that CALL designers need to consider is the potential excessive cognitive load when looking up the meaning of words in various reading-based exercises. It might be more

practical to keep exercises in a linear position with the reading passage to avoid any potential split in attention. Nevertheless, a problem that may face teachers who intend to develop reading materials on the iBook is that the embedded exercises are limited to multiple-choice questions, and when importing other more efficient widgets, the linearity between exercises and the reading passage may not be possible.

### **Limitations and directions for future studies**

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study are limited by the exploratory nature of this research. Replication of this study with larger pools of participants over longer periods of time within real instructional settings would be more informative. Also, the tasks examined in this study required different levels of evaluation, yet the same degree of need and search. Future researchers may examine the same tasks with higher degrees of search, for example comparing glosses with online dictionaries or multiple-choice types of glossing. Others might explore the impact of using L1 and L2 glosses as opposed to L2 glosses with tasks of the same cognitive load. It might also be insightful to compare the impact of repeated exposure through reading only versus recycling via tasks of high levels of involvement.

The findings of the learners' interviews suggest some relation between their learning strategies or learning preferences and the gains attained from a particular task. Future research is recommended to tap into this insufficiently researched area to examine this correlation and the benefits attained from various tasks. Another factor that may constrain the conclusions drawn from this study is the absence of feedback provided to learners regarding their performance on each task. Unfortunately, this aspect was also overlooked, or at least not mentioned, in previous studies on task-induced involvement. It would be informative to examine the effect of providing learners with feedback regarding their performance on tasks of various involvement levels and whether such feedback affects the learning gains from each type of task.

### **Conclusion**

Vocabulary knowledge is an extremely important component of language knowledge. Learners who lag behind in vocabulary knowledge face multiple challenges in their academic life, especially in reading and writing. Therefore, the current study examined types of tasks that could better enhance vocabulary learning while reading from an iBook utilizing the assumptions of the ILH. The sentence generation task was found to be more effective on both immediate and delayed

vocabulary tests. Nevertheless, the limitations of this small-scale study make it difficult to reach a compelling conclusion. By and large, the findings of the interview collaborated with the obvious differences in means between the two task points, not only the importance of deep processing, but also the learners' cognizance of its role in retaining vocabulary knowledge. The construct of task-induced involvement is built upon a semi-consensus over the significance of mental processing in raising learners' attended awareness of the target forms. However, the observations from this study pointed to the cruciality of considering modality and learners' perceptions when testing SLA hypotheses in CALL settings. As such, ILH in its current status, though promising, may not be comprehensive enough to account for the complexity of factors affecting vocabulary learning, particularly in computer based-settings.

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## Appendix A

### **You Are Getting Very Sleepy**

Many people feel surprised when they learn that researchers have discovered a single treatment that has many **merits**. It **ameliorates** memory, increases concentration, strengthen the immune system and decreases accidents. The treatment is completely free, even for people with no health insurance. It also has no side effects. Finally most people consider the treatment highly enjoyable. For most people this treatment **comprises** an extra 60-90 minutes of sleep each night. Both psychologists and psychiatrists have maintained for years that Americans have overlooked one of the most significant public health problems-chronic sleep deprivation. That is, few Americans regularly obtain the eight or more hours of sleep they require each night. The consequences of chronic sleep deprivation can be truly **catastrophic**. Laboratory experiments provide evidence that failing to get enough sleep can dramatically affect memory and concentration. It increases levels of stress hormones and disrupts the body's normal metabolism. Research outside the laboratory further suggests that long term sleep deprivation leads to greater **susceptibility** to motor vehicle accidents.

Research shows that many people are carrying a heavy “sleep debt” built up from weeks, months or even years of inadequate sleep. In experiment of sleep debt, researchers pay healthy volunteers to stay in bed for at least 14 hours a day for a week or more. Most people given this opportunity sleep about 12 hours a day for several days, sometimes longer. Then they settle into sleeping 7-9 hours per night. As William Dement put it” this means that millions of us are living a less than optimal life and performing at less than optimal level, impaired by the amount of sleep debt that we’re not even aware we carry”.

But does carrying sleep debt really have **pernicious** effects? Careful experiments by psychologist David Dinges and colleagues recruit healthy young volunteers who live continuously in Dinges’ sleep laboratory for 10-20 days. He controls access to **stimulants**, such as caffeine, and constantly monitor the sleep amount they get. Dinges has learnt that people with fewer than 8 hours’ sleep per night show **palpable** cognitive and physiological deficits. These deficits include memory impairment, a **diminished** ability to make decisions, and dramatic lapses in attention, these deficits grow worse. Consistently, failing to get enough sleep is the biological equivalent for spending more money than you make. Napping can help reduce a sleep debt, but there are also

long term benefits to maintaining consistent, predictable sleep patterns. Whereas naps do improve cognitive functioning after periods of sleep deprivation, they do little to **rectify** the negative mood that results from sleep loss.

Many people argue that they get by just fine on very little sleep. However, research shows that few can truly function well in less than 8 hours sleep per night. Dinges estimates that, over the long haul, perhaps one person in a thousand can function effectively on six or fewer hours of sleep per night. Many people with chronic sleep debts end up napping during the day or fighting off sleepiness in the afternoon. Moreover, people who chronically fail to get enough sleep may be cutting their lives short. A lack of sleep **enervates** the immune system and may even lead to diseases and permanent aging. To make this worse, most people who are sleep deprived do not even realize it. If you get sleepy during long meetings or long drives, chances are you are chronically sleep deprived.

#### Significance

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that drowsy or fatigued driving leads to more than 100,000 motor vehicle crashes every year. Even a small decline in sleep quality can negatively affect safety and performance. In a nationwide study between 1986-1995, psychologist Stanley Coren studied the effects of lost sleep that many Americans experience when they start daylight saving time. The result? A 17% increase in traffic deaths on Mondays following the time change (compared to the Mondays before). It is hard to estimate the toll sleep deprivation takes on people's health. Happiness and productivity. But according to Sleep Foundation, the annual loss in worker productivity due to sleepiness is about \$18 billion.

#### Practical Application

In light of the dramatic public health consequences of sleep deprivation and unhealthy sleep patterns, the National Sleep Foundation (NSF) established National Sleep Awareness Week. In cooperation with partner organizations, this event is promoted each year during week when people set their clocks forward for daylight saving time. In 2003, The NSF reported that about 600 sleep centers in North America sponsored instructional activities in local communities during National Sleep Awareness Week. Many US states now educate drivers not only about the **jeopardies** of driving while intoxicated but also about the dangers of driving while drowsy.

**A. Mark each statement as T (true) or F (false) according to the information in Reading**

**2. Use the glossing to help you understand new words.**

1. In David's experiment, the subjects stayed in bed for more than 14 hours a day.
2. Research suggests that most people need more than 7-9 hours of sleep.
3. It is the rare individual who can function effectively on fewer than six hours of sleep per night.
4. If we are seriously deprived of sleep, a nap may help us think more clearly.
5. Sleep deprivation affects not only a person's cognitive ability but also their mood.
6. An enhanced immune system is one benefit of sleep deprivation.
7. Studies have shown that people drink more when they are sleep deprived.
8. Sleep deprivation is having an effect on the US economy.

## Appendix B

**Stimulants -ameliorate- susceptibility- merit – enervate -catastrophic – functionality- intoxicate.**

**B. Complete the sentences with the appropriate words from the list above**

1. Studies showed that lack of sleep may badly ..... the immune system.
- 2..... like light and sound can disrupt normal sleeping.
3. Many people are unfortunately unaware of the ..... of having enough sleep on their health.
4. People who suffer lack of sleep have more ..... to mental and physical health problems.
5. Deprivation of sleep has ..... effects on both traffic safety as well as work productivity.
6. Having enough hours of sleep helps to ..... one's mental health.

**B. Use the following words in complete meaningful sentences:**

Rectify.....

Pernicious.....

Jeopardy.....

Comprise.....

Diminish.....

Palpable.....

# **The Rule of Law and the Threat of Civil Disobedience in Hong Kong: Metaphorical Structures in Local Media Coverage**

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### **Abstract**

This corpus-based study compares media reports about the rule of law in Hong Kong SAR both before the threat of the Occupy Central with Love and Peace campaign in 2013 and after its realisation in 2014. The study compiled media corpora from English newspapers in Hong Kong (*South China Morning Post* and *The Standard*) and China (*China Daily, Hong Kong Edition*). It compared prevalent metaphors related to the rule of law between the two periods. Prominent metaphors identified are explained with reference to historical legacies of the rule of law in Hong Kong and the principle of One Country, Two Systems.

