

WORD MEANING NEGOTIATION
IN ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUM COMMUNICATION

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COMMUNICATION

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To my mother and in the memory of my father, Ingemar Gustafson (1947-2015)

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ABSTRACT

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We all know that lexicons contain definitions of the meanings of words, but when we communicate with other people, these are not the kinds of meaning we use in interaction. In conversation, we coordinate with each other in a meaning-making process where we make use of a more flexible semantic quality associated with words, called *meaning potential*.

The focus of this thesis is on word meaning negotiation (WMN) in online discussion forum communication. WMN occurs when participants who are engaged in a discussion about a particular topic remark on a word choice of another participant, thus initiating a meta-linguistic sequence in which a particular word is openly questioned and the meaning of that word is up for negotiation. As a consequence, the ordinary flow of the discussion “on topic” is temporarily sidetracked, and the focus of the discussion is shifted to the specific word and its associated meaning. By closely studying the process of WMN and focusing on the behaviours and practices of the participants engaged in it, this thesis aims to empirically explore how situated meaning in concrete utterances is established by combining aspects of meaning potential with relevant aspects of the conversational context.

The thesis uses a method for qualitative interaction analysis influenced by Conversation Analysis, which devotes particular attention to how turns are related within each WMN sequence, specifically focusing on how participants orient to important aspects of prior utterances in the sequence. The analysis is performed on a sample corpus consisting of 60 WMN sequences gathered from three Swedish online discussion forums.

The results of the analysis show that instances of WMN occur either when there is insufficient understanding of the meaning of a particular word (WMNs originating in non-understanding, NONs), or when there is disagreement about what a word can or should mean, given a specific discussion context (WMNs originating in disagreement, DINs). The in-depth analysis of the negotiation process identifies several routine ways in which participants negotiate word meaning in NONs and DINs, resulting in a taxonomy of semantic operations that captures how the participants move between drawing upon aspects of meaning potential associated with the negotiated word and drawing upon relevant aspects of the situation under discussion as they collaborate to establish situated meaning.

Keywords: word meaning negotiation, semantic coordination, meaning potential, semantic operations, computer-mediated communication, CMC

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CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION.....	17
1.1 Rationale	21
1.2 Aim	22
1.3 Outline of thesis	22
2 BACKGROUND	25
2.1 The dialogical perspective on language and communication	26
2.1.1 The theory of meaning potentials and situated meaning	28
2.1.2 Understanding and misunderstanding	31
2.1.3 Miscommunication	32
2.1.4 Intersubjectivity and common ground	34
2.1.5 Communication on parallel tracks	36
2.1.6 Approaches to studying how situated word meaning is established	38
2.2 Earlier research related to word meaning negotiation	41
2.2.1 Research related to word meaning negotiation within first language acquisition	41
2.2.2 Research related to word meaning negotiation within second language acquisition	43
2.2.3 Research on lexical coordination within psycholinguistics and pragmatics	46
2.2.4 Research related to word meaning negotiation within Conversation Analysis	50
2.2.5 Research related to word meaning negotiation within philosophy of language	58
2.3 Computer-mediated communication	59
2.3.1 General characteristics of CMC	60
2.3.2 Interaction management and turn-taking in CMC	61
3 METHODS AND MATERIALS	69
3.1 Methodological approaches for studying mediated interaction	69

3.1.1 Virtual ethnography	70
3.1.2 Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis	70
3.1.3 Conversation analysis	71
3.1.4 Content analysis and dialogue act annotation	75
3.1.5 Methods used in this study	76
3.2 Delimiting the phenomenon and selecting data	78
3.2.1 Defining word meaning negotiation	79
3.2.2 Gathering the sample corpus	95
3.3 Ethical considerations	104
3.3.1 Human subject or archival research?	106
3.3.2 Private vs Public	107
3.3.3 Is informed consent needed?	108
3.3.4 Using data from commercial sites	108
3.3.5 Disguising data	109
3.3.6 Ethical considerations in this study	110
3.4 Description of data	111
3.4.1 Two types of word meaning negotiations: NONs and DINs	112
3.4.2 Descriptive statistics of NONs and DINs	112
3.4.3 A taxonomy of semantic operations for word meaning negotiation – a sneak preview	114
4 WMNS ORIGINATING IN NON-UNDERSTANDING (NONS)	117
4.1 Introduction	118
4.2 General characteristics of NONs	118
4.2.1 Triggers of NONs	119
4.2.2 Indicators of NONs	121
4.2.3 Response posts in NONs	125
4.2.4 Reactions to response posts in NONs	128
4.3 Methods for studying sequentiality in discussion forum communication	133
4.3.1 Turn-taking in discussion forum communication	134
4.3.2 Tracing sequentiality by analysing aspects of addressivity and responsivity	134

4.3.3 Responding by quoting or direct-replying	135
4.3.4 Responding by use of name or pronoun	137
4.3.5 Responding by attempting to take “the next turn”	138
4.3.6 Responding by producing the second part of an adjacency pair	138
4.3.7 Addressing someone by use of name or pronoun	139
4.3.8 Addressing someone by producing the first part of an adjacency pair	140
4.4 Sequentiality in NONs	141
4.4.1 Addressivity in trigger posts	141
4.4.2 Responsivity and addressivity in indicator posts	142
4.4.3 Responsivity and addressivity in response posts	143
4.4.4 Responsivity and addressivity in reaction posts	144
4.4.5 Deviant cases of sequentiality in NONs	145
4.4.6 Summary of the analysis of sequentiality in NONs	159
4.5 Semantic operations in NONs	161
4.5.1 Semantic operations in trigger posts	162
4.5.2 Semantic operations in indicator posts	169
4.5.3 Semantic operations in response posts	177
4.5.4 Semantic operations in reaction posts	185
4.5.5 Summary of semantic operations in NONs	187
5 WMNS ORIGINATING IN DISAGREEMENT (DINS).....	189
5.1 Introduction	190
5.2 Description of data	191
5.3 Distinguishing DINs from NONs	197
5.3.1 Distinguishing meta-linguistic clarification requests from meta-linguistic objections	198
5.3.2 Co-existing meta-linguistic clarification requests and objections	200
5.4 Identifying and characterising DINs	204
5.4.1 Prototypical meta-linguistic objections	205

5.4.2 Meta linguistic clarification requests functioning as meta-linguistic objections	209
5.4.3 Meta-linguistic objections embedded in accounts of clarification requests	210
5.4.4 DINs without overt meta-linguistic objections	211
5.4.5 Determining the scope of DINs	217
5.5 Sequentiality in DINs	218
5.5.1 Responding by quoting or direct-replying	220
5.5.2 Responding by use of name or pronoun	221
5.5.3 Responding by attempting to take “the next turn”	222
5.5.4 Responding by producing the second part of an adjacency pair	222
5.5.5 Addressing someone by use of name or pronoun	223
5.5.6 Addressing someone by producing the first part of an adjacency pair	224
5.5.7 Summary of the analysis of sequentiality in DINs	225
5.6 Semantic operations and other dialogue acts in DINs	227
5.6.1 Proposing meaning: generic and specific explicifications	228
5.6.2 Proposing meaning: exemplifications	240
5.6.3 Opposing meaning: meta-linguistic objections	247
5.6.4 Contrasting meaning	255
5.6.5 Endorsing meaning: passive endorsements and meta-linguistic endorsements	267
5.6.6 Other semantic operations	269
5.6.7 Meta-linguistic indications and comments	274
5.6.8 Summary of semantic operations in DINs	277
6 TOWARDS AN ANNOTATION SCHEME FOR CATEGORISING SEMANTIC OPERATIONS IN WMNS...	281
6.1 Distinguishing between meta-linguistic clarification requests and meta-linguistic objections	282
6.2 Distinguishing between explicification and exemplification	286
6.3 Identifying acts of contrasting	290

6.4 Distinguishing between passive endorsements and meta-linguistic endorsements	290
7 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION.....	295
7.1 Characteristics of word meaning negotiation	296
7.1.1 General differences and similarities between NONs and DINs	297
7.1.2 Differences in sequentiality	298
7.1.3 Differences in cause and motivation	299
7.1.4 Differences in how WMNs are concluded	305
7.1.5 Preference organisation	306
7.2 Semantic operations in NONs and DINs	308
7.3 Discussion of findings in relation to semantic theory	313
7.3.1 Dialogical theory of meaning	313
7.3.2 Reification: meanings as spaces	315
7.3.3 Formal semantics	318
7.4 Discussion of findings in relation to methodology	319
7.4.1 Gathering the data	320
7.4.2 Mixing methods	321
7.5 Concluding words	323
7.6 Future work	324
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	327

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

- ... Saying that the nanny has escaped means that K has talked about her as something which privately belongs to her. Prisoners can escape... a dog can escape... but you cannot escape from your place of work, you can simply quit if you want to. Escaping means that someone who cannot fend for herself or should not be out in public has fled.
- But this was about the visa. K vouched that she would be responsible for the nanny during the stay in the USA, since she was her employer. So yes, escape is actually the correct word to use.

The exchange in the example above is taken from an online discussion concerning an incident where a well-known Swedish blogger (K) posted a blog entry about her nanny running away from her during a family trip to the U.S. In the blog post, the word ‘escaped’ (rymt) was originally used to describe the nanny’s leaving the family without giving notice or telling anyone that she was planning to leave. In the beginning of the discussion, the participants initially use same word as the blogger when referring to

the behaviour of the nanny, but early on in the discussion, some participants question the appropriateness of the word 'escaped' being used to describe the discussed situation, and a meta-linguistic negotiation of word meaning unfolds.

The example above nicely illustrates that people in discussion forum communication occasionally focus their attention on the meanings of particular words used in the communication itself. The example also shows that interlocutors can have different takes on what a word can mean, given a specific conversational setting. Apparently, the meaning of a particular word is something which can be negotiated in the moment.

In everyday communication, people do not usually reflect on the meanings or definitions of the words they use to produce utterances. On a moment to moment basis, people use language naturally as a resource that has been gradually adopted over time, from many instances of situated interaction in activities of languaging. People are familiar with the possible ways words can *mean* in the sense that they know how to use them in and across situations and contexts, although they may not be conscious of this knowledge.

This thesis adopts the dialogical view of language and meaning, which recognises that words are not containers of static, lexical meaning. Actual meaning can only ever exist in situated interaction, in which communicative partners collaborate to establish the situated meaning of utterances through joint interpretation. Linell suggests that situated meanings and lexical meanings are in fact entities of different kinds, at different levels of abstraction (Linell, 2009, p. 327). Clearly, words possess abstract qualities which can be utilised in communication to enable production and interpretation of situated meaning. These qualities can be thought of as semantic potentialities, or *meaning potentials*, which are associated with words and that have been abstracted away from previous communicative situations. In dialogical theory, the meaning potential of a word is viewed as a semantic resource which, together with contextual factors, can help prompt situated meaning.

In communication, interlocutors collaborate both in the production of utterances and in the interpretation of situated meaning. However, these processes rarely revolve around interpretation of meaning at the *word level*. Communicative partners do not go about establishing mutually agreed-

upon situated meanings of each individual word used in utterances. When communication flows freely and without interruption, individual words are rarely the focus of a conversation at all. Instead, interlocutors seem to strive for understanding at the *utterance level* and thus focus on moving the conversation on topic along. Communicative partners seem to collaborate with the purpose of achieving sufficient understanding for current purposes, which generally involves establishing sufficient mutual understanding to keep on communicating (Garfinkel, 1967).

Naturally, communication may sometimes run into trouble or even break down, at which point actions need to be taken to repair the communicative problem in order to restore enough mutual understanding so that a sufficient degree of intersubjectivity between interlocutors is maintained. On occasion, particular words or lexicalised expressions – and the interpretation of these words or expressions – are the causes of such communicative problems. When a specific word is identified as the root of a communicative problem, interlocutors may need to turn their attention to this particular word and its associated meaning potential, to collaborate with each other in a process of semantic coordination in which they negotiate their different takes on the meaning potential and/or the situated meaning of the word.

This thesis focuses precisely on such instances in communication, and analyses how communicative partners coordinate with each other following a breach of communication caused by an issue of *word meaning*. In this thesis, the semantic coordination process in focus is called *word meaning negotiation*, defined as

instances in communication where participants explicitly negotiate between themselves their respective takes on the situated meaning of a particular word, and/or the meaning potential of that word.

Word meaning negotiation (WMN) sequences are typically launched when a particular word choice is overtly addressed as problematic in terms of the meaning of that word as used in the present situation. When a sequence starts, the ordinary flow of conversation “on topic” is temporarily sidetracked and the focus is instead shifted to the word itself, its associ-

ated meaning potential, and the interpretation of situated meaning in the current conversational context.

The communicative data used in this study is asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) gathered from three Swedish discussion forums. This form of communication has typically been described as a hybrid between mass and interpersonal communication (Baym, 1996). As new technologies have moved and blurred the boundaries between speech and writing, the forms of writing found in social media tend to be more dynamic and interactive compared to traditional writing forms (Linell, 2005). Although discussion forum communication is written, it is highly interactive, and therefore can be considered conversational (Herring, 2010). In discussion forum communication, instances of WMN regularly surface as a distinct interactional phenomenon. Without the corresponding empirical evidence from spoken communication, it is impossible to assert that the phenomenon occurs more frequently in asynchronous CMC than in spoken communication, but one can speculate that this may be the case, for a number of different reasons.

Given that the communication in discussion forums is asynchronous, participants have more time at their disposal to contemplate and reflect upon words and meanings. They are under no pressure to give up the floor to someone else, or to hand over the turn to another participant at any particular point. Also, since the communication is written and not spoken, the form may become more of an issue than in transient, continuous speech. In addition, participants share very little initial common ground with each other, since most of the discussions in online forums take place between formerly unacquainted participants who need to work out between themselves that they use words in similar ways when referring to people, actions and things in the discussion. Furthermore, since CMC lacks support for many of the non-verbal cues used to perform meta-communicative functions such as grounding and turn-taking in spoken communication, it is likely that more effort needs to be put into verbalising processes of interpretation and understanding in CMC than in spoken communication, where gestures, body-language, positioning, gaze and prosody may be used to perform these meta-communicative functions. Regardless if WMN is more common in asynchronous CMC than in spoken communication, it is a distinct interactional phenomenon in

discussion forum communication, and this serves as the main reason for choosing this kind of interactional data as the empirical basis for the study presented in this thesis.

The study employs a qualitative method for interaction analysis influenced by Conversation Analysis (CA), which focuses on the routines and mechanisms used by discussion participants as resources for semantic coordination in WMN sequences. The general focus is on how participants manage to establish situated meaning by orienting to the underlying organisation of text-in-interaction (asynchronous CMC), by orienting to individual and shared linguistic knowledge, by drawing upon aspects of the conversational context, and by relating to viewpoints about word meaning as expressed by others in previous utterances.

1.1 RATIONALE

Given that meaning can only ever exist in situated interaction, it appears relevant to study naturally-occurring interaction to find out exactly how interlocutors coordinate with each other in the process of establishing situated meaning. Since language is used in and across contexts, it is likely to be affected by the different conditions in which it is used. Within the minds of the language users, there is an ongoing interplay between semantic potentialities and aspects of contexts, which determines the specific situated interpretations (Norén & Linell, 2007). As researchers, we cannot put ourselves in the minds of other people, but what we can do is to study linguistic interaction where this interplay is revealed in the interaction itself. To find out how interlocutors in communication perceive that words can *mean* in interaction, we can study instances in communication where interlocutors more or less explicitly present their respective takes on relevant aspects of meaning potential associated with certain words and how these interact with relevant aspects of the situation under discussion in the establishment of situated meaning.

Knowledge about how human beings coordinate on meanings through processes of word meaning negotiation may also lead to the improvement of dialogue systems. Current dialogue systems restrict their users to using precisely the words and meanings which have been programmed into the systems. Brennan has described this issue as “the vocabulary problem in

spoken dialogue systems” (1996). Implementing support for word meaning negotiation with dialogue systems would allow systems to negotiate, learn and adapt words and meanings to individual users in specific contexts, and thus address the vocabulary problem. This would enable users to coordinate and communicate with dialogue systems more efficiently and with less effort.

1.2 AIM

The aim of the study presented in this thesis is to empirically explore processes of word meaning negotiation, specifically focusing on how situated meaning is established through particular semantic operations which take words (and their associated meaning potentials) and contextual factors as input, and produces situated meaning as output. By closely examining interaction sequences from discussion forum communication where participants explicitly devote their attention to the meanings of particular words, this study intends to shed light on how interlocutors behave when they coordinate semantically in interaction. Thus, this study aims to identify and analyse interaction patterns and practices adopted by interlocutors engaged in word meaning negotiation in discussion forum communication. The thesis also aims to develop a taxonomy of the semantic operations identified as regularly utilised in word meaning negotiation.

1.3 OUTLINE OF THESIS

Chapter 2 outlines the dialogical perspective on language and communication and discusses important differences between key notions such as situated meaning and meaning potentials. An overview of research related to word meaning negotiation is also given, which discusses findings from earlier research on semantic and lexical coordination within the fields of first and second language acquisition, linguistics and pragmatics, Conversation Analysis and philosophy of language.

Chapter 3 describes the methods used for identifying and analysing sequences of word meaning negotiation, for delimiting the phenomenon itself and for gathering the sample corpus. The chapter also presents some

characteristics of the sample corpus, and divides the material into two subtypes of word meaning negotiation, namely WMNs originating in non-understanding (NONs) and WMNs originating in disagreement (DINs).

Chapter 4 presents the results of the analysis of the NONs, first by focusing on the sequentiality of the communication and describing typical patterns of turn-taking, and then by focusing on the dialogue acts associated with semantic operations that are used in the word meaning negotiation process to establish situated meaning.

Chapter 5 presents the results of the analysis of the DINs, again by first focusing on the sequentiality of the communication, and then by focusing on the dialogue acts associated with semantic operations that are used in the word meaning negotiation process.

Chapter 6 describes how the various categories of semantic operations are identified and how they are distinguished from each other. The chapter also outlines a preliminary annotation scheme for classifying dialogue acts associated with semantic operations used to negotiate word meaning.

Chapter 7 discusses the general findings of the study and summarises the conclusions which can be drawn about the phenomenon of word meaning negotiation, based on the analyses of the NONs and DINs. The chapter concludes by discussing future directions of research on word meaning negotiation.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND

Simplifying somewhat, there are two main ways of conceptualising what language is. The formalistic approach to language primarily views language as a system or structure, whereas the functionalistic approach instead focuses on interaction and communication in situated contexts (Linell, 1998). In the formalistic view, language is seen as a set of linguistic resources, which include units associated with certain semantic representations that can be used to create utterances of discourse. In this perspective, forming utterances in communication essentially means making use of a pre-existing system of resources (corresponding to Saussure's notion of *la langue*) i.e. utilising the abstract structure and putting the linguistic units to use (corresponding to Saussure's *la parole*) (Saussure, 1964 [1916]). In contrast, the functionalistic approach to language acknowledges discourses, practices and communication as primary, which means that the focus is on language in situated interaction, dependent on naturally-occurring contexts. In practice, however, these two perspectives on language may overlap and complement each other, which means that research on language and communication can draw upon aspects from both approaches.

2.1 THE DIALOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

The dialogical perspective on language and communication aligns itself with the functionalistic approach and focuses precisely on language in linguistic interaction. Linell suggests that the term *linguaging* should be used instead of language use, as the latter term indicates that language exists before its use, whereas the term linguaging puts the activity first and acknowledges that “[...] linguaging in social interaction is the primary phenomenon, and that “languages”, i.e. linguistic “systems” [...] or accumulated linguistic resources [...], emerge from and are abstracted from the experiences of languaging” (Linell, 2012, p. 111). Dialogists acknowledge that individuals are a product of their environment since they are shaped by the previous interactions in (and with) the world. Consequently, in an analysis of language and communication from the dialogical perspective, the emphasis is put on the interactional event itself, rather than on the individual minds and their cognitive abilities (Linell, 2010).

The dialogical perspective on language and communication is greatly inspired by the works of Mikhail Bakhtin, a literary scholar who primarily based his analyses on literary texts. However, in *Speech Genres and other Late Essays*, he concerned himself with language in human dialogue, and this work has become one of the cornerstones in the dialogist perspective on language and communication (Bakhtin, 1986). Here, Bakhtin assigns primacy to the *utterance*, i.e. language used in a particular, situated context. Bakhtin claims that the utterance is more than just words and syntactic units generated from a pre-existing system. The utterance should instead be the focus of attention as the analytical unit. “For speech can exist in reality only in the form of concrete utterances of individual speaking people, speech subjects” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 71).

According to Bakhtin, utterances are dialogically co-produced by participants involved in communication. All utterances hold both responsive and projective relations to other utterances, situations and activities. This means that every single utterance simultaneously relates to previous utterances in past discourses, and is produced in anticipation of contributions that may follow as a response. The dialogicality of utterances alludes to the other-oriented view of communication which is central to dialogi-

cal language theories. All parties in a communicative project are involved in responding to and addressing each other, and therefore co-construct utterances. This clearly opposes the “transfer model of communication” (Linell, 2009, p. 36) where the speaker is assumed to autonomously form an utterance based on specific intentions and then pass this utterance on to the listener whose task it is to passively receive and understand the utterance as it was designed and intended by the speaker. Bakhtin claims that although there is some truth to communication functioning partly in this way (at least on an abstract level), to claim that this is *all* communication involves is “science fiction” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 68). “The fact is that when the listener perceives and understands the meaning (the language meaning) of speech, he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it.” (p. 68). Consequently, Bakhtin sees understanding as an activity, which in turn also influences how a speaker constructs an utterance since he or she expects active responsive understanding from the addressee when speaking. “[The speaker] does not expect passive understanding that, so to speak, only duplicates his own idea into someone else’s mind. Rather, he expects response, agreement, sympathy, objection, execution, and so forth...” (p. 69).

Some scholars suggest that Bakhtin was not dialogical enough in his theories of utterances and their properties. For example, Linell points out that Bakhtin put too much emphasis on the speaker as distinct from the addressee, since Bakhtin claims that it is the speaker who finalises the utterance, which in turn partly is defined by the speaker’s intentions (Linell, 2010). On the other hand, Bakhtin’s theories were not informed by empirical studies of situated interaction as he was active in a time before it was technologically possible to record and analyse talk.

This thesis will adopt a dialogical perspective on language and communication and study how participants engaged in dialogic interaction collaborate to negotiate and establish situated meaning of words. Therefore, this section will continue by developing the dialogical perspective on meaning in language and communication, mainly as presented by Linell but also including Clark’s work on grounding in communication (H. H. Clark, 1996).

2.1.1 THE THEORY OF MEANING POTENTIALS AND SITUATED MEANING

In the dialogical perspective on language and communication, creating situated meaning is seen as a joint project between speakers and addressees who work together to coordinate their actions in a specific communicative context. As mentioned, speaking and listening are not independent activities. Speakers and addressees are not autonomous of each others' actions – rather the opposite – they are always acting in response to the others' actions (H. H. Clark, 1996; Linell, 2009). The contextual aspects of communication are also highlighted, as contexts are always present in a communicative encounter. There is never such a thing as an isolated communicative event. There is always a surrounding context which the participants make use of and orient to in their meaning-making processes. “Explicit expressions do not represent but help prompt situated meanings. We have contexts (and interlocutors) to rely on, and we always do.” (Linell, 2009, p. 224).

Linell points out that speakers do not always have specific or clear intentions when making a contribution to an ongoing communicative project, nor can they determine all possible aspects of interpretations of that contribution made by interlocutors. “Languages are not codes with stable links between expressions and meaning.” (2009, p. 40). Along the same lines, Hanks argues that lexical and sentential meaning remains indeterminate until there is an actual context surrounding the word or sentence. This context includes intersubjective contracts between participants which are negotiated as discourse unfolds (Hanks, 1996, p. 86). Consequently, understanding between participants in conversation does not derive from their common possession of a fixed code, but from their ability to collaborate on working out meanings in contexts (Hanks, 1996).

The dialogical perspective recognises that language units possess a flexible quality of meaning which can be used in and across contexts to create situated meaning. This flexible quality of meaning can be represented by the notion of *meaning potential*, which together with the notion of *semantic potentiality* have become popular within lexical pragmatics during the last decades (Linell, 2009, p. 329). Norén and Linell (2007) suggest that situated meaning is established through an interplay between lexical resources

and aspects of situations which participants in communication make use of and orient to as they communicate with each other. In this interplay, the participants collaborate in establishing local, situated meaning of the words used by activating and negotiating parts of the meaning potentials of these words.

It should be stressed that many lexicalised items in language are not single word forms. Linell uses the term “lexical resources” to denote word-like entities in language (2009, pp. 325-344). This thesis will use a broad definition of the term “word” to include these different kinds of word-like entities, for example lexicalised expressions which are not single word forms.

Norén and Linell define the notion of meaning potential in the following way:

The meaning potential of a lexical item or a grammatical construction is the set of properties which together with contextual factors, including features of the linguistic co-text as well as various situational conditions, make possible all the usages and interpretations of the word or construction that language users find reasonably correct, or plainly reasonable in the actual situations of use. (Norén & Linell, 2007, p. 389)

Over the years, linguists have often distinguished between lexical meanings (in the sense that words have meaning at the level of the language system) and occasional meanings (which correspond to communicatively relevant meanings in situ) in terms of the type-token distinction (Linell, 2009, p. 330). Linell suggests that this distinction should be abandoned, as lexical meanings and situated meanings are entities of different kinds. Meaning potentials are not to be seen as abstracted dictionary meanings, i.e. what a word’s formal definition is according to some external linguistic resource such as a dictionary (Linell, 2009, p. 279). Instead, meaning potentials should be viewed as abstract properties of words that have accumulated over the years through repeated situated use. In this way, meaning potentials are open and dynamic and can change depending on how language users use them in different contexts in longer periods of time.

As meaning potentials can change over time, the situated meaning of an utterance is open to negotiation between participants in communication. When a speaker uses a word in an utterance, the meaning potential of that word is evoked in relation to contextual aspects, such as what the utterance is a response to, how other situated aspects are oriented to, how the utterance is addressed to the interlocutors etc. What counts as a relevant interpretation of an utterance is dialogically determined as the participants communicate with each other, and communicators generally display their current state of understanding in their communicative contributions.

Accordingly, in the theory about meaning potentials, it is assumed that linguistic entities (words, expressions etc.) have semantic potentialities which stem from both the individual's and the language community's interactional experiences in which the linguistic entity has previously been used. According to Allwood (2003), the meaning potential of a word is an unorganised union of all individually and collectively remembered uses of that word. However, Norén and Linell oppose the claim that meaning potentials simply are unorganised sets of past uses, as they point out that neither individuals nor communities can keep all past uses in mind at all times. Therefore, they argue, some abstraction must be involved in acquiring meaning potentials from actual interaction. The meaning potential of a linguistic entity is therefore assumed to have its own structure, which arises from the abstraction over previous uses in past interactions (Norén & Linell, 2006). When linguistic entities are used regularly in the same way, relatively stable aspects of meaning potentials can be abstracted over time. Relatively stable aspects of meaning potentials typically constitute the core aspects, which is the most central part of the structure of a meaning potential. Less conventionalised aspects of meaning potential are at the periphery of the structure, and are thus called peripheral aspects of meaning potentials.

In summary, the difference between meaning potentials and situated meanings is that meaning potentials are semantic properties of linguistic resources, which have been abstracted away from repeated usage in various situations over time, whereas situated meanings are interactionally accomplished in real situations, where meaning potentials are used together with contextual aspects of the situation to establish a local mean-

ing in situ (Linell, 2009, p. 341). Section 2.1.6 will describe in more detail how abstract meaning potentials can be used to establish situated meaning in communication, but the next section will first account for the dialogical theory on understanding (and misunderstanding) in communication.

2.1.2 UNDERSTANDING AND MISUNDERSTANDING

In the dialogical view of language and communication, understanding is always a matter of degree. Understanding between interlocutors in communication is rarely complete, but rather tends to be partial and fragmentary, and is always situated in context-bound interaction (Linell, 1995, p. 184; Rommetveit, 1985). Since understanding is a matter of degree, it can be difficult to distinguish from misunderstanding. Instances of problematic interaction, non-successful communication episodes, comprehension troubles etc. are common even in communication where there *is* enough understanding between interlocutors to carry on with the interaction. Accordingly, in one sense, misunderstanding is part of understanding. They both concern different degrees of intersubjectivity (see Section 2.1.4).

Linell stresses that understanding in communication needs to be sufficiently shared or mutual, although the requirements of what counts as sufficient may vary between actors and across activities. Wittgenstein formulated a similar idea as follows: “Try not to think of understanding as a ‘mental process’. – For that is the expression which confuses you. But ask yourself: in what sort of case, in what kind of circumstances, do we say ‘Now I know how to move on’.” (Wittgenstein, 1953, § 158). Working out what is enough understanding to be able to move on in the communication is a continuous, collaborative process which takes place throughout the course of the communication where interlocutors continually check their mutual understandings. According to Linell, this effort to uphold a certain degree of mutual understanding calls for some degree of meta-level management of interaction and understanding, which can be realised through actions of repair, feedback giving and seeking, meta-communicative comments and negotiation of meaning (Linell, 1995, p. 183). On a similar note, there is psycholinguistic evidence which supports that language comprehension operates on a ‘good enough’ strategy (Ferreira

& Patson, 2007), and that continuously managing and resolving potential sources of misunderstanding is one of the main driving forces in communication (Healey, 2008).

2.1.3 MISCOMMUNICATION

Linell points out that the notion of misunderstanding tends to be attributed exclusively to the addressee, i.e. that the listener fails to understand what the speaker means. Instead, he promotes the use of the term *miscommunication*, which can be used to denote all kinds of mismatches in interactional coordination (Linell, 2009, pp. 227-228). Linell sketches some analytical dimensions of what he calls *miscommunication events* (MEs). He discusses how to diagnose MEs (the diagnosis dimension), how MEs can be spotted in communication (the indications dimension), what can be identified as the core problem of an ME (the objects/matters dimension), the origins of the core problem of the ME (the genesis dimension), how MEs are attended to within the interaction (the treatment/resolution dimension), and how the whole sequential organisation of the ME is formed (the extension and progression dimension) (Linell, 1995, pp. 186-192).

The diagnosis dimension concerns how to detect MEs, which can either be done by the participants who are part of the communication or by an analyst studying the communication after it has taken place. Linell divides MEs into three subcategories, namely *overt MEs* which can be diagnosed by manifest properties of miscommunication in the interactional data, *covert MEs* where there are hints or traces of miscommunication in the interactional data, and *latent MEs* where there are no traces of miscommunication in the interactional data itself (but when it becomes apparent in retrospect that the communication contained misunderstanding or misrepresentation of some sort) (Linell, 1995, p. 187).

The indications dimension includes manifest indicators such as repair (for example clarification requests), meta-comments relating to problems of understanding and negotiation of meaning. They can also include more obscure or vague indicators such as general incoherence or incongruence in dialogue and vocal or non-vocal signs of uncertainty, irritation and awkwardness (Linell, 1995, pp. 187-188).

The objects/matters dimension deals with “the matter at hand”, i.e. discrepancies between the interlocutors about whatever has caused the problem in the ME. According to Linell (1995, p. 188) causes for discrepancies include mishearings, referential difficulties, meaning specifications (i.e. aspects of activated meaning potentials), attitudes, levels of intentionality (seriousness vs joking) and perspectives adopted in interpretation.

The genesis dimension also addresses the roots of the problem in the ME, but does this by looking at the complex interactions between *discourse contributions, events or incidents* and *contextual factors* (Linell, 1995, pp. 188-189). The treatment/resolution dimension is divided into subcategories depending on how the ME is addressed within the communication: non-identified or unrecognised, identified but not dealt with, treated without being resolved or resolved by interactants (Linell, 1995, p. 190).

The extension and progression dimension takes the whole sequential organisation into consideration. The ME can be locally situated within a longer piece of discourse, or it can be global in the sense that it dominates an entire interaction. When the ME is local, it is often possible to find its focus, i.e. identify the core utterances which are crucially involved as a source of the miscommunication. A typical structure of a local, focused ME sequence is described as follows:

- 0 precursors;
- 1 core utterance;
- 2 reaction;
- 3 attempted repair;
- 4 reaction to repair;
- 5 exit

Generally, (0-1) are part of the main line of discourse, while (2-4) involve meta-comments and tend to form a side-sequence within the main interaction. (5) wraps up the side-sequence and resumes the main line of discourse. Normally, (0-1) can only be identified as precursors and core utterances in retrospect as if no one had raised any objections to these utterances, they would not have ended up being looked at as such (Linell, 1995, p. 196). In Section 3.2.1, the notion of miscommunication events (as presented by Linell) will be used when delimiting the phenomenon of

word meaning negotiation and for identifying sequences of word meaning negotiation sequences.

In more recent studies, other scholars within dialogue research have underlined the importance of miscommunication in communication. In studies on interactive alignment, Mills and Healey (2008) show that sequences of other-initiated repair help improve semantic coordination between dialogue partners. They conclude that alignment in dialogue therefore is not simply a product of successful communication, but that more frequent episodes of repair can actually help dialogue partners develop higher levels of semantic coordination (Mills & Healey, 2006).

2.1.4 INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND COMMON GROUND

Understanding between communicative partners generally builds on some kind of mutual foundation about what is shared knowledge between the interlocutors. Intersubjectivity is a concept which is used extensively in several different research disciplines, but with slightly varying meaning. On the broadest level, the concept represents “the variety of possible relations between people’s perspectives.” (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010, p. 19). Linell (2009) describes intersubjectivity as one side of the “other-orientedness” in communication, as the force that strives towards unity and consensus, as opposed to the notion of alterity, which strives towards difference and multiplicity of meanings. He suggests that communication would be impossible without intersubjectivity at some level, as participants need some foundation of common knowledge and assumptions about shared points of departure in communication.

Rommetveit (1974) describes intersubjectivity as temporarily shared social realities, and as the “attunement to the attunement of the other” (Rommetveit, 1992, p. 23). Here, Rommetveit highlights that in order to interpret utterances in a communicative context, there is a need to first identify the knowledge that is shared between participants as this constitutes the foundation on which new meaning in communication can be built. In any interaction, participants need to establish a temporary intersubjective foundation before they can contribute new meaning. This new meaning can in the next step become intersubjectively shared and provide yet another foundation for new meaning to be continually constructed

(Wertsch, 1998, p. 111). In effect, Rommetveit claims that the general conclusion about intersubjectivity is that it “in some sense has to be taken for granted, in order to be achieved” (1974, p. 106). Rommetveit stresses that what is meant by an utterance in a particular situation is determined by the contracts that have been established by participants, concerning which social reality has been agreed at the time of communication. “In order to assess what is made known, we have thus in each particular case to inquire into what at the moment of message transmission is tacitly assumed to be the case.” (Rommetveit, 1974, p. 74). It is only by assuming and accepting parts of the common ground that the communicative contracts between participants are endorsed and intersubjectivity can be reached.