### **Keywords**

Rule of law, Civil disobedience, Occupy Movement, Occupy Central for Love and Peace campaign, Corpus linguistics, Critical Metaphor Analysis

In March 2013, Benny Tai, a law professor at the University of Hong Kong, with others, released a manifesto about the Occupy Central with Love and Peace campaign (henceforth OCLP campaign). Advocating the values of democracy, civic participation, and non-violence, the campaign aimed to generate pressure on the Beijing and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) governments to introduce a fair and open Chief Executive election in 2017 through universal suffrage. Universal suffrage had been promised in Hong Kong's post-1997 constitutional document, the Basic Law, and had yet to be delivered. The OCLP campaign would be carried out if the Hong Kong Government's proposed universal suffrage plan did not fall in line with what they considered international standards. Occupying Central, the main financial district

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in Hong Kong, would be the last civil disobedience act in the campaign, with the first three being public deliberation, public authorisation, and negotiation.

Since the announcement of the OCLP campaign, the threat of future civil disobedience had been seen in almost apocalyptic terms; for instance, “the opposition camp no doubt intends to take Hong Kong residents hostage ... Tai’s rhetoric presents a direct challenge to the rule of law and is a bomb aimed at destroying Hong Kong’s prosperity and stability” (Tai, 2013). Others saw this possible action as a last-ditch effort to have genuine, rather than symbolic, universal suffrage.

Protests, and lack of consensus, have often been deemed to affect the prosperity, stability and rule of law in Hong Kong (Eagleton, 2012). It is, therefore, worthwhile to examine how the rule of law was depicted in the press vis-à-vis the threat of civil disobedience and the threat’s later realisation, an act which involves the breaking of laws.

The OCLP campaign brought to the fore issues about Hong Kong’s governmental system. Under the constitutional principle, Hong Kong, being a distinct Chinese region, could retain their legal, administrative, and economic systems while the rest of China uses the Chinese socialist model. It is, therefore, also worthwhile to examine how the press in Hong Kong and in China compare in their representation of OCLP and related ideologies.

This corpus-based discourse-analytical study compares English newspapers published in Hong Kong in two periods: 16 January 2013 to 28 September 2014 when OCLP collaborators threatened civil disobedience and 29 September 2014 to 31 December 2014 from the time the threat was carried out until two weeks after the occupation. It examines how the press presented the rule of law over these two periods, and why, and whether there was any change in how the concept of the ‘rule of law’ was described. Specifically, the study compares metaphors used to depict the abstract concept of the ‘rule of law’ in the newspaper corpora to ascertain the ways in which rule of law metaphors in the corpora reveal linguistic, cognitive, and political contexts (Charteris-Black, 2005; Goatly, 2007; Cheng & Ho, 2014; Cheng & Lam, 2013).

This study aims to address two research questions:

- (1) How did reports on OCLP by Hong Kong and Chinese newspapers compare in their metaphorical description of the rule of law in the period of threat of civil disobedience and the period of realisations of civil disobedience?
- (2) What might have accounted for the findings?

### **The meaning of the rule of law and civil disobedience**

Discussion about the meanings of ‘rule of law’ has focused on thin and thick definitions of the term. Thin definitions emphasise the procedures through which rules are formulated and applied; thick definitions aim to protect human rights and frame them within broader human development discourse (Peerenboom, 2002). This is concerned about what the rule of law should contain, its aim in society, and what defines an effective or ineffective form of the rule of law (Belton, 2005). For example, the last Hong Kong Governor, Christopher Patten, writes in a review of Tom Bingham’s *The rule of law*:

The rule of law is a phrase often used but seldom defined. It can easily become a portmanteau expression of political virtue. Yet protected and practised, it is a fundamental part of both the software and hardware of a free, pluralist society. (Patten, 2014)

According to the World Justice Project (2017), the rule of law comprises four universal principles: accountability, just laws, open government, accessible and impartial dispute resolution. In the Hong Kong legal system, the rule of law, warranted by the Basic Law, Hong Kong's constitution, is defined by the principles of legality and independence of the courts of the executive (Community Legal Information Centre, 2017).

As for the 'acts of civil disobedience', an encyclopaedia definition states that they are illegal, nonviolent, public, and done to protest a governmental law or policy (Gale, 2006). Rawls (1999) sees civil disobedience as "a public, non-violent, conscientious yet political act contrary to law usually done with the aim of bringing about a change in the law or policies of the government" in order to address "the sense of justice of the majority of the community" (p. 320). Talk about civil disobedience has generally focused on what it is and whether acts of civil disobedience can be morally justified.

### **Literature review**

Research has investigated journalistic and political discourse in Hong Kong. In their analysis of public speeches and political interviews during the 2012 Chief Executive election in Hong Kong, Wai & Yap (2012, 2013) focused on the discourse-pragmatic damage control strategies employed by the candidates, such as ellipsis, silence, first person pronouns, and evasion strategies, to avoid aggressive questioning. These strategies were adopted for face management, considering the increasingly confrontational nature of Hong Kong's political discourse.

Research has specifically examined OCLP in April-December 2014. Eagleton (2012), for instance, conducted a critical metaphor analysis of the political discourse of post-handover Hong Kong, examining how the print media (e.g., newspapers and government documents and websites) discursively mediates the discourse of universal suffrage. She concluded that the repetition, relexicalisation, and explication of metaphors are the critical mechanism for ideologies in the political discourse of Hong Kong. Hallberg (2014) analysed reports on the pro-democratic OCLP published in *South China Morning Post*, Hong Kong's oldest and largest English newspaper. The study concluded that the newspaper had been misrepresenting both Hong Kong's pro-democratic opposition in favour of more moderate status quo political ideologies and the challenges of the dominant pro-establishment hegemony in Hong Kong.

In another study, Mey & Ladegaard (2015) analysed the pragmatic meaning of a contentious word, 'democracy', as reported in the news during OCLP. The word was quoted to mean "We practice Chinese democracy, not western style democracy" by the mainland Chinese government and Hong Kong's pro-government spokespersons, and "There is no such thing as Western or other democracy, there is just big D Democracy" by "an anonymous Occupy retort" (p. 324). The researchers suggested that only when the "ideological and socio-cultural differences

between Hong Kong and Mainland China” (p. 319) are discussed, a meaningful debate about ‘democracy’ between the opposing sides will be possible.

Lan & Ye (2016) compared news reports and articles published in *China Daily*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times* from April to December 2014 in terms of representation of social actors (van Leeuwen, 2008) and transitivity (Halliday, 1994). They found that *China Daily* labelled the protesters as an “organized anti-government minority” and student protesters as “ignorant campaigners”, whereas the two American newspapers represented all protesters as “the majority of Hong Kong people fighting for the deserved political power” (Lan & Ye, 2016, p. 82). The researchers attributed these polarised views of Occupy Central protesters to the news outlets’ different political backgrounds and hence their views about governance, power control, civil rights, and civil disobedience. In a corpus-based study of the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement circa 2014, Ho (2019) compared word co-occurrences in the *South China Morning Post* and *China Daily* and found opposing voices. Ho also found the use of discursive strategies of prediction, nomination, and perspectivisation to construct the social actors.

Recent research of various journalistic and political discourse in Hong Kong that has examined different linguistic features and compared different newspapers confirms the important role of institutional objectives, political ideologies, and socio-historical legacies.

### **Theoretical frameworks**

This study adopted a discourse-historical approach (D-HA) to critical discourse analysis (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009; Wodak, 2001, 2011), considering its emphasis that “discourse is always historical, that is, it is connected synchronically and diachronically with other communicative events which are happening at the same time or which have happened before” (Wodak & Ludwig, 1995, p. 12; see also Sarangi & Coulthard, 2000). D-HA focuses on entire texts, not in terms of de-contextualised words or phrases but in terms of their situatedness within the text-internal context, intertextual, and interdiscursive relations, the situational context, and the socio-political/historical context (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). In Hong Kong political discourse, “historical legacies” relative to the current situation are frequently discussed, and so studying such discourse without insertion of the historical antecedents to the text limits the reliability of a study (Eagleton, 2012).

A major analytical tool used in the D-HA approach to critical discourse analysis is metaphor. Metaphors are used to depict and evaluate people, situations, and phenomena in a text as they work to integrate pragmatic, cognitive, and linguistic knowledge, incorporating ideology, culture, and history in small packages. They also act like “warrants” in arguments (Santibáñez, 2007). Metaphor sends out ideological messages covertly and helps to structure our thinking, with linguistic associations serving to argue for cause and effect (Goatly, 1997, 2007).

This study regarded the metaphors presented in the newspapers as an attempt to persuade readers to take part in or oppose OCLP. It adopted Charteris-Black’s (2005) Critical Metaphor Analysis, which extends Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, as he



investigates metaphors from the perspective of actual discourse, arguing that metaphors should not only be analysed cognitively, but also pragmatically, because they act as powerful tools of persuasion in discourse. In this regard, Charteris-Black (2005) states that metaphors can influence political and social thinking and act to develop new ideologies, thereby shaping new discourses.