If the notion of intersubjectivity can be said to characterise how people assume shared understandings as basis for communication, the question arises of how intersubjectivity in actual communication is achieved, and how it can be systematically analysed in empirical studies. Gillespie and Cornish (2010) draw attention to the problem that many previous studies analysing intersubjectivity have used the individual speaker as unit of analysis, despite the obvious inherent relational character of the concept itself. In the methodological framework developed in Conversation Analysis (CA), on the other hand, a more dialogical approach is adopted for studying intersubjectivity, since the notion here is treated as a relational phenomenon as the focus of analysis is not individual turns, but how understandings are displayed through interaction *across a sequence of turns* (Schegloff, 1991).

A concept closely associated with intersubjectivity is that of *common ground*, which is described by Clark (1996) as the sum of participants’ mutual knowledge, beliefs and suppositions. The coordination processes which are used to achieve common ground are sometimes referred to as *grounding processes* (H. H. Clark & Schaefer, 1989), where participants contribute to the ongoing discourse by collaborating on constructing their mutual common ground in an orderly fashion as they make progress in the communicative event. Clark and Schaefer assume that a speaker, after producing an utterance, tries to establish a mutual belief in collaboration with the interlocutor that the interlocutor has understood what the speaker meant well enough for current purposes. This is done through systematic procedures in which participants jointly try to meet the grounding

criterion for each utterance, namely that they understand each other well enough for current purposes.

When the grounding criterion is met, the common ground accumulates in an orderly way and the conversation can move on. In trying to meet the grounding criterion, participants must take positive steps in establishing understanding and avoid miscommunication, which can be done by actively seeking evidence for understanding, through acknowledgement, by initiation of a relevant next turn and by continued attention. Clark and Brennan (1991) acknowledge that grounding processes are different depending on the medium used for communication. The cost of collaborative efforts is generally lower in a medium that provides the participants with a rich context. Clark and Brennan list eight media characteristics which facilitate grounding and help keep grounding costs at a minimum: co-presence, visibility, audibility, co-temporality, simultaneity, sequentiality, reviewability, and revisability. The fewer characteristics a medium provides for communication, the higher are the costs of the collaborative grounding efforts. Grounding is hypothesised to be more difficult in a sparse medium, which would imply that grounding processes in text-based computer-mediated communication (studied in this thesis) likely need more collaborative effort than face-to-face communication. However, a study by Vandergriff which compared grounding processes amongst L2 learners in CMC and face-to-face settings found no significant difference between the frequency rates of the various grounding strategies used by the participants in the CMC learning environment and the face-to-face environment (Vandergriff, 2006).

2.1.5 COMMUNICATION ON PARALLEL TRACKS

According to the grounding hypothesis formulated by Clark, communicative partners try to ground what they say at any given point in a spoken conversation, which occurs at all levels of communication, ranging from joint attention, presenting and interpreting acoustic signals, understanding the each other's utterances and carrying out joint projects together. Clark suggests that communication simultaneously takes place on two parallel tracks, where the difference between the tracks is what they are dealing with, with regards to the conversation (H. H. Clark, 1996, pp. 241-249).

Track 1 deals with the “official business” of the conversation, i.e. what the conversation is about. Track 2 handles the management of the conversation, which means that this track is a meta-communicative track, used to create and sustain a successful communication between the interlocutors.

In conversation, communicative partners are *both* carrying out the official business of the conversation, i.e. discussing some particular topic, *and* coordinating with each other with regards to turn-taking and grounding. All of these activities are going on simultaneously, on parallel tracks.

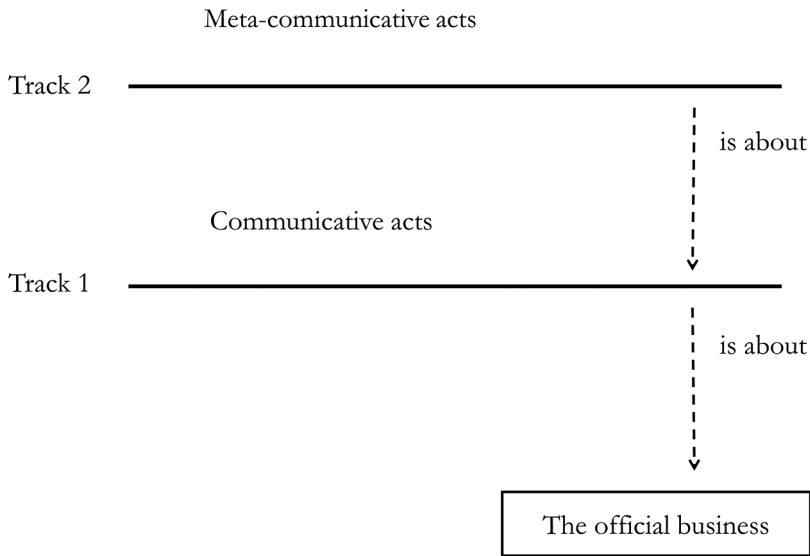


Figure 1: Communicative activities carried out on parallel tracks. The figure is borrowed from Clark (1996, p. 241)

Clark suggests that with every communicative contribution dealing with the official business on Track 1 follows a collateral question on Track 2 prompting the interlocutor for evidence of understanding. In effect, the collateral question on Track 2 is asking “Do you understand what I mean by this?”. Track 2 is thus used for handling signals dealing with management of the communication itself, for example signals providing evidence of understanding. In spoken communication, these signals do not need to be presented in the form of distinct utterances, but can instead be

presented as gestures or marked prosody. In Chapter 3, the parallel tracks model (presented in Figure 1) will be expanded upon to include a meta-linguistic track particularly handling the meaning of linguistic entities used in communication.

2.1.6 APPROACHES TO STUDYING HOW SITUATED WORD MEANING IS ESTABLISHED

So far the assumption has been, according to the dialogical perspective of language and communication, that situated meaning is established in instances of communication in which interlocutors draw upon aspects of meaning potentials and aspects of the conversational context, and that both speaking and understanding are activities in which interlocutors rely on each other and guide each other towards a mutual interpretation of meaning (by processes of grounding). But what, concretely, is it that interlocutors *do* in communication when they co-construct situated meaning by producing and interpreting utterances? This section, and the following sections, will describe findings from studies that have investigated how situated meaning is established in communication, focusing on the word level.

Normally, issues regarding word choice and word meaning are not the main focus of a conversation. In communication, a speaker rarely needs to know if an interlocutor's understanding of a word is the same as his or her own. As a result, in conversation, it is commonly found that when a speaker proposes a perspective by choosing a particular word or expression, the addressee will often follow on, taking up that same perspective (H. H. Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs, 1986; Garrod & Doherty, 1994). This tacit agreement of word meaning has been called lexical entrainment (Bortfeld & Brennan, 1997; Brennan & Clark, 1996; Garrod & Anderson, 1987).¹ In short, lexical entrainment can be seen as a conceptual pact or agreement between partners to view and name an object or action in a particular way (Brennan & Clark, 1996). Aside from repetition or re-use of a word by lexical entrainment, acceptance of word meaning can be signalled through acknowledgement (non-verbal or verbal), by continued attention or by ini-

1 This concept will be developed further in Section 2.2.3.

tiating a relevant next turn (E. V. Clark, 2007; H. H. Clark & Brennan, 1991; H. H. Clark & Schaefer, 1989).

Under such circumstances, when communication relies on tacit assumptions about sharedness of meaning, it may be difficult to study the connection between a particular word's meaning potential and the situated meaning established in concrete instances of interaction, as this connection does not manifest itself in any explicit way. On the other hand, in communication where lexical form or lexical meaning does become an issue, for example in instances of MEs, the connection may become clearer and thus possible to study. In an empirical study of how meaning potentials are utilised in situated communication, Norén and Linell (2007) show how meaning potentials interact with contextual conditions in the establishment of situated meaning in communication. Norén and Linell empirically investigate the word 'ny' (new) in conversational episodes where the situated meaning of this word is problematised by use of the construction 'x-och-x' (x-and-x). By uttering 'ny-och-ny (new-and-new²)' across conversational contexts, interlocutors draw attention to various aspects of meaning potential of the word 'ny', and display how these aspects may or may not be relevant in the concrete situated interaction in which the word 'ny' is uttered. For example, a speaker may first refer to a recently purchased item as 'new', but then modify the utterance by providing an explanation that the item indeed is new to the speaker, but is in fact bought second-hand and therefore is not brand new.

Norén and Linell conclude that there are at least three kinds of interesting phenomena occurring when meaning potentials interact with contextual aspects in construction of situated meaning: a) *aspects of meaning potentials*, b) *contexts interacting with potentials*, i.e. that contextual resources are made locally present by interlocutors' orienting towards them, and c) types of construals, i.e. *operations* in which potentials are applied to the situated contexts. In the study by Norén and Linell, such operations performed by the 'x-and-x' construction include problematisation (relativisation) of aspects of meaning potential, foregrounding of aspects of meaning potential which are perceived as relevant given the particulars of the

2 In English this would roughly correspond to "new, well, it depends on what you mean by new".

discussed situation, backgrounding of aspects of meaning potential which are perceived as less relevant given the conversational context, confirmation of the existence of particular aspects of meaning potential, cancellation (denial) of other aspects of meaning potential, and contrasting of different aspects of meaning potential perceived to be associated with a particular word (Linell, 2009, pp. 337-338; Norén & Linell, 2007).

Accordingly, assuming that intersubjectivity in communication is reached through joint coordination in which language plays an integral part, it seems difficult to study how semantic coordination processes operate when everything is working smoothly in conversation, since communication then seems to rest on tacit assumptions about shared meaning. Perhaps the best way of studying how situated meaning is established in authentic interaction, then, is to study when coordination processes run into difficulties and as a result, repair processes are initiated in order for intersubjectivity to be restored. The inspiration for focusing on misunderstandings and repair when analysing intersubjectivity can be traced back to Garfinkel (1967), who pointed out that the background assumptions that shape the intersubjective foundation for a communicative setting are likely to appear only when they are breached, i.e. when participants fail to assume that they share common ground between them. Studying instances of problematic communication (MEs) may then be viewed as a dialogical approach to analysing coordination of understanding regarding the meanings of words, as the unit of analysis is a dialogical one, focusing on at least two contributions (one utterance where something is assumed by the speaker and another where the assumption is disputed by an interlocutor). From a dialogical perspective, when some part of an utterance is challenged in an utterance that follows, there is a clear resonance from the previous utterance which surfaces in the following one. One point of departure in this thesis is therefore that assumptions about shared understandings of what words can mean (intersubjectivity about word meaning) are more difficult to study than interactional episodes where there are explicit communicative problems revolving around word meaning. Therefore, this study will use conversational data which contain instances of overt MEs concerning issues of word meaning.

To conclude, this section has outlined the dialogical perspective of language and communication, and specifically focused on how the situ-

ated meanings of words can be established in communication through coordination processes between interlocutors. The aim of this thesis is to connect the theoretical notion of meaning potential with the establishment of situated meaning in interaction by exploring how participants in asynchronous, computer-mediated communication negotiate situated meanings of particular words and by doing so construct their mutual common ground about situated word meaning. By focusing on episodes of communication in which word meanings are openly questioned or disputed, the point of departure will be to focus on instances of miscommunication, i.e. instances where there is an explicit lack of intersubjectivity between interlocutors concerning word meaning.

2.2 EARLIER RESEARCH RELATED TO WORD MEANING NEGOTIATION

Similar phenomena to the one investigated in this thesis have previously been studied within several different research disciplines. In this section, an overview of research related to word meaning negotiation will be presented, focusing on research within first language acquisition (Section 2.2.1), research on word meaning negotiation within the field of second language acquisition (Section 2.2.2), research on lexical coordination between interlocutors within the fields of psycholinguistics and pragmatics (Section 2.2.3), research performed within Conversation Analysis concerning how interlocutors engaged in communication generally behave with regards to agreement, disagreement and repair (Section 2.2.4), and research on word meaning negotiation within philosophy of language (Section 2.2.5).

2.2.1 RESEARCH RELATED TO WORD MEANING NEGOTIATION WITHIN FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Studies on how young children learn new words indicate that children develop strategies for acquainting themselves with those words, and working towards incorporating them in their vocabulary (E. V. Clark, 2007). For example, early strategies include immediately repeating the new word, or acknowledging the offer of a new word (by saying 'yeah' or 'uh-huh').

When learning what the new word means, the child must start at the beginning and assign some preliminary notion of meaning to the new word as it is used in interaction. According to Eve Clark, the first step of learning word meaning requires mapping the word onto the intended referent in the interaction. The second step is for the child to make simple inferences about closely related words, which means that the child must relate the new word to other words already familiar to the child, within the same domain. The third step is to identify important characteristics which can distinguish the nearly related words from each other. The fourth step in children's uptake of new words is to add new information about the relations linking a new word to already known words, for example learning relations of subordination between words ("a robin is a kind of bird").

When a child makes mistakes in the process of uptake of new words, corrective feedback can help the child in the learning process (E. V. Clark, 2003).

Example 1

Naomi: mittens

Father: gloves

Naomi: gloves

Father: when they have fingers in them they are called gloves and when the fingers are all put together they are called mittens.

Example 1 comes from Eve Clark (2007, p. 169) and illustrates how corrective feedback is one way for dialogue partners to coordinate in dialogue at the word level when they do not initially have a shared take on word meaning. In recent dialogue research, attempts have been made to formalise such processes of semantic coordination by representing various dialogue moves used alongside corrective feedback when interlocutors coordinate with each other in interaction. Larsson and Cooper (2009) identify several mechanisms for semantic coordination in dialogue, for example corrective feedback, clarification requests, explicit corrections, meaning accommodation and explicit negotiation of meaning.

2.2.2 RESEARCH RELATED TO WORD MEANING NEGOTIATION WITHIN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

As discussed earlier in this chapter, when miscommunication occurs participants in conversation use different kinds of repair strategies for signalling the problem, and working around it. Studies within second language acquisition research have identified that when such breakdowns in communication originate in insufficient understanding concerning a particular word, they are often followed by a sequence negotiating the meaning of that problematic word. Such instances of non-understanding are described by Varonis and Gass as “those exchanges in which there is some overt indication that understanding between participants has not been complete” (Varonis & Gass, 1985, p. 73). These instances of miscommunication originating in non-understanding often occur when native speakers and non-native speakers communicate, as the native speaker is typically more skilled than the non-native speaker, and is likely to use words which are unfamiliar to the non-native speaker.

The interactionist theory of language acquisition suggests that the conditions for language learning are enhanced by allowing learners to negotiate meaning of words and expressions (Long, 1991, 1996; Long & Robinson, 1998). Within research on second language acquisition, communication breakdowns like the one described above are therefore viewed as valuable learning opportunities as they are often followed by processes of meaning negotiation in which interactional modifications are made and input is made more comprehensible, which in turn facilitates language acquisition (Gass, 2003; Pica, 1994; Wang, 2006).

It has been shown that in breakdowns of communication, such as instances of non-understanding of words, participants shift their focal attention to the words used in the communicative event. Long has defined this phenomenon as *focus on form* (Long, 1996), since the focus is shifted from making conversational progress to negotiating the form of lexical entities which make up the conversation itself. In the repair negotiation that follows such a break of communication, the utterance that is perceived by at least one of the interlocutors as problematic gets clarified through collaboration and negotiation between the participants. Such repair negotiations generally contain at least two significant parts: a trigger that sets

off the communication problem and a signal indicating the problem. As Gass (1997, p. 107) puts it: "Negotiation here refers to communication in which participants' attention is focused on resolving a communication problem as opposed to communication in which there is a free-flowing exchange of information." As a consequence of the interactional partners collaborating to resolve problems they are having in understanding each other, language acquisition is facilitated as focus on form connects input, internal learner capacities, selective attention, and output in productive ways (Long, 1996).

Varonis and Gass have developed a model for spoken interaction in language acquisition settings (originally between non-native speakers) which moves horizontally as each turn is made without disruption, which is regarded as the norm when native speakers converse. When the interlocutors share a common language background, the turn-taking sequence is likely to proceed smoothly (Varonis & Gass, 1985, p. 72). In this model, instances of non-understanding are treated as vertical divergences which are solved through vertical levels of negotiation before the conversation moves back into the original horizontal movement when the communication problem is solved. Accordingly, the interruptions to the conversational flow are viewed as vertical sequences in an ongoing horizontal progression, or as specific side-sequences that involve the negotiation of meaning which is central to the success of the overall conversation.

The model developed by Varonis and Gass consists of four parts. The *trigger* is an utterance, or part of an utterance, which is recognised in retrospect as problematic and later results in some indication of non-understanding. The *indicator* follows the trigger, and draws attention to the issue of non-understanding in a number of different ways. In previous research (Pitzl, 2005; Vasseur, Broeder, & Roberts, 1996) indicators have been categorised along a continuum depending how explicit they are, ranging from explicit meta-comments asking for explanations or definitions to implicit symptomatic indicators which are displayed by a general lack of uptake, silences and bodily gestures. In between the explicit and implicit ends of the continuum lie semi-explicit indicators, such as repeating a part of the problematic utterance. Another kind of semi-explicit indicators are so called minimal queries, for example "what?" or "eh?". This kind of semi-explicit indicators are sometimes referred to as "open class repair initia-

tors” since they do not specifically locate the source of the communicative problem (Drew, 1997). The next component is the *response* to the indicator, which in spoken communication can contain strategies such as repetition, expansion and paraphrasing. In instances of non-understanding, it is the response component which is expected to clear up the state of insufficient understanding and thus elaborate on word meaning. Finally, there may be a *reaction* to the response, which is an optional component used to tie up the side-sequence of negotiation of meaning and correction of non-understanding, before returning to the main conversation. An example illustrating the T-I-R-(RR) model is presented in Table 1, taken from Yanguas (2010, p. 78).

Table 1: Sequence illustrating the T-I-R-(RR) model of repair of non-understanding

P1	I have a whistle, 5 dollars...	TRIGGER
P2	A whistle?	INDICATOR
P1	It's to make noise with your mouth when you need help... do you know?	RESPONSE
P2	Oh yeah, it's good.	REACTION TO RESPONSE

Research within second language acquisition is generally performed on conversational data elicited from experimental settings, in which the interlocutors are put in a learning situation with the purpose of learning a language. Often, one of the participants is more skillful in the target language than the other, as the experiments tend to be set up as asymmetrical conversations between one native speaker and one non-native speaker. It is therefore uncertain if word meaning negotiation in natural conversations will follow the same pattern as the one identified within second language acquisition research (trigger, indicator, response, reaction). As research within Conversation Analysis has shown, there are other patterns of repair and correction when misunderstanding and other forms of miscommunication occur. These studies will be discussed in Section 2.2.4. The next section will describe studies related to word meaning negotiation within the fields of psycholinguistics and pragmatics.

2.2.3 RESEARCH ON LEXICAL COORDINATION WITHIN PSYCHOLINGUISTICS AND PRAGMATICS

Communication involves convergence of behaviour between interlocutors on many different levels, both linguistic and non-linguistic levels. Pickering and Garrod refer to this general convergence mechanism as *alignment*, but use the term to refer to interlocutors' mental representations, and not their actual behaviour (Pickering & Garrod, 2004). At the lexical level, interlocutors tend to repeatedly refer to particular objects in conversation by reusing the same terms. This indicates that a kind of lexical coordination emerges as the conversation makes progress. Garrod and Anderson (1987) call this phenomenon *lexical entrainment*.

Lexical alignment is a concept very similar to lexical entrainment, and many times the concepts are used interchangeably. Both concepts are used to describe the fact that interlocutors tend to converge on a joint vocabulary when communicating, but the two concepts are associated with different models explaining why the lexical convergence occurs. Lexical alignment, as used by Pickering and Garrod (2004), is explained by automatic priming mechanisms influencing interlocutors' mental representations, whereas lexical entrainment typically is used to refer to the observable behaviour of the interlocutors. Costa, Pickering and Sorace comment on the difference between lexical alignment and lexical entrainment: "Importantly, alignment refers to the underlying representations that give rise to behaviour. In fact, alignment can occur without entrainment, as for example when a speaker refers to a couch as *the sofa* and the addressee would tend to respond with the same term but never has the chance." (Costa, Pickering, & Sorace, 2008, p. 531). This thesis focuses on the manifest interactional behaviour of communication partners, and therefore the term lexical entrainment will be used to refer to convergence on the lexical level.

Brennan and Clark (1996) discuss four different factors which they suggest can influence how and why lexical entrainment occurs: *recency*, *frequency*, *partner-specificity* and *provisionality*. In a set of experiments, partners were coupled up in pairs and given the task of matching cards from two identical decks without seeing each other and without seeing the other person's cards. One person was assigned the role of the *director*, who had

to explain each card to the other person, the *matcher*, who had to try to figure out which card was being described and match it. The experiment was conducted in three rounds, and the different pairs performed a different amount of repetitions in each round. In the first round, two decks of cards with only one shoe in each deck were used. In the second round, the decks were switched, and instead two identical decks picturing three different shoes were used (one shoe being the same as in the first round). In the second round of the experiment, the interlocutors could not use the generic term “the shoe” when referring to the original shoe from round 1. Instead, they had to agree on a more specific term to refer to the shoe, for example “the loafer” (the other shoes being one high-heeled shoe and one sneaker). In the third round of the experiment, the original card decks from round one were re-used, which means that the interlocutors could go back to using the more generic term “the shoe” when referring to the loafer. However, it was shown that interlocutors very often retained their term from the middle round of the experiment when referring to the loafer, and this correlation was stronger amongst pairs who had performed more sets of the middle round, which suggest that a kind of partner-specific conceptualisation emerged when interlocutors had to abandon the more generic term and instead come to agree on how to refer to the object in a new way.

From the experiments, Brennan and Clark conclude that ahistorical models of explanation do not hold when trying to account for why interlocutors entrain on certain terms when engaged in conversation. In the experiments, interlocutors were often more informative than they needed to be, which indicates that they were influenced by something in the conversational history when making and converging on word choices. Brennan and Clark suggest that there is a need to make use of historical explanations for lexical entrainment, since factors in the conversational history can explain why participants are over-informative when referring to certain objects in conversation. They conclude that interlocutors form partner-specific *conceptual pacts* when conversing with each other. A conceptual pact is a temporary agreement about how the interlocutors should conceptualise and refer to a particular object. Conceptual pacts are established gradually as the conversation makes progress. Initially, participants will use markers of provisionality when suggesting a new conceptualisation,

for example by use of hedges (“sort of”, “kind of”, “like” or by use of suffix such as -ish or -y). Further along in the conversation, these hedges disappear as the precedent is set and the conceptual pact is in place. Referring expressions then become shorter and more efficient. Brennan and Clark show that conceptual pacts are established jointly, with both the speaker and the addressee being active. In this way, the conceptual pacts are equally accessible to both speakers and addressees.

A later study by Metzging and Brennan (2003) also shows a clear speaker-specific effect when studying how interlocutors interpret referring expressions, which supports the idea that partner-specific conceptual pacts are established when interlocutors need to repeatedly refer to particular entities in conversation. Metzging and Brennan set up an experiment in which people interacted with a confederate speaker while using eye tracking equipment, and they could see that the interlocutors entrained on shared perspectives as they repeatedly referred to certain objects (for example “the shiny cylinder”). Half-way through the experiment, the confederate speaker left the room, and after a little while either a new confederate speaker entered, or the same one returned. The experiment tested what happened when either the new or original confederate speaker used either a new or old term to refer to the discussed object. The study shows that when the original (entrained) term is used, either by the new confederate speaker or the original speaker, addressees are equally quick to identify the discussed object. However, when a new expression is used to refer to the object (“the silver pipe”), there is partner-specific interference. Addressees are slower to pick out the discussed object when the *original* confederate speaker uses the *new* term, than when the new speaker uses it. This suggests that the addressees are expecting the original speaker to behave in a certain way, i.e. to maintain the conceptual pact already established. Instead, when the conceptual pact is broken between the original speaker and the addressee, it takes longer to identify the discussed object than when the exact same term is used in the same setting but by a new speaker with whom there is no such conceptual pact in place.

All of the studies discussed in this section have in common that they point to a strong tendency towards adaptation between speaker and addressee when coordinating on the lexical level in the referring process. In this kind of partner-specific adaptation, it appears as the interlocutors

make use of their common ground. They seem to design their utterances depending on who the recipient is, and take the addressee's knowledge and beliefs into account when producing an utterance using a referring expression, to keep track of whether or not a conceptual pact is established with a certain addressee.

Related studies have also shown that speakers take their addressee's knowledge and beliefs into consideration when producing utterances. Clark and Schaefer (1987) show that speakers adjust their utterances depending on if only the addressee can hear the utterance, or if they are also being overheard by bystanders in the conversation. Wilkes-Gibbs and Clark (1992) show that participants in conversation develop and keep track of beliefs about shared information between certain interlocutors. In a series of experiments, a director and a matcher tried to coordinate on referring to tangram figures, and as the conversations progressed, referring expressions became shorter and more efficient. This effect was also seen when the matcher was switched to another person who had been observing the previous conversations as a side-participant in earlier rounds. When the side-participant was assigned the matcher role, the director continuously kept using the shorter and more efficient expressions, which indicates that the director assumed that the new matcher would understand the referring expressions that had been established as precedents with the old matcher. The effect was much weaker if the side-participant had not been present in the same room when the earlier rounds were carried out, but had been observing on a screen from another room (which the director knew about).

However, there are other studies on lexical entrainment that suggest that the partner-specific effect is weaker than indicated by the results of the studies presented above. These studies generally explain lexical entrainment as a non-adaptive activity that results from ordinary word accessibility in memory, which are not tied to any specific addressee. As discussed above, Pickering and Garrod (2004) propose that linguistic representations employed by language users in dialogue become aligned at many different levels simultaneously (phonological, syntactic, semantic, lexical etc.). They suggest that the interactive alignment process is automatic and depends on priming mechanisms that enable interlocutors to align situation models (which roughly correspond to multi-dimensional

representations of the situation under discussion). According to Pickering and Garrod, coordination occurs naturally and spontaneously due to priming, without any additional processing costs and without any modelling of the interlocutor's knowledge or beliefs.

From the studies on lexical entrainment, the consensus seems to be that interlocutors do converge on the lexical level when making repeated references to the same entities in conversation. There are different explanations of why the lexical convergence occurs. Some studies stress that the interlocutors adapt to each other because they make use of the common ground that they have between them, and that they form partner-specific pacts with particular addressees. Other studies suggest that partner-specificity is not the strongest explanation factor, but that the convergence is a result of general interactive alignment processes, due to priming mechanisms on many different linguistic levels. Some studies suggest that it is availability of certain words which explains the phenomenon of lexical entrainment, not adaptation to particular addressees. Regardless of which explanation is the most accurate one, numerous studies have independently shown that lexical entrainment does occur in conversation, as interlocutors who repeatedly make reference to the same object tend to use the same term as the conversation progresses. However, it may be relevant to point out that most of the studies on lexical entrainment have been carried out in experimental settings, using elicited conversational data gathered from very specialised tasks. Consequently, patterns of lexical and semantic coordination may be different under these circumstances, compared to coordination of word meaning in spontaneous, naturally-occurring conversations.³

2.2.4 RESEARCH RELATED TO WORD MEANING NEGOTIATION WITHIN CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

CA researchers have not specifically addressed the question of how participants in conversation converge or diverge on word choices, but related phenomena such as general disagreement in conversation and repair of

3 A recent corpus study indicate that interlocutors in fact diverge syntactically in naturally-occurring conversation (Healey, Purver, & Howes, 2014).

different forms of miscommunication have been investigated extensively within CA. These findings will be presented below, but first two central concepts in CA need to be explained, namely adjacency pairs and preference organisation.

ADJACENCY PAIRS AND PREFERENCE ORGANISATION

One of the most salient features of ordinary conversation is that certain types of utterances typically appear in pairs, so called adjacency pairs. Questions and answers, greetings and return-greetings and invitations and responses are examples of such ordered pairs of utterances, which consist of a first pair part and a second pair part. These sequences are called adjacency pairs because they are expected to be produced next to each other, but there is no absolute requirement for the two parts to be strictly adjacent in all cases (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008, p. 43). CA studies have shown that some adjacency pairs display *preference organisation*, with regards to what is expected of the second part of the pair. The notion of preference describes how alternative, but not equivalent, courses of action are available to participants in a conversational setting (Sacks, 1973). The main idea behind the notion of preference is that participants orient to various implicit principles of conversation which play a part in how participants select and interpret expressions and how they produce and interpret initiating and responding actions (Pomerantz & Heritage, 2013). The preferred action can be characterised as the unmarked, expected or “default” action. For example, following an invitation first part pair, the acceptance or declination is conditionally relevant to follow as the second part of the pair, but these alternatives do not seem to be equivalent. On the contrary, there are differences in preference organisation, where accepting the invitation constitutes the preferred action and declining it constitutes the dispreferred action. This conclusion has been drawn since participants who decline an invitation behave in a very different way compared to participants who accept an invitation. For example, they use delay markers and also adopt different mitigating strategies to diminish the negative impact of the declination. Preferred actions are typically performed simply and uncomplicatedly without delay, whereas dispreferred actions normally tend to be delayed, qualified and accounted for (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008).

REPAIR

Although little CA research has focused on the specific phenomenon of word meaning negotiation, where participants in communication oppose or remark on the word choices of other participants, there have been many studies focusing on how participants deal with general issues of miscommunication. The notion of *repair* refers to the practice of interrupting the ongoing sequence of talk to deal with potential problems in speaking, hearing or understanding (Kitzinger, 2013). Repair is used so that “the interaction does not freeze in its place when trouble arises, so that intersubjectivity is maintained or restored” (Schegloff, 2007, p. xiv). Repair can thus characterise all kinds of problems ranging from failure to hear or be heard, use of a wrong word or failure to come up with the intended word at a particular moment, to more general problems of understanding (Kitzinger, 2013). CA studies have shown that the practice of repair in spoken communication seems to orient towards a preference organisation in which self-initiated repair is the preferred alternative, which means that the speaker who causes the initial trouble also acknowledges this and self-corrects by producing a repair solution. In other cases, it is a participant other than the speaker who initiates the repair, which is called other-initiated repair. This form of repair is more prone to threatening the speaker’s positive face since the participant initiating other-repair openly indicates that the speaker is responsible for some kind of communication trouble which may indicate interpersonal disalignment between participants (Robinson, 2006). A recent quantitative corpus study of repair patterns has confirmed the CA findings regarding the preference for self-initiated repair over other-initiated repair (Colman & Healey, 2011).

Schegloff et al. (1977) suggest that techniques for other-initiated repair essentially are techniques for locating the trouble source. When interlocutors initiate repair on behalf of a communicative partner, they can choose a repair initiation form which specifically locates the trouble source by pointing to the repairable item, or they can choose a repair initiation form which addresses the whole prior turn as problematic (Drew, 1997). Schegloff points out that other-initiated repair can sometimes be used for other issues than repairing instances of miscommunication, for example to offer a pre-disagreement or a pre-rejection to something said in a

previous turn. In this way, other-initiated repair sequences can be used in the same way as delays, hedges and accounts to indicate disagreement with a prior speaker's assessment, and they also offer the speaker a chance of modifying the utterance facing the possible rejection or disagreement before the open disagreement is a known fact (Schegloff, 2007, pp. 102-103). On a similar note, Egbert points out that other-initiated repair is sometimes used not to address issues of miscommunication, but to build alliances between participants (Egbert, 2004). Egbert's study on repair in multi-party conversation shows a general tendency for more than one participant to initiate repair directed at the same speaker and the same trouble-source. Egbert concludes that such (seemingly redundant) repair actions are taken to display affiliation with the participant who first initiated the repair (Egbert, 1997). By adopting this practice, participants in multi-party conversation can orient themselves towards each other and build affiliations between each other and by doing so they also form a more dyadic pattern of communication.

DISAGREEMENT

In ordinary spoken conversation, there seems to be a general *preference for agreement* between interlocutors, which means that participants generally collaborate to maintain a successful communication rather than ending up in disalignment or dispute. Generally, if disagreement does occur, it is weakened by various mitigating strategies which pushes the disagreeing component back into the utterance (Sacks, 1987). In Sacks' words:

There is an apparent interaction between the preference for contiguity and the preference for agreement, such that, if an agreeing answer occurs, it pretty damn well occurs contiguously, whereas if a disagreeing answer occurs, it may well be pushed deep into the turns that it occupies. (Sacks, 1987, p. 58).

If the preference for agreement principle generally holds in conversation, it is probably reasonable to assume that it also has an effect on the lexical level. Quibbling about the word choices of other interlocutors for no apparent reason breaks the preference for agreement as it signals interper-

sonal disalignment (Robinson, 2006). Agreement on the lexical level may occur as an effect of lexical entrainment (see Section 2.2.3). The assumption would then be that a word choice made by a speaker will influence the addressee so that the addressee will continue using the same word when referring to the entity being talked about, unless it is motivated by some *other* principle to use an alternative word instead. This could for example occur when an interlocutor wants to make a contrast between two lexical expressions, which Eve Clark has formulated as *the principle of contrast* (E. V. Clark, 1993) and which Van der Wege (2009) has labelled *lexical differentiation*. Even words that mean nearly the same thing bear somewhat different connotations, and choosing a different word to describe the same entity as the previous speaker may then portray a dissimilar version of the situation being talked about, which in itself can cause disagreement. Apart from the circumstances in which participants opt to make a contrast by substituting one word for another, lexical entrainment may be expected and explained by the general orientation towards the preference for agreement in conversation, i.e. that participants adopt the same word choice as the previous speaker instead of opening up for potential disagreement on the lexical level.

Although the norm for ordinary, spoken conversation seems to follow a general preference for agreement, some CA studies have indicated that the preference organisation changes when interlocutors in fact do happen to disagree and start to argue. Kotthoff (1993) has shown that once a conversation is re-framed as a dispute or an argument, a different preference organisation seems to replace the ordinary preference for agreement which only applies as long as the conversation is not a dispute or an argument. The evidence for this is that the turn format for disagreement changes once a conversation is re-framed as an argument. Instead of being marked with delays, hedges, partial agreements and other mitigating strategies, which is the norm for displaying disagreement in ordinary conversation, disagreement becomes much more explicit once the conversation is re-framed as a dispute. This means that the expected, preferred or unmarked response in a dispute is no longer agreement, but instead *disagreement*. The participants stop orienting themselves towards the expectation of agreement and the change of the participants' expectations is

reflected in the fact that they express their opposing ideas and arguments in an unmodulated, direct manner (Kotthoff, 1993).

Pomerantz (1984) has shown that the general preference for agreement holds when it comes to making consecutive *assessments* about people, activities and events. She demonstrates that two assessments that follow each other are sequentially organised and display a certain preference organisation. Her findings show that in ordinary conversations where one participant offers an initial assessment, he or she simultaneously performs an action such as to give praise or compliment, to complain or insult or to brag or self-deprecate. Following such an assessment, the expected action from the interlocutor is to either agree or to disagree with the accomplished action. By demonstrating how participants orient to preference principles in the different cases, Pomerantz shows that in all but the self-deprecating action, the preferred next action is agreement with the initial assessment. It is reasonable to assume that this may also have an effect on the lexical level. If an addressee is expected to agree with an assessment just made by the speaker, it can perhaps be assumed that making the same word choice as the speaker can be part of the agreement with the original assessment.

In specific settings, however, the preference organisation for assessments has been shown to be different than in ordinary conversation. Studies on American courtroom interaction have revealed that disagreement with an initial assessment or description is common for example during cross-examination when an attorney and a witness typically give different and competing descriptions of events, places and people. Pomerantz (1987) shows that interactants in courtroom settings, by offering contesting descriptions of facts, perform central activities such as correcting misinformation, making arguments, attributing blame to others etc. On a similar note, Drew's research on courtroom interaction also focused on contesting descriptions during cross-examination between an attorney and a witness in a rape trial (Drew, 1992). Drew concluded that the witness often produced an alternative description to that given by the attorney in the previous turn, which means that she avoided adopting the word choices made by the attorney. Instead of openly disagreeing with the description or assessment given by the attorney, the witness produced her own version using somewhat different words which served to replace the version of

events previously offered in the attorney's description. As a consequence, the witness conceded to the description of the general turn of events as portrayed by the attorney, but by selecting different words with slightly varying meaning, she oriented to differences in the accounts perceived as important by her with regards to attribution of blame. For example, when asked if the man who allegedly raped her had not in fact come to "sit with her" early on in the evening, the witness responded that he had "sat at our table", which confirms the event that they had been sitting at the same table, but does not accept that he came to sit with her specifically. In this manner, choosing different words to describe the same event can create a tension between interlocutors in conversation without entering into an open dispute about word choices.

This way of offering an alternative description of events without openly opposing the interlocutor's choice of word corresponds to what Jefferson (1987) calls *embedded corrections*. Jefferson accounts for two ways in which an interlocutor can indicate that a word has been used inappropriately in conversation. One way is to remark on the choice of word without initiating repair, i.e. without stopping the current course of action, simply by making an embedded correction in the next turn, as in the example from Drew (1992) above. When making an embedded correction, the correcting participant simply substitutes words in his or her own next utterance without pointing out that his or her word choice is more suitable than the one preceding it (see Example 2, taken from Jefferson (1987, p. 92)).

Example 2

Customer: Mm, the **wales** are wider apart than that.
Salesman: Okay, let me see if I can find one with
wider **threads**. (Looks through stock.)
How's this?

The other alternative is to make an *exposed correction* by initiating a side-sequence which openly addresses the issue. This way of correcting someone else displays a repair-like character, and also offers possibility for the participant to include an account of why the word is perceived to have been misused in the current context. When an exposed correction is made, whatever has been happening in the conversation up until that point is put

on hold, and the correction in the side sequence has to be attended to by all participants (see Example 3, also taken from Jefferson (1987, p. 87)).

Example 3

Ken: And they told me how I could stick a Thunderbird motor in my Jeep? And I bought a fifty five Thunderbird **motor**.

Roger: Not motor, **engine**.

A study by Deppermann has taken a similar interest into how contrasts are achieved in communication when participants draw upon different lexical resources (Deppermann, 2005). Deppermann suggests that the currently relevant interpretation of a word or expression is affected when the lexical items are contrasted with other words or expressions, since an act of contrasting focuses on certain semantic aspects of lexical items, while other aspects are defocused. In this way, acts of contrasting can establish local opposites in conversation, which in turn can provide the conversation with locally established meanings for the contrasted words. One of Deppermann's examples is taken from a conversation where one participant is complaining about the other participant's child and describes the child as being insolent or cheeky.⁴ The participant whose child it is continues the conversation by saying that all children at one point or another are insolent, a move which gives the word a morally indifferent value. The participant then moves on by contrasting the word with another word, sick ("krank"), saying that she would rather have an insolent child than a sick child, implying that it is normal behaviour for children to sometimes be "bad-mannered". In offering a negative contrast (sick/krank) to the targeted word (insolent/frech) the participant herself establishes a locally positive value for the word insolent, and makes it the preferred alternative compared to its contrast. Deppermann concludes that these corrective contrasts, in which participants remark on the word choices of others, are used to express disaffiliation with the categorisation made by the prior speaker and also to provide an account for the disaffiliating action. In

4 The original conversation is in German, and the word used to describe the child is "frech".

offering an alternative formulation, corrective contrasts both oppose the prior turn and address a perceived problem which has to be solved before the communication can move on. Deppermann suggests that the repair-like and reflexive character of corrective contrasts makes them especially well suited for managing lack of intersubjectivity and other forms of miscommunication.

Obviously, when participants in conversation fail to converge on a joint vocabulary but instead produce alternatives in the manner described by Jefferson and Deppermann, spontaneous lexical entrainment does not occur. On the contrary, on such occasions, the communication opens up for explicit coordination processes regarding word choices and word meanings, which could potentially encompass instances of word meaning negotiation. CA research therefore provides important insights on which to continue building when studying word meaning negotiation in communication. Ludlow makes the same point: “While CA analyses do not always look at the way in which word meanings are modulated (it is more focused on the mechanics of turn-taking), there is plenty of data that can provide us some insights into the process.” (Ludlow, 2014, p. 28).

2.2.5 RESEARCH RELATED TO WORD MEANING NEGOTIATION WITHIN PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

A concept related to word meaning negotiation, which is the focus of this study, is word meaning litigation, a term coined by Ludlow (2014) which represents how interlocutors in conversation make arguments for their particular understanding of the meaning of a particular word. Similar to Linell (2009), Ludlow argues that word meanings are open-ended and dynamic. While Linell depicts meaning potentials as overly rich, Ludlow suggests that word meanings are underdetermined and that we adjust and modulate meanings on a conversation-to-conversation basis.⁵ Ludlow argues that there is no absolute core meaning of a word, only different modulations which apply to different situations. Occasionally in conversa-

5 Note that Ludlow does not acknowledge the distinction between meaning (potential) as an abstract quality of the word and (situated) meaning as an aspect inherently tied to the communicative situation.

tion, one interlocutor's preferred modulation of a word may collide with that of another interlocutor. This may be solved by one interlocutor adapting to the other person's modulation, or by engaging in an open dispute about which modulation of the word should be used in the conversation. In such cases, when an interlocutor openly resists another interlocutor's modulation and instead litigates for his or her own preferred modulation, the conversation turns into what Ludlow calls word meaning litigation. Seemingly, the term 'litigation' signals that there in fact exists one preferred view about what a particular word can mean, or should mean, in a particular context. In this thesis, no such assumptions about preferred modulations of meaning will be made at the outset of the study. Therefore, the term 'negotiation' is chosen instead of 'litigation', to denote all efforts and actions taken by interlocutors to semantically coordinate with each other at the word level.

2.3 COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, scholars from a range of research disciplines have taken an interest in mediated communication. Linguists have studied how language is used and adapted to mediated settings, focusing mainly on language changes that develop through the mediated use of language, such as new language styles and registers. Anthropologists and sociologists have studied how people create and sustain communities on the internet by communicating through written, mediated language. Researchers from the field of media and communication studies have taken an interest in how opportunities for interactivity and communication change as the media landscape has evolved, and scholars from the learning and education fields have studied how written, mediated language can be adapted to web-based education and collaborative learning.

Enriched by studies from many different research fields, studies on computer-mediated communication (CMC) encompass several different foci, some studying languaging in itself, some focusing primarily on other aspects of the mediated activities involved in the communication, but even here language plays an important part as it is the primary means for communication. For this reason, communication through the means of written interactive language is the common denominator for most work in the CMC research field.

2.3.1 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CMC

Typically, CMC has been characterised by how the communication is mediated with regards to the time dimension. CMC is generally divided into synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication. In synchronous modes, the communication takes place in real time, as the participants are online communicating at the same point in time. In asynchronous modes of communication, the participants are usually not communicating in real time, but with significant time lags between turns. Examples of media which enable synchronous CMC are instant messaging or chat clients and interactive, online games. Examples of media which typically enable asynchronous forms of CMC are online discussion forums, e-mail and blogs.

Historically, many attempts have been made to characterise CMC with regards to where it falls on the speech-writing continuum. Clearly, most CMC is text-based, and in that sense written, but language is used in different ways when it is technologically mediated compared to traditional writing, which is why this issue has received a lot of attention within CMC research. Baron (2008) describes CMC in general as a mixed modality, resembling both speech and writing in different ways, depending on which medium is the mediator of the communication. Generally, according to Baron, CMC shares the informality of speech, and also contains mostly first and second person pronouns as well as verbs in the present tense. However, CMC also shares some of the characteristics of traditional writing in using a wider range of vocabulary selection and also more complex syntax than speech (Baron, 2008, p. 48).

Some researchers have argued that synchronous CMC displays many similarities with spoken language, since the interactive exchanges are shorter, more spontaneous, syntactically simpler and less varied in vocabulary range, whereas asynchronous CMC bears more resemblance with traditional writing, where messages are longer, more syntactically complex and also more lexically varied (Cherny, 1999; Danet, 2001; Herring, 1999; Osman & Herring, 2007; Werry, 1996). Herring (2010a) suggests that all instances of interactive, text-based CMC should be viewed as *conversations*, since these forms of communication, regardless of being produced by traditionally written means, share enough traits with spoken conversa-

tions. Herring points out that typographic practices compensate for lack of prosodic features, that discourse is produced in chunks which resemble intonation units, that there are patterns for turn-taking (although quite different from those of spoken conversations), that topics develop via step-wise moves and also that the communication taking place serves many of the same social functions as that of spoken conversation.

2.3.2 INTERACTION MANAGEMENT AND TURN-TAKING IN CMC

Earlier CMC research focusing on interaction management has generally described turn-taking as problematic due to constraints of the mediated communication systems. This section will account for studies which have investigated turn-taking and sequentiality in CMC, starting with studies on synchronous CMC, and then moving on to asynchronous CMC.

TURN-TAKING AND SEQUENTIALITY IN SYNCHRONOUS CMC

Garcia and Jacobs (1999) compares turn-taking activities within two different synchronous chat systems to turn-taking within spoken communication and conclude that the placement of messages in relation to each other differ in CMC compared to spoken conversation, since the participants are not able to control or coordinate the order in which they take turns in the mediated conversation due to lack of feedback from the system about when someone else is typing a message.⁶ Garcia and Jacobs argue that CMC conversations are multidimensional with regards to chronology and not unidimensional as in spoken conversations where utterances are simultaneously available for all participants at one particular point in time. Garcia and Jacobs point out that participants in spoken conversations can take part in utterances in progress, and therefore predict points in the conversation that can serve as potential transition relevance places, which

6 This functionality has since been implemented as a standard feature of many instant messaging and chat systems, making it possible for participants to see when (but not what) someone else is typing. Some systems even allow for participants to take part in messages in progress incrementally, but this is not considered a standard feature of most synchronous CMC systems.

is not possible in CMC as messages in progress are not usually available to participants.

Garcia and Jacobs stress that turn-taking in CMC compared to face to face interactions differ primarily on the basis that participants are not allocating *turns at talk*, but *positions* in a constant flow of messages on the screen, and that the control of the interactional order to a large extent is beyond that of the participants since they may not be aware of the communicative actions of others since it is not made visible to them when someone else is typing. Garcia and Jacobs point out that participants cannot fully influence where their messages will be placed in relation to their intended referents, and as a result, they cannot always rely on the preceding messages as a context to interpret a following message. From this, Garcia and Jacobs conclude that CMC is a different type of communication with regards to turn-taking, although not a “flawed one”. They point out that users who are familiar with this form of communication manage to make order of the seemingly disorganised interactions, and develop strategies for coping with turn-taking and other aspects of interactional management. For example, in their data, participants who had used synchronous CMC environments for two to three months began using address terms and formats to show how messages were related, or splitting up long messages in two parts, to improve the chances of the first part of the message ending up in the intended position in the flow of messages, serving as a place-holder for the message as a whole, the second part following later.

A more recent study by Anderson et al. (2010) concludes that even in a synchronous communication system which allows incremental message transmission, keystroke by keystroke, turn-taking patterns are still systematically different from those found in spoken, face-to-face interactions. This study shows that turn-taking is achieved by systematic use of overlapping sequences, followed by prolonged strategic pauses which enable participants to take a moment and read the messages currently being written and to then continue writing themselves. Here, overlap is treated as the norm, and not as a problem experienced by the participants.

Herring (1999) describes turn-taking and sequential coherence in CMC as violating the “no gap, no overlap” principle of systematic turn alternation, postulated by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974). Herring suggests that these violations of substantial gaps between turns and frequent over-

laps of turns are obstructing coherence in CMC and describes turn-taking as disorderly, since there normally is no exact correspondence between an initiation and a response. Several replies can be aimed at a single initiating message, and at other times an initiation can receive no response at all. Individual messages can also respond to more than one message within a single turn. Herring describes violations of sequential coherence in CMC as a rule, rather than an exception, since turns that constitute an adjacency pair structure frequently are disrupted by intervening, unrelated messages. However, similar to the conclusions drawn by Garcia and Jacobs (1999), Herring acknowledges that participants develop strategies to overcome the shortcomings of the turn-taking systems and to improve interactional management. Ways to achieve this include, for example, indicating cross-turn references by addressivity markers, applying strategies for linking (the practice of explicitly referring the content of the message being responded to) and explicitly quoting text. Örnberg (2009) confirms that turn adjacency often is interrupted in CMC, but underlines that this is not always seen as an obstacle by the participants themselves. The strategies adopted for dealing with the problems of turn adjacency are (for example by replication of sequential structures), in Örnberg's study, sufficient to sort out the potential ambiguity of the interruptions in the turn management processes.

Hancock and Dunham (2001) point out that CMC systems generally do not permit for some of the signals considered important for turn-taking coordination to be present in the same manner occurring in face-to-face situations. Uses of gesturing, gaze, prosody, pitch and pause length are examples of such signals proven important for coordination of turn-taking in speech, which are not easily available in CMC environments. The lack of support of these kinds of non-verbal cues is, according to Hancock and Dunham, part of the explanation to why it is seemingly more difficult to coordinate turn-taking in CMC environments.

TURN-TAKING AND SEQUENTIALITY IN ASYNCHRONOUS CMC

As previously discussed, turn-taking in synchronous communication has generally been characterised as difficult but manageable. Studies on asynchronous CMC have portrayed turn-taking as even more complicated,

even chaotic, mainly due to the fact that participants in asynchronous CMC are not present at the same point in time when trying to take turns at posting messages. Herring (1999) describes interactional coherence in asynchronous environments as fragmented and disjointed as a result of (in her opinion) limitations of the computer messaging systems. Herring describes processes for turn-taking as disrupted and subject to constant breakdown. She views overlapping of exchanges as the main difficulty in asynchronous turn-taking, although it is not clear if she assigns this perceived difficulty to the participants' own experience or to that of the analyst trying to make sense of the resulting patterns of the interactions after the communication has already taken place. Regardless, she depicts the patterns of asynchronous interactions as dense and complex.

Several researchers have drawn attention to some of the constraints of interactional management of turns in asynchronous mediated communication and shown that turns are not only longer in asynchronous CMC but also typically more multifunctional, containing multiple conversational moves in one turn, often addressing multiple other messages simultaneously (Herring, 1999; Kitade, 2006; Lewis, 2005; Marcoccia, 2004; Wanner, 2008). It has also been shown that a discussion which begins as multilateral communication on a particular topic often quite rapidly turns into overlapping dyadic conversations, especially in discussion forums (Lewis, 2005). It also seems as there are structural differences concerning messages which contain some kind of initiating action compared to spoken communication. For example, turns that contain the first part of an adjacency pair, such as a question or a request often go unnoticed or do not receive any responses at all (Herring, 1999).

On the same note, Marcoccia (2004) describes how asynchronous online conversations typically are made up of multiple, parallel threads, which he calls polylogues, and which are characterised by a lack of collective focus and by being very diverse in several coexisting topics. One explanation for why so many of the messages in asynchronous communication end up not being responded to is offered by Örnberg (2003) who hypothesises that asking questions in a mediated environment without directing them to someone, by the use of non-verbal cues such as gesture or gaze, leads to the questions being perceived as vague, which lessens the social pressure to respond. In other words, when questions are not

being overtly directed at someone, it may be less offensive to choose not to respond.

Gibson uses CA as a method for studying the organisation of asynchronous CMC in an educational computer-mediated discussion forum (Gibson, 2009). The focus of Gibson's study is on how some of the concepts central to CA relate to asynchronous CMC, primarily with regards to sequentiality in interaction and turn-taking patterns. Gibson concludes that students in online discussions negotiate turn-taking and arrange their turns displaying a preference to conventional interaction patterns similar to exchanges of spoken communication. However, Gibson notes that because contributions to the discussions are not posted synchronously, participants take turns when they can, i.e. when they are logged on to the discussion forum, which means that the turn placement in the discussion structure may appear random and unsystematic compared to the order of turns in face-to-face interaction. Gibson describes this issue as a hindrance for the analysis of adjacency pairs in asynchronous CMC and points out that:

Answers are readable as such wherever they occur in a sequence of posts; postings in "answer positions" (next turns) that are not answers, are readable as such even though they do occur in answer positions; postings that provide answers to more than one question or that index multiple posts in some way, are readable as such. (Gibson, 2009, p. 5)

Gibson thus suggests that although exchanges are not always arranged chronologically, they still seem to maintain their sense of sequentiality as participants apply specific mechanisms for achieving interactional order. Participants treat exchanges as if they are part of an adjacency pair when suitable, even though turns may not be physically adjacent. For this reason, Gibson stresses that there are at least two types of sequential ordering in asynchronous CMC, namely *constitutive* ordering of individual posts, i.e. chronological order, and *relational* ordering between posts, which captures how exchanges are actually related to each other with regards to adjacency pair structuring and other sequentiality aspects that demonstrate

how exchanges are related content-wise and how they together display the interactional context in which they operate.

Related studies by Maroccia (2004) and Harrison (2008), also using the CA method to study asynchronous CMC, show how conversational management is different when the communication takes place through written, asynchronous exchanges. These studies identify overlapping turns and the unfeasibility of interrupting mid-turn (turn transitions not being possible until the participant hits “send”) as well as disrupted opportunities for response strategies and correction as the most prominent difficulties of the interaction management. Maroccia holds the functionality of the CMC systems responsible for many of the difficulties in making order of the complex conversational structures. For example, he points out how discussion forums typically do not help participants in sorting out the parallel, multiple conversations going on at once by indicating how a message in the sequence is related to previous messages. Instead, messages generally only appear in chronological order, often in one flat flow of communication, which leads to participants often making errors in attempts to make sense of how the messages are related in sequence.

Similarly, Andrews (2010) uses a conversation analytical approach for studying the interactions between blog authors and blog commentators. Focusing on how participants in the communication create and uphold communicational order, regardless of the obstacles put forward by the asynchronicity of the communicative environment. Andrews concludes that participants in asynchronous, written communication follow a different turn-taking pattern all together, compared to participants involved in ordinary spoken conversation. The principle of “current speaker selects next” (Sacks et al., 1974) is turned upside down. Instead, Andrews identifies the principle of “current speaker selects previous” (Andrews, 2010, p. 98). Here, Andrews makes clear that that it is how a message is received, picked up and commented on *after* it has been posted that determines what weight it is assigned in the discussion that follows. “The most important turns in establishing order in a conversation are turns in which other participants ratify or reject the topic by earlier speakers.” (Andrews, 2010, pp. 4-5). On this point, Herring (2010b) agrees with Andrews, and in an article on what it means to hold the floor in technologically-mediated communi-

cation, Herring also points out that the only way to know that one participant's message has held the floor is if later messages reference its content.

Unlike most of the other studies on CMC, Andrews puts very heavy focus on the functionalities and characteristics of the technical environment mediating the communicative activities, instead of primarily focusing on the communicative activities themselves. Andrews stresses that previous studies have not assigned sufficient weight to how the systems actually mediate and transform the communication taking place within them, and goes so far as to say that the CMC systems have completely taken over the responsibility for managing turns (Andrews, 2010, p.83), identifying the systems themselves as participants of the conversation.⁷

It might be tempting to assume that because they allow for conversation between two human beings [...] mediated communications inherently support the same local control of turn-taking, by participants, which is possible in face-to-face conversation. It might also be tempting to assume that, because they all allow for reciprocal communication, all forms of computer mediation -- IM, email, comment threads, etc. -- provide *equal* support for managing turn-taking.

In fact, because of the way computers' processors work, **computers always interfere with turn-taking mechanisms**. Based on the order in which input arrives at the CPU, computers constantly make decisions about which speaker spoke first, even as they present two speakers' input so quickly as to appear (to the human eye) to be simultaneous. As a result, computer management of input decides on the temporal order of turns in the conversation it is mediating. (Andrews, 2010, pp. 84-85).

By this, Andrews illustrates that when two participants are simultaneously responding to an earlier message, instead of making clear that both are responses to the same message, the technical system will always mark one as arriving before the other, which will result in a sequence in which it appears that one of the parallel messages responds to the other, when in

⁷ Emphasis as indicated by bold font is in original.

fact they both respond to the same previous message. To cope with this problem, participants (and analysts observing and analysing this kind of communication) need to pay close attention to the timestamps of each contribution, as these are important contextual factors to consider when making sense of the conversation. Andrews describes this as a “contextual/indexical/deictic competency which takes the place of understanding gaze, proxemics and other cues”. (p. 88).

To summarise this section about turn-taking and sequentiality in CMC, researchers have identified problems in technologically mediated environments which hinder interactional management and turn-taking in synchronous CMC, but they have also shown that at least to some extent, this is not perceived as a problem by the participants communicating, since they develop strategies to overcome the barriers put forth by the technicalities of the CMC environments. As a result, patterns for interactional management and turn-taking in synchronous CMC are different from those found in spoken communication, especially with regards to overlapping sequences. Studies on asynchronous communication have shown that conversations carried out through written, asynchronous discourse generally consist of multiple, parallel threads, simultaneously treating coexisting topics. In addition to the complex message structures, the systems responsible for mediating these forms of communication lack functionality for making relations between messages clear, as messages are always arranged in chronological order and there is no refined support for arranging them in relational order. As an analyst, it is therefore important to reconstruct the interactional coherence of the communication by recreating the relational order in which posts are sequentially related to each other, and not focus on simply trying to make sense of the communication as it is displayed in chronological order.

As a consequence, when analysing the interaction patterns within word meaning negotiation in this study, the focus will be precisely on how participants relate to and build upon the previous utterances of other participants as they contribute to the word meaning negotiation process.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This chapter will first present the methods used in this study for identifying and analysing the WMN sequences, for delimiting the phenomenon and for gathering the sample corpus. Subsequently, the characteristics of the data sample will be described.

3.1 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES FOR STUDYING MEDIATED INTERACTION

Throughout the last few decades, researchers interested in studying CMC have utilised a range of methods, depending on the object of study. This section will describe the most commonly used methods for studying text-based interaction in computer-mediated settings, and will mainly focus on the methods used in this particular study.

3.1.1 VIRTUAL ETHNOGRAPHY

When the objective is to unveil online cultural practices, ethnographic approaches are often used for studying mediated interaction. According to Hine (2000), ethnography entails studying the behaviours and discursive practices of a particular group from the members' own perspective. This means that the researcher must become a participant observer in the group's communicative practices through ongoing online field work. However, in this study, the objective is not to depict the discursive practices of any particular cultural group, and therefore ethnographic methods will not be used in this study. As a consequence, there will be no interaction between the researcher and the participants in the study.

3.1.2 COMPUTER-MEDIATED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Herring (2001, 2004, 2007) promotes a framework of computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) for studying mediated interaction. In the outline of the CMDA framework, Herring's point of departure is that online communication ultimately takes place through written interaction, which therefore becomes the primary unit of analysis. CMDA applies methods from several language-driven disciplines, such as linguistics, communication research and rhetoric (Herring, 2001). CMDA is performed on data consisting of logs of authentic interaction. The focus of the analysis can be on different levels of language and communication, ranging from word-formation processes and lexical choices at the micro-level, to structural patterns of participation and turn-taking at the macro-level.

Herring stresses that CMDA is not theory-driven at its core as it makes no general predictions about the nature of computer-mediated discourse. Instead, the CMDA approach is an inductive one, putting the phenomena of interest in focus, rather than using a deductive theory-driven approach. As a consequence, there is room within CMDA to test diverse theories from different disciplines about communication and discourse, for example from conversation analysis, pragmatics or interactional sociolinguistics. However, there is obviously a basic theoretic foundation on which the framework rests. Herring accounts for three main theoretical assumptions underlying CMDA: that discourse exhibits recurrent patterns, that

discourse involves speaker choices, and that CMD may be shaped by technological features of the CMC environments. The fundamental methodological direction in CMDA is based on language-focused content analysis which can involve both qualitative and quantitative accounts of the observed phenomena.

This study will adopt some of the foundational ideas of the CMDA framework, but the tool-kit itself is limited in a number of ways, which is why it will not be used in this study. For the purpose of this particular study, CMDA is too narrowly focused on content analysis (see also Section 3.1.4) and too top-down driven by hypotheses since it relies on the operationalisation of pre-conceived notions and assumptions about what is supposed to be the specific unit of analysis. Herring herself admits that CMDA may be better suited for analysing and comparing simple and concrete phenomena in CMC, and not as well-suited for analysing complex or abstract phenomena. “[...] content analysis may not be the best approach for analyzing complex, interacting, ambiguous or scalar phenomena, which risk distortion by being forced into artificially discrete categories for purposes of counting. Such phenomena may be more richly revealed by qualitative, interpretive approaches that illuminate through exemplification, argumentation and narration.” (Herring, 2004, p. 362). Given that the phenomenon of word meaning negotiation is complex in a number of ways, and that very little is known about the phenomenon from the outset, CMDA will not be used as a research method in this study. Instead, another data-driven, inductive qualitative method will be used, greatly influenced by Conversation Analysis, which will be described in the next section.

3.1.3 CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

Assuming that meaning can only ever be established in situated interaction, the focus of the research must be a dialogical and action-oriented one, investigating precisely how participants co-construct contributions in negotiations of meaning. As discussed in Section 2.2.4, Conversation Analysis (CA) relies on the assumption that human interaction is a highly organised activity. By closely examining instances of naturally-occurring interaction, CA researchers attempt to reveal how participants manage

to accomplish orderly interaction, particularly focusing on how turns are related to prior turns. CA assumes that turns at talk are not just serially ordered, but also sequentially organised, which means that they relate to each other in a number of relevant ways (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008, p. 41). Consequently, one primary aim in CA research is to reveal the sequential order of communication. In this way, by focusing on how turns orient towards and relate to prior turns, CA research can be characterised as both dialogical and action-oriented, which is a focus that lends itself well to this particular study. In the present study, where the objective is to reveal how participants who engage in negotiation of word meaning collaborate in establishing the situated meaning of particular words, the focus on various sequentiality features of the communication will be carried over from CA research.

CA research is typically based on recordings of spoken, naturally-occurring interactions, and transcriptions of these recordings. In CA, the emphasis is on building collections of instances of a certain interactional phenomenon. These collections are used as basis for identifying similarities in conversational patterns with regards to the particular phenomenon under investigation. Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008, p. 89) describe the CA method as moving through three stages, where the first is to locate a potentially interesting phenomenon in the data by “unmotivated looking” as the main strategy. The second stage includes gathering a number of instances of the phenomenon at hand and then describing one instance of the phenomenon in great detail, focusing mainly on its sequential context, i.e. the turns that surround it. “If patterns can be located in the sequential contexts in which the potential phenomenon occurs in the data, then there begins to be the basis for a robust description.” (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008, p. 90). In the third stage, the data is revisited and examined for other possible instances of the same phenomenon. The analyst then compares the new instances with the description of the first instance, to see if the account holds or if the description needs to be refined. The process continues until a detailed account of a sequential pattern can be fully developed. As a consequence, CA aims to build analytic accounts which are both particularised and generalised, which means that the patterns are found and described in singular instances in particular contexts, but also exhibit traits which are general enough to apply to interactional encoun-

ters across contexts. Hutchby and Wooffitt suggest that “The regularities in talk which we can identify when, as analysts, we locate a phenomenon or device and observe its use in a collection of instances can thus only be described if we build an account that is more general while continuing to pay close attention to the particularities.” (2008, pp. 105-106).

As presented above, the typical CA approach utilises general concepts to analyse particular instances of interaction, with the aim of producing general formulations of various interactional devices or systematics, i.e. routine ways in which participants organise their interactional activities (Ten Have, 2007). But how does the notion of generality relate to this qualitative research method? Within CA, the main aim is not to achieve empirical generalisations in quantitative form, by first producing a representative sample of a particular population, then operationalising specific variables and measuring individual instances in the sample in order to draw general conclusions about the population at large. Ten Have writes: “CA aims to get a *theoretical* grasp of interactions’ underlying ‘rules’ and ‘principles’, [...] ‘*the procedural infrastructure of interaction*’.”⁸ (Ten Have, 2007, p. 148).

Consequently, within CA research, generality is achieved by closely analysing single cases looking for routine ways in which participants regularly behave in interaction and formulating these findings as general rules or principles which participants orient to in their natural interactions. This inductive analytical method does not aim at producing statistically generalisable results, but instead what Yin calls “analytical generalisation” as each individual case is constantly related to the overall theory (Yin, 1984, p. 41). In CA, this form of generality is achieved by moving between the particular and the general, by closely scrutinising individual instances of interaction, formulating identified regularities and patterns as general rules, and continuously testing these rules against other instances of interaction (Ten Have, 2007).

CA studies normally present findings using informal quantification, i.e. by describing particular interactional phenomena as occurring ‘frequently’, ‘ordinarily’, or ‘regularly’ (Schegloff, 1993). In this way, findings from individual instances are given a wider relevance, as an illustration of

8 Emphasis in original.

something which appears typical in some particular sense. Accounting for actual numbers and percentages when presenting findings is not typical for CA research, but in some studies rudimentary forms of quantification have been used to provide frequency counts for various interactional phenomena (Drummond & Hopper, 1993; R. Frankel, 1984; Heritage & Roth, 1995; Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1991; Jefferson, 1989; Lindström, 1994; Schegloff, 1968; West, 1984; Zimmerman & West, 1975).

To sum up, it should be clear that although both conversation analysts and quantitative researchers engage in developing categories and classifying data in terms of those categories, there are some obvious differences. This point is highlighted by Hutchby and Wooffitt, who write:

CA places great emphasis on the close description of empirical examples and often the analysis of a phenomenon will grow from the careful description of one instance, which then, through the process becomes a description capable of covering a whole collection of cases. Conversation analysts use collections in order to reveal systematic patterns in talk-in-interaction across different contexts, but that aim is underpinned by a recognition that while there may be regularities across cases, each case is ultimately unique. (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008, p. 109).

This means that conversation analysts must constantly move between the particularities of the single instance, and the generality of the identified patterns and regularities of the example collection as a whole. As a consequence, conversation analysts refrain from focusing primarily on the coding and counting of instances, as such an approach is in danger of prematurely breaking down a complex interaction into too simple and discrete categories. However, it should also be noted that conversational analysts do not oppose all use of quantification, merely its premature use (Heritage, 1995; Hopper, 1989; Schegloff, 1993).

3.1.4 CONTENT ANALYSIS AND DIALOGUE ACT ANNOTATION

Quantitative methods for characterising and analysing dialogue generally involve identifying and coding various actions, functions or speech acts found in utterances. Content analysis is a method used in the social sciences which deals with the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content in communication. The method involves coding chosen units of analysis (specified characteristics of communication) according to particular coding schemes, and then calculating inter-coder reliability measuring the degree of correspondence between the coders (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). One well-cited model for analysis of online, asynchronous communication is Henri's content analysis model (1992), which was developed for analysis of communication in online learning environments, and was intended to measure how well students perform with regards to participation and cognitive performance in online courses. However, Henri's model has received criticism since it has turned out to be ill-suited for measuring how well students perform in tasks which require collaboration and co-construction of knowledge, for example in in-depth discussions on complex course topics.

Later developments of content analysis models have included the interaction model by Gunawardena et al (1997), which was developed for online interaction analysis with the purpose of understanding the processes of collaborative meaning-making and co-construction of knowledge which takes place in collaborative online learning environments. However, this model has also been criticised, especially for being too difficult to apply as categories used in the coding process tend to overlap which makes it difficult to choose which category to assign to a particular utterance (Flynn & Polin, 2003; Marra, Moore, & Klimczak, 2004). Aside from ambiguity problems of annotation schemes, studies using methods of content analysis have also been criticised for overlooking the surrounding context when the unit of analysis is singular utterances, which can make the analysis of the original communication oversimplified and defragmented (De Wever, Schellens, Valcke, & Van Keer, 2006). Thus, a general challenge for development of models for dialogue act annotation seems to involve resolving ambiguity problems of annotation schemes and choosing a unit of analy-

sis which takes enough context into consideration, so that the context of the communication is not lost in the coding process.

One model for dialogue act annotation which attempts to preserve as much context as possible when annotating utterances according to various categories is the DAMSL (Dialogue Act Markup in Several Layers) annotation scheme (Allen & Core, 1997). For example, the DAMSL model takes into consideration how utterances are related to each other, since it simultaneously codes functions on several layers, for example according to a forward-looking function (coding how a particular utterance influences future utterances in the communication) and backward-looking function (coding how an utterance relates back to previous utterances in the communication chain). The DAMSL model also attempts to address the ambiguity problem by outlining decision trees which can guide the annotators to more reliably code each utterance. The DAMSL model has been tested for reliability with fair results, although the kappa scores for some of the functions were below the recommended value of what is considered reliable (Core & Allen, 1997). The DAMSL model does not specifically include dialogue acts for word meaning negotiation.

Purver's extensive work on clarification requests in naturally-occurring interaction is another example of when empirical dialogue research is combined with dialogue act annotation (Purver, 2004). Purver uses both corpus-based and experimental approaches when studying and categorising the forms and functions of clarification requests in dialogue. The result is a comprehensive taxonomy of types of clarification requests describing their forms and interpretations as well as the conditions and phrase types which trigger them. Similar to the DAMSL model, Purver also outlines an annotation scheme with decision trees which analysts can use when categorising the different forms and readings of clarification requests in dialogue.

3.1.5 METHODS USED IN THIS STUDY

The CA research method described in Section 3.1.3 will be used as the primary research method in this study, although the conversational data does not consist of naturally occurring talk-in-interaction, but rather text-in-interaction. The assumption that talk-in-interaction is systematically

organised and ordered will be transferred onto computer-mediated communication, assuming that this kind of interaction is also systematically organised, although probably in very different ways. The point of departure in this thesis is therefore that the same principles and methods used in CA can be applied to the particular kind of interaction investigated in this study.⁹ The method will involve building a collection of instances of the interactional phenomenon, i.e. sequences of word meaning negotiation, studying each instance in great detail and building a rich description of each instance. The descriptions of each instance are then compared to each other especially focusing on emerging patterns and regularities. Subsequently, the data is re-examined particularly focusing on the identified regularities using these as the primary unit of analysis for a continued description and analysis of the investigated phenomenon.