### Methodology

To investigate how the rule of law was discussed metaphorically during the threat of OCLP and during the realisation of OCLP, the study built six corpora of newspaper articles split into two time periods. Data were collected from two periods: 16 January 2013 to 28 September 2014, the period when Occupy Central was first mentioned to the time it was announced, and 29 September 2014 to 31 December 2014, from the declaration of Occupy Central to two weeks after the clearance of those occupying various parts of Hong Kong.

The search item ‘Occupy Central’ was used to retrieve relevant articles from three English-language newspapers, *South China Morning Post (SCMP)*, *The Standard*, and *China Daily (Hong Kong edition)* for both of the time periods (Table 1). *SCMP* was downloaded via Factiva; *The Standard* and *China Daily* were downloaded from Wise News. *SCMP* and *The Standard* corpora were combined for both periods as they are both Hong Kong-based publications, while *China Daily* is a Beijing-affiliated publication but in a Hong Kong edition. Hard news articles and opinion articles were examined together.

**Table 1**  
*Facts about the newspapers used in the study*

<b>16 Jan 2013 – 28 Sep 2014</b>	Opinion articles	Hard news articles	Total number of articles	Total number of words
<i>South China Morning Post</i>	406	1,115	1,570	801,273
<i>The Standard</i>	66	400	466	206,500
<i>SCMP &amp; The Standard</i>	472	1,515	2,036	1,007,773
<i>China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)</i>	324	180	504	354,879
<b>29 Sep 2014 – 31 Dec 2014</b>	Opinion articles	Hard News articles	Total number of articles	Total number of words
<i>South China Morning Post (SCMP)</i>	197	654	851	491,980
<i>The Standard</i>	15	304	319	135,846
<i>SCMP &amp; The Standard</i>	212	958	1,170	627,826
<i>China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)</i>	180	170	350	182,464

To examine how the words ‘rule’ and ‘law’ were depicted metaphorically in the corpora, *ConcGram 1.0* (Greaves, 2008), a phraseological search engine, was used to generate the concordance lines of the two-word concgram *rule/law*, with 20 words before and after *rule/law* in order to have sufficient co-text to identify their metaphorical meanings. Concordance analysis identified metaphor words in the concordance lines to decipher meanings according to the co-text, following the Metaphorical Identification Procedure (MIP) developed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007). These potential metaphorical words were then cross-checked against the METALUDE database as a source of reference. The metaphors in this database were sorted by Goatly et al. (2002) according to different source domains. In particular, metaphors following MIP were checked on METALUDE for information about source domains and metaphorical meanings; those identified were grouped according to conceptual metaphors or root analogies. For example, the lexical word ‘treasure’ as in ‘my cleaning lady is a real treasure – she’ll do anything I need’ is under the root analogy HUMAN IS VALUABLE OBJECT/COMMODITY; ‘treasure’, in this case, means literally “wealth in the form of jewellery or money” and metaphorically a “likeable, helpful person” (METALUDE entry for the lexical word ‘treasure’). After ascertaining the top root analogies, the study will present examples and discuss why these particular metaphorical structures are used.

### Discussion of findings

The present study aims to find out in what ways news articles on OCLP by Hong Kong and Chinese newspapers compare in their metaphorical description of the rule of law in the period of threat of civil disobedience and the period of realisations of civil disobedience, and possible reasons for the findings. To address these aims, the study first compared the frequencies and normalised percentages of the two-word concgram *rule/law* in the corpora of newspaper articles. As shown in Table 2, the normalised percentages of *rule/law* in *China Daily* in both periods are much higher than those in the corpus of *SCMP* and *The Standard*, showing the Beijing-affiliated newspaper’s emphasis on the rule of law.

**Table 2**  
*Frequencies and normalised percentages of rule/law in the corpora*

16 Jan 2013 – 28 Sep 2014	Frequencies of <i>rule/law</i>	Normalised percentages of <i>rule/law</i>
<i>SCMP</i> and <i>The Standard</i>	242	0.024%
<i>China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)</i>	351	0.099%
29 Sep 2014 – 31 Dec 2014	Frequencies of <i>rule/law</i>	Normalised percentages of <i>rule/law</i>
<i>SCMP</i> and <i>The Standard</i>	280	0.045%
<i>China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)</i>	209	0.115%

As noted by Lan & Ye (2016), the ideological slant of the newspaper led not unexpectedly to polarised views about action. Concordance analysis of *rule/law* in the first period of threat of civil disobedience shows that the rule of law is usually discussed in the context of protecting or following or keeping the rule of law, or what OCLP would do to the rule of law in Hong Kong if it went ahead, or if the movement continued for a longer period. In the second period after the threat had been realised, concordance analysis of *rule/law* shows an even greater threat.

As in Eagleton (2012), the present study finds repetition, relexicalisation, and explication of metaphors. There is regular repetition of similar metaphors across the different corpora in both the threat and realisation of threat periods, reflecting the possibility that the same opinion-makers, who were by and large the “gatekeepers” of the discussion about political reform, had written articles across the two periods, and in both newspapers, regardless of ideological slant. Writers connected to the OCLP often tried to represent themselves in a less confrontational manner in line with the Chinese cultural line. OCLP supporters’ reasoning was that what they were doing would ultimately benefit society.

Concordance analysis also shows that the abstract phrase ‘rule of law’ seems to take on a physical shape as something that could be ‘attacked’, ‘violated’, ‘damaged’, ‘eroded’, or ‘undermined’, while it should be ‘respected’, ‘cherished’, ‘upheld’, ‘valued’, and ‘treasured’ as something that had made Hong Kong successful, prosperous, and stable. The metaphors are chiefly of a verbal nature and used to describe something that might change the status quo or long-held beliefs. This is similar to the earlier discussion about the “discourse of threat”, which involves a potential effect when discussing possible scenarios resulting from a threat and its aftermath. Since verbs need doers of the action, the nouns and noun phrases (in italics) identified were: ‘*those who ignore the court’s warnings who* undermine the rule of law’, ‘*Benny Tai’s rhetoric* presents a challenge to the rule of law’, and ‘*Occupy Central* constitutes a challenge to the rule of law’. This relates to Ho’s (2019) study in that discursive strategies of prediction, nomination, and perspectivisation were used to construct the actors involved in this potential action. Compared to verbal metaphors, noun metaphors that refer to the rule of law are far fewer, realised in ‘foundation’, ‘cornerstone’, ‘treasure’, ‘bomb’, and ‘core values’ of Hong Kong.

Verbal and noun metaphors are also combined, such as ‘It will *erode* the *foundation* of the rule of law and ruin Hong Kong’, and ‘*Challenging* the *spirit* of the rule of law’, where the OCLP campaign would harm some aspects of the rule of law. Double metaphors were also found; for example, ‘As the *spirit* of the rule of law is fading, while the boundary of the rule of law is in danger of being *breached*’ describes an aspect of the rule of law being affected by the OCLP.

The term ‘rule of law’, like ‘democracy’ as studied by Mey & Ladegaard (2015), can also be pragmatically used and taken as ‘law’ is equal to ‘rule’. This construal casts OCLP as a law-breaking action. The rule of law is depicted as both a feeling entity and a structure (a building), with OCLP being an action likely to damage the structure and render it uninhabitable. This can also be shown by the orientational nature of some of the metaphors, such as ‘undermine’, ‘understand’, ‘underlie’, ‘uphold’, ‘core’, ‘centerpiece’, and ‘under’. Therefore, as ‘rule of law’ is considered metaphorically a building, one’s position vis-à-vis the ‘building’ might determine how

firm the foundation of this structure will be, according to the ‘architects’ or ‘managers’ of the building.

The following sections discuss the major root analogies found and the implications of these analogies. Many diverse root analogies were identified, but the two newspaper article corpora in both the threat and the realisation periods share the following:

1. SOCIAL ORGANISATION IS BUILDING
2. IMPORTANCE IS CENTRALITY
3. GOOD QUALITY/MORALITY IS HIGH
4. EFFECT IS IMPACT

#### **SOCIAL ORGANISATION IS BUILDING**

The most common metaphor between the corpora and in both periods is variations on ‘undermine’, especially in the threat period. The literal meaning of ‘undermine’ is “dig underneath” with the metaphorical meaning of “cause to fail”. To ‘undermine’ requires a structure, such as a foundation. These are the most basic structures of either a building or a concept, in this case, the rule of law (see extracts in Table 3). The extracts show how this multi-metaphorisation builds up the basic ideological stance that the OCLP campaign will threaten the basic structures of Hong Kong as an entity.

**Table 3**

*SOCIAL ORGANISATION IS BUILDING (16 Jan 2013 – 28 Sep 2014)*

<i>SCMP and The Standard</i>	<i>China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)</i>
<p><b><i>undermine/undermining</i></b></p> <p>‘He says it is an important counter to what he sees as increasing “mainlandisation” in Hong Kong and the <i>undermining</i> of the rule of law.’</p> <p>‘Unlawful activities that <i>undermine</i> the rule of law in Hong Kong.’</p> <p><b><i>foundation stones</i></b></p> <p>‘One of the <i>foundation stones</i> of our society is the rule of law and we should respect this and not <i>undermine</i> it.’</p>	<p><b><i>undermine/ undermining</i></b></p> <p>‘Tai’s ‘Occupy Central’ movement will cause huge damage to the local economy as estimated by many experts, and <i>undermine</i> the city’s much <i>treasured</i> rule of law.’</p> <p>‘SMHK holds that Tai and the entire ‘Occupy Central’ movement are putting Hong Kong’s future on the line, <i>undermining</i> the rule of law and creating a threat to the livelihood of the people.’</p> <p><b><i>foundation, cornerstone</i></b></p> <p>‘The rule of law is the <i>cornerstone</i> of democracy. Without it, democracy cannot work effectively or last long. Some people demand an ideal form of democracy but <i>do not respect</i> the rule of law.’</p>

In the realisation period of OCLP (Table 4), different forms of ‘undermine’ are still the most prominent metaphor; however, other verbal metaphors make their appearance, such as ‘collapse’, metaphorically meaning “fall down suddenly” or “fail or cease to exist”, and ‘built’ since the threat had materialised. The metaphor of ‘undermining’ is combined with another root analogy EFFECT IS IMPACT (e.g., ‘safeguard’), since an action has to take place for something to be ‘undermined’.

**Table 4**  
*SOCIAL ORGANISATION IS BUILDING (29 Sep 2014 – 31 Dec 2014)*

<i>SCMP and The Standard</i>	<i>China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)</i>
<p><b><i>undermine/ undermining/ undermined</i></b></p> <p>‘Huang and Chen say the protests have upset social order and <i>undermined</i> the <i>foundation</i> of the rule of law.’</p> <p>“‘We are resolutely opposed to all kinds of illegal activities that <i>undermine</i> Hong Kong’s rule of law and social order and firmly support the SAR government in handling these in accordance with the law so as to <i>safeguard</i> Hong Kong’s social stability,” Yang was quoted as saying.’</p> <p><b><i>cornerstone</i></b></p> <p>‘The rule of law is the <i>cornerstone</i> of Hong Kong’s success. We can’t violate the rule of law while pursuing democracy.’</p> <p><b><i>collapse</i></b></p> <p>‘Students cry out against the <i>collapse</i> of rule of law while standing in an occupied street, entirely unaware of the hypocrisy inherent in that statement.’</p> <p><b><i>built</i></b></p> <p>‘It has been suggested that the rule of law has been left <i>intact</i> in that those who have broken the law have come forward to face the legal consequences. Hong Kong is <i>built</i> on rule of law. Such an argument is tantamount to legitimising law-breaking activities and will not be accepted in our society.’</p>	<p><b><i>undermine / undermining / undermined</i></b></p> <p>‘With the rule of law — one of the <i>key cornerstones</i> of the city’s economic prosperity and social stability — being relentlessly <i>challenged</i> and <i>undermined</i> by ‘Occupy’ protesters, concerns are rising that the city’s status as an international financial center and its role as a conduit between the mainland and foreign countries could be weakened</p> <p><b><i>foundation</i></b></p> <p>“‘I think it is time for them to leave the streets,” Tsang wrote, worried that a prolonged protest will lead to more conflict that might <i>shake</i> the city’s <i>foundations</i> - including the stability of its financial markets and the rule of law.’</p> <p>‘President Xi Jinping in Beijing on Sunday... ‘fully affirms and supports” the Hong Kong SAR Government’s current efforts to maintain social order and <i>safeguard</i> the rule of law as a <i>foundation</i> of stability in Hong Kong.’</p> <p><b><i>cornerstone / cornerstones /key cornerstone</i></b></p> <p>‘The events unfolding on the streets of Hong Kong.... are <i>undermining</i> rule of law — a <i>key cornerstone</i> for democratic development, as well as social stability — the <i>foundation</i> of the city’s economic prosperity.’</p>

## IMPORTANCE IS CENTRALITY

The root analogy of IMPORTANCE IS CENTRALITY is expressed by such words as ‘core value’, ‘core interests’, and ‘pivotal’ (Table 5). Fewer examples of ‘core value’ were found in the *SCMP* and *The Standard* than in *China Daily*. This was to be expected as *China Daily* had more opinion articles than the former and is likely to express the official Beijing line. The ‘core’ is the central and most crucial part of something, without which something major would happen.

**Table 5**  
*IMPORTANCE IS CENTRALITY (16 Jan 2013- 28 Sep 2014)*

<i>SCMP &amp; The Standard</i>	<i>China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)</i>
<p><b>core value/values</b></p> <p>‘Democracy and rule of law are Hong Kong people’s <i>core values</i>’</p> <p>‘Look, rule of law is one of Hong Kong’s <i>core values</i>’</p>	<p><b>core values/core interests</b></p> <p>‘Hong Kong is a mature citizen society where the <i>core values</i> include the rule of law, fair competition and the pursuit of freedom, equality and reason.’</p> <p>‘... have not only reaffirmed one of Hong Kong’s <i>core values</i> — rule of law — but also flagged a timely warning to advocates of the “Occupy Central” campaign: Political appeals are no excuse for any illegal activity.’</p> <p><b>pivotal</b></p> <p>‘History shows convincingly that the rule of law has played a <i>pivotal</i> role in facilitating the boosting of Hong Kong’s economy...’</p>

In the realisation stage of OCLP, the phrase ‘core values’ is used more frequently in more or less the same way (Table 6). In many respects, ‘core values’ is likely to accompany the root analogy of SOCIAL ORGANISATION IS BUILDING since the latter analogy refers to the most crucial part of a physical structure.

**Table 6**  
*IMPORTANCE IS CENTRALITY (29 Sep 2014 – 31 Dec 2014)*

<i>SCMP &amp; The Standard</i>	<i>China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)</i>
<p><b>core value/values</b></p> <p>‘Society’s most important <i>core value</i> is the rule of law not democracy.’</p> <p>‘... seriously affect the rule of law which is a <i>core value</i> for the city’s role as a financial centre.’</p> <p><b>centerpiece</b></p> <p>‘Importance of the rule of law, the <i>centerpiece</i> of the latest Communist blueprint’</p>	<p><b>core value/values</b></p> <p>‘In an effort to educate the public on the rule of law — one of Hong Kong’s <i>core values</i> — the government may distribute copies of the Basic Law at protest sites.’</p> <p>‘Hong Kong is a capitalist society which regards the rule of law as a <i>core value</i>. In theory ‘Occupy’ is a bona fide radical movement. It is designed to <i>weaken</i> the rule of law, which is the <i>foundation</i> of a society’s democracy and freedom.’</p>

### GOOD QUALITY/MORALITY IS HIGH

GOOD QUALITY/MORALITY IS HIGH refers to the ‘upholding’ of ‘core values’, such as the ‘rule of law’ (Table 7). The adjective ‘good’ in this metaphor reflects the orientational nature of most conceptual metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). The literal meaning of ‘uphold’ is “support and grip in a high position”; the metaphorical meaning is “defend or maintain (a law or principle)”, according to the METALUDE online database.

Table 7

*GOOD QUALITY/MORALITY IS HIGH (16 Jan 2013-28 Sep 2014)*

<i>SCMP &amp; The Standard</i>	<i>China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)</i>
<p><b><i>uphold/upheld/maintain</i></b></p> <p>‘In June, Security Secretary Lai Tung-kwok promised ‘robust action to <i>uphold</i> the rule of law and <i>maintain</i> public safety and public order.’</p> <p>‘Hong Kong’s stability and thriving economy can only be <i>maintained</i> if its rule of law and global governance standards are <i>upheld</i> in the long run’</p>	<p><b><i>uphold/upholding</i></b></p> <p>‘A country that does not <i>uphold</i> the rule of law cannot be democratic’</p> <p>‘I care less who is elected chief executive ... than I do about <i>upholding</i> the rule of law’</p>

In the realisation period when the actual OCLP got underway, ‘rule of law’ is used in much the same way (Table 8).