In this thesis, numbers and percentages are presented when discussing findings, as an illustration of how common these particular findings have proven to be in this study. It is important to stress that this way of presenting frequency counts to convey how common a particular finding is within the example collection should not be interpreted as an attempt to make an empirical generalisation over discussion forum communication as a whole. The possibility of generalising the results from this study beyond the example collection is limited by at least the following factors:

- The method for finding WMN sequences which is described in Section 3.2. Potential generalisations can hold only for WMNs that have been found using the search expressions described in this section, and cannot be assumed to hold for WMNs found in other ways, by using other search expressions.
- The similarity between the interaction in forum discussions (investigated in this thesis) and the type of interaction that one wishes to generalise to.
- The potential effect of Google's ranking system on the search results, since Google's search engine has been used to gather the example collection (see Section 3.2.2).

⁹ Earlier studies using a CA approach to study CMC are discussed in Section 2.3.2.

As a consequence, the presentation of frequency counts in this thesis should only be interpreted as a way to present how common various findings are in relation to each other in this specific study, based on the particular data sample and the particular method for finding examples used in this study. Word meaning negotiation as a whole may likely include additional categories, and the full set of categories may display a different distribution pattern in discussion forum communication as a whole, compared to the findings based on this particular collection of examples. Obviously, this is an interesting issue to continue exploring in future research, where it also would be possible to combine qualitative and quantitative research methods with the aim of testing the identified categories and determining the reliability of the proposed categorisation of dialogue acts using multiple annotators.

In this study, dialogue act annotation (presented in Section 3.1.4) will be used as part of the iterative, ongoing research process, in which the findings of the qualitative analysis of each particular instance of WMN is compared to previous findings of other instances in an attempt to develop categories which can be used to code various semantic operations found to be central in word meaning negotiation. A brief description of the taxonomy of semantic operations is presented in Section 3.4.3 and a more lengthy discussion about the process of developing the annotation scheme used in this study is provided in Chapter 6. However, as discussed above, validation of the proposed annotation scheme of categories lies beyond the scope of this particular study (see Section 7.6).

3.2 DELIMITING THE PHENOMENON AND SELECTING DATA

In this study, the analysis of word meaning negotiation is based on an example collection of the phenomenon of interest, i.e. sequences containing word meaning negotiation. Within CA, data selection is typically performed using a “specimen approach” (Ten Have, 2007) which assumes that any instance of communication containing the phenomenon of interest is equally valid to any other instance. In this study, an example collection containing instances of word meaning negotiation is gathered using particular search expressions which will be described later in this chapter. First, the phenomenon itself needs to be defined and delimited in more detail.

3.2.1 DEFINING WORD MEANING NEGOTIATION

In order to gather an example collection containing instances of WMN sequences, the phenomenon first needs to be defined and delimited from other interactional phenomena. Therefore, this section will propose a definition of word meaning negotiation.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the primary objective of this study is to empirically explore how meaning potentials of words interact with contextual aspects to establish situated meaning in authentic computer-mediated interaction. Meaning potentials have been defined as semantic properties (affordances) tied to or associated with words (see Section 2.1.1). In order for situated meaning to be established, the meaning potentials of words need to be combined with properties of the surrounding conversational context. This occurs in situated interaction, as interlocutors take turns interpreting utterances. Consequently, situated meaning is always a product of an interpretation process, in which the interlocutors assist each other in achieving sufficient mutual understanding to be able to move on with the conversation (Clark & Schaefer, 1987).

In communication, participants do not always explicitly negotiate the meanings of the words used in conversation. If they did, they would make no progress on the topic being discussed. At certain points in conversation, however, participants *do* remark on the word choices of others, which may be an indication of a lack of intersubjectivity between the participants (Linell, 1995), i.e. a sign that is insufficient understanding or disagreement between the participants at that particular point in the conversation. These kinds of issues of miscommunication must be dealt with, in order for the conversation to proceed smoothly.

Sometimes when a participant's word choice is questioned by another participant, the conversation turns into a sequence which unfolds on a meta-linguistic level, where the meanings and uses of that particular word are discussed in more detail. In such sequences, the communication turns from being "on topic" to being "on language". In this study, sequences of this kind are called *word meaning negotiation sequences* (WMN sequences, or WMNs). These sequences are distinguished by participants using language to talk about language, and more precisely the meanings of words. The

focus of the communication in WMN sequences is temporarily changed to the meanings of words or the uses of words given a particular context.

In this study, word meaning negotiation is defined as

instances in communication where participants explicitly negotiate between themselves their respective takes on the situated meaning of a particular word, and/or the meaning potential of that word.

Note that the term ‘negotiate’ is used loosely to characterise all collaborative efforts taken by interlocutors to achieve a shared understanding about the situated meaning of a particular word, including actions such as explaining, problematising, questioning and exemplifying word meaning.

Also note that this thesis adopts a broad definition of the term “word”, which includes different kinds of word-like entities, for example lexicalised expressions which are not single word forms (such as ‘spill the beans’ or ‘kick the bucket’). In addition, lexical entities belonging to the same word family are included in a particular word meaning negotiation sequence. A word family corresponds to the base form of a word together with its inflections and derivatives (Schmitt & Zimmerman, 2002). Consequently, in a negotiation sequence initially focusing on the meaning of the word ‘flirta’ (to flirt), posts that negotiate the meaning of a word within the same word family are also included in the negotiation sequence, for example ‘flirtig’ (flirty) and ‘flirt’ (a flirt).

THE META-LINGUISTIC TRACK IN COMMUNICATION

As explained, there needs to be a meta-linguistic shift which turns the focus of the conversation from being on topic to being on language in order for a conversation to turn into a WMN sequence. In Clark’s model of communication on parallel tracks (see Section 2.1.5), there is a separation between utterances which contribute to the “official business of the communication” (Track 1) and utterances which deal with the communication management, such as turn-taking, grounding and repair (Track 2). Clark’s model is here expanded to include a *meta-linguistic track* as part of the meta-communicative track. The meta-linguistic track is referred to as

Track 2b. All other communication management, not dealing specifically with linguistic issues, is assumed to be carried out on the meta-communicative track, which in the expanded communication model is referred to as Track 2a. In this study, the focus of the meta-linguistic track will specifically be on issues pertaining to word meaning, but it is possible to imagine other linguistic issues to be addressed as part of the meta-linguistic track, for example issues concerning the pronunciation of words or remarks on grammar. In this study, all utterances which contain a contribution on the meta-linguistic track targeting word meaning are considered as being a part of a particular WMN sequence.

Since the communication investigated in this study is asynchronous, computer-mediated communication, utterances tend to be long and highly multi-functional (Hutchby & Tanna, 2008). As a result, individual discussion posts can include *both* a contribution on topic (Track 1), and a contribution on language/word meaning (Track 2b). Also, since many of the signals used in spoken communication for handling turn-taking and signalling evidence of understanding are absent in asynchronous CMC (for example gestures, gaze, facial expressions, backchannel sounds, prosody etc.), it is likely that meta-communicative signals need to be verbalised to a higher degree in CMC than in spoken communication. As a consequence, within a single discussion post, many different things can be going on at the same time, at different levels of communication. By using the adapted version of Clark's model of communication, it is possible to distinguish between various functions performed within a discussion post, separating parts of utterances which deal with "the official business" (the topic of the discussion) from parts of utterances dealing with meta-communication and meta-language.

In the expanded version of Clark's communication model used here, there are thus three tracks. The official business of the communication is still carried out on Track 1 (the task track). In discussion forum communication, "doing the task" of the communication corresponds to engaging in the discussion on topic. In every discussion thread in an online forum, a so called Thread Starter (TS) decides what the thread should be about, which means that the TS selects the topic of the thread and gets the discussion going. Everything pertaining to the discussion on topic is seen as

being part of “doing the task” or “carrying out the official business” of the communication.

Track 2a is the meta-communicative track dealing with communication management. Parts of utterances which comment upon or address turn-taking, grounding and repair issues, but that do not specifically comment upon issues concerning language, belong to Track 2a. The meta-linguistic track particularly addresses issues concerning language and languaging (in this study, specifically, word meaning). Consequently, parts of utterances which comment upon, question or negotiate meanings of particular words belong to the meta-linguistic track (Track 2b). As mentioned, all discussion posts which make a contribution on the meta-linguistic track targeting word meaning are considered as a part of the WMN sequence.

Three examples below will be used to illustrate the difference between sequences which contain posts that deliver meta-linguistic contributions (and therefore constitute WMN sequences), and sequences which do not contain posts that deliver meta-linguistic contributions (and thus do not count as WMN sequences but instead are excluded from this study).

Excerpt 1

- (1) P1: Jag är antisexist, vilket betyder att jag är emot sexism i samhället! Fråga mig vad ni vill!
I am an antisexist, which means that I am against sexism in society. Ask me anything!
- (2) P2: Vad menar du med begreppet "sexism"?
What do you mean by the concept of "sexism"?
- (3) P1: Att människor behandlas olika pga sin könstillhörighet.
That people are treated differently because of their gender.

In the example in Excerpt 1, the situated meaning of the trigger word ‘sexism’ is questioned by P2, which causes a meta-linguistic track shift. In turn 3, P1 responds to the meta-linguistic clarification request and explains the meaning of the trigger word. Since there is a meta-linguistic track shift in the third turn, and this post specifically addresses the clarification request as an issue about word meaning, this sequence counts as a WMN sequence.

Table 2 : Sequence containing a meta-linguistic track shift

Turn (Participant)	Utterance	T1: the task track	T2a: the meta-communicative track	T2b: the meta-linguistic track
1 (P1)	I am an antisexist, which means that I am against sexism in society. Ask me anything!	I am an antisexist, which means that I am against sexism in society. Ask me anything!	What do you mean by the concept of "sexism"?	What do you mean by the concept of "sexism"?
2 (P2)	What do you mean by the concept of "sexism"?		That people are treated differently because of their gender.	That people are treated differently because of their gender.
3 (P1)	That people are treated differently because of their gender.			

The sequence in Excerpt 1 and Table 2 can be contrasted with another example, in which the clarification request in the second turn is not addressed as a meta-linguistic clarification request, and where the sequence thus does not unfold on the meta-linguistic track. Therefore, in the following example in Excerpt 2, there is no meta-linguistic shift (to Track 2b), and as a consequence, the sequence does not constitute a WMN according to the criteria used in this study.

Excerpt 2

- (1) P1: Jag har en liten undran. Om min sambo avskriver sig från vårt lägenhetskontrakt, kommer dom att behöva göra ett nytt "godkännande" för mig eller påverkas inte jag?
I have a small question. If my partner writes himself off from our lease, will they need to "approve" me again or won't I be affected?
- (2) P2: Vad menar du med "avskriva"? Ta kontakt med er hyresvärd.
What do you mean by "write himself off"? Contact your landlord.
- (3) P1: Han och jag ska gå isär. Jo ska göra det imorgon.
We are breaking up. Yes will do that tomorrow.

The clarification request produced by P2 in turn 2 is explicitly targeting the word 'avskriva' (write oneself off) but even though this word is pointed to in the clarification request, P1 does not respond to it by providing meta-linguistic clarification regarding that particular word's meaning. Instead, P1 continues the discussion on topic, by providing more information about the described circumstances. Consequently, there is no meta-linguistic shift in the response attending to the clarification request, and therefore the sequence in Excerpt 2 does not constitute a WMN.

Table 3: Sequence containing no meta-linguistic track shift

Turn (Participant)	Utterance	T1: the task track	T2a: the meta-communicative track	T2b: the meta-linguistic track
1 (P1)	I have a small question. If my partner writes himself off from our lease, will they need to “approve” me again or won’t I be affected.	I have a small question. If my partner writes himself off from our lease, will they need to “approve” me again or won’t I be affected.		
2 (P2)	What do you mean by “write himself off”? Contact your landlord.	Contact your landlord.	What do you mean by “write himself off”?	
3 (P1)	We are breaking up. Yes will do that tomorrow.	Yes will do that tomorrow.	We are breaking up.	

As illustrated in Table 3, there is no contribution on the meta-linguistic track (Track 2b) in this exchange. The clarification request is attended to by P1 in turn 3 by further contextualising the described situation, but not by particularly explaining the meaning of the indicated problematic word. In this case, P1 may have interpreted the clarification request not as indicating an issue of insufficient understanding originating in word meaning, but instead as a general issue of insufficient understanding at the utterance level. As a response to the clarification request, P1 thus provides more contextual information as a way of clearing up the issue of non-understanding. The response is therefore interpreted as a contribution on the meta-communicative track, but there is no contribution on the meta-linguistic track, since the exchange does not specifically focus on the meaning of the word 'avskriva' (write oneself off). It would have been possible for P1 (in turn 3) to respond to the clarification request (in turn 2) by providing a meta-linguistic clarification targeting the meaning of the trigger word. Had this been the case, this contribution would have been considered a part of the meta-linguistic track, and the sequence would have counted as a WMN.

Naturally, there is not always a clear cut boundary between sequences that result in a meta-linguistic shift and sequences that do not make such a shift when addressing the issue of miscommunication. Sometimes, there are borderline cases, and such an example is presented below.

Excerpt 3

- (1) P1: Har du testat nu när hon är lite äldre med riktigt slät mat? Min äldsta tog väldigt lång tid på sig att äta mat med lite konsistens. Yngsta åt plockmat direkt. Barn är olika.

Have you tried now that she is a little older to feed her completely smooth food? It took a very long time before my oldest could eat food with a little texture. My youngest ate finger food immediately. Children are different.

- (2) P2: Vad menar du med slät mat?
What do you mean by smooth food?

- (3) P1: Inga som helst bitar. Burkmat à la 6-månaders eller hemlagat med liknande konsistens. Det är ju inte säkert att det är smaken hon reagerar mot, kan vara konsistensen.
No lumps whatsoever. Similar to canned food for six-month-olds or home-cooked food with a similar texture. It may not be the taste she is reacting to, it could be the texture.
- (4) P2: Jaha, nä det var ett tag sen jag testade sån. Får köpa och testa den i morgon.
Ah, no it has been a while since I tried that kind. Will buy and try tomorrow.

In the example in Excerpt 3, the trigger of the WMN is the expression ‘smooth food’, which is remarked upon in the second post where P2 requests meta-linguistic clarification. P1 is drawing upon aspects of the meaning potential of the word ‘smooth’ both in the first post, and in the response post in the third turn. In the first post, P1 is contrasting the word ‘*smooth* food’ with the expression “food with *a little texture*”. By making a contrast using this latter expression, P1 is drawing attention to an aspect of the meaning potential of the word ‘smooth’ which has to do with something along the lines of “a texture without lumps”. In this situation, the meaning applies to the texture of food, but the aspect of meaning potential being drawn upon can presumably also be applied to other concepts, such as for example surfaces of different kinds.

Table 4: Sequence containing a meta-linguistic shift

Turn (Participant)	Utterance	T1: the task track	T2a: the meta-communicative track	T2b: the meta-linguistic track
1 (P1)	Have you tried now that she is a little older to feed her completely smooth food? It took a very long time before my oldest could eat food with a little texture. My youngest ate finger food immediately. Children are different.	Have you tried now that she is a little older to feed her completely smooth food? It took a very long time before my oldest could eat food with a little texture. My youngest ate finger food immediately. Children are different.		
2 (P2)	What do you mean by smooth food? No lumps whatsoever. Similar to canned food for six-month-olds or home-cooked food with a similar texture. It may not be the taste she is reacting to, it could be the texture.		What do you mean by smooth food? No lumps whatsoever. Similar to canned food for six-month-olds or home-cooked food with a similar texture.	What do you mean by smooth food? No lumps whatsoever. Similar to canned food for six-month-olds or home-cooked food with a similar texture.
3 (P1)	Ah, no it has been a while since I tried that kind. Willbuy and try tomorrow.	no it has been a while since I tried that kind. Willbuy and try tomorrow.	Ah,	Ah,

Note that when the WMN sequence has been launched, by the meta-linguistic shift in the third turn (due to P1's interpretation of the clarification request as an issue concerning word meaning), both the first and second turn are retroactively recognised as being part of the WMN sequence, and contributions to the negotiation made in these posts are therefore also seen as part of the negotiation itself. What is displayed on the meta-linguistic track in Table 4 for turn 1 and 2 is thus retroactively put on Track 2b, once the post in turn 3 has addressed the clarification request in turn 2 as an issue of word meaning.

In the negotiation of 'smooth' in Excerpt 3, it is not as clear as in the WMN of 'sexism' that the sequence is focusing on the meaning of one particular word.¹⁰ In the 'smooth' example, it may be questionable whether the negotiation concerns the compound (non-lexicalised) expression 'smooth food', or if the negotiation can be interpreted as focusing on one specific trigger word ('smooth'). However, since there is mentioning of aspects which appear to be associated with the semantic potentialities of 'smooth', this sequence is interpreted as a WMN sequence, focused around the meaning of this particular word.

To avoid simply relying on the analyst's intuition about whether or not a sequence focuses on the meaning of a particular word, a test is performed on borderline cases, as a way of operationalising the decision process when determining if a meta-linguistic shift occurs or not. When there is uncertainty about whether or not a particular post contains a meta-linguistic contribution focusing on word meaning, the post is compared to lexical entries of the trigger word using various lexical resources to determine if any of the mentioned aspects of meaning potential can be found.¹¹ This is done in order to decide if a participant is drawing upon semantic affordances associated the negotiated word, i.e. if the perceived meaning potential of the word is being highlighted as part of the

10 Again, note that this thesis adopts a broad definition of the term "word", which includes lexicalised expressions that are not single word forms.

11 The lexicon resources used are SAOB (<http://g3.spraakdata.gu.se/saob/>), synonymer.se (<http://www.synonymer.se>), Wordnet (<http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu>), Merriam Webster (<http://www.merriam-webster.com>), dictionary.com (<http://dictionary.reference.com>), and thesaurus.com (<http://www.thesaurus.com>),

response. If there is mention of a semantic property, and that property is associated with the particular word, the lexical entry can confirm that this semantic feature in fact belongs to the word itself, i.e. that it highlights an aspect of word meaning. Obviously, this test is an artificial one and it is not implied that it models how lexical knowledge is stored within humans. However, it can be used to strengthen the claim that a meta-linguistic shift involves responses drawing upon and making use of properties of the lexical resources (meaning potentials) opposed to responses which do not focus particularly on issues of word meaning.

For example, when applying the test onto the example in Excerpt 3, a meta-linguistic shift is detected in the clarification response of ‘smooth’, since the mentioned aspect of meaning potential is found in several of the lexicon resources used:

Slät: ”fri från upphöjningar o. fördjupningar. [...] (i sht mjuk, flytande, halvflytande) massa: finfördelad o. heltigenom homogen (utan klumpar eller inblandade stycken av något)” Svenska akademins ordbok (<http://g3.spraakdata.gu.se/saob/>)¹²

Smooth: “of a liquid mixture : not having any lumps : mixed together so there are no lumps.” Merriam Webster (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/smooth>)

As a comparison, in the example in Excerpt 2, concerning the sequence targeting ‘avskriva’ (writing oneself off), no part of the response to the clarification request touches upon aspects of meaning potential of the word ‘avskriva’. Instead, what is added in the response seems to pertain only to contextual aspects of the discussed situation. When looking up ‘avskriva’ (writing oneself off) in the various lexical resources, there is no entry mentioning ‘breaking up’. By applying the lexicon test, it can be confirmed that the response to the clarification request targeting ‘avskriva’ does not contain a meta-linguistic contribution as no aspect of the word’s meaning potential is being drawn upon. There is only mentioning

12 Approximate translation: Smooth: “free from bumps and ridges. [...] (in soft, liquid or semi-liquid) mass: atomised and completely homogenous (without lumps or mixed in pieces of something)” Swedish Academy Glossary (<http://g3.spraakdata.gu.se/saob/>).

of contextual aspects which are used to (possibly) clear up the problem of understanding at the utterance level.

Even though aspects of meaning potentials and information stored in lexicons are clearly not entities of the same kind, they have in common that they (in different ways) capture semantic affordances associated with words. However, one disadvantage of the test is that it does not cope with possible negotiations of neologisms or words which have novel meanings, or domain/genre specific uses. In this way, the test is limited, but in many cases it still serves its purpose as a somewhat objective method for verifying if a response draws upon semantic properties associated with the negotiated word or not.

As a summary, the criteria for determining whether or not a sequence constitutes a WMN is that there is an utterance indicating a word choice as potentially problematic, and that this utterance subsequently is interpreted as highlighting a need to negotiate the meaning of that particular word on a meta-linguistic level. The response must address the communicative problem as being an issue of *word meaning* and must therefore include a *meta-linguistic shift*. A test comparing mentioned possible aspects of meaning potential with lexical knowledge stored in actual lexicons is performed on borderline cases, when there is uncertainty if a meta-linguistic shift occurs or not.

IDENTIFYING INSTANCES OF WMN

So far, this chapter has concluded that word meaning negotiation is a phenomenon which occurs when interlocutors in communication shift focus the discussed topic to the meaning of a particular word. This section will describe the process of identifying WMN sequences within forum discussions, i.e. determining when a WMN sequence begins and which posts are to be considered as being part of the sequence. In this study, an entire discussion post which contributes to the meta-linguistic negotiation is considered to be part of the WMN even if only a small part of the post is devoted to negotiating the meaning of a particular word.

One way of finding sequences which unfold on the meta-linguistic level (Track 2b) is to identify the initiators that change the focus from being on topic to being on language. Linell suggests that signs to look for

are manifest properties of miscommunication, such as repair initiators (for example clarification requests) and meta-commenting (1995, p.187). Norén and Linell (2006) suggest that specific utterance-initial constructions can function as initiators, for example “vadå X?” (“what do you mean X?”) or simply just repeating the word as a question “X?”. Ludlow also points out that these kinds of constructions are reliable signals for indicating conflicts in meaning, as they often are used as objections to something meta-linguistic, rather than as objections of the truth of a claim just made (Ludlow, 2014).

This study focuses specifically on sequences initiated by a number of utterance-initial constructions which are all Swedish variations of “What/How do you mean (by) X?”, see Table 5.

Table 5: Utterance constructions used in searches to identify potential sequences containing word meaning negotiation¹³

Vadå X?	What do you mean X?
Vad då X?	What do you mean X?
Vaddå X?	What do you mean X?
Vad menar du med X?	What do you mean by X?
Hur menar du med X?	How do you mean (by) X?

In this study, the utterance constructions displayed in Table 5 are presumed to be likely initiators of WMN sequences. However, there are likely other ways of indicating the need to negotiate the meaning of a specific word in a conversational context which do not include using one of the utterance constructions in Table 5. It is a deliberate delimitation in this study to only search for these five utterance constructions, even though there probably are others that can be used to initiate WMN sequences, for example “Det är inte X!” (“That is not X!”) or simply “X?”.¹⁴ Initiators

¹³ The first three utterance-initial constructions are different spelling variations of the same Swedish clarification request, which roughly translates as “What do you mean X?”. A direct translation of ‘vadå X?’ would correspond to ‘what then X?’.

¹⁴ The utterance construction “X?” mentioned by Norén and Linell (2006, 2007) is likely a common initiator of WMNs. However, this construction has been excluded due to difficulties in finding a search method for reliably retrieving sequences launched by this construction.

like the five utterance constructions in Table 5 are called indicators of the WMN sequence, as they constitute ways of indicating a wish to shift focus to discussing word's particular meaning or use in context. As discussed, the indicator constructions pointing to the trouble-source (the word X) have been preceded by that word being used in a previous post. Thus, the word retroactively becomes a trigger of the WMN sequence when a participant in a following post remarks on it by producing an indicator.

The minimum WMN sequence consists of three posts, one using the word in the original context (the trigger post), one questioning the word (the indicator post) and one responding to the indicator, delivering a meta-linguistic contribution to the negotiation. All posts which build on or relate to the negotiation of the trigger word and follow a minimum sequence are also included in the WMN sequence. Sometimes, antecedents of such posts are also included in the sequence. There are two reasons for including antecedents. The first is when the indicator construction is not the first initiator of the WMN sequence. In these cases, the WMN has been launched prior to the particular utterance construction, by another initiator, for example "That is not X!" or "X?". Under such circumstances, the WMN sequence starts at an earlier point, and that point needs to be identified in order to capture the whole sequence. The other reason for including antecedents is when a post within the WMN sequence explicitly refers to a post outside the sequence. In such cases, the post within the WMN is explicitly responding to a post which in itself was not characterised as being part of the WMN (contributing something meta-linguistic to the negotiation), but by drawing upon this previous post in a post which *is* part of the WMN, the antecedent also becomes a resource used in the WMN and thus considered a part of it.

IDENTIFYING A WMN, STEP-BY-STEP

In brief, the process used in this study for finding and delimiting a WMN sequence runs as follows.¹⁵ A search is made of one of the five indicator constructions in Table 5. The searches are directed to three popular online discussion forums. The 100 first hits for each construction on each

¹⁵ A more lengthy description of the process is presented in Section 3.2.2.

forum are systematically examined for spotting possible WMN sequences. Discussion threads dealing with sensitive topics are removed due to ethical reasons (see Section 3.3). For each hit, starting from the identified utterance construction used in the search, it is assessed whether or not this indicator leads to a meta-linguistic negotiation of the meaning of the trigger word. If there is at least one post responding to the “What/How do you mean (by) X?” construction providing a meta-linguistic contribution on Track 2b, a WMN sequence has been identified. Each WMN sequence is then examined in the following way:

1. The post containing the trigger word, i.e. the X word, is identified.
2. The start of the WMN sequence is identified, which means that all of the indicators possibly preceding the identified utterance construction are identified.
3. The entire thread is examined in order to determine which of the posts are to be considered as being part of the WMN sequence. All posts containing the trigger word are carefully examined, as these are the most likely to contain remarks on the meaning of that word. Posts which do in fact contribute something on the meta-linguistic level, i.e. make a contribution concerning the meaning of the trigger word, are included. All posts which do not contain the trigger word are also examined, as these can also include contributions about the meaning of the word without actually repeating the word. For example, the word may have been substituted for the pronoun ‘det’ (it): “Det är när man är attraherad av en person” (“It is when you are attracted to someone”). ‘It’ here refers to the trigger word ‘flirt’.
4. The last post of the WMN sequence is identified. This is basically the last post which contributes something to the meta-linguistic negotiation before the sequence either is wrapped up or simply fizzles out.

The step-by-step identification process described above is inspired by the diagnostic process used to identify instances of miscommunication events (MEs) described by Linell (1995, pp. 185-187) (see Section 2.1.3). In the first step, the trigger corresponds to the core utterance of the ME (1), the

cause of the problem which needs further negotiation or repair. In the second step, the start of the WMN sequence corresponds to the reaction indicating the problem in the ME (2). In the third step above, all of the posts included in the sequence would correspond to attempted repair, ME (3), and reaction to the repair, ME (4). The fourth step above corresponds to ME (5), i.e. exiting the repair sequence using Linell's terms.

3.2.2 GATHERING THE SAMPLE CORPUS

The sample corpus of WMN sequences used in this study is gathered from three large Swedish discussion forums.

Flashback (www.flashback.org) is one of the most popular websites in Sweden, and currently holds place 28 on the Alexa ranking of Swedish web sites.¹⁶ Flashback has over 800 000 members who together compose between 15 000 and 20 000 posts daily in various discussion threads. In total, Flashback has about 2 000 000 unique visitors per week. It has been difficult to get a hold of information about the gender distribution between members, as this information is not available on the site itself. In an e-mail, one of the forum's moderators replies that approximately 90 % of the members in the forum are male, 10 % are female. Flashback's tag line is "Yttrandefrihet på riktigt" (True Freedom of Speech) and the forum is known for its heated discussions and for its members being very outspoken. The topics of the forum are divided into the categories: Computers, Drugs, Family, Culture, Lifestyle, Food, Politics, Travel, Societal Issues, Sex, Sports, Science and Miscellaneous.

Familjeliv (Family Life or Family Living, www.familjeliv.se) is another very popular Swedish website. According to the Alexa ranking, it currently places at number 204 of the most popular Swedish sites. Familjeliv has about 130 000 members who compose approximately 12 000 posts on a daily basis. The forum has about 700 000 unique visitors per week. 78 % of Familjeliv's members are female, 16 % are male, and 6 % of the members do not state their gender. Familjeliv's tag line is "Sveriges största familjesajt" (Sweden's largest family site) which indicates that the focus is on family oriented issues. The forum part of the site is divided into the

¹⁶ www.alexacom/topsites/countries;1/SE visited 2015-05-19.

following categories: General issues, Adoption, Ask the Expert, Parenting, Pregnancy, Sensitive Issues, Members' Groups, Fathers' Groups, Planning Children, Sex and Relationships, Difficulties in Conceiving and Angels (which is the site's word to refer to deceased children).

Passagen Debatt (www.debatt.passagen.se) is another Swedish discussion forum, which has decreased in popularity during the last few years. In the early and mid 2000's, it was one of the most popular discussion sites in Sweden. A few years ago, it still ranked amongst the top 500 Swedish sites according to the Alexa ranking, but at present Passagen Debatt has dropped to number 4 518. The site still has about 200 000 unique visitors per week. Passagen Debatt's tag line is "Vad har du på hjärtat?" (What's on your mind?) and the forum is divided into the following categories: Spiritual Issues, Family, Hobbies, Health, Work, Love, News, Entertainment, Politics, Sex and Science.

The searches used to produce the example collection of WMN sequences were performed using Google's search engine, and were directed toward each of the discussion forum sites presented above. For example, the search of the first utterance construction ("Vadå X?") was performed using Google by the search expression ["vadå" site:flashback.org]. More precise searches could have been carried out if a corpus tool had been used instead of Google's general search engine, but at the time when the sample corpus was gathered, there was no corpus tool available which included interactional data from discussion forums in their dataset. Since then, the Korp tool (www.spraakbanken.gu.se) has been extended to include such data. If the dataset comprising of all of the discussion threads from the three chosen discussion forums had been available as text files, the SCoRE search engine developed by Purver (2001), could have been used instead of Google. Using SCoRE would likely also have improved the searches and made them more precise. For example, it would have been possible to use regular expressions in order to search for repeats of particular words across turn boundaries, which could have captured sequences initiated by the utterance construction "X?". However, since the discussion forum communication data used in this study was not available as a database of text files, the SCoRE search engine could not be used when gathering the sample corpus of WMN sequences. All of the

Google searches were carried out in November 2013 by the author. The results from each of the searches are presented below.

Again, it should be stressed that the way data has been selected in this study is not intended to produce an exhaustive or representative sample of an imagined population of all possible word meaning negotiation sequences. Instead, the search method used to gather the sample corpus is designed to bring together enough examples of the phenomenon of interest to carry out a qualitative analysis of the interaction patterns and practices adopted by participants engaged in word meaning negotiation in discussion forum communication.

VADÅ X?

The expression “Vadå X?” generated 105 000 hits on Familjeliv, 400 000 hits on Flashback and 408 000 hits on Passagen Debatt. The first 100 unique threads from each forum were chosen and manually scrutinised by the author using the guidelines above to see if any of the “Vadå X?” resulted in word meaning negotiations of the word X. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Search results for “Vadå X?”

VADÅ X?	Familjeliv	Flashback	Passagen
CR not addressed	17	13	19
CR addressed without WMN	1	1	0
WMNs included in study	4	1	0
Sensitive WMNs	8	6	2
Other	70	79	79
Total	100	100	100

The top row indicates occurrences where a clarification request targeting a particular word was produced by someone, but where nobody responded to the clarification request. In such cases, the clarification request was simply left unaddressed. There can be a number of different reasons explaining why the construction “Vadå X?” can be left unaddressed, ranging from participants not seeing it (not reading it), deliberately ignoring it, or simply

not interpreting it as something needing specific attention. In either case, the top row of the table displays the number of times the construction “Vadå X?” on the three different forums received no answer at all.

The second row of the table displays the number of times the construction “Vadå X?” received an answer, but was not developed into a WMN. In such cases, the answer to the clarification request contained no meta-linguistic shift, and added nothing to a potential negotiation of the meaning of the trigger word X.

The third row displays the number of times the utterance construction “Vadå X?” resulted in actual WMN sequences, which have been included in the sample corpus used in this study. The fourth row also indicates occurrences of actual WMNs, but these sequences have not been included in this study due to ethical reasons since these discussions dealt with sensitive topics such as suicide, miscarriage or sexual preferences (see Section 3.3). It is possible that the deliberate exclusion of the so called sensitive WMN sequences may have biased the sample as interaction patterns may be different when the topic is especially sensitive. This question, although interesting, is beyond the scope of this study.

The Other category on the fifth row indicates occurrences of the utterance constructions which were not part of potential or actual WMN sequences. The word ‘vadå’ is frequently used for a range of different purposes. On many occasions, the word X which follows after ‘vadå’ is not a word, but a whole phrase: “Vadå det är ingen mänsklig rättighet att få barn?” (What do you mean that it is not a human right to have children?). Here, the focus of the clarification request is not targeting a particular word, but an entire phrase, which is not included in this study. All of these non-instances of word meaning negotiations are included in the Other category, which clearly dominate the total number of occurrences of ‘vadå’.

In total, only 12 (4+8) of the occurrences on Familjeliv result in word meaning negotiation, and the corresponding number for Flashback is 7 (1+6), Passagen Debatt only 2 (0+2). When removing the sensitive threads from the sample, the example collection of WMN sequences contains 5 WMN involving the utterance construction “Vadå X?”.

VADDÅ X?

The construction “Vaddå X?” generated 36 700 hits on Familjeliv, 42 100 hits on Flashback and 93 400 hits on Passagen Debatt. The first 100 unique threads from each forum were chosen and examined to see if any of the “Vaddå X?” resulted in WMN sequences of a word X. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Search results for “Vaddå X?”

VADDÅ X?	Familjeliv	Flashback	Passagen
CR not addressed	6	13	22
CR addressed without WMN	0	2	0
WMNs included in study	1	0	2
Sensitive WMNs	4	8	0
Other	89	77	76
Total	100	100	100

For the construction “Vaddå X?” there are fewer occurrences which result in word meaning negotiation. On Familjeliv, 5 (1+4) occurrences are WMNs, and the corresponding number on Flashback is 8 (0+8) and only 2 (2+0) on Passagen Debatt. When removing the sensitive threads from the sample, the example collection of WMN sequences will include 3 WMNs containing the construction “Vaddå X?”.

VAD DÅ X?

The expression “Vad då X?” generated 16 400 hits on Familjeliv, 18 900 hits on Flashback and 72 100 hits on Passagen Debatt. The first 100 unique threads from each forum were examined to see if any of the “Vad då X?” resulted in WMNs of a word X. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Search results for “Vad då X?”

VAD DÅ X	Familjeliv	Flashback	Passagen
CR not addressed	9	7	18
CR addressed without WMN	0	0	0
WMNs included in study	1	2	1
Sensitive WMNs	10	3	0
Other	80	88	81
Total	100	100	100

Similar numbers as with the previous two expressions are found for the construction “Vad då X?”. On Familjeliv, 11 (1+10) occurrences are WMNs. On Flashback, there are 5 (2+3) word meaning negotiations, and on Passagen Debatt only 1. Again, the “Other” category dominates the total number of occurrences, which suggests that “Vad då” is primarily used for *other* purposes than to question and negotiate the meanings of words.

VAD MENAR DU MED X?