Table 8

*GOOD QUALITY/MORALITY IS HIGH (29 Sep 2014 – 31 Dec 2014)*

<i>SCMP and The Standard</i>	<i>China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)</i>
<p><b><i>upheld /uphold /upholding</i></b></p> <p>‘While I appreciate the courage shown by the protesters, it is more important to maintain social order and <i>uphold</i> the rule of law.’</p>	<p><b><i>uphold /upholding</i></b></p> <p>‘The temporary injunctions show Hong Kong’s judiciary will not bow to illegal political pressure and is capable of <i>upholding</i> the law as well as dispensing justice.</p> <p>‘What Hong Kong needs now is a quick return to normality. It needs to <i>uphold</i> the rule of law and enter the next stage of consultation for constitutional change to deliver universal suffrage in 2017.’</p> <p><b><i>above</i></b></p> <p>‘... the current administration must uphold the rule of law as should everyone in Hong Kong including the “Occupy” protesters, some of whom are legal practitioners. They are not <i>above</i> the rule of law.</p>

## EFFECT IS IMPACT

An activity must have an effect, as in ‘cause and effect’, and hence the prominence of EFFECT IS IMPACT. The ‘effect’ of OCLP would be ‘impacted’, that is, it would be a violent change. This root analogy bifurcates into the actual “effect” (‘hit’, ‘damage’, ‘destroy’, and ‘impact’) and how to minimise or prevent this “effect” if this activity did occur (‘guard’, ‘safeguard’, and ‘protect’) (Table 9).

**Table 9**

*EFFECT IS IMPACT (16 Jan 2013- 28 Sep 2014)*

<i>SCMP &amp; The Standard</i>	<i>The China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)</i>
<p><i>safeguard</i></p> <p>‘In the statement, dated July 5, the association accused ‘an extremely small number of radical elements’ of staging the Occupy Central movement, and praised the police for <i>safeguarding</i> Hong Kong’s rule of law’.</p>	<p><i>guard</i></p> <p>‘He felt obligated to speak out to <i>guard</i> the rule-of-law tradition in a society that is widely admired for its civil freedom.’</p> <p><i>protect</i></p> <p>‘His promise is a much-needed assurance to shore up the confidence of Hong Kong residents and international investors in the SAR government’s and judiciary’s resolve to <i>protect</i> Hong Kong’s rule of law.’</p>

Table 10 shows that compared to the threat period, a greater variety of metaphors under EFFECT IS IMPACT, and also negative metaphors (‘hit’, ‘damage’, and ‘destroy’), were used to express similar metaphorical meanings.



**Table 10**  
*EFFECT IS IMPACT (29 Sep 2014 – 31 Dec 2014)*

<i>SCMP and The Standard</i>	<i>The China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)</i>
<p><b><i>impact</i></b> ‘There has been much discussion, over the nine weeks of protest, about the <i>impact</i> of the Occupy movement on Hong Kong’s rule of law.’</p> <p><b><i>protect</i></b> ‘There is no certain formula that can ensure our future, so it is time to end the civil disobedience and mend the divide, <i>protect</i> our rule of law...’</p> <p><b><i>safeguard</i></b> ‘Dealing with illegal activities through legal means is the best <i>safeguard</i> for the rule of law.’</p> <p><b><i>hit</i></b> ‘The occupy movement has already <i>hit</i> Hong Kong’s rule of law and disrupted social order.’</p> <p><b><i>damage</i></b> ‘Movement has already done harm ... and the “rule of law” has been seriously <i>damaged</i>.’</p> <p><b><i>destroy</i></b> ‘In no circumstances should anyone <i>destroy</i> the rule of law.’</p>	<p><b><i>safeguard</i></b> ‘President Xi Jinping on Sunday reaffirmed the central government support.... the SAR government’s efforts to <i>safeguard</i> the rule of law and maintain social order in Hong Kong.’</p> <p><b><i>damage</i></b> ‘the unlawful protests will do more long-term <i>damage</i> to governance and the rule of law’</p> <p><b><i>destroy</i></b> ‘movement know the best way to paralyze ... but all of Hong Kong is to <i>destroy</i> its rule of law’</p>

From these four root analogies, one could surmise that the rule of law, something integral to Hong Kong, would be impacted greatly, if not destroyed, by OCLP. This appears in both the threat and realisation phases. Since metaphors resonate over a period of time and since all communication is dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981), a metaphor forms a dialogue with other metaphors and rhetorical structures to have a “synergistic” effect, creating certain themes (Cameron, 2010, p. 80). Three common themes are in evidence: (1) the relationship between the rule of law and Hong Kong, (2) the effect of OCLP on the rule of law, and (3) the relationship between the rule of law and democracy. Each of the themes is discussed in the following.

## **The relationship between the rule of law and Hong Kong**

The root analogies SOCIAL ORGANISATION IS BUILDING and IMPORTANCE IN CENTRALITY both point to Hong Kong's close identification with the rule of law. The former root analogy uses such metaphors as 'foundation' and 'cornerstone', being crucial elements of a structure, while the latter stresses the quality and worth of the rule of law as integral to the essence of Hong Kong. The following excerpt, which contains several metaphors (in italics), highlights this:

Rule of law is one of Hong Kong's greatest *strengths*, an integral part of the *core values* ingrained in Hong Kong people's psyche. It is the *cornerstone* for Hong Kong's many successes. History shows convincingly that the rule of law has played a *pivotal* role in facilitating the boosting of Hong Kong's economy, its entrance into the world market and transformation into a vibrant cosmopolitan city. (*China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)*, during the threat period)

All sides in the debate would state that the rule of law is one aspect of what has made Hong Kong as it is today, as illustrated by the following excerpt from a government website (HKSAR, 2002):

It has often been said that if Hong Kong people have a defining ideology, it is the rule of law. That is why, since 1997, the rule of law has been the focus of considerable attention in Hong Kong and for the international community.

It goes on to add:

The rule of law is one of Hong Kong's greatest strengths. It is the cornerstone of Hong Kong's success as a leading international commercial and financial centre, providing a secure environment for individuals and organisations and a level playing field for business.

This kind of sentiment was echoed in similar metaphors throughout the four corpora studied. The importance of the rule of law above other values, such as human rights, clean government, freedom, and democracy, as described in the 2013 Policy Address by the Hong Kong Government, will be discussed in the following section on the relationship between democracy and rule of law in Hong Kong.

## **The effect of OCLP on the rule of law**

Examining headlines of news reports about future events, Neiger (2007) found that the "conjectured future" type of discourse had "the highest level of speculation", bearing "political import because it provides fertile ground for releasing trial balloons, magnifying threats, creating

solidarity, and justifying acts of government” (p. 309). This was the focus of many in the anti-Occupy Central camp in the threat phase. The following extract from *China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)* (2017, August 3) is an example:

“Occupy Central” remains theoretical at this stage, and we might not overstate its feasibility though. But, the ill-conceived plan has gathered substantial momentum in the last two months, due to its masterminds’ relentless inflammations. We should come to grasp the reality that “Occupy Central” is merely a prelude for struggle over the Hong Kong SAR’s political power. We should instead gain an insight into the matter, and must not treat it lightly. Any neglect could prove fatal to our city’s sustainable and steady development.

The “conjectured future” in this case, at least by one side, is a potentially dark one. “Occupy Central” is represented as threatening the stability of the city of Hong Kong.

Both SOCIAL ORGANISATION IS BUILDING and IMPORTANCE IN CENTRALITY indicate existing and future adverse effects of the OCLP on the rule of law of Hong Kong. During the “realisation” phase, the threat remained of further deterioration. In SOCIAL ORGANISATION IS BUILDING, sentences using ‘undermine’ or ‘undermining’ expressed confusion about the differences between “breaking the law” and “breaking the rule of law”. One legal expert said that while the protests were breaking the law, they were not “undermining it, rather it is purposeful law-breaking with a ‘higher ideal’” (Davis, 2014). According to the *China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)*, OCLP convener Benny Tai “has tried to add a pinch of sacredness to his campaign by calling it ‘civil disobedience’”, but it is “an abuse of civil disobedience” which “undermine(s) the city’s much treasured rule of law” (Li, 2013). Li’s view was that civil disobedience is justified only when people “rebel against great injustice in a highly oppressive society” like the actions of Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela. However, Hong Kong enjoys “a high level of freedom and civil rights” with readily available “channels for discussions, negotiations and making compromises on issues, including constitutional reform and election formats”, thus rendering “civil disobedience unwarranted” (Li, 2013). Therefore, since the movement does not fit the criteria for civil disobedience, it breaks the law. Nevertheless, the occupiers see it in a completely different light; in contrast, a basic tenet of the Occupy Movement in Hong Kong was that “one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws”, as argued by Martin Luther King Jr. when justifying his civil disobedience movement in the 1960s. The different views reflect Chinese mainland and Western perspectives on this issue.

The different perspectives of Chinese mainland and the West on civil disobedience can also be seen in the context of Chinese rhetorical topoi. Typical rhetorical topoi in Chinese discourse throughout the centuries have involved harmony, loyalty and Chinese vs. foreign and stability (which is connected to harmony and consensus) (Powers & Kluver, 1999). The discourse of threat and change is important here as the focus of the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law was keeping Hong Kong’s systems basically the same after the reversion of sovereignty, albeit without certain

colonial elements. This folds into the “discourse of threat” and also the “discourse of stability”, with mainland China focusing on the slogan “stability overrides everything”, after the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, in Hong Kong after 1967 riots, and in the lead-up to 1 July 1997.

### **The relationship between the rule of law and democracy**

According to the Declaration adopted on 24 September 2012 by the United Nations General Assembly at the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels, it was reaffirmed that “human rights, the rule of law and democracy are interlinked and mutually reinforcing”. This can be seen in the concordance lines when ‘democracy’ was co-selected with ‘rule of law’ (Tables 11 and 12).

**Table 11**

*The relationship between the rule of law and democracy (16 Jan 2013 – 28 Sep 2014)*

<b><i>SCMP and The Standard</i></b>	<b><i>China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)</i></b>
‘Rule of Law and Democracy are <i>core values</i> ’ ‘Rule of law <i>underlines</i> successful democracy’ ‘Rule of law is <i>key</i> ... to carrying out democratic reform’ (3 instances) ‘Rule of law <i>underlies</i> every successful democracy’ (3 instances) ‘Rule of law is the <i>bedrock</i> of democracy’	‘A democratic culture is consisting of least of the following six: due <i>respect</i> for the rule of law’ ‘Rule of law is more <i>essential</i> to freedom than democracy’ ‘Rule of law is the <i>cornerstone</i> for democracy’ ‘Hong Kong people <i>treasure</i> rule of law more than democracy’ ‘Country that cannot uphold the rule of law cannot be democratic’ (3 instances) ‘Democracy without rule of law plunge society into <i>chaos</i> ’ (2 instances) ‘Without the rule of law – the name of democracy will be <i>tarnished</i> ’ ‘Rule of law is an <i>integral</i> part of democracy’ ‘Demand ideal form of democracy but do not <i>respect</i> the rule of law’ ‘Democracy is a <i>precondition</i> to the rule of law’ ‘Democracy is the <i>foundation</i> of the rule of law’ (2 instances)

**Table 12**  
***The relationship between the rule of law and democracy (29 Sep – 31 Dec 2014)***

<b><i>SCMP &amp; The Standard</i></b>	<b><i>China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)</i></b>
<p>‘A senior mainland official has asked Hongkongers to contemplate the <i>relationship</i> between democracy and the rule of law’</p> <p>‘Wants us to contemplate the <i>relationships</i> between the “one country” and the “two systems”, between democracy and the rule of law.’</p> <p>‘If you want peace and social order you should <i>treasure</i> the rule of law more than democracy’</p> <p>‘Society’s most important <i>core value</i> is the rule of law, not democracy.’</p> <p>‘Seeking democracy at the <i>expense</i> of the rule of law is not democracy’</p> <p>‘When people discover that that “true democracy” is false or pushed so far as to <i>undermine</i> the rule of law’</p> <p>‘Real democracy <i>strengthens</i> the rule of law’</p>	<p>‘Rule of law is the true <i>basis</i> of democracy’ (2 instances)</p> <p>‘amounts to saying that democracy is not a necessary <i>condition</i> for the rule of law’</p> <p>‘Carrie Lam emphasized that the rule of law is <i>vital</i> for democracy’ (2 instances)</p> <p>‘Essentially the opposition camp is fighting for so-called genuine democracy at the <i>expense</i> of the rule of law’</p> <p>‘The rule of law is <i>fundamental</i> to democracy’</p> <p>‘It [the protests] shows their lack of <i>respect</i> for the <i>spirit</i> of democracy and the rule of law’</p> <p>‘This would allow them to pursue democracy while <i>respecting</i> the rule of law’</p> <p>‘Democracy and the rule of law are the two <i>pillars</i> that ensure Hong Kong is a rule-based society’</p> <p>‘Democracy is not a necessary <i>condition</i> for the rule of law’</p> <p>‘We can’t <i>violate</i> the rule of law while pursuing democracy’</p> <p>‘Protesters understand that in the West rule of law is the <i>cornerstone</i> of democracy’</p>

Interestingly, the corpus of *SCMP* and *The Standard* in both periods had approximately half of the close mentions of the ‘rule of law’ and ‘democracy’ than did *China Daily* in both periods. Again, this is probably due to the larger amount of opinion articles in the *China Daily (Hong Kong Edition)* and its agenda of promoting the Beijing Government’s line. *China Daily* emphasises that the rule of law is what should come first and what democracy’s attitude to the rule of law should be, as in ‘it has to respect the rule of law’ and ‘the rule of law is the cornerstone of democracy’ (SOCIAL ORGANISATION IS BUILDING). A society that cannot uphold the law cannot have democracy (GOOD QUALITY/MORALITY IS HIGH), and the rule of law is more important than democracy (IMPORTANCE IS CENTRALITY).

From the above, the following stances were observed to occur in most of the Hong Kong-based and China-based newspaper article corpora:

1. Other people’s views are being ignored by the protesters.
2. Their idea of universal suffrage is not necessarily the only right one.
3. The protesters’ basis for protesting about democracy is wrong.
4. Democracy is a dangerous topic.
5. The rule of law is quite fragile.

This finding is also related to ‘democracy’, and in this case, to universal suffrage. Like the ‘rule of law’, ‘democracy’ is also an essentially contested concept (Gallie, 1956). This is because it is a term that exhibits polysemy, a state which characterises the language of ideology that is “pervaded with political and moral interests” and “shaped in a cultural setting” (Irving, 2012, p. 1). Essentially contested concepts are “concepts the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users”, and these disputes “cannot be settled by appeal to empirical evidence, linguistic usage, or the canons of logic alone” (Gray, 1977, p. 344). Essentially contested concepts involve widespread agreement on a concept; for example, fairness and democracy, but not the best realisation of this concept, that is, democracy in action as a governance system or the rule of law as a judicial system.

The common themes listed above can be explained by both historical legacies of the rule of law in Hong Kong and “One Country, Two Systems”, which was the constitutional principle for the reunification of China during the early 1980s. This can be inferred from the last Governor of Hong Kong Chris Patten’s handover speech of 30 June 1997: “as British administration ends, we are, I believe, entitled to say that our own nation’s contribution here was to provide the scaffolding that enabled the people of Hong Kong to ascend”. These things were, according to Chris Patten, “The rule of law. Clean and light-handed government. The values of a free society. The beginnings of representative government and democratic accountability.” The rule of law had assumed political and ideological importance in Hong Kong because it was seen as the most crucial factor differentiating Hong Kong from the mainland China (Cullen, 2005). Now that Hong Kong was a part of China, various parties tried to reconcile the concept to ‘fit’ into quite different political systems.

Regarding “One Country, Two Systems”, the discussion in Hong Kong about the rule of law during the OCLP seems to display confusion over “breaking the law” and “breaking the rule of law”. This could relate to interpreting the meaning of the expression in one system (Hong Kong) in the context of another system (Beijing). Those who push the “two systems” in the “One Country, Two Systems” framework tended to be of the pan-democratic camp and those who follow Western tradition; those who follow the establishment or Beijing line in Hong Kong or mainland China’s focus on the “one country” part of the equation (Eagleton, 2012).

In 1997, the Chinese Communist Party decided to make the rule of law a basic strategy and “building a socialist country under the rule of law” an important goal for socialist modernisation (State Council, 2011). However, the definition of ‘rule of law’ is different from what it is in the West. The phrase in Chinese is *fazhi* (“法治”), composed of *fa* meaning “law” and *zhi* meaning “to govern.” In the case of *fazhi*, that phenomenon has led to two similar but distinct translations in Chinese-English dictionaries: ‘rule of law’ and ‘rule by law’. While the two phrases may seem similar, they actually have very different connotations. The Chinese language lacks prepositions; the preposition “of” and “by” can make a large difference to meaning, and give rise to alternative interpretations, particularly when used by gatekeepers of a discourse.