The search expression “Vad menar du med X?” (What do you mean by X?) resulted in 556 000 hits on Familjeliv, 1 140 000 hits on Flashback and 270 000 hits on Passagen Debatt. Again, the first 100 unique threads from each forum were chosen and manually examined to see if any of the expressions resulted in word meaning negotiation of a word X.

Table 9: Search results for “Vad menar du med X?”

VAD MENAR DU MED X?	Familjeliv	Flashback	Passagen
CR not addressed	5	12	22
CR addressed without WMN	3	3	0
WMNs included in study	13	8	8
Sensitive WMNs	10	3	1
Other	69	74	69
Total	100	100	100

The utterance construction is part of a WMN sequence in 23 instances on Familjeliv (13+10), in 11 instances on Flashback (8+3) and in 9 on Passagen Debatt (8+1). The sensitive WMNs are removed from the sample corpus, and we are left with 29 WMN sequences containing the construction “Vad menar du med X?”.

Again, most of the occurrences of “Vad menar du med X?” are not part of a WMN sequence and therefore put in the Other category. The expression “Vad menar du med” is very common in Swedish, and is most often followed by the demonstrative pronoun ‘det’, as in “Vad menar du med det?” (What do you mean by that?). It is also often followed by a phrase, and not a word, for example “Vad menar du med att andra klarar av att resa bort utan att få hemlängtan?” (What do you mean by saying that others manage to go away without being homesick?).

HUR MENAR DU MED X?

The search expression “Hur menar du med X?” (How do you mean (by) X?) resulted in 106 000 hits on Familjeliv, 189 000 hits on Flashback, and 71 600 hits on Passagen Debatt. The first 100 unique threads from each forum were chosen and manually examined to see if any of the expressions resulted in word meaning negotiation of a word X.

Table 10: Search results for “Hur menar du med X?”

HUR MENAR DU MED X?	Familjeliv	Flashback	Passagen
CR not addressed	7	10	25
CR addressed without WMN	7	0	2
WMNs included in study	8	3	3
Sensitive WMNs	6	4	2
Other	72	83	68
Total	100	100	100

Similar results as with the previous expression are found, as most of the occurrences of the expression “Hur menar du med X?” do not result in WMN sequences, as this expression is very common, for example in “Hur menar du med det?” (How do you mean by that?) and “Hur menar du med

ovanstående inlägg?” (How do you mean by the post above?). On Familjeliv, 14 (8+6) of the occurrences are part of actual WMN sequences. On Flashback, there are 7 (3+4) WMN sequences, and on Passagen Debatt, the corresponding number is 5 (3+2). When the sensitive WMNs are removed, a total of 14 WMN sequences are included in the example collection containing the indicator construction “Hur menar du med X?”.

In total, the searches have produced 55 WMN sequences which are included in the sample corpus, constituting the example collection of the interactional phenomenon investigated in this study.

Table 11: Search results for all of the utterance constructions

	Familjeliv	Flashback	Passagen	Total
CR not addressed	44	55	106	205
CR addressed without WMN	11	6	2	19
WMNs included in study	27	14	14	55
Sensitive WMNs	38	24	5	67
Other	380	401	373	1154
Total	500	500	500	1500

As a side note, it is worth mentioning that Passagen Debatt appears to have a higher number of potential beginnings of WMNs which are never developed into actual negotiation sequences. On this particular site, it seems more common for a clarification request to receive no answer whatsoever, than on the two other sites. For all five of the examined expressions serving as possible indicators of WMN sequences, about 20 to 25 percent are left completely unaddressed on Passagen Debatt. The corresponding number for the other two sites is lower, which may indicate that there is something in the graphical interface of this particular site which could explain why clarification requests receive answers to a lower degree here than on other sites. Both Familjeliv and Flashback have flat discussion flows (see Figure 2), whereas Passagen Debatt has a threaded, hierarchical flow of posts which may make it easier to miss questions and comments in general (see Figure 3). It may be that when posts are organised in a flat flow, it is more likely that someone will notice and address a clarification request directed at them, than if the flow of the communication is nested in a hierarchical structure with many parallel replies.

Flashback Forum > Samhälle > Ekonomi > Nationalekonomi

Skulle medborgarlön öka inflationen?

SVARA PÅ ÄMNE Sidan 1 av 9 1 2 3 > sista»

ÄMNESVERKTYG

2012-07-19, 21:49 #1

Medlem ●

Som sagt, skulle medborgarlön öka inflationen om det infördes i Sverige? Sen undrar jag om det finns nått land som har/haft medborgarlön?

Reg: Jul 2006
Inlägg: 3 284

CITERA

2012-07-19, 21:58 #2

Medlem ●

Nej, tror inte det.

Vi har ju faktiskt en sorts medborgarlön redan idag, men det kallas "socialbidrag".

Nackdelen med den som den ser ut nu är att folk måste förnedra sej för att få pengarna, plus att nivån ligger för lågt.

Ska vi ha riktig medborgarlön ska den ligga en bit över existensminimum, annars kommer ingen att ha råd med något mer än lite mat och då avstannar ekonomin istället.

Reg: Jan 2011
Inlägg: 1 705

CITERA

2012-07-19, 22:10 #3

Medlem ●

Beror på hur den finansieras. Förenklat råder:
inflation = ökning penningmängd - tillväxt

Så om medborgarlönen finansieras genom att trycka upp pengar innebär det mer inflation.

Medborgarlön prövades i Iran:
<http://www.economist.com/node/18867440>

Reg: Aug 2010
Inlägg: 1 032

CITERA

Figure 2: Flat discussion flow on Flashback

Att någon vill provocera med att påstå Sverige som ett kristet land är alltså fel. Majoriteten a inte som kristna, den tidiga tvångsanslutningen till kyrkan ger således en skev bild. Religionsfriheten avvisar också detta påstående. Även statsöverhuvudets familj undviker av är tvingad att leva med den gamla lagen, även om den snart kommer att avskaffas som alla medeltida lagar.

 Skriv svar till debattant  Tipsa en vän om inlägget

Svar:

Vis

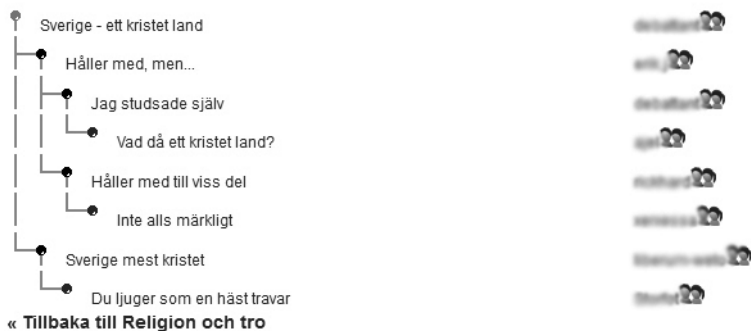


Figure 3: Hierarchical, nested discussion flow on Passagen Debatt

3.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Collecting written, interactional language data from its naturally occurring context, for example on discussion forums or blogs, is essentially simple. Since the communication has already taken place, and is archived on the internet, the researcher using this kind of data for analysis can easily avoid

the “Observer’s paradox”, which is a term coined by Labov, the founder of variationist sociolinguistics. The paradox is described by Labov as follows: “...the aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain these data by systematic observation.” (Labov, 1972, p. 209). The underlying apprehension here is that people, when they know they are being observed, will not act or interact naturally but will change their language use in some way, as a result of the observation itself. Since observation of naturally occurring interactions on the internet is possible as the data already exists “out there”, the paradox can be avoided. Participants’ language activities of past interactions can be studied naturally without the participants being influenced by the observational situation, as the observation occurs after the interaction has taken place. But how ethical is this manner of data collection on the internet? Is it like collecting data by eavesdropping on private conversations? How can the participants’ right to privacy, which is a fundamental requirement in any social science study, be taken into consideration when collecting and using interactional data from the internet?

The general consensus in social research is that research should be as overt as possible, since research subjects have a right to know if they are being observed and recorded in different ways. Typically, the key factor is getting informed consent from the participants involved in the study, otherwise the research might be dismissed as covert and unethical. However, research conducted openly in public places may be exempt from this general rule (Clegg Smith, 2004). The guidelines from AoIR (the Association of Internet Researchers) draw attention to two important variables when deciding if and how to gather and use data from the internet; the sensitivity of the shared information and the openness of the medium (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). If the medium is public and the sensitivity of the shared information is low, there are generally less ethical considerations to be made when gathering and analysing data. On the other hand, if the medium is private and the sensitivity of the shared information is high, the researcher needs to be more careful in relation to ethical considerations, in order to uphold the participants’ right to privacy (Sveningsson, 2004).

In addition to the two distinctions highlighted by AoIR, the five questions below have been recognised as important when making ethical con-

siderations in relation to online data, and have been addressed by several researchers to date (G. N. Allen, Burk, & Davis, 2006; Androutsopoulos, 2008; Bruckman, 2002; Chen, Hall, & Johns, 2004; Ess, 2007; Ess & Jones, 2004; Kozinets, 2010; Lawson, 2004; Markham, 2004b; Walther, 2002; Wood, Griffiths, & Eatough, 2004).

1. How is the data gathered? By participation or strictly by archival methods?
2. Is the data gathered from private, semi-private or public sources?
3. Should the researcher get informed consent from the participants involved in the communicative activities before collecting and analysing data, or can the data be used without such consent?
4. Should the researcher get permission from the companies providing the communication service, i.e. the corporations owning the platforms on which the communication takes place, or can the data be used without such permission?
5. Should the data be protected or disguised in some way, when it is reported and quoted, or should real online pseudonyms, aliases and nicknames be used?

3.3.1 HUMAN SUBJECT OR ARCHIVAL RESEARCH?

Herring (1996a, p. 5) initially dealt with the first question by asking how ethical it is to collect data by “lurking”, i.e. by reading messages in a discussion forum without contributing to the discussion. Likewise, Chen et al (2004) point out that lurking as a method for collection of online data is considered unethical by some researchers. However, Kozinets (2010) stresses that the actual question here is if this manner of data collection and analysis should be viewed as *human subject research* or not. Here Kozinets differentiates between a researcher who is actively involved as a participant in the communication, and one that is merely an observer, using publicly available archives of communication data. According to Kozinets, pure archival methods of data collection of easily accessible communication data, where the researcher does not record the identity of the participants, do not qualify as human subjects research. “It is only when interaction or intervention occurs that consent is required.” (Kozinets, 2010, p.151).

3.3.2 PRIVATE vs PUBLIC

The second question of ethical considerations addresses the issue of how the sources of information are viewed; as closed and private environments, or as open spaces. One dilemma in applying general ethical principles to CMC studies is the inherent uncertainty of where the boundary between private and public lies on the internet (Schroeder, Heather, & Lee, 1998). Naturally, different forms of computer-mediated communication provide different affordances for privacy and openness, ranging from private instant messaging between two participants, to mass-communicative interactions on blogs and discussion forums. The question of how to view the communication spaces as either private, semi-private or public also connects closely to the expectations of the participants communicating in the environment. Do they expect to be alone when communicating, or do they know that there might be a wider audience than the participants involved in the actual communication? Clearly, the case of dyadic instant messaging involves expectations of communication privacy. If a researcher would collect logs of instant messaging communication without first asking permission, this would clearly be considered unethical, as the participants involved in the communicative act were not expecting to be “overheard” by someone else. In contrast, when participants communicate in open, mass-communicative spaces, such as on blogs or discussion forums, the expectation of privacy is likely much lower, which is why such environments can be characterised as open spaces.

In general, synchronous communication is perceived as more private than asynchronous communication, which has to do with the transient and fleeting nature of communication tied to a particular moment in time, compared to messages intended for communicative purposes beyond the “here and now”, as well as the fact that synchronous modes of communication are considered more conversational and speech-like, and more often are aimed at particular interlocutors. Kozinets writes:

We should probably treat the recording of conversation in a chat-room or activity and interaction in a virtual world, or other synchronous conversation and interaction differently from the way that we treat asynchronous communications that are more clearly intended as postings for mass and public communication. (Kozinets, 2010, p.145).

3.3.3 IS INFORMED CONSENT NEEDED?

Logistically, getting informed consent from participants in computer-mediated communication can be complicated since it involves tracking down anonymous participants of past communicative activities to request permission to use their interactional contributions as data for analysis (M. S. Frankel & Siang, 1999, p. 8; Sveningsson, 2004, p. 50). Ethically, it is not always needed. The question concerning if researchers require a participant's informed consent before obtaining that person's communication data has already formally been answered in Section 3.3.1, in drawing the conclusion that archival research does not officially constitute human subjects research (Kozinets, 2010). In itself, this conclusion implies that informed consent is not necessary, and even in border-line cases where the research could be considered human subject research, consent is only needed "if the research presents no more than a minimal risk of harm to the subjects" (Kozinets, 2010, p.151). However, as Bruckman points out, it is *always* important to "carefully weigh the public benefit of making the revelation, and balance this against the potential harm to the subject" (Bruckman, 2002, p.225). This means that the researcher should always take into consideration the potentially negative reactions of the participants when reporting an analysis using quotes and examples from the original communication data, and in particularly sensitive situations take appropriate measures to shield the identity of the informants. McKee and Porter (2009) list four research variables affecting the question of whether informed consent from participants is necessary or not: degree of openness of data, topic sensitivity, degree of interaction between the researcher and the subjects and subject vulnerability.

3.3.4 USING DATA FROM COMMERCIAL SITES

Kozinets suggests that using commercial sites as sources of information is ethically acceptable if the researcher first ensures that it is not explicitly stated in the company's terms of service or terms of use agreements that such behaviour is prohibited (Kozinets, 2010, p.149). Some sites providing communication platforms allow reading of messages without being a member on the site, but require membership if someone is to contrib-

ute to the communication taking place on the site. Other sites require membership both for reading and active participation. When membership is required even for reading, a researcher gathering communication data first must become a member on the site, before data collection can begin. In such cases, researchers should pay specific attention to the terms of membership agreement that is likely to be a prerequisite to sign before becoming a member, since this agreement may state that data collection is prohibited (Kozinets, 2010, p.150).

In contrast to this approach, Allen, Burk and Davis (2006) take a step further and claim that even in situations where service agreements state that non-commercial of communication data is prohibited, collection of such data can be considered ethically motivated, since “the strict enforcement of terms of service document terms in this situation would virtually close commercial websites to any examination by academia” (Allen et al, 2006, p.607).

3.3.5 DISGUIISING DATA

When reporting on findings by quoting data or using data as illustrative examples, the question of how to protect individual subjects from “potential harm” becomes particularly relevant. Although many communication platforms allow their users to write using aliases or nicknames functioning as pseudonyms, which to some extent hides the person’s actual identity, many researchers have come to the conclusion that online pseudonyms in many cases should be treated as real names (Bruckman, 2002; M. S. Frankel & Siang, 1999; Walther, 2002). Bruckman writes:

Individuals often use the same pseudonym over time, and care about the reputation of that pseudonym. They may also choose to use a part of or their entire real name as a pseudonym, or some other detail that is equally identifying. They may also routinely disclose information linking their pseudonym and real name. (Bruckman, 2002, p.221).

If pseudonyms should be treated as real names, is the answer simply to anonymise pseudonyms when using data for quotes or examples? Kozinets points out that online search engines can quickly link a string of text

from a quote or example to its original context, and therefore to its pseudonym, which means that there is still a possibility for breaches of pseudonymity and anonymity even when anonymising aliases and nicknames (Kozinets, 2010, p.145).

Kozinets suggests that different circumstances call for different approaches when choosing to include or omit original aliases or nicknames. He describes these circumstances as situations varying on a sensitivity scale, which call for different levels of disguising or “cloaking” of data. In the uncloaked situation, which is the lowest level of the sensitivity scale, aliases or nicknames are used (or even real names if these are available), but potentially harmful material is omitted. In the minimum cloaked situation, site or community names are given, but aliases or nicknames, as well as group names, are altered. Direct quotes can be used, even though highly motivated people could use search engines to connect quotes to the research participants. Naturally, harmful material is omitted also in the minimum cloaked situation. In the maximum cloaked situation, which is the highest level of the sensitivity scale, site or community names are withheld, all aliases, names or other identifying details are changed and no direct quotes are used as examples.

3.3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THIS STUDY

As discussed, when gathering interactional data from different CMC platforms, a few key variables should be considered when deciding whether or not informed consent from the participants is needed. These parameters concern degree of openness of data, topic sensitivity, degree of interaction between the researcher and the participants and the general vulnerability of the participants.

In this study, the data used for analysis is gathered from publicly available online discussion forums. The communication is open and accessible by anyone, without having to register or log in to the forum. Therefore, the expectation from the contributors on the forums is probably that they are in a public place when communicating. They are likely aware that they are using a public, virtual message board, and that what they write will be read by a large number of people. On forums, the topics of discussions can range between highly sensitive (dealing with personal health, sexual

activity, religious beliefs etc.) to not sensitive at all. In this study, only discussion threads dealing with non-sensitive topics have been included in the example collection for ethical reasons. This means that WMN sequences identified in discussions dealing with topics such as miscarriage, deceased children or sexual preferences have been excluded, to ensure that data which may expose the participants to negative public exposure or embarrassment is left out in this study.

The degree of interaction between the researcher and the participants is low, in fact non-existent, as the interactional data is collected after the communication has taken place. Likewise, subject vulnerability is low as the focus of the study is how participants negotiate word meanings, a focus which does not put the participants in harm's way. Since all of the variables affecting the need for informed consent are indicating low values, the conclusion is drawn that getting informed consent from participants is *not* needed in this particular study.

When using examples from the interaction, quotes from communication data will be disguised in the manners suggested above in the minimum cloaked situation, which means that site names will be given, but nicknames will be altered.

In their membership agreements, the three discussion forums used for gathering data in this study do not forbid data collection for non-commercial use. On the contrary, they inform their users that the forum services may be used for private or educational purposes. Familjeliv explicitly urge their users to take into consideration that they are writing in publicly available spaces and that their contributions may be used in ways beyond their own control.

3.4 DESCRIPTION OF DATA

By using the five utterance constructions described in Section 3.2.2, the searches produced 55 WMN sequences which were put into the example collection. In addition, five other WMN sequences were added to the sample corpus. These five WMNs had previously been identified and collected as part of a pilot study, and were the reason attention was drawn to the interactional phenomenon in the first place. All of the five additional sequences were gathered from the forum Familjeliv. The five WMNs

which were collected during the pilot study were added to the example collection, making the total number of WMNs in the corpus 60 sequences.

3.4.1 TWO TYPES OF WORD MEANING NEGOTIATIONS: NONS AND DINS

Initial manual inspection of the sample corpus of the 60 WMN sequences concluded that the WMNs typically can be sorted into two main types, depending on the origin of the WMN. The first type comprises WMN sequences which are caused by insufficient understanding of a particular word, i.e. when one participant uses a word which is not understood by another participant, and the second participant needs to request clarification regarding the meaning of that word in order to restore enough understanding so that the discussion on topic can continue. In this thesis, the type of WMN originating in non-understanding will be referred to as NONs (non-understanding word meaning negotiation sequences). The second type encompasses WMN sequences which originate in disagreement between participants regarding the way a particular word is used in the discussion context. In this type of WMN, participants tend to disagree about the appropriateness of a particular word being applied to the current discussed situation, and the meaning negotiation which unfolds focuses on the meaning of the trigger word and how this word should be appropriately used in language in general and in the discussed situation in particular. This type of WMN will be referred to as DINs (disagreement word meaning negotiation sequences). In total, there are 38 NONs and 22 DINs in the sample corpus. Together, the 60 WMN sequences comprise over 56 000 words.

3.4.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF NONS AND DINS

Next, some descriptive statistics regarding the two types of WMNs in the example collection will be presented. Table 12 displays the differences between the two types of negotiations with regards to the length of the WMNs in relation to the number of active participants contributing to the WMNs.

Table 12: Differences between NONs and DINs with regards to number of participants and length of WMNs

	NONs	DINs
Mean number of participants per WMN	2.32	16.23
Standard deviation of mean	0.57	13.39
Mean number of posts per WMN	3.92	28.68
Standard deviation of mean	1.11	23.63
Mean number of words per WMN	326.21	2008.05
Standard deviation of mean	199.4	1887.41
Mean number of words per post	83.53	71.58
Standard deviation of mean	49.09	21.4
Mean number of posts per thread	219.89	559.14
Standard deviation of mean	676.83	723.82

As shown in Table 12, the group of NONs display little variation with regards to the number of participants and the number of posts in each WMN sequence. Typically, in NONs, there are either two or three participants engaged in the WMN, and the WMN is normally concluded in three or four turns. In contrast, the group of DINs display a high degree of heterogeneity with regards to both the number of active participants and the number of posts in each sequence. In DINs, the mean number of participants per sequence is 16.23, but the standard deviation is high indicating a high degree of variance. Similarly, the mean number of posts per WMN is 28.68 and the standard deviation is 23.63.

Independent-samples T-tests were used to compare the two types of WMNs with regards to participation and length. With regards to the mean number of participants per WMN, the T-test confirmed that the types are different, $T(58) = 6.29$, $p < 0,01$. Similar results were found with regards to the mean number of posts per WMN for the two types, $T(58) = 6.34$, $p < 0,01$. Also, the mean number of words per WMN are significantly different between the two types, $T(58) = 5.35$, $p < 0,01$. However, no significant difference was found with regards to the mean number of words per post between the two types ($T(58) = 0.22$, $p = 0.8$) or the mean number of posts per thread ($T(58) = 1.79$, $p = 0.08$).

The results from the independent-samples T-tests thus conclude that the NONs and DINs are significantly different with regards to the mean number of participants per WMN, the mean number of posts per WMN and the mean number of words per WMN. However, no significant difference is found in the number of words per post, or the number of words per thread.

To summarise the description of data, the group of NONs is homogeneous with regards to the number of participants per sequence and the number of posts per sequence, displaying little variation over the sample corpus, whereas the group of DINs is heterogeneous with regards to the number of participants per sequence and the number of posts per sequence, displaying a high degree of variation over the sample corpus. The next chapter will present and discuss the results of the analyses of the NONs, but the last section of this chapter will first present a brief overview of the semantic operations used by the participants in the negotiation process, both in the NONs and DINs.

3.4.3 A TAXONOMY OF SEMANTIC OPERATIONS FOR WORD MEANING NEGOTIATION – A SNEAK PREVIEW

This section will outline a very brief preview of the taxonomy of semantic operations used in the analysis of word meaning negotiation in NONs and DINs. It should be stressed that the taxonomy of semantic operations is in fact a result of the analyses. These specific categories of semantic operations were not in place at the outset of the analysis of this study. Instead, the categories were inductively developed as the analytical process proceeded through different stages, moving between focusing on the particularities of each individual WMN sequence and the general findings of the example collection as a whole. Even though the taxonomy of semantic operations is a result of the analyses, it is briefly presented here to help the reader better understand the findings which will be presented in Chapter 4 (the results of the analyses of NONs) and in Chapter 5 (the results of the analyses of the DINs).¹⁷ In this thesis, the notion of a semantic

¹⁷ Only the main categories in the taxonomy are presented here. There are subcategories of most of the categories of the semantic operations, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 and 5.

operation is broadly defined to include all dialogue acts which contribute to the meta-linguistic negotiation of word meaning. This means that all recurrent ways of participating in a word meaning negotiation sequence which involves combining aspects of meaning potential with aspects of the situated context are viewed as semantic operations.

To avoid jumping ahead of the analyses, invented examples will be used in this section to illustrate how each semantic operation functions, and to highlight the differences between the operations. The negotiated word in each of the examples below is referred to as the ‘trigger word’.

Explicification is a semantic operation which introduces a definition-like component to the trigger word. “Crocodile tears means to cry fake tears.”

Exemplification is a semantic operation which describes what the trigger word can mean, or usually means, in circumstances other than the current discussed situation. “For example when my daughter wants me to feel sorry for her and she tries to cry but no real tears come.”

Contrasting is a semantic operation which positions the trigger word against another word, typically highlighting a similarity or difference between the two contrasted words. “I wouldn’t be so quick to deem that as crocodile tears – it is still displaying emotion of some kind.”

Meta-linguistic clarification request is a semantic operation which indicates the need to go into meta-linguistic negotiation about the meaning of a particular word. “What do you mean by crocodile tears?”

Meta-linguistic objection is a semantic operation which objects to the use of a particular trigger word in a specific discussion context. “That is not crocodile tears!”

Meta-linguistic endorsement is a semantic operation which supports the continued use of a trigger word in a specific discussion context. “Yes, crocodile tears is actually correct to use here.”

CHAPTER 4

WMNS ORIGINATING IN NON-UNDERSTANDING (NONS)

Out of the 60 WMN sequences in the sample corpus, 38 sequences are identified as originating in non-understanding about word meaning, and are thus characterised as NONs. 17 of these sequences are gathered from the forum Familjeliv (familjeliv.se), 13 from the forum Flashback (flashback.org) and eight from the forum Passagen Debatt (debatt.passagen.se). The sequences all have in common that they contain one of the Swedish variants of the utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?”, signalling insufficient understanding of the word X at a particular point in the discussion. In all of the 38 sequences, the utterance construction has subsequently been interpreted by the participant attending to the clarification request as a need to go into a meta-linguistic negotiation about the situated meaning of the word X.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will outline and discuss the results of the analyses of the 38 NONs. First, the general characteristics of this type of word meaning negotiation will be discussed. Next, the focus will be on the sequentiality of the communication, dealing with typical patterns of turn-taking found in NONs. Subsequently, the focus will be on the semantic operations which are found to contribute to meaning negotiation process. As discussed in Section 3.1.5, frequency counts will be included in this chapter when presenting and discussing various findings. As mentioned, the purpose of this study is not primarily to make quantitative generalisations, and the main point of including frequency counts is to add to the understanding of the example collection used in this study. Empirical generalisations of quantitative measures beyond the data sample are conditioned by factors described in Section 3.1.5.

4.2 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF NONS

This section will present and discuss the characteristics of the NONs, focusing on each of the turn components which characteristically constitute the typical NON sequence. Most of the NONs in the sample corpus display the sequential pattern T-I-R-(RR), which corresponds to the model of non-understanding proposed by Varonis and Gass (1985), as described in Section 2.2.2. In the T-I-R-(RR) model, T is the trigger causing the non-understanding, I is the indicator displaying the non-understanding, typically requesting clarification, and R is the response, usually providing the requested clarification. RR is an optional unit in the sequence, a reaction to the response, which in the model proposed by Varonis and Gass is used to tie up the routine of repair before popping back up to the main flow of the conversation.

The T-I-R-(RR) pattern displays a sequence of turn-taking normally between two participants, below called P1 and P2. The sequence typically looks as follows:

P1: [Post containing a word X which is later perceived by another interlocutor as problematic in some way] – Trigger post

P2: What/How do you mean (by) X? – Indicator post

P1: [Response to question what is meant by X, typically containing clarification] – Response post

(P2: [Comment on response] – Reaction to response post)

The trigger post is uttered by P1 in the main sequence of the discussion, i.e. the discussion on topic, which is carried out on Track 1.

By producing a clarification request in the indicator post, P2 initiates other-initiated repair and signals the need to address an issue of insufficient understanding in the second turn. If, in the third turn, the indicator post is interpreted as a meta-linguistic clarification request regarding the situated meaning of the word X, the response post will shift the discussion onto the meta-linguistic track – Track 2b – dealing with meaning of individual words. Requesting meta-linguistic clarification of meaning is an appeal to P1 who used the trigger word on Track 1 to agree to a (temporary) track shift, and move the discussion to dealing with meaning on Track 2b. If P1 indeed interprets the indicator post as a meta-linguistic clarification request and accepts a track shift, a response post is normally contributed providing the requested meta-linguistic clarification in the third turn. Next, P2 may react to the response post, and this last turn in the sequence may also contain an explicit track shift back to Track 1. In some cases, there is no explicit reaction to the response post, in which case the sequence displays the pattern T-I-R instead of T-I-R-RR.

4.2.1 TRIGGERS OF NONS

In all cases but one in the sample of NONs, the trigger word is used for the first time in the discussion thread when it becomes the trigger of the WMN. In one single case, the trigger word has been used a few times by the same participant, before someone remarks on it and requests meta-linguistic clarification of the meaning of the word, indicating it as a trigger.

All of the trigger words in the sample of NONs are content words. Out of the 38 NONs, 23 trigger words are nouns, 10 are adjectives, four

are adverbs and one is a verb. In the list below, the trigger words are listed in the word form in which they were used in the indicator posts.

Nouns:

- avsaltning (desalination)
- evighetsgaranti (eternity guarantee)
- handlingsförmåga (agency/ability to act)
- handlov (heel of the hand)
- helkroppsscanning (full body scan)
- klibbor (stickers)
- mannar (men/menfolk)
- medborgarlön (unconditional basic income)
- näthat (online expressions of hate)
- omvårdnad (care)
- ordningslista (order list/priority list)
- personlighet (personality)
- resning (placement)
- sandlåde-nivå (sandbox level)
- semester (holiday)
- snabbhet (speed)
- sexism (sexism)
- tråd (thread)
- tvångssyndrom (obsessive-compulsive disorder)
- vanor (habits)
- värmevallningar (hot flushes)
- växtbok (plant book)
- överpris (overprice)

Adjectives:

- blyg (shy)
- egen (own)
- nedsatt (of poor health)
- ogift (unmarried)
- orent (dirty)
- påhittade (made-up)
- självständig (independent)

- slät (smooth)
- smutsig (dirty)
- välbetalt (well-paid)

Adverbs:

- gratis (free)
- igen (again)
- inkognito (incognito)
- överallt (everywhere)

Verb:

- vicka (tilt)

4.2.2 INDICATORS OF NONS

The indicator posts in all 38 NONs bear great similarities with each other, which is a direct result of the search method used to find them in this study. As mentioned, the search query has explicitly looked for the different Swedish variations of the utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?”, which is why all of the indicator posts contain this particular meta-linguistic request for clarification. However, the co-text surrounding the construction in the indicator post may vary between the NONs, in primarily two ways:

- The directness of the meta-linguistic clarification request – is it hedged or mitigated (which perhaps would be expected in face-to-face conversations, according to the general principle of preference for agreement)?
- The way the clarification request is explained or accounted for – is there an account given which explains why it is made (which may also be expected in face-to-face conversations, as objections to particular words being used may be seen as face-threatening and therefore may require an explanation for why the objection is made)?

In nine of the 38 NONs, the utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?” makes up the whole indicator post, which means that nothing else is added as a co-text surrounding it. In these instances, the meta-linguistic clarification request is made directly, without hedging or mitigation, and without any explanation or account for why it is made.

DIRECTNESS IN INDICATOR POSTS

In 35 of 38 examined NONs, the meta-linguistic clarification request is made without hedging or mitigating strategies. Again, this could be the result of the search method used to find the sequences. It is possible that similar indicator constructions could be used to launch NONs, where the wording is paraphrased slightly differently, and where hedges are included. However, it is still possible to use hedges in the co-text surrounding the variants of “What/How do you mean (by) X?”. For example, participants may apologise for being unknowledgeable, which is one way of mitigating or diminishing the potential negative impact of the meta-linguistic clarification request. This is done in a WMN of the word ‘resning’ (placement), presented in Excerpt 4 (where bold font is added to highlight the hedge).

Excerpt 4

P1: Priset brukar väl ofta vara utan resning. Ca2-3 miljoner för standardhus.

The price is normally without placement. About 2-3 million for a standard house.

P2: Vad menar du utan resning? **Ursäkta ifall frågan låter knas** är inte så duktigt på sånt
*What do you mean without placement? **Sorry if the question sounds weird**, am not good at this*

Similarly, in a WMN of the word ‘tråd’ (thread), the indicator construction is hedged by the participant apologising that he or she needs to make the request for meta-linguistic clarification.

Excerpt 5

P1: Prova att köra med tråd direkt i nätverksuttaget. Prova med tråd direkt i routern.

Try putting the thread directly in the network socket. Try putting the thread directly into the router.

P2: **Du får ursäkta mig, jag är inte så kunnig** men vad menar du med tråd direkt i nätverksuttaget? Vadå tråd?

You’ll have to excuse me, I don’t know much about this but what do you mean by thread directly into the network socket? What do you mean thread?

Another way of hedging the utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?” in the indicator post is to delay the initiation of repair in different ways. This can be seen in spoken interaction where it is common to delay a part of an utterance which signals discord towards an interlocutor by prefacing that part of the utterance by a pause or a partial agreement (Sacks, 1987). Pausing in asynchronous, written communication is naturally more difficult than in spoken interaction, but it can be done by imitating and explicitly spelling out pausing sounds, so called “filled pauses” (Vandergriff, 2013).

Excerpt 6

P1: min 6 månaders bebis har för några dagar sen börjat med att vicka på huvvet åt sidan i mellanåt [...] undrar om de är någon mer som har ngt barn som gjort så?

my six month old baby started “tilting” her head sideways a few days ago [...] wonder if anyone else has children who’ve done this?

P2: **Hmm..** hur menar du med “vicka ”...

P2: **Hmm..** how do you mean by “tilt”...

In the example in Excerpt 6, the filler “Hmm...” may also be used as a mitigating strategy to slightly hedge (delay) the meta-linguistic clarification request which indicates the need to repair an issue of insufficient understanding in the discussion.

Clearly, the vast majority of indicator posts in this study are direct as hedges or other mitigating strategies are only found in three out of the 38 NONs.

EXPLAINING OR ACCOUNTING FOR CLARIFICATION REQUESTS

Only five of the 38 NONs examined in this study include an account in the indicator post explaining why the meta-linguistic clarification request is made. One way of accounting for a meta-linguistic clarification request is by portraying oneself as too unknowledgeable to understand the meaning of the trigger word. This seems to indicate that the participant issuing the request blames him- or herself for the need to initiate repair and request meta-linguistic clarification. The example in Excerpt 7 was previously used to illustrate hedging, but here it is used to illustrate an account explaining why a meta-linguistic clarification request is made (bold font is here used to highlight the account).

Excerpt 7

P1: Priset brukar väl ofta vara utan resning. Ca2-3 miljoner för standardhus.

The price is normally without placement. About 2-3 million for a standard house.

P2: Vad menar du utan resning? Ursäkta ifall frågan låter knas **är inte så duktigt på sånt.**

*What do you mean without placement? Sorry if the question sounds weird, **am not good at this.***

In P2's post in Excerpt 7, the account explaining why the meta-linguistic clarification request is made co-exists with an apology, hedging the utterance. The same occurs in the indicator post from the negotiation of 'tråd' (thread) in Excerpt 5. Excerpt 8 displays another example of a clarification request containing an explanation or an account, but which occurs

without a hedging excuse, taken from the WMN of 'handlov' (heel of the hand). In this WMN, the trigger word is used for the first time in a discussion where a student training to become a nurse (P1) asks fellow students about the correct way of performing chest compressions during CPR.

Excerpt 8

P1: Mina kloka vänner.... Gör man kompressionerna med handloven + handloven eller två fingrar + handloven? Älskar när jag hittar olika versioner på allt....

My wise friends... Do you perform the compressions using the heel of the hand + the heel of the hand or two fingers + the heel of the hand? Love it when I find different versions of everything...