In the Fourth plenum of the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 2014, the party leadership wrote in a communique that only if the “rule of law is vigorously enforced

under party leadership can people be the masters of their own affair” (Liao, 2014). In other words, the state is a reflection of the will of the people, and the law will better serve citizens when it is seen as an instrument of the state. In addition, the official media used a longer phrase, “ruling the country according to law”, to describe the agenda. “Ruling according to law” (“依法治国”) could be taken as being somewhat semantically different from the rule of law (“法治”) (Li, 2014). In Jiang Zemin’s report delivered to the 15<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 1997, “ruling according to law” was officially defined as:

Under the leadership of the Party, the general public participate in governance ... according to the Constitution and state laws ... and gradually institutionalize and legalize socialist democracy, so that such institutions, legislations, and legal decisions will not be susceptible to changes when the occupants of the leaders’ offices change or the leaders’ opinions or focuses of attention change. Therefore, to rule according to law (“依法治国”) is to have the rule of law (“法治”).

Thus acts that were ‘against the law’ (illegal) could be seen as threatening the whole legal system. The Chinese Communist Party pledges to operate under the primacy of the law, yet it insists on Party supremacy in all matters, including the law. Anything seen as threatening the socialist system could be deemed as being against the law. Thus there is a contradiction between legal rule and party rule; the Socialist rule of law could be seen as “political oxymoron” (Liao 2014). It is immediately apparent that OLCP’s actions could be come to be seen by the Chinese Communist Party as a threat to its definition of the rule of law.

### **Conclusion**

This corpus-based discourse-analytical study shows that the Occupy Central with Love and Peace campaign (OCLP) was seen by some as an existential threat to Hong Kong’s core value of the rule of law and consequently its stability and prosperity. This relates to Hong Kong’s long relationship with the discourse of “threat” and “instability” as well as the differences in ideologies regarding law between Hong Kong and mainland China.

According to METALUDE (Goatly, 2002), the phrase ‘rule of law’ is itself a metaphor, having the root analogy of JUSTICE/LAW IS STRAIGHT (LINE). A ‘rule’ is a “long flat straight-edged implement for measuring or drawing straight lines”, which is paradoxical since regulations or laws or constitutions of a location have enough flexibility to fit changing situations since ambiguity is a characteristic of language in general.

In 2015, 2017, and 2018, a number of ‘occupiers’ had been prosecuted by the Department of Justice of the HKSAR, being charged with inciting others or conspiring to commit public nuisance, and with taking part in an unlawful assembly. Some of the prosecuted have been convicted. As Benny Tai expressed, he would be willing to plead guilty as “a guilty plea aligns with the spirit of civil disobedience – the central theme of the 79-day Occupy demonstrations” (Ng, 2017). Despite the end of OCLP, the discourse of threat and instability raised in its discussion both before and after OCLP have left a legacy for future possible actions of civil disobedience.

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# Morality, Language Use, and Ontogenesis: Vygotsky and Shotter Revisited

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### Abstract

According to Vygotsky's theory, language is the driving force behind the attainment of ontogenesis. Here, language is described as a psychological tool, and its invariable internalisation mediates the higher psychological functions. When combined with the biological lines of development, the fully developed human being emerges. However, it is not just language that drives ontogenesis. It is on this point that Vygotsky's theory has come under criticism. Scholars, such as Shotter, have pointed out that Vygotsky's theory neglects, to a certain degree, the importance of moral inculcation as a driving force behind language use. However, in response to this, it is argued that language is the driving force in ontogenesis, particularly in the early stages of development. Thus, as language is internalised and speech develops, moral behaviour only then begins to impact on language production, not before.

### Keywords

Vygotsky, Ontogenesis, Shotter, Morality, Language

## Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky (1978, 1986) believed that language was the key ingredient in the development of the higher mental functions, such as voluntary attention, logical memory, concept formation, and problem solving. He compared the use of language as similar to the use of a tool; as human

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beings use tools, a transformation of the environment occurs. In a similar fashion, through the use of language as a ‘psychological tool’ the ‘environment of the mind’ is transformed. That is, the internalisation of language results in the development of the higher mental functions through the mediation of the social and the psychological realms of consciousness. Through this process of mediation, the social and psychological are unified and the ontogenesis<sup>31</sup> of the individual as a fully developed cultural member is attained. The terminology of language as a psychological tool serves as a powerful metaphor to describe the complex relationship between the social and the psychological.

Vygotsky (1978) describes internalisation as an “internal reconstruction of an external operation” (p. 56). He uses the pointing gesture of a child to explain internalisation. For example, a young child who has not yet acquired language sees an object and desires it. The child stretches their hand out to grasp the object but cannot obtain it because it is out of their reach. The mother sees the child’s behaviour and steps in to deliver the object to the child. The child then makes the connection between the grasping (pointing) action and the attainment of the object. Here, in the child’s mind, there is a shift in movement from the object to the person (the mother). This simple behaviour signifies the beginning of the development of the psychological tools of language (e.g., the pointing gesture) as a mediator between the psychological realm (the desire to obtain an object) and the social realm (the communication between the child and the mother). Here, the transformation in the child that has taken place is the awareness of social activity (communication specifically) to solve problems and satisfy desires. The symbolic act of pointing constitutes a first communicative step in ontogenesis, toward the mediating tools of signs, and later, language.

Vygotsky (1978) describes internalisation as having three levels of transformation. The first level occurs when an initial external operation is reconstructed as an internal one (as depicted in the pointing/child analogy). The second level occurs when interpersonal processes are transformed into intrapersonal processes. On this level, the cultural traditions of the group become internalised in the individual. Vygotsky states,

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<sup>31</sup> Ontogenesis is the convergence of the natural (biological) and cultural (social) lines of development which lead to the formation of the fully fledged human being.

“Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level.” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57)

Here, the crux of his theory of sociocultural development is defined, that is, that all the higher mental functions have their origins as a consequence of human interaction. Finally, the third level occurs after a long series of development (the transformation of the interpersonal to the intrapersonal), of which some functions do not result in transformation and stagnate at the elementary level. Once internalisation has been achieved, the particular inner functions that result follow their own systemic rules.

Vygotsky’s theories (1978, 1986) on sociocultural theory have broad appeal and currency in the fields of education, linguistics, and developmental psychology. As Van der Veer and Valsiner (1991) observed, “Vygotsky essentially presented a theory of man [sic], his origin and coming into being, his present state amidst the other species, and a blueprint for his future” (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991, p. 191). This quote is particularly insightful because it not only demonstrates the major strength of Vygotskian theory; that is, its ability to encapsulate the totality of human psychological and social development, but it also demonstrates its major weakness. This weakness is that such a vast and ambitious theory cannot describe everything in full detail. Inevitably, there is vagueness in some aspects of this huge theory. This point has not gone unnoticed by scholars who have criticised Vygotsky’s theory, particularly in regard to his notions on internalisation (see Atkinson, 2002; Duveen, 1997; Frawley, 1997; Shotter, 1993a, 1993b; Wertsch, 1991).

### **Shotter on Morality and Vygotsky**

Of particular interest here is the critical perspective of Shotter (1993a, 1993b), who argued that the process of internalisation does not arise through the processing of effective social activity into an inner realm, but rather through the ontogenesis of the individual as an ethical being acting in accordance with their cultural expectations. Shotter (1993a, 1993b) questioned the relationship of speech as a tool mediating thought, claiming that while it is possible for speech to be used in a tool-like fashion, as a means of shaping speech and activity, it does not allow for speech to be used in just any way the speaker wishes. Rather, speech is a negotiated process in which each participant in the dialogue must act in accordance with the semiotic position of the other. That is,

each participant must be sensitive to the responses of their interlocutor within the cultural bounds of linguistic meanings. This entails that each cultural participant must learn how to be a proper member of their particular cultural group from an early age. In sum, Shotter (1993a, 1993b) argues that ontogenesis of moral knowledge, knowing how to become a legitimate cultural member, is the key aspect of internalisation that Vygotsky overlooked.

This criticism of Vygotsky's theory to a large extent relies on the valid and important point that moral and ethical behaviour is not described in any great detail in Vygotsky's theories on internalisation, although in fairness to Vygotsky, moral and ethical constraints on behaviour are implicitly subsumed within his theories on internalisation. Recall Vygotsky's (1978) idea that the child's cultural development appears first on the social level, then on the individual level once internalised.

Moral and ethical behaviours are in fact critical functions of cultural development. One cannot easily separate the functions of cultural development from moral and ethical concerns since the mores and moral elements of a culture are deeply entwined. 'Culture', as a general term, encompasses what is morally and ethically acceptable to members of a particular culture. Moral imperatives are ingrained in culture and hence automatically inculcated in individuals as they undergo ontogenetic development. Of course, this will, in turn, have a major impact on how they use language.