P2: **Förstår inte..**vaddå handlov ?

Don't understand.. what do you mean by heel of the hand ?

Here, the meta-linguistic clarification request is preceded by an explanation for why it is made. P2 explicitly states that he or she does not understand the meaning of the trigger word, but does not apologise for issuing the clarification request.

4.2.3 RESPONSE POSTS IN NONS

The third turn component in the T-I-R-(RR) sequence generally determines if the sequence becomes a WMN or not. Up until this point, a word has been used by P1 which has been perceived as problematic in some way by P2. This has been signalled in the indicator post, making the problematic word a trigger of a potential WMN. In the third turn, if P1 accepts the track-shift proposed by P2 and interprets the clarification request as raising a meta-linguistic issue, a WMN sequence has been identified. In most cases, the response post typically provides the requested meta-linguistic clarification, which is generally provided by P1 (to whom the indicator post is directed). In some cases, however, the meta-linguistic clarification is provided by a third participant, i.e. someone other than P1.

In the analyses of the 38 NONs, 33 of the meta-linguistic clarification requests are found to be responded to by the *same* participant who first used the trigger word. In five instances, the indicator post is responded to by a third participant (P3). In one of these five instances P1 later confirms that P3's clarification corresponds to P1's own understanding of the meaning of the trigger word.

In 34 out of the 38 NONs, the requested meta-linguistic clarification is provided in the third turn, which is what is expected from the model of non-understanding proposed by Varonis and Gass (1985). The results of this study thus seem to confirm that there is an expectation that P1 will return following P2's indicator post and provide the requested clarification. In most cases, this happens routinely, and in the few cases where this does not happen, i.e. when meta-linguistic clarification is not provided in the third turn, this is overtly addressed by the participants in the discussion, which makes the expectation explicit in the communication. When the requested meta-linguistic clarification is absent, this becomes a communicative problem in itself, and is overtly addressed by the participants in the discussion. This will be described in more detail in Section 4.4.5, concerning deviant cases.

In NONs, a response post is generally the turn component which contributes the most to the meaning negotiation, since it typically contains the requested meta-linguistic clarification. Regularly, a response post explicitly builds on aspects of meaning potential already mentioned in the preceding indicator post. For example, when the indicator post preceding the response post has included partial understanding of the trigger word next to the clarification request, it is common that the response post acknowledges the aspects of meaning potential already mentioned thus far in the negotiation sequence, by relating to them and continuing to build on them. In nine of the NONs where aspects of meaning potential are mentioned in the indicator post, these aspects are a part of the meta-linguistic clarification provided in the response turn. When there are explicit alternative interpretations mentioned in the indicator post, it may be straightforward for P1 to confirm which of the suggested interpretations (if any) is the one intended. This happens in the WMN in Excerpt 9, where P2, who is a church cantor, has been asked a question by P1 in the

trigger post concerning the issue of whether you can have the cantor play a song of your own at a baptism.

Excerpt 9

P1: Om man har dop kan man få kantorn att spela en "egen" låt?"

If there is a baptism, can you have the cantor play an "own" song?

P2: Vad menar du med egen? Nåt som du skrivit själv eller nåt som du väljer själv?

What do you mean by own? Something that you've written yourself or something you've chosen yourself?

P1: Något man väljer själv.

Something you choose yourself.

Here, two possible interpretations of the meaning of the word 'egen' (own) are put forward as possible candidates of the situated meaning of the word in the current context. In relation to the word 'låt' (song), the word 'egen' (own) could either mean ownership in the form of composition or selection, i.e. either it may refer to a song you have written yourself, or to a song you have chosen by yourself. In the response post, P1 provides the requested meta-linguistic clarification by confirming one of the interpretations suggested by P2 in the indicator post.

The same thing occurs in the WMN dealing with the word 'ogift' (unmarried), where P2 proposes two different interpretations of the trigger word in the indicator post, suggesting that it could either be interpreted as "literally unmarried" or "without a partner".

Excerpt 10

P1: Vad är dina tankar om du skulle träffa en ogift 39 kvinna som inte har barn?

What are your thoughts if you were to meet an unmarried 39 woman who does not have children?

P2: Förresten måste fråga, vad menar du med

"Ogift". Många är ju sambos, sårbos, lever i partnerskap etc. Menar du verkligen bokstavli-

gen gift i din fråga eller menar du snarare att kvinnan ifråga är utan partner? Finns ju mängder av folk som lever som sambos och har barn. *By the way, have to ask what you mean by "Unmarried". Lots of people live together, or live apart, or in partnerships etc. Do you literally mean married in your question or do you mean that the woman in question does not have a partner? Lots of people live together and have children.*

P1: Hej, jag menar enbart ogift.

Hi, I simply mean unmarried.

Again, in the response post in Excerpt 10, P1 confirms one of the suggested interpretations as part of the meta-linguistic clarification in the response post. The situated meaning of the word in this particular discussion is indeed "literally unmarried".

To summarise, the third turn component of the T-I-R-(RR) sequence typically provides the meta-linguistic clarification requested in the second turn component, and in cases where aspects of meaning potential were mentioned in the indicator, these aspects are generally picked up as part of the response clarifying the situated meaning of the trigger word.

4.2.4 REACTIONS TO RESPONSE POSTS IN NONS

In the model of repair of non-understanding proposed by Varonis and Gass (1985), the optional fourth turn component of the T-I-R-(RR) sequence is generally used to wrap up the side-sequence of repair and resume the main sequence of the discussion. In this study, 24 NONs display the T-I-R-RR pattern, i.e. contain four turns, whereas 10 out display the T-I-R pattern and hence only contain three turns. In the 24 cases where the fourth turn is present, this component is generally used for *grounding* purposes, which manifests itself in two main functions of reaction posts:

- Confirming understanding of meaning, which means that the fourth turn component is a part of the negotiation.

- Returning to the main discussion, i.e. track shifting, leaving the word meaning negotiation and continuing the discussion on topic.

As discussed in Section 2.1.4, Clark (1996) suggests that participants engaged in conversation collaboratively try to ground their respective contributions. Grounding a specific contribution in conversation means establishing it as part of common ground well enough for current purposes (1996, p. 221). According to Clark, grounding can take place through different signals of positive evidence of understanding. Clark describes four main classes of positive evidence; assertions of understanding, presuppositions of understanding, displays of understanding and exemplifications of understanding (p. 228).

Explicitly confirming that the meta-linguistic clarification provided in a response turn has been understood is one way to signal positive evidence in the reaction post and to ground what has been written in the negotiation up until that point. In the 24 sequences where there is a reaction to the response, confirmation of understanding is provided in 14 cases, ranging from instances where there are explicit assertions of understanding to more implicit grounding strategies involving the participants displaying understanding of the negotiated word rather than explicitly asserting that they now understand the word's situated meaning.

The example in Excerpt 11 is an illustration of an assertion of understanding found in the fourth turn component in the negotiation of the word 'igen' (again). In this discussion, P1 is worried about his or her dog behaving strangely. In the trigger post, P1 has written that the dog 'löper igen' (is in heat again). In the indicator post, P2 has questioned the meaning of 'igen' (again), and asks what it means that the dog is in heat *again*. In the response turn, P1 clarifies what he or she means by the word, and P2 reacts to the response signalling positive evidence of understanding as part of a grounding strategy.

Excerpt 11

P1: Hon är 1,5år. Är visserligen lite förkyld efter att vi haft en hel vecka med vårväder för att vakna med -15° och haft så hela dagarna

under helgen. Ingen feber (38,1°) Hon löper även igen. Dock var hon inte så här dom andra gångerna, utan som vanligt.

She is 1,5 years old. She has a small cold from a week of spring weather followed by -15° and it has been like that all weekend. No temperature (38.1°) Also, she is in heat again. However, she was not like this the other times, then she was normal.

P2: tänkte först att hon var skendräktig, men det stämmer ju inte med att hon löper. vad menar du med att hon löper "igen"?

first I thought she might be pseudopregnant, but she can't be if she is in heat. what do you mean by that she is in heat "again"?

P1: Detta är 3e gången hon löper. Första var i juli, andra i oktober. Tycker att det är lite tätt, därav igen :)

This is the 3rd time she is in heat. The first was in July, second in October. I think this is kind of close together, therefore again :)

P2: ja, det var tätt.

yes, that was close together.

In Excerpt 11, P1 explains that he or she used the trigger word since there has been three separate points in time when the dog has been in heat, and since the occurrences happened close together in time. In the response, P1 is signalling that something can be described as happening 'again' if there has been a series of events occurring closely together in time. In the reaction to the response post, P2 acknowledges the clarification from the response post, and signals understanding of the trigger word in an attempt to ground the meaning of the word.

An example of how a reaction post can function to ground understanding of meaning in a less explicit manner, is found in the negotiation of 'helt kroppsscanning' (full body scan), in which P2 in the fourth

turn component is displaying understanding of the meaning of the word, rather than explicitly stating it.

Excerpt 12

- P1: Men ska som sagt till husläkaren och ska säga att jag vill göra en helkroppsscanning och börja med medicin.
Like I said, I'm going to the family doctor and will say that I want to get a full body scan and start using medicine.
- P2: Vad menar du med helkroppsscanning?
What do you mean by full body scan?
- P1: Alltså en slags röntgen där dom ser inflammationerna 😊
I mean a kind of x-ray where they can see the inflamed parts 😊
- P2: Jag har aldrig fått nått sånt, var nyfiken på vad det var 😊 Jag har däremot fått händerna undersökta med ultraljud.
I've never had that done, was curious as to what that was 😊 I've had my hands examined by ultrasound.

In Excerpt 12, P2 displays understanding of what the trigger word means, by adding that he or she never has had that procedure done. In the remainder of the discussion (not included in Excerpt 12), the trigger word is continuously used with the situated meaning established in the negotiation sequence above.

However, not all reaction posts display a relation to the response post by including acts of explicitly signalling understanding. In 10 of the 24 NONs where there is a reaction post, the fourth turn component in the WMN sequence does *not* contribute to or build on the meaning negotiation of the trigger word. Instead, in these cases, the fourth turn merely constitutes a relevant next turn in the main discussion on topic, which means that it involves a track shift from the meta-linguistic track (Track 2b) back to the main track dealing with the discussion on topic (Track 1). This corresponds to signalling positive evidence by presupposition of understand-

ing, using Clark's grounding taxonomy. Two figures are displayed below, which illustrate the difference between a sequence containing a reaction post which *both* grounds understanding on Track 2b and then returns to the original discussion on Track 1 (Figure 4), and a sequence in which the reaction post is only used to provide a relevant next turn without grounding understanding (Figure 5).

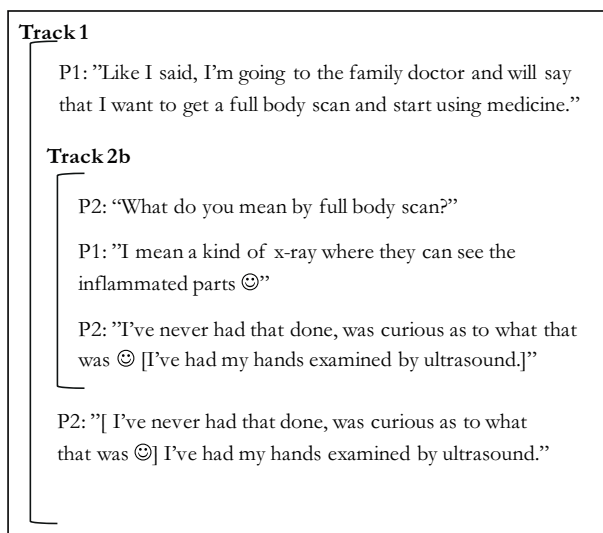


Figure 4: A reaction post grounding understanding and returning to original discussion

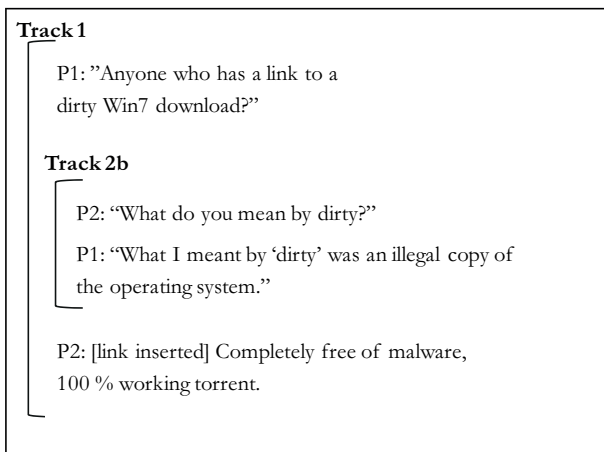


Figure 5: A reaction post returning to original discussion without explicitly grounding understanding

It should be noted that *none* of the 24 reaction posts are used *only* to ground understanding. Every single reaction post in the sample provides a contribution to the main discussion on topic, regardless of whether or not it also includes a grounding function.

4.3 METHODS FOR STUDYING SEQUENTIALITY IN DISCUSSION FORUM COMMUNICATION

As discussed in the previous section, 34 out of 38 NON sequences in the sample corpus display the ordinary T-I-R-(RR) pattern, which means that they consist of either three or four turn components. This section will focus on methods for studying sequentiality in asynchronous CMC, and specifically discuss how sequentiality can be analysed in discussion forum communication, by examining how the turns are related to each other within forum discussions.

4.3.1 TURN-TAKING IN DISCUSSION FORUM COMMUNICATION

Since the communication examined in this study is text-based asynchronous, multi-party CMC, several participants can simultaneously post messages in the discussion thread at one particular point in time, without the other participants being aware of this. When a participant is responding to a particular post, which at the time of writing is the last one appearing on that participant's screen, other participants' coinciding posts can interrupt the chronological flow of communication when messages are posted almost simultaneously in the discussion. As discussed in Section 2.3.2, this means that posts which are relationally adjacent (i.e. respond to or build on each other with regards to content) often end up not being chronologically adjacent in the flow of communication (Garcia & Jacobs, 1999; Gibson, 2009).

This phenomenon has been well studied in asynchronous CMC, and has traditionally been characterised as a problem of interactional incoherence (Herring, 1999). Therefore, identifying the four components of a T-I-R-(RR) sequence involves tracing how posts are relationally adjacent, and how they make up a sequence corresponding to this pattern within a more complex communication structure. The next section will address this issue, and analyse how posts may relate to each other, and how it is possible to trace manifest properties of addressivity and responsivity within posts as a way of recreating the sequentiality between the posts making up the T-I-R-(RR) sequence.

4.3.2 TRACING SEQUENTIALITY BY ANALYSING ASPECTS OF ADDRESSIVITY AND RESPONSIVITY

As discussed in Section 2.1, every utterance in interaction is a link in a communication chain, where each utterance is related to other utterances in different ways (Bakhtin, 1986). As a consequence, every utterance bears properties of addressivity and responsivity, which are forward-pointing and backward-pointing dialogical relations to other utterances in the communication event (Linell, 2009, p. 167). Analysing aspects of dialogicality is therefore a way of mapping out sequentiality relations between utter-

ances, as aspects of addressivity and responsivity display how utterances are related to each other in a particular sequence of communication.

As previously discussed, responding to a particular post in a discussion in an online forum is made complicated by the fact that the communication is both asynchronous and multi-party. Writing a new post directly below the last written post does not guarantee that these two posts will be displayed next to each other, since other posts may end up interrupting the intended flow of communication. As a result, participants engaging in discussion forum communication tend to develop strategies for overcoming this problem of interactional incoherence, making sure that it will be possible to interpret how posts relate to each other within the discussion thread (Gibson, 2009). Discussion posts thus bear traces of both responsive and projective aspects of dialogicality, which means that it is possible to analyse how they are a response to something previously written in the discussion and how they are produced in anticipation of being responded to in the discussion expected to follow in the future.

Next, four strategies of displaying responsivity towards past discussion posts and two strategies for displaying addressivity towards anticipated future posts will be presented. Later, Section 4.4 will describe how the various strategies for manifesting sequentiality relations were actually used in each of the four turn components of the T-I-R-(RR) structure in the NONs in the sample.

4.3.3 RESPONDING BY QUOTING OR DIRECT-REPLYING

One strategy for displaying *responsivity* towards a particular post involves explicitly quoting that entire previous post, or a part of it, indicating that the new post is responding to the previous post (see Figure 6). Many discussion forums have this feature built into the communication interface. Both Familjeliv and Flashback have quoting buttons placed next to every single discussion post in each thread, facilitating the quoting practice amongst the participants. Passagen Debatt does not have a quoting button, but instead uses a direct-reply function which makes it impossible to write “the next post” in a discussion thread without explicitly directing that post at a previous post (see Figure 7). On both Familjeliv and Flashback, it is

possible to contribute posts without explicitly directing them at someone, simply by writing in the dialogue box in the bottom of the screen.

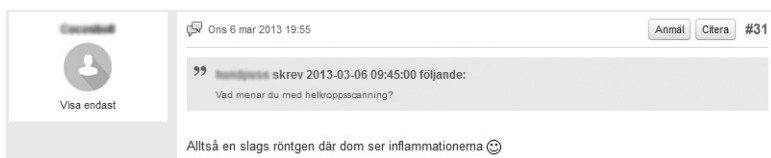


Figure 6: Responding to someone by including a quote of the original post and by including a second person pronoun (Familjeliv)

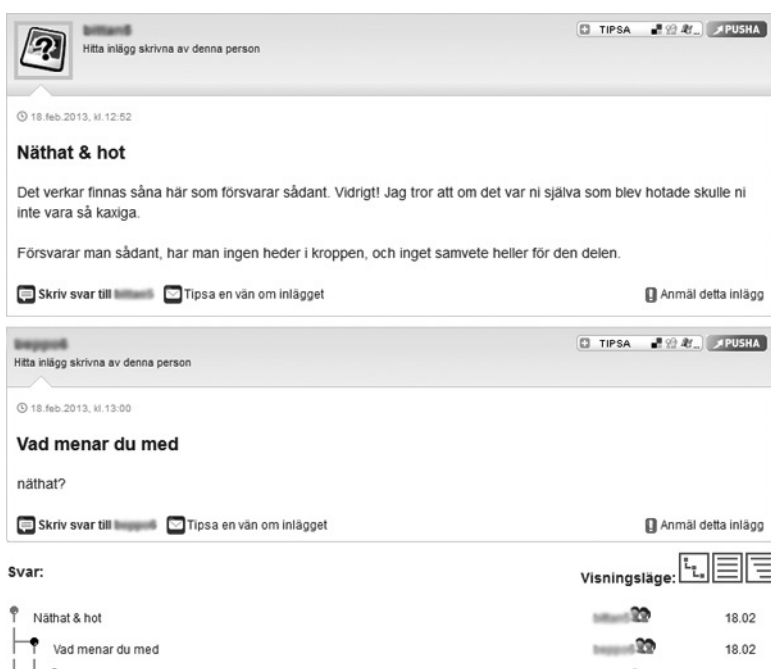


Figure 7: Responding to someone by using the direct-reply function and by including a second person pronoun (Passagen Debatt)

4.3.4 RESPONDING BY USE OF NAME OR PRONOUN

Another way of making explicit that a post is relating to someone else's post is by referring to that participant by name (alias) or by use of a pronoun, typically 'du' (you, second person singular) or 'ni' (you, second person plural). Examples of this way of responding to someone are displayed both in Figure 6 and Figure 7. By including a second person pronoun in a post, this post is explicitly linked to something already written by someone else. Even if many other posts end up intervening in the flow of communication between the original post and the new post responding to the original post, it is possible to trace how these two posts are relationally adjacent, even without being chronologically adjacent, as the name or pronoun is pointing backwards in the discussion. Of course, sometimes it can be unclear which referent 'you' is pointing to if the post is short and does not provide clues about responsivity in other ways. Instances of responsive uses of a second person pronoun occur when a participant is reacting to something previously written by someone else, and includes the pronoun as a reference to that prior post. One example is shown in the clarification request in Figure 7, in which the second participant contributing to the discussion asks "Vad menar du med n athat?" ("What do you mean by online expressions of hate?"). Responsive uses of second person pronouns also include other kinds of reactions, and not just clarification requests. An example of this is provided in Excerpt 13.

Excerpt 13

P: F rst s ger du att det  r fel och sen att det  r r tt. Mots gelsefullt!
First you say it is wrong and then that it is right. Contradictory!

In Excerpt 13, P is reacting to something previously written by 'you', and is thus responding to this particular person, but without explicitly inviting that person to respond, for example by including a question which would have been interpreted as a projective use of the second person pronoun (see Section 4.3.7 and 4.3.8).

4.3.5 RESPONDING BY ATTEMPTING TO TAKE “THE NEXT TURN”

As explained, there is no guarantee that an attempt to take the next turn in an ongoing discussion will lead to the new post being displayed as the next chronological post in the thread. However, participants get clues about the pace of a discussion from the time stamp on each post. If a participant is writing a new post in a slow, inactive thread, where nothing has been written for several hours, or even days, the likelihood increases that no one else is typing another post at the same time. In such cases, responding to the last post by attempting to take the next turn can often be a successful strategy of indicating that the new post is a response to the last post. Chronological adjacency is therefore one way for posts to display a relation of responsivity, although this strategy is beyond the control of the participants since they cannot know for sure that their post will end up in the intended spot. Figure 8 displays an example of chronological adjacency in a discussion thread.



Figure 8: Responding to someone by producing the next chronological turn and by producing the second part of an adjacency pair (Familjeliv)

4.3.6 RESPONDING BY PRODUCING THE SECOND PART OF AN ADJACENCY PAIR

When it is clear that a post constitutes the second part of an adjacency pair, there are manifest properties of responsivity in that post since the post is functionally dependent on a previous post. This means that it is evident that the post is a part of a two-part exchange and that it relates to the first part post, regardless of how far back in the chronological flow

of discussion that the first part post is located. An example of this is displayed in Figure 8, in which the first post contains a clarification request and the second post contains an answer. In this study, the most commonly found adjacency pair in the sample corpus is question-answer. By providing an answer post, a participant is explicitly responding to a prior post, and by reconstructing the adjacency structure, the analyst can find out how posts are related to each other in this respect.

4.3.7 ADDRESSING SOMEONE BY USE OF NAME OR PRONOUN

Discussion posts also have projective dialogical relations with other posts which indicate how they are intended to relate to other posts in a forward-pointing direction. By examining features of *addressivity* in discussion posts, it is possible to analyse how they are intended to be read and responded to by other participants. Many times in multi-party communication, posts are not addressed to *all* of the other participants engaged in the discussion. Often, posts are intended for particular addressees, which can be indicated by directing posts at these specific interlocutors by using their name or alias, or simply by using a second person pronoun.

An example of this form of addressivity is displayed in Figure 9. Projective uses of second person pronouns typically co-occur with a first part of an adjacency pair, such as a question or an invitation. By including the pronoun ‘you’ in a question, that question is explicitly addressed to a particular interlocutor. It is possible for a second person pronoun to simultaneously be used to indicate responsivity towards an earlier post and to indicate addressivity towards another post expected to follow in the future. This is the case for the use of the second person pronoun in Figure 9, since this particular post is both a response to something previously written by ‘you’ and an attempt to get ‘you’ to clarify the meaning of the targeted, problematic word in an expected future post. It is also theoretically possible for a second person pronoun to be used in a purely projective (but not responsive) manner, for example when urging another participant to write something without explicitly linking this to a particular previous post. An (invented) example of this may read “Lisa, could you comment on what kind of care patients receive when admitted to hospital

for stomach surgery?”, assuming that Lisa has not already written a post relating to the current discussion sequence.



Figure 9: Addressing someone by producing the first part of an adjacency pair and by use of second person pronoun (Flashback)

4.3.8 ADDRESSING SOMEONE BY PRODUCING THE FIRST PART OF AN ADJACENCY PAIR

When producing the first part of an adjacency pair, such as a greeting, invitation or question, there is an underlying anticipation that the addressed participant(s) will respond in the expected way, by producing the second part of the adjacency pair. In discussion forum communication, it is probably less likely than in face-to-face communication that first pair parts will be addressed as intended, since participants do not communicate synchronously with each other but instead come and go in and out of the discussion as they please. This issue has also been well studied in earlier research on asynchronous CMC (see Section 2.3.2). Nevertheless, producing the first part of an adjacency pair is one way for participants to address interlocutors in a projective manner, and therefore finding the first parts

of adjacency pairs is a way to trace manifest properties of addressivity. An example of this manifest property of addressivity is displayed in Figure 9 since post #2 includes a question.

4.4 SEQUENTIALITY IN NONS

This section will present the results of the sequentiality analysis of the NONs, by focusing on the manifest properties of responsivity and addressivity presented in Section 4.3. This section will thus account for the ways each of the four turn components in the NONs have been found to explicitly relate to each other within the sequence, with regards to backward-pointing responsivity and forward-reaching addressivity. As previously mentioned, 34 out of 38 NONs display the sequentiality pattern of T-I-R-(RR), and this section will focus on these 34 sequences. The remaining four sequences will be analysed in detail in Section 4.4.5.

4.4.1 ADDRESSIVITY IN TRIGGER POSTS

Naturally, a trigger post can contain both properties of responsivity and addressivity, as it is a post like any other in a discussion thread. Here, the focus will be on addressivity, as the trigger post is the first post in the T-I-R-(RR) sequence, and it is therefore more interesting to look at how this post relates forwards into the sequence, than backwards (responding to other posts outside the scope of the WMN). Out of the 34 NON sequences displaying the T-I-R-(RR) pattern, 19 trigger posts include use of the forward-addressing pronoun 'you', and 20 sequences contain the first part of an adjacency pair. In this manner, these trigger post display aspects of addressivity and signal that they need responding to by other participants. However, as mentioned above, the trigger post is a discussion post like any other up until the point of it becoming the trigger of a WMN, as signalled by an indicator post.

4.4.2 RESPONSIVITY AND ADDRESSIVITY IN INDICATOR POSTS

Looking at the responsivity features in the 34 indicator posts, it can be noted that 32 contain the pronoun ‘you’ manifesting that the post is responding to a particular addressee, namely the author of the trigger post. This is unsurprising given that several of the search strings used to find potential WMN sequences in this study include the pronoun ‘you’. Furthermore, 20 indicator posts are responsive in the way that they constitute the second part of an adjacency pair, i.e. respond to the first part of the adjacency pair from the trigger post. As described above, 20 of the trigger posts contain the first part of an adjacency pair, almost always a question on topic, and all of them receive attention in the indicator post.

21 of 34 indicator posts display responsivity towards the trigger post by being the next chronological turn. 17 of the indicator posts explicitly point to the trigger post by quoting it (on Familjeliv and Flashback) and 5 of the indicator posts are so called direct-replies using the built-in function on one of the discussion forums (Passagen Debatt).

As presented above, most of the indicator posts display one or several aspects of responsivity. In the sample, only one indicator post displays none of the responsivity traits analysed in this study. This occurs in the negotiation of ‘handlov’ (heel of the hand), a WMN sequence which was previously used as an example to illustrate another point in Section 4.2.2. In Excerpt 14, the consecutive ID numbers assigned to each post by the discussion forum are included, as well as the time stamps of each post, to illustrate the lack of manifest properties of responsivity in this particular indicator post.

Excerpt 14

#22, 10:50 P1: Mina kloka vänner.... Gör man kom-
pressionerna med handloven + hand-
loven eller två fingrar + handloven?
Älskar när jag hittar olika version-
er på allt....
*My wise friends... Do you perform
the compressions using the heel of
the hand + the heel of the hand or*

*two fingers + the heel of the hand?
Love it when I find different ver-
sions of everything...*

#31, 11:11 P2: Förstår inte..vaddå handlov?
*Don't understand.. what do you mean
heel of the hand?*

The indicator post in Excerpt 14 does not include a quote of the trigger post, nor does it contain a name or pronoun addressing any particular participant (although the translated version does). It does not constitute the next chronological turn in the discussion thread, and it could not have been intended as such, judging from the time stamps on the posts between the trigger post and the indicator post. The only thing connecting the trigger and indicator posts in this particular instance is the repetition of the trigger word 'handlov' (heel of the hand).

All of the 34 indicator posts in the sample contain the same projective aspect of addressivity, since they all constitute the first part of an adjacency pair. This is because every indicator post in the sample contains a clarification request, namely one of the variants of the utterance construction "What/How do you mean (by) X?", which in itself always constitutes the first part of an adjacency pair, intended to be responded to by someone.

4.4.3 RESPONSIVITY AND ADDRESSIVITY IN RESPONSE POSTS

Turning to the dialogical features of the response posts, it can be noted that these posts contain the most responsivity features of the four turn components in the T-I-R-(RR) sequence. Here, 26 of 34 response posts contain a quote of the indicator post, making explicit that these posts are responding to the clarification request put forward in the indicator posts (Familjeliv and Flashback). Five of the 34 response posts have been made using the direct-reply function provided by the discussion interface of one of the discussion forums (Passagen Debatt). In this way, a total of 31 out of 34 response post explicitly point out and respond to the indicator post by quoting or direct-replying to it.

Other responsive features found in the response posts are that nine include the pronoun 'you' specifically addressing the participant who issued the clarification request in the indicator post. 26 response posts make up the next chronological turn compared to the indicator turn. All of the 34 response posts display the responsive feature of being the second part of an adjacency pair, since they in themselves target the clarification request in the indicator turn and provide clarification as a response.

When it comes to projective aspects of dialogicality, fewer markers of forward-reaching addressivity are identified than backward-pointing responsivity. Only three response posts constitute the first part of an adjacency pair. Clearly, the response posts in the 34 NONs contain more aspects of responsivity than of addressivity. This is in line with what could be expected, as a response post is elicited to provide a clarifying response in order to solve a communicative issue of non-understanding.

4.4.4 RESPONSIVITY AND ADDRESSIVITY IN REACTION POSTS

Moving on to the fourth turn component of the T-I-R-(RR) sequence, it first needs to be noted that only 24 of the 34 NONs contain a reaction to the response post. Out of these 24 NONs, 16 reaction posts contain an explicit quote of the response post, and three are made using the direct-reply function. Nine out of 24 sequences contain the pronoun 'you', specifically addressing the participant who made the response post. 15 of the reaction posts are produced as the next chronological turn, i.e. immediately after the response post. Nine of the reaction posts contain the second part of an adjacency pair. Three of these are responding to the questions raised in three of the response posts. The other six reaction posts are addressing questions asked earlier in the sequence, i.e. questions that were asked in the trigger posts (see Figure 10). There are fewer markers of addressivity than of responsivity in reaction posts. For example, only five reaction posts constitute the first part of an adjacency pair.

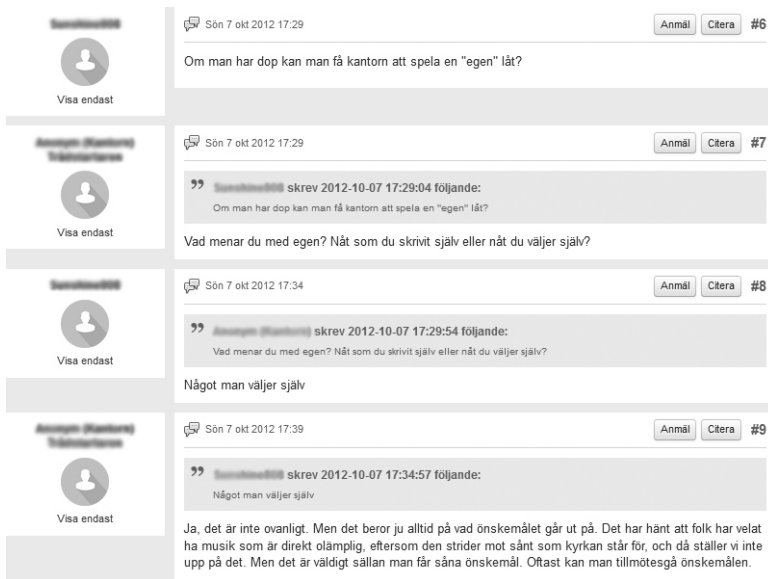


Figure 10: Reaction post (#9) constituting the second part of an adjacency pair, answering question from Trigger post (#6) (Familjeliv)

4.4.5 DEVIANT CASES OF SEQUENTIALITY IN NONS

From the sequential pattern of T-I-R-(RR) which is commonly found in repair of instances of non-understanding, it seems clear that there is an expectation from P2 manifested in the indicator post that P1 will provide meta-linguistic clarification in a later turn. The indicator post displays a responsive dialogical relation to the trigger post, and in a sense creates the trigger post by pointing out the need for clarification. The indicator post simultaneously displays a projective dialogical relation to a future, expected turn, as it contains a question addressed to a particular addressee ‘you’ (P1). There is an expectation that ‘you’ will come back to the discussion and provide more information, to actively take part in the repair which will eventually clear up the issue of non-understanding. In most of the NONs in this sample, this expectation is met, but in four NONs,

clarification is not provided in P1's response post in the third turn of the sequence. Sidnell (2013) writes:

“Of course, a recipient sometimes responds in a way that might not have been predicted by the prior turn, or, indeed, does not respond at all. What can we make of such examples? As it turns out, such deviant cases often provide the strongest evidence for the analysis because it is here that we see the participants' own orientations to the normative structures most clearly.” (p.80)

The four NONs which deviate from the pattern by not providing the requested meta-linguistic clarification in the response post will be treated as deviant cases in this study, and will therefore be described in more detail in this section, focusing on how the participants orient to the normative structures by dealing with the unexpected behaviour of their interlocutors.¹⁸

REFUSAL TO MAKE META-LINGUISTIC SHIFT IN RESPONSE POST

In two cases, P1 refuses to provide the meta-linguistic clarification requested in the indicator post by P2. This happens in the negotiations of 'påhittade' (made up/fictitious) and 'självständig' (independent), which will be described in more detail below.

The WMN of 'påhittade' (made up/fictitious) starts out like the other sequences originating in non-understanding. The trigger word is pointed out in an indicator post requesting clarification. However, the pattern is broken when P1 in his or her response post does not provide the requested meta-linguistic clarification. Instead, P1 appears reluctant to clarify the meaning of the trigger word, and responds “I guess I mean what I say” which is not interpreted as a cooperative attempt to clear up the issues of non-understanding regarding the meaning of the trigger word. This refusal to provide the expected clarification is openly addressed by several other participants. P1 makes another response post, which contains both

18 The deviant cases of NONs are distinguished from non-instances of WMNs in that there is a meta-linguistic shift present in the NONs, but it is not provided in the third turn, as is expected in the T-I-R-(RR) sequence normally found in repair of non-understanding.

grammatical and spelling errors, and which appears to confuse the other participants even more, not just when it comes to the intended meaning of the trigger word in the WMN, but also with regards to the contextual scenario described by P1. A side-sequence clearing up a spelling error is launched, and some participants make comments about P1's refusal to clear up the details of his or her story.

Excerpt 15

- P1: Ja påhittade räkningar vägrar jag ju såklart betala är det konstigt på något sätt .
Yes of course I refuse to pay made up invoices is that strange in some way?
- P2: Vad menar du med påhittade räkningar ? Har du en skuld hos fogden ?
What do you mean by made up invoices? Are you in debt with the Swedish Enforcement Authority?
- P1: Antar att jag menar det jag säger såklart(-:
I guess I mean what I say of course (-:
- P1: Hade men byt ut faran mot räkningarna så ska du se resultatet .
Used to but substitute the danger with the invoices and you will see the result.
- P2: Ursäkta men jag förstår inte vad du skriver ? Byt ut faran ??
Excuse me, but I don't understand what you are writing? Substitute the danger?
- P3: Hopplös tråd gillar inte när TS inte förklarar ordentligt utan man ska gissa sig till vad hon/han menar.
Hopeless thread don't like it when TS doesn't explain properly but wants us to guess what she/he means.
- P1: [Citerar P2] Sorry fakta ska det stå.
[Quotes P2] Sorry it should say facts.
- P4: Haha! Vilken rolig tråd... En TS som inte kan skriva och man får dessutom inga rediga svar.. Bara flum...

Haha! What a funny thread... A TS who cannot spell and you don't get any clear answers.. Just fuzziness...

- P5: Denna TS har för vana att då och då skapa trådar som ingen begriper och som hon (?) sen inte ger någon mer förklaring till och så vanligen avslutas de med att TS vägrar svara på något mer av en eller annan anledning.
This TS is known for occasionally creating threads that nobody understands and that she (?) doesn't explain, so usually they end with TS refusing to answer any questions for some reason.

The reactions from several of the other participants in Excerpt 15 show that there is a normative structure in place, expecting that P1 will provide the requested clarification in the response turn, following the sequence T-I in a case of non-understanding. When the expected clarification is not provided in the response turn, this is overtly addressed making the sequence a deviant case, revealing the participants' own orientations to the normative structures of what constitutes the expected behaviour.

At this point in the discussion, P1 has still not responded to what he or she means by the trigger word. Next, one participant re-uses the word in a form of comprehension check directed at P1, in another attempt to elicit a response containing a meta-linguistic clarification.

Excerpt 16

- P6: Okej, så något företag har skickat ut påhittade räkningar till dig, som du inte har betalat men inte heller bestridit, och nu har ärendet gått till kronofogden. Är det så det har gått till?
Okay, so some company has sent you made up invoices, which you have not paid, but which you have not contested either, and now the matter has become a case at the enforcement services. Is this how it all happened?

P1: eller skriver överenskomna summor det roliga är att jag vet inte om några överenskommelser eller vad det avser och har inte skrivit sådana i heller.

or writes agreed-upon amounts the funny thing is that I'm not aware of any agreements or what it concerns and have not written such things either.

The participants have still not made any progress beyond the indicator post regarding the situated meaning of the trigger word, as P1 has not provided a response post clearing up the issue of non-understanding concerning what the trigger word means in the current context. However, a few turns later, P1 quotes an earlier post commenting on his or her unhelpful behaviour and contests that he or she has not been clear about what is meant.

Excerpt 17

P1: Jag sa ju det det är räningar som sägs vara överenskomna och jag har ingen aning har dock inte gjort några överenskommelser och vet heller inte vad det avser.

I did say they are invoices which are said to be agreed-upon and I have no idea have not made any agreements and don't know what they are about.

P5: Varför har du då inte valt att bestrida räknin-garna? Man kan inte bara låta räkningar ligga, inte ens om de är felaktiga, för då hamnar det ju hos kronofogden till slut.

Why haven't you contested the invoices then? You can't just ignore invoices, even if they are faulty, because they will end up at the Enforcement Service eventually.

In Excerpt 17, P1 finally touches upon aspects of meaning potential of the word 'påhittade' (made up/fictitious). It has to do with agreements which are said to be arranged but that have not been agreed upon by both

parties, i.e. the arrangements do not correspond to reality, according to P1. This is in fact fairly close to the dictionary meaning of ‘made up’ or ‘fictitious’, and the issue of non-understanding of the word likely has to do with P1’s creative use of the word in the current conversational context. The word ‘påhittade’ (made up/fictitious) is typically not used to describe invoices.

In the response to P1 in Excerpt 17, P5 displays enough understanding of the scenario to produce a follow-up question regarding the topic. P5 substitutes the word ‘påhittade’ (made up/fictitious) with ‘felaktiga’ (faulty). Beyond this point in the discussion, the word ‘påhittade’ is not used again. Instead, the word ‘felaktiga’ is used in the remainder of the discussion to refer to the erroneous invoices.

This sequence clearly breaks the T-I-R-(RR) pattern, which seems to result from P1’s refusal to shift track and move the discussion onto the meta-linguistic level and provide the requested clarification concerning the situated meaning of the trigger word. Several participants overtly address this refusal to provide clarification, and they collaboratively keep asking P1 in different ways to clarify what he or she means. In the end, the other participants are successful in eliciting a response concerning the meaning of the trigger word, and the WMN is concluded. It ends in consensus that the word ‘påhittade’ is not the best word to describe the erroneous invoices, and another word is used instead.

Another case in which a participant refuses to provide meta-linguistic clarification in a response turn is found in the WMN of the word ‘självständig’ (independent). Although it displays the sequential order T-I-R-RR, there is no meta-linguistic track shift in the third turn, which is normally required for the sequence to be considered a WMN. Similar to the last case, the person addressed with the clarification request does not track shift onto the meta-linguistic track in the response post, and hence does not address the meaning of the trigger word. Again, this is overtly addressed in the reaction to the response post in the fourth turn. Unlike in the WMN of ‘påhittade’, the meta-linguistic shift comes in the *reaction turn*, by a third person entering into the WMN clarifying the meaning of the word in P1’s place. Since there *is* a meta-linguistic shift, although this does not come until the fourth turn, this sequence is still considered a WMN but is treated as a deviant case.

The discussion thread in which the WMN of 'självständig' is located is about one participant's ideal woman. P1 starts off by describing her as independent yet attached or affectionate, which another participant appears to interpret as a kind of contradiction.¹⁹

Excerpt 18

P1: Min önskekvinnna. Hon ska vara självständig men ändå tillgiven. Hon ska vara utmanande men bara för mig. Hon ska ha värme men visa kyla och avståndstagande mot utomstående. Hon ska vara en hemmafru som pysslar om hemmet och gör det hemtrevligt som bara en kvinna kan.

My ideal woman. She is independent but yet attached/affectionate. She is alluring but only towards me. She is warm but distanced towards outsiders. She is a housewife who looks after the home and makes it homely the way only a woman can.

P2: Vad menar du med självständig men ändå tillgiven? Vad lägger du in för kriterier vad gäller självständighet hos en kvinna kontra tillgivenhet? Det är jag nyfiken på.

What do you mean by independent but yet attached/affectionate? What criteria do you put into independence in a woman, compared to attachment/affection? I'm curious about this.

P1: Att min önskekvinnna ska ha dessa egenskaper. Jag vill ha tillbaks den trygghet man hade som barn av att ha en kvinna helt för sig själv och som man vet känner något alldeles extra för en. Jag är uppväxt utan någon fadersgestalt och hade endast kvinnor i hemmet när jag växte upp. Det kan vara dessa känslor som kommer upp när jag beskrev hur jag vill ha en kvinna.

¹⁹ The word 'tillgiven' is difficult to translate into English. There is an aspect of submissiveness in the word, which may be missing from any direct translation of it into English. When translating 'tillgiven' into 'affectionate', this aspect goes missing, which is why it is here translated both into 'attached' and 'affectionate'.

I mean that my ideal woman possess these qualities. I want to return to the security one got as a child from having a woman all to oneself and who you know feel something extra for you. I grew up without a father figure and was only surrounded by women in my home growing up. It may be these feelings that emerge when I describe what I want in a woman.

P3: en självständig kvinna = en kvinna som tjänar egna pengar och kan ta hand om sig själv vilket krockar med din önskan om en hemmafru för en hemmafru får DU ta hand om mer än vad hon tar hand om dig.

an independent woman = a woman who makes her own money and can take care of herself which clashes with your wish to have a housewife, since YOU would be looking after a housewife more than she would look after you.

In Excerpt 18, many of the criteria on P1's list are listed in pairs, where the first element in the pair is in some way contradicting the second element since they are contrasted with each other by the word 'but'. This applies to the first criterion, about being independent but yet attached/affectionate. P2 requests clarification about the meaning of the word 'självständig' (independent), which he or she seems to regard as difficult to combine with the word 'tillgiven' (affectionate/attached). Here, it seems that there are aspects of meaning potentials of the two words which P2 cannot merge into one personality trait in a woman. P2 hints that the two words pull into different directions, that they are opposites.

P2 asks P1 to provide meta-linguistic clarification about the meaning of the trigger word, which is signalled in the indicator post. However, P1 does not shift track in the response post. The entire response post from P1 is on Track 1, discussing the topic of the thread, not dealing with the meaning of the particular trigger word. Even though P1 attends to the indicator post by replying to it, there is nothing said about the meaning of the trigger word, which means that there is no meta-linguistic contribution in the response post. P1 simply repeats that these are the qualities he is

looking for in a woman. He does not further explain what he thinks these qualities entail, or what the words he is using to describe them mean.

When the meta-linguistic clarification request is not attended to on Track 2b, another participant enters into the discussion and puts forward an explanation of the trigger word 'självständig' (independent). At that point, a definition-like explanation of the meaning of the word 'självständig' is provided. P3 touches upon aspects of meaning potential in the sense that being independent means making money and being able to support oneself.

Both of the WMNs which break the mould for what is the ordinary sequential pattern in cases of non-understanding presented in this section manifest the expectations of what is considered "normal behaviour" when engaging in a WMN sequence dealing with issues of non-understanding. When the expected meta-linguistic clarification is not provided in the third turn, the participants orient to this lack of clarification by explicitly addressing it in the discussion. In one case, many participants collaboratively keep trying to get P1 to track shift and provide the requested meta-linguistic clarification. In the other case, a third participant takes it upon him- or herself to provide the requested meta-linguistic clarification, when P1's response post does not do so. These sequences display a deviant pattern due to the participants' unexpected behaviour, but they still constitute WMNs since they do contain a meta-linguistic shift, just not in the third turn component (as expected).

BEING VAGUE IN RESPONSE POST, PLAYING ON WORDS

The two WMNs presented in the previous section were treated as deviant cases since there was no meta-linguistic shift in the third turn. Next, two other deviant cases will be described and analysed. In these cases, there are attempts to track shift in the third turn, but they are not fully successful. Again, the failure to track shift and provide meta-linguistic clarification is overtly addressed in the discussion that follows, highlighting how participants orient to the normative structures by dealing with the unexpected behaviour of their interlocutors.

The first WMN is about the word 'evighetsgaranti' (eternity guarantee) which is used in a religious discussion where one participant uses it as a promotional piece on why believing in God is a good thing.

Excerpt 19

P1: Tron på Gud är som en utgångspunkt för allt jag är med om. Inte som en vag gissning utan som det mest verkliga jag vet: livet. Gud som livets ursprung och mål är stabila grejer, ja som jag kan se den enda hållbara utgångspunkten för livet. Evighetsgaranti medföljer ju. Länge leve livet!

Faith in God is the starting point for everything in my life. Not as a vague guess, but as the most real thing I know: life. God as the origin and goal of life, that is stable stuff, yes as I can see it the only starting point of life. And eternity guarantee comes with it. Long live life!

P2: Orsak, mening och evigheten. Det är den där vissheten om orsaken, meningen och evigheten som känns märklig för mig. Vad då evighetsgaranti ? Garanti??? Varför är det så säkert att det finns en orsak eller en mening? DET är tankekonstruktioner om något.

Cause, meaning and eternity. It is the part about cause, meaning and eternity which seems odd to me. What do you mean eternity guarantee? Guarantee??? Why is it assumed that there is a cause or a meaning? THAT is just a construction of thought, if anything.

P1: Vissheten känns märklig för dig skriver du. Fast jag skulle tycka det var ännu mer märkligt om en människa inte var förvissad om sin egen tro. Evighetsgaranti var bara en liten lek med våra ord, ta det inte så bokstavligt.

You write that certainty feels odd to you. But I would find it even more odd if a human being was not certain of their own faith. Eternity guarantee was only a play on words, don't take it literally.

P2: Hur ska jag ta ordet evighetsgaranti om inte bokstavligt? Du säger ju att du är förvissad. Är du förvissad (känner att du har garanti) för att du ska få evigt liv, eller är du inte förvissad om det? Eller är du bara förvissad om att du tror att du kommer att få evigt liv? Det är faktiskt en viktig distinktion.

How should I understand the word eternity guarantee if not literally? You say you are sure. Are you sure (feel you have a guarantee) that you will have eternal life, or are you not sure about that? Or are you only sure of that you think you will have eternal life? There is an important distinction between the two.

P1: Tack för dina synpunkter. Orden är allas vårt redskap att skapa begriplighet med allvar och lek och den här gången blev mitt försök med evighetsgaranti ingen hit. Beklagas det men jag har ingen möjlighet att fortsätta diskussionen ikväll.

Thank you for sharing your opinions. Words are tools for us all to make sense both in seriousness and in play and this time my attempt with eternity guarantee failed. I'm sorry about that but I'm unable to continue this discussion tonight.

In the WMN in Excerpt 19, P2 requests clarification about the trigger word 'evighetsgaranti' (eternity guarantee), indicating the need to specifically address the meaning of this word. By repeating the word 'garanti' (guarantee) immediately after the word 'evighetsgaranti' in the indicator post, P2 is drawing attention to the meaning of this particular word. P1 responds to the indicator post, but does not enter into a WMN, since he or she provides no meta-linguistic clarification. Instead, P1 explicitly

states that the situated meaning of the word ‘evighetsgaranti’ should *not* be interpreted literally. Note that P1 simply acknowledges that the word *has* a literal interpretation, but that this does not apply here, in this particular situation. This is not the same as expressing what is *not* in a word’s meaning potential, i.e. saying what a word does not or cannot mean. On the contrary, P1 is implicitly saying that the literal meaning of the word *is* in the meaning potential of the word, but that it is not the correct sense in which the word should be interpreted at this precise moment in time. In fact, perhaps the word should not be interpreted at all, since P1 states that it only was “a play on words”. The comment about “play on words” constitutes a meta-linguistic comment, displaying meta-linguistic awareness on behalf of that participant.

P2 does not appear satisfied with the response in the third turn, which may be a result of the vagueness in the attempt to provide clarification in the response from P1. In the fourth turn, the reaction to the response post, P2 repeats the clarification request. Again, P2 explicitly states that he or she wants know what the word ‘evighetsgaranti’ means in this situation. P2 indicates that he or she can think of no other interpretation of the word than the literal one and is thereby making explicit that ‘evighetsgaranti’ must mean something very close to a literal interpretation of the word, i.e. something along the lines of “a promise that something will last forever”. The repetition of the meta-linguistic clarification request in the fourth turn is responded to by P1, but yet again this response post fails to provide meta-linguistic clarification about the meaning of the trigger word. Instead, P1 essentially retracts the use of it altogether.

Again, this deviant case shows that participants explicitly orient to otherwise invisible normative structures when their interlocutors behave in an unexpected manner. When a response post which is expected to provide meta-linguistic clarification instead contains vagueness or word play, the participant requesting clarification is essentially left without a proper response and therefore adopts alternative strategies for coping with the still persisting issues of non-understanding. In this case, we see that both of the strategies from the two deviant cases described earlier are employed, i.e. repeating the clarification request and providing an answer by yourself as to what the word can (must) mean in the situated context.

It should be mentioned that the WMN concerning ‘eternity guarantee’, which is here considered a deviant case of NONs, could also have been analysed as a borderline case of a WMN originating in disagreement (DIN). Since it is difficult to unequivocally tell from P1’s response post whether the indicator post is issuing a meta-linguistic clarification request or a meta-linguistic objection, it is difficult to absolutely determine if the WMN is originating in non-understanding and thus addressing an issue of insufficient understanding, or if it originates in disagreement about what constitutes an appropriate use of the word in the particular conversational context. This particular WMN thus constitutes a borderline case between non-understanding (NON) and disagreement (DIN), but has here been analysed as a deviant case of non-understanding.

Yet another example of a deviant case of NONs containing word play in a response post is found in the WMN of the word ‘mannar’ (men/menfolk). The discussion is about a person, P1, who wants to start up a tattoo removal business abroad and who has a few questions regarding the funding of that business.

Excerpt 20

P1: får jag bidrag av mannar ifrån Sverige om jag öppnar upp företaget utomlands, eller ska ja registrera företaget i Sverige o flyga runt (resebidragskostnader kan man få av försäkringskassan va?) så flyger man runt o tar bort tatueringar...

Will I get financial support from Swedish men/menfolk if I open up the company abroad, or should I register the company in Sweden and fly around (you can get travel grants from the Social Insurance Agency, I believe?) and then you fly around and remove tattoos...

P2: Vad menar du med **mannar**?

*What do you mean by **men (menfolk)**?*

P1: Jag menar givetvis män i skor.

Of course I mean men in shoes.

P2: Menar du alla män i riket som bär skor, eller vad? Går det inte lika bra att du får bidrag ifrån kvinnor i höga klackar?

Do you mean all men in the country who wear shoes, or what? Isn't financial support from women in high heels just as welcome?

In the second turn in Excerpt 20, P2 reacts to the use of the word 'mannar' (men/menfolk) and requests clarification in the indicator post. The indicator post comes directly after the trigger post, and there is no quote of the trigger post, but the trigger word is highlighted by the participant's own use of a bold font.

P1 responds to the indicator post, but employs a kind of word game instead of explicitly providing meta-linguistic clarification. Here, it is difficult to translate the original response post into English. When translated word for word 'män i skor' means 'men in shoes', but put together as a compound word 'mäniskor' means 'people' (although the correct Swedish spelling is 'människor'). In the response post, P1 is suggesting that 'mannar' means 'men in shoes', which could also be interpreted as 'people'. However, P1 is again making a kind of distinction between the gender neutral word 'människor' (people) which he could have used both in the trigger post and in the response post and the two word choices specifically focusing on men. What P1 appears to be asking, is if he or she will receive financial support from the Swedish government, i.e. the Swedish people, so explicitly asking about Swedish 'mannar' (men/menfolk) or 'män i skor' (men in shoes) seems to draw attention to a difference between the word choices foregrounding male citizens and the neutral 'människor' (people). This is also picked up in the reaction post, where P2 explicitly asks if financial support coming from women isn't just as welcome. At this point, P1 has been vague in the response post, by employing a play on words, and it is still not clear if 'mannar' (men/menfolk) should be interpreted as 'people' or 'male people'. In the reaction post, P2 makes the other, more specific clarification request, drawing attention to the distinction between male and female taxpayers. The reaction post indicates the need to stay on the meta-linguistic level, until sufficient understanding of the trigger word has been established. However, there is no uptake from P1 with regards to

the second clarification request. In fact, the reaction post is the very last post in the entire thread.

Again, in the fourth deviant case (Excerpt 20) we see yet another example of how a participant addresses unexpected behaviour from an interlocutor. When the requested meta-linguistic clarification is not provided, but the response post instead contains vagueness and word play, this issue is overtly addressed, and the clarification request is repeated. In this case, it is made more specific and simultaneously adds to the WMN of the trigger word, asking if it should be understood as ‘male people’ or just ‘people’.

4.4.6 SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS OF SEQUENTIALITY IN NONS

To summarise, this section has looked at the sequentiality patterns of NONs in the sample corpus and has shown how turns within the T-I-R-(RR) sequence relate to each other in various manifest ways, by analysing properties of responsivity (backward-pointing dialogicality) and addressivity (forward-reaching dialogicality). In the analyses, these properties have been used to identify how the four turn components in the sequence are tied together, and how they explicitly build on each other and thus make up a micro sequence within the overarching discussion. It has been shown that the trigger component (T) typically displays addressivity features by constituting the first part of an adjacency pair, and by including the pronoun ‘you’ to address a particular interlocutor. The indicator component (I) generally includes many markers of both responsivity and addressivity. In itself, it addresses a particular interlocutor by constituting the first part of an adjacency pair, since the indicator always includes a clarification request directed at the participant who produced the trigger post. The indicator post is also highly responsive in different ways. Markers of responsivity here include quoting the trigger post or making a direct-reply to it, constituting the second part of an adjacency pair, responding by use of name or second person pronoun and constituting the next chronological turn after the trigger post.

The response component (R) typically includes the most responsivity features of the four turn components, by quoting the indicator post or making a direct-reply to it, by constituting the second part of an adjacency

pair (in every single instance, since the response post in itself is an answer to the clarification request in the indicator post), by being the next chronological turn after the indicator post and by responding by use of name or second person pronoun. The response component displays few markers of addressivity other than addressing the author of the indicator post by second person pronoun. In only three out of 34 instances, the response post constitutes the first part of an adjacency pair.

The reaction component (RR) also displays many features of responsivity, for example by including a quote of the response post or by direct-replying to it, by constituting the second part of an adjacency pair, by being the next chronological turn after the response post and by responding to a particular participant by use of name or second person pronoun. Sometimes, the reaction component includes features of addressivity, by constituting the first part of an adjacency pair or by including a forward-addressing second person pronoun.

It should be noted that despite the theoretical distinction between responsive and projective uses of second person pronouns (respectively indicating responsivity and addressivity), in this particular study these uses frequently overlap, as there are only a few instances of purely responsive uses of second person pronouns (corresponding to posts containing responses or reactions to something written by 'you' which did not simultaneously include a question or invitation summoning 'you' to respond) and no instances of purely projective uses.

Table 13 summarises the findings from the sequentiality analysis of the 34 NONs.

Table 13: Manifest properties of responsivity and addressivity identified in each of the turn components of the 34 NONs in the sample corpus

	R1: Quote or direct-reply	R2: 2 nd person pronoun	R3: Next turn	R4: 2 nd part of adjacency pair	A1: 2 nd person pronoun	A2: 1 st part of adjacency pair	Total
Trigger	-	-	-	-	19 (56 %)	20 (59 %)	34
Indicator	22 (65 %)	32 (94 %)	21 (62 %)	20 (59 %)	32 (94 %)	34 (100 %)	34
Response	31 (91 %)	9 (26 %)	26 (76 %)	34 (100 %)	9 (26 %)	3 (9 %)	34
Reaction to response	19 (79 %)	9 (38 %)	15 (63 %)	9 (38 %)	9 (38 %)	5 (21 %)	24

To conclude, four instances of NONs in the sample have been identified as deviant with regards to the sequentiality structure, as these four instances do not display the traditional sequential pattern of T-I-R-(RR) normally found in repair of non-understanding. The four deviant sequences have been analysed in great detail to investigate the participants' own orientations to the normative structures of what constitutes the expected behaviour in WMNs originating in non-understanding. The findings indicate that when the expected meta-linguistic clarification is not provided in the third turn component of a NON sequence, the participants overtly address this as a communicative issue in itself and employ a number of strategies for dealing with the absent (expected) meta-linguistic clarification.

4.5 SEMANTIC OPERATIONS IN NONS

As previously discussed in Section 2.1.6, Norén and Linell (2007) suggest that situated meaning is established through semantic operations which take linguistic resources with meaning potentials combined with contexts as input and produce situated meaning as output. This section will look into how such semantic operations work in each of the four turn components of the 34 WMNs displaying the T-I-R-(RR) pattern. The focus of this section will be on patterns and regularities found in the ways participants engaged in WMNs combine semantic properties associated with words with aspects of context when negotiating meaning in cases of non-understanding. In a NON sequence, it is possible to contribute to the meaning negotiation in all of the four turn components, although the main part of the negotiation is expected to follow in the response post

where the meta-linguistic clarification typically is provided. The ways in which input is contributed to the meaning negotiation in each of the turn components will be presented in the following sections.

4.5.1 SEMANTIC OPERATIONS IN TRIGGER POSTS

As mentioned, the trigger post is retroactively recognised as problematic by the indicator post which points out the issue of non-understanding. Even though the trigger post is not part of a negotiation sequence as it is written, it is still possible to find clues about the intended situated meaning of the trigger word in the trigger post. This is the case in eight of the 34 NONs. In these cases, the participants writing the trigger post have in different ways touched upon aspects of the meaning potential of the words which later becomes the target of a WMN sequence. This section will discuss ways of proposing meaning in the trigger post, through acts of contrasting the trigger word with other concepts. Four of the eight sequences will be used to illustrate these ways of proposing meaning in the trigger post by acts of contrasting.

One example of when aspects of meaning potential are mentioned in the trigger post to the (later) negotiated word is the following, from the WMN of the word 'slät' (smooth). This example has previously been used to illustrate the notion of a meta-linguistic shift in Section 3.2.1.

Excerpt 21

P1: Har du testat nu när hon är lite äldre med riktigt slät mat? Min äldsta tog väldigt lång tid på sig att äta mat med lite konsistens. Yngsta åt plockmat direkt. Barn är olika.

Have you tried now that she is a little older to feed her completely smooth food? It took a very long time before my oldest could eat food with a little texture. My youngest ate finger food immediately. Children are different.

P2: Vad menar du med slät mat?

What do you mean by smooth food?

P1: Inga som helst bitar. Burkmat à la 6-månaders eller hemlagat med liknande konsistens. Det är ju inte säkert att det är smaken hon reagerar mot, kan vara konsistensen.

No lumps whatsoever. Similar to canned food for six-month-olds or home-cooked food with a similar texture. It may not be the taste she is reacting to, it could be the texture.

P2: Jaha, nä det var ett tag sen jag testade sån. Fårköpa och testa den i morgon.

Ah, no it has been a while since I tried that kind. Willbuy and try tomorrow.

As discussed in Section 3.2.1, the trigger of this particular WMN is the expression ‘smooth food’, but P1 is touching upon aspects of meaning potential of the word ‘smooth’ both in the trigger post, and in the response post. Here, the focus is only on the first turn in the sequence, the trigger post. In the trigger post, P1 is contrasting the word ‘smooth’ with the expression ‘a little texture’. By making a contrast using this latter concept, P1 is drawing attention to an aspect of the meaning potential of the word ‘smooth’ which has to do with lack of texture. In this context, the meaning applies to the texture of food, but the aspect of meaning potential being suggested can presumably also be applied to other concepts, such as for example surfaces of different kinds. In the trigger post, P1 thus draws upon an aspect of meaning potential of the word ‘smooth’ by contrasting it with another concept highlighting differences between the two concepts.

In another NON sequence, P1 makes a meta-linguistic contribution in the trigger post by rephrasing his or her own question, substituting the (soon-to-be) trigger word for another, contrasting word meaning roughly the same thing.

Excerpt 22

P1: Jag undrar vad man får för omvårdnad om man ligger inne på sjukhus för t.e.x blindtarmsinflammation, gallsten, tarmvred, bukspottsinfektion eller någon inflammatorisk tarmsjukdom

osv. Vad får man för hjälp för att ligga inne på sjukhus för magsjukdomar? Är väldigt rädd för sjukhus.

I wonder what kind of care you get when you're hospitalised for appendicitis, gallstone, ileus, inflammation of the pancreas or inflammation of the intestines. What kind of help do you get when you're in the hospital due to stomach illness? I'm very afraid of hospitals.

In Excerpt 22, P1 phrases the question in two ways, using two different words to describe the same thing, both 'omvårdnad' (care) and 'hjälp' (help). Therefore, P1 is addressing an aspect of meaning potential of the word 'omvårdnad' (care) which is something that is shared with the 'hjälp' (help). The two concepts are used to refer to the same kind of action. P1 does not specify further what is meant by the word 'hjälp' (help) in this context.

The two acts of contrasting found in the WMN of 'slät' (smooth) and 'omvårdnad' (care) are different since the former is used to highlight a difference in meaning potential between two contrasted words, whereas the latter is used to highlight a similarity in meaning potential between two contrasted words. It is important to stress that it is how the trigger post is made relevant in the next turn (the indicator post) which determines if two mentioned concepts are interpreted as similar (as near synonyms, such as in a paraphrase) or distinct from each other (highlighting the differences between them). This can be illustrated in the following sequence, in which P1 appears to be using the trigger word to contrast it with a near synonym, but where P2 seems to interpret the two words as highlighting a difference in meaning potential.

Excerpt 23

P1: Jag skäms så för en sak... Jag har ett så stökigt och smutsigt hem att jag inte längre vågar lämna min bostad på dagarna för jag är rädd att fastighetsägaren/skötaren ska knacka på, gå in med nyckel och upptäcka hur det ser ut.

I'm so embarrassed about one thing... I have such a messy and dirty home that I no longer dare to leave during the days because I'm worried the manager of the building will knock on the door and then enter using his key and discover the state of the place.

P2: Hur menar du med smutsigt? Och har du haft det så här innan?

How do you mean by dirty? And has your home been like this before?

P1: Stökigt, smutsigt, gammal skit överallt.. ser knappt golvet någonstans.. va jag skäms :(*Messy, dirty, old shit everywhere... can barely see the floor... am so embarrassed :(*

P2: Förstår att det känns jobbigt, jag har också haft det så i perioder. Det blir så mycket också att man inte kan fixa allting för det tar enorm tid och ork.

I understand it feels difficult, I've also been like that sometimes. It piles up and fixing it all takes an enormous amount of time and effort.

In the WMN in Excerpt 23, P1 complains in the trigger post that his or her home is (both) messy and dirty, and that he or she is embarrassed about this fact. P2 requests clarification about the meaning of the word 'dirty'. Perhaps, when used together with 'messy' (which would normally be used to describe an unordered, untidy home), 'dirty' may refer to something *else* which is not already covered by the word 'messy'. P2 specifically requests clarification about the word 'dirty'. It could be that P2 in this case is interpreting the two words next to each other as highlighting a difference between the words, and that P2 therefore needs clarification as to what the addition of the word 'dirty' means in this particular context. This would be in line with the *principle of contrast*, postulated by E. V. Clark (1993), which suggests that a difference in form marks a difference in meaning.

In the response post, P1 repeats the words already used in the trigger post, and also adds that the floor is cluttered with shit. After the third turn,

it appears to be clear that P1 is using the two words in a similar way, to describe his or her untidy home. There does not seem to be any apparent difference between ‘messy’ and ‘dirty’ in the way the words are used in the trigger post, which perhaps there could have been (if they had been used as a deliberate contrast to each other). ‘Messy’ could have been enough to cover the clutter aspect, i.e. that there are things lying around where they should not be. In contrast, ‘dirty’ could have been used to refer to a filthy room, as opposed to an untidy one. In this discussion, however, P1 does not draw attention to any such difference in meaning, but uses the words in a similar way, as a kind of paraphrase, to describe a cluttered, untidy home. There is no mention of hygiene, sanitation or uncleanliness. P1 makes clear that the meaning of the word ‘dirty’ in this situation is very close to the already mentioned ‘messy’. In this context, it may seem redundant to use two words to describe a state which could have been more efficiently described using only one word. Perhaps this is the reason why P2 initially interprets the two words as highlighting a difference, rather than interpreting them as a paraphrase.

Something similar is going on in another thread, in a negotiation of the meaning of the word ‘näthat’ (online expressions of hate). In Excerpt 24, the whole exchange is displayed for context, but in this part of the analysis the focus is mainly on the trigger post and how this is interpreted in subsequent posts.

Excerpt 24

P1: Näthat & hot (rubrik). Det verkar finnas såna här som försvarar sådant. Vidrigt! Jag tror att om det var ni själva som blev hotade skulle ni inte vara så kaxiga. Försvarar man sådant, har man ingen heder i kroppen, och inget samvete heller för den delen.

Online expressions of hate & threats (topic). *There seem to be people here who defend that kind of thing. Disgusting! I think if it was you who received the threats you wouldn't be so cocky. If you defend that kind of thing you have no honour and no conscience either.*

P2: Vad menar du med näthat?

What do you mean by online expressions of hate?

P1: Antar att du sett Uppdrag granskning²⁰ och debatten om näthat som varit uppe nu ett tag. Fega kräk som gömmer sig bakom skärmen och skickar sexistiska hot till kvinnliga journalister m.m. Har svårt att tro att du kan ha missat det.

I guess you've seen Uppdrag granskning and the debate about net hatred which has been going on for some time. Cowards hiding behind screens sending sexist threats to female journalists etc. Difficult to believe you've missed that.

P2: Missade tyvärr det programmet. Var det inte en sosse som var värst av dräggen som sysslade med sådan där skit? Så för att näthata måste man hota enligt dig? Eller räcker det med att man skriver om sådant som inte vanlig media tar upp, exempelvis invandringens negativa konsekvenser, brottsstatistik etc.?

Unfortunately I missed that show. Wasn't it a social democrat who was among the worst creeps who did that kind of shit? So online expressions of hate always involve threats according to you? Or is it enough if you write about kinds of things mainstream media does not address, such as the negative consequences of immigration, crime statistics for example?

As in the previous example in Excerpt 23, two words are used close to each other in the trigger post in Excerpt 24. P1 mentions both 'näthat' (online expressions of hate) and 'hot' (threats) *together*. This may be interpreted as an indication that these words complement each other, i.e. that they mean slightly different things, otherwise there would be no need to use them both. If online expressions of hate *always* involve threats, it is seemingly redundant to explicitly add "& threats" in the utterance. In the next part of the utterance, P1 moves on to writing *only* about threats, sug-

20 Uppdrag Granskning (literally: Mission Investigation) is a Swedish TV program focusing on investigative journalism.

gesting that people who defend online expressions of hate and threats probably would not be so cocky if they were on the receiving end of the threats. In this part of the utterance, P1 only mentions threats, but it is unclear if P1 means that these threats can be part of the meaning of the word 'näthat'.

P2 requests meta-linguistic clarification, perhaps because the relation between the two mentioned words is unclear. In the response post, P1 acts as if the request for clarification about the meaning of the trigger word is unnecessary, but P1 is willing to shift track and go into the WMN, addressing the situated meaning of the negotiated word. In the response post, P1 touches upon one aspect of meaning potential associated with the trigger word, suggesting that online expressions of hate involve cowards sending threats to female journalists. Here, P1 makes 'threats' part of the clarification of what 'online expressions of hate' means. P1 mentions nothing else, beyond threats, that 'online expressions of hate' can mean and is thus clear about the situated meaning of 'online expressions of hate' in this discussion. P2 returns with yet another, more explicit, meta-linguistic clarification request in the reaction post, concerning the trigger word. Here, P2 explicitly asks if threats *need* to be involved for it to count as 'online expressions of hate' or if the word can also mean writing negatively about the consequences of immigration (i.e. issues which may not be considered politically correct in mainstream media)?

Why does P2 make a second meta-linguistic clarification request? P1 has already explained the meaning of the trigger word in the third turn. Normally, this is enough to get the discussion back on Track 1 dealing with the topic. Perhaps it has to do with the fact that P1 in the first post (trigger post) used *both* words ("näthat & hot") indicating that there may be a difference between the two. As previously mentioned, if 'online expressions of hate' means 'threats', or always involves threats, it seems redundant to use *both* words. Perhaps this is what P2 is reacting to, when trying to keep the negotiation going, even after clarification has been provided. Again, like in the WMN of 'smutsigt' (dirty), we may be dealing with a case where the participant in the trigger post intended to use two words as a kind of paraphrase, but where the interlocutor interpreted the use of the two words as highlighting a difference in meaning potential.