### **Culture Bound Morality and Language**

The impact of culture on language use is illustrated by an interesting study by Hinkel (1995) in which 455 essays of varied topics written by 450 English as a Second language (ESL) students were examined for modal verb usage (e.g., should, must, have to etc.). The ESL students consisted of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indonesian, and Vietnamese, all of whose cultural heritages are heavily influenced by Buddhist, Taoist, or Confucian philosophy. Each of the ESL students had a high degree of English proficiency, and when their essays were compared with native English speakers of Anglo-backgrounds, significant differences were found in the usage of root modals verbs around the topics of family, friendships, and traditions. The ESL students reflected the usage of root modals in keeping with their Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian traditions which did not match the Anglo cohort's verb use. In particular, Hinkel (1995) argued that cultural values such as

“harmony maintenance, family and group responsibility, and extrinsically imposed obligation and necessity” (p. 327) were prevalent in the ESL students’ modal verb usage.

Essentially, alternative interpretations of what is considered obligatory and necessary is heavily influenced by culturally determined codes of behaviour and this accounts for the difference of results between the ESL students and their Anglo-background counterparts in their particular use of modal verbs. Here, a distinct moral and ethical code has been inculcated in the ESL students and this has affected the use of grammatical constructions. This example succinctly illustrates Shotter’s (1993a) point on morality and ethics as guiding language use. Here, language as a psychological tool cannot be wielded in any particular fashion but as guided by the ethical and moral dispositions of cultural members.

However, while the language here is consistent with and reflective of underlying cultural values, it is important to recognise that language would have been the medium in which these cultural values would have been inculcated. It is highly unlikely that Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian moral and ethical codes could be communicated from one generation to another without using language in some form or other.

It is clear that language is tied to moral and ethical behaviour on many levels. First, language is a significant medium through which these values are expressed informally between cultural members and from one generation to the next. Second, language in the form of written and spoken texts preserves the more formal renderings of moral considerations and directives of a particular culture (e.g., religious and legal documents). So it is generally accepted that learning a language also entails learning the culture of the target language (e.g., Byram, 1991; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Kramsch, 1993; Risager, 1991). In fact, cultural knowledge is encoded within and presumed by language (see Holland & Quinn, 1987). Of course, moral and ethical behavioural codes are critical elements of any human culture and, in many ways, can be considered as defining and differentiating properties of cultures. Hence, language, culture, and morality/ethics are deeply interrelated concepts that are not easily separated.

### **The Primacy of Language or Morality**

Shotter’s (1993a, 1993b) criticism of Vygotsky was that morality and ethics are primary in language use. He claims that humans cannot use the psychological tools of language in arbitrary ways and that ethical and moral concerns guide all aspects of communication. It seems reasonable

that ethical and moral inculcation is a driving force behind language use, as demonstrated in Hinkel's (1995) study. However, moral behaviour can only develop through language use. For example, at the infant stage, children do, at first, use language as a psychological tool without any moral and ethical restrictions. Vygotsky (1986) outlines four main stages in the development of speech. Initially, there is the primitive or natural stage, the stage of preintellectual speech and preverbal thought. The next stage is the "naïve psychology" stage, whereby the young child uses their body to interact with the environment, and experiences the use of tools and begins to use language (without fully comprehending meaning). The third stage of development comprises the use of external aids (signs and operations) to assist with internal problems (such as counting on fingers, using mnemonic aids, and using egocentric speech). The last stage, described as the "ingrowth stage", occurs when external operations turn inward, such as when the child begins to count in their head, uses "logical memory" (uses inner signs), and in speech development, transforms egocentric speech (self-directed talk) into the higher mental process of inner speech (Vygotsky, 1986).

According to Vygotsky (1986), at the naïve psychology stage, infants begin to use language (recall the example of the baby and the pointing gesture). There is clearly no moral or ethical imperative here. The beginning of the development of language is tool-like, as a means of expressing and satisfying unattainable desires through an intermediary. It might be argued that this evidences a rudimentary and ego-centric 'id morality' within the child. However, for this to make sense it is necessary to twist the definition of morality to include the absence of morality – that is, if an infant has no conception of right or wrong beyond "what I want is right" and "what I don't get is wrong" then this is not even a proto-morality since it does not inform behaviour but merely describes behaviour.

In Vygotsky's example, the infant desires an object and discovers that they can satisfy this desire indirectly through their grasping and clutching gesture which results in the mother's intervention. At this point, a critical connection is made in the mind of the infant. That is, the awareness of the symbolic act of grasping (pointing) and the resulting action of the mother. This constitutes the beginning of rudimentary language usage. The infant has internalised the sign (the grasping or pointing gesture) as a means of expression and communication of desires. This is more sensibly understood as the beginnings of communication and language use than as an expression of proto-morality. Thus, for the child, this important realisation paves the way for the



internalisation of more sophisticated language use, such as words as representations of physical objects, and later to the development of abstract concepts – which includes ethical considerations.

In terms of ontogenesis, it is language that acts as the primary catalyst for such a complex process. At such an early developmental point, moral and ethics do not feature and arise only when language, as a psychological tool, has transformed the consciousness of the infant. It is only through the interaction of, observations of, and corrections of the mother (and other cultural members) – through language – that the child learns his or her ethical code of behaviour and begins to develop as a cultural member. Only after language use has transformed consciousness can the child's inculcation of ethical or moral precepts take place.

Furthermore, language occurs both naturally and culturally, whereas moral and ethical concerns are entirely cultural. Language (speech) is both genetically predetermined and cultural at the same time. For example, Chomsky (1965) argues humans have the biological and mental architecture contained in our genetic code to allow for the development of speech, and it is speech which makes us human. Reinforcing this claim are psychological studies that show pre-verbal infants' behaviour, in terms of operant learning (e.g., reinforcement of behaviour), is close to animal behaviour, and that the more language is acquired the less animal-like behaviour becomes (see Bentall, Lowe, & Beasty, 1985).

Speech is rooted in human genetics but it is also cultural and can only develop after the language acquisition device has been triggered through social interaction (cultural activity) (Chomsky, 1965). Hence, language is ingrained in both the biological and the cultural (see also Karmiloff-Smith, 1992). This qualifies language as a truly ontogenetic phenomenon, occurring in both the biological and cultural lines of development. When the biological and cultural lines converge, this interaction results in the fully developed human being. In contrast, ethics and morality, are purely cultural phenomena.

It is doubtful that humans are as genetically predisposed toward moral behaviour as they are toward speech. For example, do new-born babies have some pre-programmed moral or ethical dispositions? At this point, it is not established whether new-born babies have a sense of self (see Gallagher, 1996) although increasingly complex mental structures develop over time for engaging with the world (Rossmanith & Reddy, 2016), thus it is difficult to imagine morality as the driving force behind the early linguistic behaviour of babies. Babies certainly have biological and emotional needs, and develop increasingly sophisticated ways of satisfying these needs (and

desires) from undifferentiated crying, to pointing, to the emergence of speech. Similarly, once language develops then more sophisticated mental phenomena like moral and ethical imperatives can be inculcated. Hence, the primacy of satisfying basic biological desires triggers proto-language acquisition, which in turn allows for the development of moral inculcation.

In a nutshell, language is at first used clumsily as a psychological tool, devoid of any moral imperative, but as more complex language is internalised and used, moral behaviour is invariably inculcated and developed along with other abstractions. As the development of moral behaviour gains momentum through language it, in turn, exerts an increasing influence on how language is generated by circumscribing the range of actions that can be performed that are acceptable to the cultural milieu. This forms a multi-step feedback loop whereby: behaviour generates engagement with language; engaging with language generates engagement with culture; engaging with culture generates engagement with morality; and engaging with morality generates and informs behaviour.

By contrast with Shotter (1993a, 1993b), it is argued that language is the primary driving force in ontogenesis while ethics/morality develop through the acquisition and use of language. At ontogenesis, the natural and cultural lines of development converge as the essentialized human being emerges as a fully developed member of their particular group whose behaviour is constrained by the ethics/morality of their culture. At this point, language use and ethics/morality become two (largely) inseparable elements. So, the fully developed member of a cultural group acts linguistically within the moral traditions of his/her society. However, this situation can only arise through, and by, language use. Speech and language are fundamental to all aspects of human behaviour and as such constitute the driving force behind ontogenesis. Of course, this idea does not preclude the important impact of morality on language use as humans develop ontogenetically.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, a brief review of Vygotsky's theory on language and ontogenesis has been presented. According to Shotter (1993a, 1993b), one of the problems with Vygotsky's theory is that it neglects moral and ethical behaviour as a driving force behind both language use and ontogenesis. It was argued that while Vygotsky's theory has to some extent neglected the importance of moral and ethical issues as a driving force behind language use, morality as a construct only develops through the gradual acquisition of language. That is, only after the internalisation of language can ethics and morality play a substantial role in affecting language use. In effect, language, as a phenomenon

firmly rooted in both genetic endowment and culture, is the premier catalyst in ontogenesis. Moral and ethical behaviour drive language use only after it has been inculcated because of, and by, language.

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