4.5.2 SEMANTIC OPERATIONS IN INDICATOR POSTS

The indicator posts in the NONs in the sample corpus always contain a clarification request, which is subsequently interpreted as a need to go into meta-linguistic negotiation about a particular word pointed to in the indicator post. Occasionally, the indicator post can also contribute to the WMN by displaying partial understanding of the meaning of the trigger word, for example by suggesting alternative interpretations of the trigger word next to the clarification request, or by displaying partial understanding through exemplifying by drawing upon own similar experiences illustrating how the trigger word may be interpreted. Displaying partial understanding of the trigger word next to a clarification request in an indicator post is similar to what Heritage calls proposing “candidate understandings” Heritage (1984, p. 319). However, in spoken communication, candidate understandings are not normally found within the same turn as another repair initiator (for example a clarification request). Instead, in spoken communication, the proposed candidate understanding operates as the repair initiator itself.

This section will discuss a number of mechanisms for proposing meaning in indicator posts, as observed in the sample of NONs.

PROPOSING MEANING IN INDICATOR POSTS, BY SUGGESTING ALTERNATIVES

One way of displaying partial understanding of the trigger word in an indicator post is by putting forward alternative interpretations, i.e. asking P1 something along the lines of “Do you mean X as in Y1 or Y2 or ... Yn?” (where n is at least 2). Proposing meaning in the indicator post by suggesting alternatives is found in five out of 34 NONs in this study. An example of this is the indicator post from the WMN of the word ‘ogift’ (unmarried), presented in Excerpt 25. This WMN was previously used to illustrate another point in Section 4.2.3.

Excerpt 25

P1: Vad är dina tankar om du skulle träffa en ogift
39 kvinna som inte har barn?

What are your thoughts if you were to meet an unmarried 39 woman who does not have children?

P2: Förresten måste fråga, vad menar du med "Ogift". Många är ju sambos, sãrbos, lever i partnerskap etc. Menar du verkligen bokstavligen gift i din fråga eller menar du snarare att kvinnan ifråga är utan partner? Finns ju mängder av folk som lever som sambos och har barn. *By the way, have to ask what you mean by "Unmarried". Lots of people live together, or live apart, or in partnerships etc. Do you literally mean married in your question or do you mean that the woman in question does not have a partner? Lots of people live together and have children.*

P1: Hej, jag menar enbart ogift.
Hi, I simply mean unmarried.

In the indicator post in Excerpt 25, P2 shows that the trigger word 'ogift' (unmarried) is not completely unknown to him or her, and points to two different interpretations of the word which seem possible in the current conversational context. Is the intended meaning in this situation "literally unmarried" or is it rather "without a partner". In this part of the utterance, P2 displays that he or she knows of two different aspects of meaning potential associated with the word 'ogift' (unmarried) which may be used to establish situated meaning in this context, but is still unclear about which of the interpretations apply in this situation, which is why P2 needs meta-linguistic clarification.

Similarly, in a WMN about the word 'växtbok' (plant book), the indicator post containing the meta-linguistic clarification request also contains

alternative interpretations of the situated meaning of the trigger word, see Excerpt 26.

Excerpt 26

- P1: Jag har hört att det någonstans inne i Stockholm ska finnas en ganska liten bokhandel (möjligen även antikvariat) som har växtböcker som specialitet. [...]. Är det någon som vet något om denna bokhandel?
I've heard that somewhere in Stockholm there is supposed to be a quite small book shop (possibly also second-hand) which deals with plant books as its specialty. [...] Does anyone know anything about this book shop?
- P2: Vad menar du med "växtbok"? Menar du som en flora där man kan slå upp växter? Böcker om odling? Om vilda växter i naturen?
What do you mean by "plant book"? Do you mean like a Flora where you can look up plants? Books about cultivation? About wild plants?
- P1: De skulle ha alla möjliga växtrelaterade böcker har jag för mig, däribland sådana om odling.
They were supposed to have all kinds of plant related books I think, for example books about cultivation.

In the indicator post in Excerpt 26, P2 puts forward three possible interpretations of the meaning of the word 'växtbok'. P2 suggests that a plant book could mean a plant lexicon (a Flora), a book about how to grow plants (cultivation) or a book about plants growing in the wild. P2 clearly perceives that all of these aspects of meaning potential are associated with the trigger word, but wants to know which of the aspects should apply when establishing the situated meaning of the word in this particular situation.

Another way of putting forward a tentative interpretation of meaning by providing alternatives in the indicator post is making a comprehension check. Of course, the difference here is that instead of two or more alter-

native interpretations of the perceived situated meaning, only one option is put forward. This is the case in a WMN of the word 'klibbor' (stickers), which in the indicator post (P2's post) is wrongly spelt as 'klippor', presented in Excerpt 27.

Excerpt 27

- P1: Köp coola klibbor, ju fler desto bättre!
Buy cool klibbor, the more the better!
- P2: Vad menar du med klippor...? Klistermärken eller?
What do you mean by klippor...? Do you mean stickers or?
- P1: Coola klibbor = klistermärken, köp många coola!
Cool klibbor = stickers, buy many cool ones!

PROPOSING MEANING IN INDICATOR POSTS,
BY EXEMPLIFICATION

Another way of displaying partial understanding of meaning in an indicator post, without putting forward alternative interpretations of the presumed situated meaning, is by displaying understanding of the trigger word by referring to an example of an experience which resembles the one described in the trigger post. This occurs in 10 out of 34 NONs. An example of this is found in the indicator post in Excerpt 28. In this discussion, P1 is concerned about her baby moving her head sideways in a peculiar manner. P1 therefore asks the forum if anyone else has experienced the same thing. P1 uses the word 'vicka' (tilting) to refer to how the movement is carried out by the baby, which is not completely understood by the participant answering the question. The same excerpt has previously been used in Section 4.2.2 to illustrate the use of filled pauses.

Excerpt 28

- P1: min 6 månaders bebis har för några dagar sen börjat med att vicka på huvvet åt sidan i mellanåt [...] undrar om de är någon mer som har ngt barn som gjort så?

my six month old baby started "tilting" her head sideways a few days ago [...] wonder if anyone else has children who've done this?

P2: Hmm.. hur menar du med "vicka"...Min pojk skakar mycket på huvudet i sidleds.. Dvs som när man säger nej..

Hmm.. how do you mean by "tilting"...My boy shakes his head a lot sideways... like when you say no..

In the indicator post in Excerpt 28, P2 requests meta-linguistic clarification by questioning to the meaning of the trigger word. At the same time, the participant is displaying partial understanding of the word, as she compares the behaviour to that of her own baby. P2 suggests an alternate word when describing her own baby's head movements, indicating that she interprets 'vicka' (tilting) as 'skaka' (shaking), without explicitly formulating this as a comprehension check, which could have been a possibility ("Hmm.. how do you mean by "tilting"... Do you mean "shaking"?"). In this case, it seems as P2 is not completely sure that the participants are talking about the same kind of movement, hence the clarification request. However, P2 displays that the word is not completely unfamiliar to her, as she includes the example in which she substitutes the trigger word in her own account for another, indicating that the situated meaning of the trigger word 'vicka' (tilting) in this case could be interpreted to mean 'skaka' (shaking).

A similar instance of proposing meaning in an indicator post by drawing upon own experiences through exemplification is found in the WMN of the word 'omvårdnad' (care). A part of Excerpt 29 has been used to illustrate acts of contrasting in trigger posts in Section 4.5.1.

Excerpt 29

P1: Jag undrar vad man får för omvårdnad om man ligger inne på sjukhus för t.e.x blindtarmsinflammation, gallsten, tarmvred, bukspotts inflammation eller någon inflammatorisk tarmsjukdom

osv. Vad får man för hjälp för att ligga inne på sjukhus för magsjukdomar? Är väldigt rädd för sjukhus.

I wonder what kind of care you get when you're hospitalised for appendicitis, gallstone, ileus, inflammation of the pancreas or inflammation of the intestines. What kind of help do you get when you're in the hospital due to stomach illness? I'm very afraid of hospitals.

P2: Vad menar du med omvårdnad? Jag fick medicin och hjälp att blanda näringsdrycken som skulle ersätta mat under den tid jag hade tarmvila. När jag blev piggare och kunde vara uppe och röra mig fick jag dock fixa den själv.

What do you mean by care? I was brought medicine and received help with mixing the nutritional drink which was replacing food during the time my intestines were resting. When I started feeling better and could move around I had to fix that myself.

P1: Liksom va vårdpersonalen hjälpte dig med :)
Kind of what the hospital staff helped you with :)

Even though P2 requests clarification about the meaning of the word 'care', he or she is displaying partial understanding of the trigger word in the indicator post, since the original question by P1 (regarding what kind of care is provided by hospital staff) is actually answered in the same post as the clarification request is raised. P2 does not wait for the clarification to be provided in the expected response turn, but instead attempts to answer the question on topic already in the indicator post, next to the clarification request. By behaving in this manner in the indicator post, P2 is simultaneously requesting meta-linguistic clarification and displaying the current understanding of the word 'care'. In effect, P2 is putting it to P1 to see if P1 agrees that this is in fact the intended situated meaning of the trigger word in this particular context. If P2 had been entirely clueless about the situated meaning of the word 'omvårdnad' (care), P2 would not have been able to answer P1's question on topic already in the

indicator post. As things are here, sufficient understanding for current purposes actually appears to exist, i.e. enough to move on in the discussion and answer P1's question on topic. However, P2 apparently perceives that there is not enough understanding of the meaning of the word to completely exclude the meta-linguistic clarification request and *only* answer P1's question on topic.

In the WMNs concerning 'vicka' (tilting) and 'omvårdnad' (care) in Excerpts 28 and 29, the indicator posts both contain an initiation to go into a meta-linguistic negotiation sequence (indicating need to track shift to Track 2b) *and* a contribution on topic (indicating that the discussion can continue on Track 1). Asking about the meaning of a trigger word even though there seems to be sufficient understanding (in this case: for appropriately answering a question) is perhaps a phenomenon which can be explained by the multi-functionality of the asynchronous communication mode. In this form of communication, it is simple to let one single turn include *both* an initiation of a repair sequence ("Hey, I don't get this word, we probably need to negotiate the meaning of it for a while before I can answer your question.") *and* an answer to the original question ("This is how I understand the word and how I would answer the question on topic if my understanding is correct."). Perhaps, when taking advantage of the extra affordances of multi-functionality of the communication form, different possibilities for future actions are simultaneously opened up. If P1 in the next turn perceives that P2's understanding of the meaning of the word corresponds with the one intended, the question has already been answered and there will be no need to enter into the repair sequence (WMN). In that case there needs to be no reaction to the meta-linguistic clarification request, and the discussion on topic can move forward. However, if the interpretation of the trigger word is not the intended one, P1 can respond to the meta-linguistic clarification request by entering into a WMN.

A similar example of multi-functionality in an indicator post is found in the following WMN concerning the word 'värmevallningar' (hot flushes). Here, the topic of the discussion is what kind of side effects people experience when taking a certain medicine. P1 writes that she has taken the drug for two weeks and has been experiencing hot flushes. P2 requests clarification about the trigger word, but simultaneously includes his or her

own understanding of the word by drawing upon similar experiences of side-effects which may be what P1 calls hot flushes.

Excerpt 30

P1: Jag har ätit sertralin i 2 veckor och jag har värmevallningar , trött som tusan, diarrè.. Lite förvirrad emellanåt men om det förtsätter så här efter jul så ska jag prata med min läkare och höra hur länge ev biverkningar kan hålla i sig..

I have taken seratlin for 2 weeks and I've been having hot flushes, am really tired, have diarrhea... A bit confused sometimes but if this keeps up after Christmas I'm speaking to my doctor to see how long these side effects normally last...

P2: hur menar du med värmevallningar ? jag har en brännande känsla i huden på ryggen occh armarna, men bara när jag är orolig så jag tänkte att det är ångest som känns så. [...]

how do you mean by hot flushes ? I have a burning feeling of the skin on my back and arms, but only when I'm anxious so I thought that is the way anxiety feels. [...]

P1: Jag blir varm i hela kroppen mest fötter och händer och sen på kvällarna kan jag märka att jag har rödflammig hud på bröstet och låren..
Helskumt.

I become hot all over my body mostly feet and hands and then in the evenings I can notice that my skin is flushed on the chest and thighs... Really weird.

Like in the previous example of 'omvårdnad' (care), P2 is here both requesting meta-linguistic clarification and exemplifying his or her own similar side-effects, i.e. displaying some understanding of the meaning of the word by exemplification. In a way, this act of displaying partial understanding could be characterised as a kind of comprehension check, similar

to the example concerning 'klibbor' (stickers). The difference is that this way of proposing meaning to the trigger word is not phrased as a question to P1 ("What do you mean by klipper...? Do you mean stickers or what?"), but as personal example of the interpretation of meaning of the trigger word thus far ("How do you mean by hot flushes? I have a burning feeling of the skin on my back and arms."). Both ways of displaying partial understanding of the trigger word contributes to the negotiation of meaning, but the comprehension check is phrased as a question directed at P1, the other is displaying understanding by exemplifying through drawing upon own experiences about what the presumed meaning of the word is.

4.5.3 SEMANTIC OPERATIONS IN RESPONSE POSTS

This section will look into the different kinds of semantic operations used by participants when providing meta-linguistic clarification in response posts. Specifically, the focus of this section will be on how participants combine aspects of the discussion context with aspects of meaning potential when clarifying the situated meaning of a particular word. The semantic operations in the response posts will be classified according to whether or not they primarily foreground contextual aspects of the discussed situation or aspects of meaning potential associated with the trigger words.

In the analysis of how word meaning is negotiated in response posts of NONs, one commonly found semantic operation is *explicitification*, a concept described by Ludlow (2014) which denotes the introduction of an explicit definitional component to a word meaning under negotiation. In the response posts in the NONs, participants may clarify the meaning of the trigger word by introducing a definitional component which foregrounds aspects of the word's semantic properties, i.e. aspects of meaning potential. In this study, applying this kind of semantic operation will be called making a *generic explicitification*. Another option is to foreground aspects of the discussed situation as the major part of the clarification of meaning, which is here called making a *specific explicitification*. Within a single response post, it is possible to apply both kinds of semantic operations, i.e. to move between drawing upon aspects of meaning potential and aspects of the discussed situation when attempting to establish situated meaning.

Note that even in clarifications which are based on generic explicifications, the discussion context is always present although it is not explicitly drawn upon as the primary resource in the negotiation of meaning. Just by being sequentially tied to previous turns, the response post is always connected to surrounding discussion context, even though contextual aspects may not be used as the main resource for negotiating meaning.

GENERIC EXPLICIFICATIONS

This section will discuss examples of generic explicifications found in response posts in the 34 NONs. 20 out of 34 response posts have been classified as containing the semantic operation of generic explicification when providing the meta-linguistic clarification of the trigger word. One example is found in the response post in the WMN of the word 'sexism' (sexism), presented in Excerpt 31.

Excerpt 31

- P1: Jag är antisexist, vilket betyder att jag är emot sexism i samhället! Fråga mig vad ni vill!
I'm anti-sexist, which means that I'm against sexism in society. Ask me anything!
- P2: Vad menar du med begreppet "sexism"?
What do you mean by the concept of "sexism"?
- P1: Att människor behandlas olika pga sin könstillhörighet.
That people are treated differently because of their gender.

In the response post in Excerpt 31, P1 is making a generic explicification, since the definition-like component of the meta-linguistic clarification foregrounds an aspect of meaning potential associated with the trigger word rather than aspects of the discussed situation. There is nothing in the response post which explicitly draws upon anything from the surrounding discussion context in this particular clarification. Instead, P1 provides a generic, definition-like clarification about the meaning of the trigger word, which draws upon semantic affordances tied to the word itself. Another example of a clarification containing a generic explicification is found in

the response post from the WMN of the word ‘medborgarlön’ (unconditional basic income) in Excerpt 32 (all misspelled words are in original).

Excerpt 32

P1: Jag har skickat brev till alla riksdagsledamöter om att införa medborgarlön och jag har fått väldigt många positiva svar. Snart är medborgarlönen här!

I have sent letters to every member of parliament about introducing unconditional basic income and I have received many positive answers. Soon unconditional basic income will be a reality!

P2: Vad menar du med medborgarlön? Jag underar vad du menar med medborgarlön. Menar du att alla människor oavsatt vad de arbetar med (eller om de är arbetslösa), ska få exakt lika mycket pengar varje månaden i en så kallad medborgarlön? Eller menar du att alla människor ska få en summa pengar av staten oavsatt om de arbetar eller inte, och de som jobbar får en lön ovanpå den så kallade medborgarlönen?

What do you mean by unconditional basic income? I wonder what you mean by unconditional basic income. Do you mean that all people regardless of what they do for a living (or if they are unemployed) will get exactly the same amount of money in a so called unconditional basic income? Or do you mean that all people get an amount of money from the government regardless of if they work or not and that the people who do work get paid on top of the so called unconditional basic income?

P1: Alla människor som är svensk medborgare får en medborgarlön på ca 7000kr. Vill man ha mera pengar så får man jobba .

All people who are Swedish citizens get an unconditional basic income of approximately 7000 SEK. If one wants more money one will have to work.

In the clarification in the response post in Excerpt 32, P1 draws upon perceived aspects of meaning potential associated with the trigger word, by clarifying that the word means “an unconditional basic income of approximately 7000 SEK”. Again, meaning is assigned to the trigger word without touching upon any situational aspects in the clarification.

A third example of a response post containing a generic explicification is taken from the WMN of the word ‘klibbor’ (stickers), see Excerpt 33. A part of this excerpt was previously used to illustrate another point in Section 4.5.2.

Excerpt 33

P1: Köp coola klibbor, ju fler desto bättre!
Buy cool klibbor, the more the better!

P2: Vad menar du med klippor...? Klistermärken
eller?
*What do you mean by klippor...? Do you mean
stickers or?*

P1: Coola klibbor = klistermärken, köp många coola!
Cool klibbor = stickers, buy many cool ones!

Again, in the clarification in the response post in Excerpt 33, meaning is assigned to the trigger word without foregrounding aspects from the discussed situation. Instead, P1 clarifies the meaning of the word by making a generic explicification which foregrounds an aspect of meaning potential associated with the trigger word.

SPECIFIC EXPLICIFICATIONS

Turning to clarifications which primarily draw upon aspects of the discussed situation when explicifying meaning, this section will discuss some examples of specific explicifications found in response posts of the NONs. Out of the 34 NONs, 17 are classified as containing specific explicifica-

tions. Performing a specific explicification typically means instantiating, or embedding, the explanation into the surrounding discussion context, i.e. foregrounding properties of the discussed situation as the major part of the definitional component in the meta-linguistic clarification. One example of a specific explicification is taken from the response post in the WMN of the word ‘snabbhet’ (speed), presented in Excerpt 34.

Excerpt 34

- P1: D800 är väl också mer orienterad till studio/
landskap och inte till snabbhet/ mångsidighet.
*D800 is more oriented towards studio/landscape
and not speed/versatility, isn't it.*
- P2: vad menar du med snabbhet? har just nu en "fin"
2.2fps på min gamla olympus så egentligen så
kommer vilken som vara bättre än den.
*what do you mean by speed? I now have a "nice"
2.2 fps on my old olympus so any of the models
will be better than that one.*
- P1: D600/D610an har vad jag förstått bättre ISOe-
genskaper och högre framerate och det är det
jag menar med snabbhet.
*As far as I understand the D600/D610 has better
ISO qualities and higher frame rate, and that
is what I mean by speed.*

In the response post in Excerpt 34, P1 foregrounds aspects of the discussed situation in his or her clarification about the meaning of the trigger word. The surrounding discussion on topic is about different types of cameras, and clearly the word ‘speed’ in this context relates to some property of a camera. Here, P1 is explicifying that speed means something specific, namely a camera with “better ISO qualities and higher frame rate”. These aspects of the explicification cannot be said to be a semantic property associated with the trigger word in general. Instead, these aspects are drawn into the WMN from the surrounding conversational context, through an act of a specific explicification.

Another example of a specific explicification is found in the response post of the WMN of the word 'gratis' (free), presented in Excerpt 35.

Excerpt 35

P1: Nej givetvis inte då ni sköter det själva gratis genom era listor. Sluta svara i telefon på er fritid så kommer ni snart ha er beredskap. Finns ju med i ert avtal så varför inte nyttja det? §22

No of course not since you are doing this work yourself for free using your call lists. Stop answering the phone on your spare time and soon you will have an on call system in place. This is regulated in your collective agreement, so why not take advantage of it? §22.

P2: Hur menar du med "gratis"?

How do you mean by "(for) free"?

P1: Att du svarar i telefon på din fritid så att du kan bli utkallad. Detta utan att ha beredskap. Har jag en ledig dag så svarar inte jag i telefon.

That you answer the phone in your spare time so that you can be called in. This without being on call. If I have a day off, I don't answer the phone.

In the response post in Excerpt 35, the meaning of 'free' is explained through a clarification which draws upon the surrounding discussion context. P1 assigns meaning to the negotiated trigger word by performing a specific explicification, which foregrounds aspects of the already discussed situation. Here, the clarification does not primarily utilise general aspects of semantic affordances tied to the trigger word, but instead specific aspects of the previously discussed scenario. In this particular situation, working for 'free' means "answering the phone in your spare time without being on call".

CO-EXISTING GENERIC AND SPECIFIC EXPLICITIFICATIONS

Three out of 34 WMNs contain response posts which move between drawing upon aspects of meaning potential and aspects of the discussed situation in the provided meta-linguistic clarification. This means that there are three response posts in the sample of NONs that perform both generic and specific explicitifications. One example of such an instance is found in the response post of the WMN of the word ‘handlov’ (heel of the hand), which has been used in earlier sections to illustrate other points (see Section 4.2.2 and Section 4.4.2).²¹

Excerpt 36

P1: Mina kloka vänner.... Gör man kompressionerna med handloven + handloven eller två fingrar + handloven? Älskar när jag hittar olika versioner på allt....

My wise friends... Do you perform the compressions using the heel of the hand + the heel of the hand or two fingers + the heel of the hand? Love it when I find different versions of everything...

P2: Förstår inte..vaddå handlov ?

Don't understand.. what do you mean by heel of the hand ?

P3: handflata typ... Den delen av handen du använder vid kompressioner

kind of the palm of the hand... The part of the hand you use when performing compressions.

In the response post in Excerpt 36, the first part of the clarification contains a generic explicitification, as P3 is suggesting that “heel of the hand” kind of means “palm of the hand”. The second part of the clarification draws upon situational aspects, since the current discussion on topic is about how to perform heart compressions in the correct manner.

21 In this WMN, it is not P1 who picks up on the clarification request issued by P2. Instead, a third participant enters into the discussion and provides clarification about his or her opinion about the meaning of the trigger word.

EXEMPLIFICATION IN RESPONSE POSTS

As previously discussed, in the sample of NONs, the most common way of responding to a meta-linguistic clarification request in an indicator post is by providing an explicification, clarifying what the trigger word means in the current situation by introducing a definition-like component to the word under negotiation. This is perhaps not unexpected, since a response post is always functionally dependent on the preceding indicator post. The two posts are the first and second part of an adjacency pair, where the first part contains the clarification request, and the second part provides the clarification. Therefore, the ordinary way of providing a response to one of the indicator constructions “What/How do you mean (by) X?” seems to be to put forward an explanation of meaning by introducing a definitional component of the trigger word. This means that the typical way of responding to a meta-linguistic clarification request targeting the X word is by explaining what X means, in a straight-forward manner.

P2: What do you mean by X?

P1: I mean Y.

In the sample corpus of NONs, it is much more unusual to respond to a meta-linguistic clarification request in an indicator post by providing an *example* of what *could* be meant by the trigger word, in situations beyond the current conversational context.

P2: What do you mean by X?

P1: Well, for example Y or Z.

However, in three sequences in the sample of NONs, there are acts of exemplification in response posts, and in all of these cases, these acts co-occur with an act of explicification.

One example of this is found in the response post of the WMN of the word ‘ordningslista’ (order list), see Excerpt 37.

Excerpt 37

- P1: Hursomhelst finns det en ordningslista för hur man designar en byggnad och jag tror inte TS greppar det riktigt.
Anyway there is an order list for how you design a building and I don't think TS completely gets this.
- P2: Vad menar du med ordningslista?
What do you mean by order list?
- P1: Tänk prioritetslista. "Mitt hus SKA ha en pool" vs. ""Mitt hus KAN ha en pool om förhållandena tillåter". Det finns vissa saker som man löser först och vissa saker man löser senare.
Think priority list. "My house NEEDS a pool" vs. "My house could have a pool if the conditions are right." There are some things you solve first and other things you solve later.

In the example in Excerpt 37, the first part of the response post contains an explicification, suggesting that a definitional component of the trigger word ‘order list’ is something along the lines of a ‘priority list’. The second part of the response post contains an act of exemplification, further explaining what the trigger word can mean in situations beyond the current conversational context.

4.5.4 SEMANTIC OPERATIONS IN REACTION POSTS

Regularly in NONs, the reaction component of the T-I-R-(RR) sequence is used to ground understanding of meaning, i.e. to acknowledge that a mutual situated meaning of the trigger word has been established in the local context. As discussed earlier, this is generally done by either signalling positive evidence through explicit assertions, exemplifications or displays of understanding, or by contributing a relevant next turn which

corresponds to making a presupposition of understanding (H. H. Clark, 1996, p. 228).

In the sample of NONs, the reaction turn is only rarely used to continue the WMN, by contributing meaning to the word being negotiated or by issuing another meta-linguistic clarification request, urging the other participant to continue negotiating the word. However, there are a few instances where the reaction turn *is* used to continue the WMN, for example some of the instances found among the deviant cases discussed in Section 4.4.5. In one case, where the response post does not provide meta-linguistic clarification, the reaction turn is used to address the lack of expected clarification in the response turn, and a third participant reacts to the response post's unwillingness to provide meta-linguistic clarification (see Excerpt 18, concerning 'självständig'). In this WMN, the reaction by P3 is made using the direct-reply function, which is available in the forum Passagen Debatt. The reaction post provides the meta-linguistic clarification which was requested by P2 in the indicator turn and expected to follow in the response post by P1. However, P1's response post did not shift its focus from a discussion on topic to a discussion on language – it did not provide any meta-linguistic clarification concerning the meaning of the trigger word. Therefore, the reaction turn is used to acknowledge this lack of uptake on the meta-linguistic level, and provides a meta-linguistic clarification by performing a generic explicification with regards to the meaning of the trigger word. When the expected meta-linguistic clarification is not provided in the response turn as expected, this is addressed in the reaction turn, and the meta-linguistic shift in the WMN is instead provided in this turn component which deviates from the norm.

In two other deviant cases, which concern 'evighetsgaranti' (eternity guarantee) and 'mannar' (men/menfolk) (Excerpt 19 and Excerpt 20), the response post only contributes a vague clarification which seems to be interpreted as a play on words rather than a helpful meta-linguistic clarification about the meaning of the trigger word. In both of these cases, the reaction posts are used to reissue the meta-linguistic clarification request, i.e. to urge P1 to make another response post which better clarifies the meaning of the trigger word. In this way, the reaction posts in both of these deviant cases are used as an attempt to continue the WMN, without proposing any meaning to the trigger word, by repeating and paraphras-

ing the meta-linguistic clarification request, so that the WMN can continue until a mutually acceptable situated meaning of the trigger word has been established. This is clearly a different function of a reaction turn, compared to the normally expected grounding function which is found in most of the WMNs where a reaction turn is present in the T-I-R-RR sequence. Since the response post in the third turn component has not provided enough meta-linguistic clarification, the reaction post cannot be used for grounding purposes. Instead, in these deviant cases, the reaction turn is used to continue the WMN until enough understanding between the participants has been reached.

4.5.5 SUMMARY OF SEMANTIC OPERATIONS IN NONS

This section of the chapter about NONs has focused on how participants contribute to the word meaning negotiation in different ways in each of the four turn components of the T-I-R-(RR) sequence. The results have shown that trigger posts occasionally (in eight out of 34 cases) contain clues about how to understand the meaning of the trigger word. These clues are typically displayed through acts of *contrasting* the trigger word with other words, highlighting aspects of meaning potential which are shared or different between the contrasted words.

In indicator posts, participants who request meta-linguistic clarification sometimes include a candidate understanding of the questioned trigger word. This occurs in 15 out of the 34 NONs, in five instances by putting forward *alternative suggestions* on the form “Do you mean X as in Y1 or Y2 or ... Yn?” (where n is at least 2), and in 10 instances by displaying understanding of the trigger word by illustrating by bringing up an own *example of a similar experience*.

Moreover, this section has analysed how meaning is clarified in response posts, and has specifically looked into the different semantic operations which take words with meaning potentials combined with contexts as input and produces situated meaning as output. It has been found that 20 out of 34 response posts contain *generic explicifications* used to assign meaning to the word under negotiation, whereas 17 have been classified as containing acts of *specific explicification*. Three sequences contain both generic and specific explicifications as they move between explicitly draw-

ing upon aspects of meaning potential and aspects of the discussed situation in the provided meta-linguistic clarification. In three NONs, acts of *exemplification* have been found in response posts, always co-existing with acts of explicification.

Lastly, this section has looked into how reaction posts in the T-I-R-RR sequence can contribute meaning to the ongoing WMN. It has been shown that reaction posts are used to perform dialogue acts of grounding understanding or to resume the discussion on topic, but in rare (often deviant) cases, the reaction turn can be used to confirm or endorse someone else's meta-linguistic clarification, or to repeat the meta-linguistic clarification request, trying to get the other participant to further engage in the WMN and make another, perhaps clearer, clarification about the meaning of the trigger word.

To conclude, the semantic operations found to contribute to the process of word meaning negotiation in NONs are explicification, exemplification, contrasting and requesting meta-linguistic clarification. This means that acts of meta-linguistic endorsement (briefly presented in Section 3.4.3) have not been found in the sample of NONs. In addition, acts of meta-linguistic objection have only been found in the deviant cases of NONs. The semantic operations of meta-linguistic endorsement and meta-linguistic objection play a more prominent role in word meaning negotiations originating in disagreement, which will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

WMNS ORIGINATING IN DISAGREEMENT (DINS)

Out of the 60 WMN sequences in the sample corpus, 22 sequences are identified as originating in disagreement about word meaning, and are thus characterised as DINS. 15 of these sequences are gathered from the forum Familjeliv (familjeliv.se), six from the forum Passagen Debatt (debatt.passagen.se) and one from the forum Flashback (flashback.org) and). 17 of the sequences were found during the same search that generated the NONs, which means that these sequences all have in common that they contain one of the Swedish variants of the utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?”.²² Five of the 22 DINS were not found during the search using the variants of the utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?”. Instead, these five sequences were found in an exploratory pilot study which took place before the present

²² The corresponding utterance constructions in Swedish are “Vad menar du med X?”, “Hur menar du med X?”, “Vadå X?”, “Vaddå X?” and ”Vad då X?” as presented in Section 3.2.2.

study started, and were the reason that attention was drawn to the phenomenon of word meaning negotiation in discussion forum communication. These additional sequences are used in this study even though they were not gathered using the ordinary search method, since this study is not primarily intended to provide quantitative generalisations, but instead should be seen as a first attempt at circumscribing and describing the phenomenon of word meaning negotiation and associated dialogue strategies and semantic operations.

Determining which posts within a discussion thread should be considered as being a part of a DIN sequence is done by using the same criteria as in the analysis of NONs (see Section 3.2). Deciding if a post is part of a WMN thus depends on whether or not the post delivers a meta-linguistic contribution, i.e. makes a contribution regarding the meaning of the trigger word.²³ Similar to NONs, there needs to be an indicator post which identifies the trigger word, highlighting that there is something problematic in the discussion which needs to be addressed on a meta-linguistic level. In DINs, several indicators can co-exist, often in the form of meta-linguistic objections. Similar to NONs, for a sequence to count as a WMN, there needs to be at least one response post delivering a meta-linguistic contribution, following the trigger post and the indicator post(s).

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will outline and discuss the results of the analyses of the 22 DINs. The first part of the chapter will present some descriptive statistics of the data sample (Section 5.2). Next, the focus will be on how DINs are distinguished from NONs, focusing on how DINs can be identified and differentiated from NONs (Section 5.3 and Section 5.4). Subsequently, attention will be devoted to the sequentiality of the communication, dealing with typical patterns of turn-taking found in DINs (Section 5.5). Lastly, the focus of the chapter will be on the semantic operations and other dialogue acts involved in word meaning negotiation in DIN sequences (Section 5.6).

²³ See Chapter 3 for details about delimiting the phenomenon of WMN in this study.

5.2 DESCRIPTION OF DATA

As it turns out, DINs are structurally and sequentially very different from NONs. This section will present some data which will function as a backdrop to the analyses of the DINs. In all of the DINs, the trigger word of the negotiation is a content word. Out of the 22 trigger words, seven are nouns, seven are adjectives and eight are verbs. In the list below, the trigger words are listed in the word form in which they appeared in the first post containing the utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?” in each DIN sequence.

Nouns:

- förnekare (denier)
- jämställdhet (gender equality)
- krog (dive/joint/restaurant, referred to as dive)
- misshandel (abuse, referred to as abuse1)
- mobbning (bullying)
- stalking (stalking)
- övergrepp (abuse, referred to as abuse2)²⁴

Adjectives:

- billigt (cheap)
- fullfet (full fat)
- giltig (valid)
- handfallna (perplexed)
- homogen (homogenous)
- onaturligt (unnatural)
- onyttigt (unhealthy)

Verbs:

- flirta (flirt, referred to as flirt1)
- flirta (flirt, referred to as flirt2)²⁵

²⁴ There are two Swedish words (found in two separate WMNs located in the same discussion thread) which have both been translated into the same English word.

²⁵ There are two different WMNs of the trigger word ‘flirta’ (flirt1 and flirt2), gathered from two different discussion threads.

- ljugá (lie)
- ljuger (lying)
- lura (trick)
- rymt (escaped)
- smáda (blaspheme)
- super (boozing)

Table 14 illustrates the number of active participants in each DIN sequence, the number of posts within each DIN sequence and the number of posts in each thread in which the WMN is located.

Table 14: Number of posts in DIN sequences, number of posts in the entire thread in which the DIN is located, followed by the number of participants contributing in each DIN sequence

Trigger word	Number of posts in WMN	Number of posts in thread	Number of participants in WMN
billigt	27	426	21
flirta (flirt1)	33	43	20
flirta (flirt2)	31	77	21
fullfet	27	320	14
förnekare	7	31	4
giltig	10	1728	3
handfallna	5	41	3
homogen	6	7	2
jämställdhet	6	16	3
krog	22	1211	11
ljuga	58	307	40
ljuger	15	270	4
lura	31	307	30
misshandel	80	2363	38
mobbing	7	13	4
onaturligt	18	363	7
onyttigt	51	426	34
rymt	85	664	40
smäda	5	75	2
stalking	18	39	6
super	26	1211	22
övergrepp	63	2363	28

As illustrated in Table 14, the DINs display a great variation in length. The shortest DIN sequence is only five turns long, and the longest is 85 turns long. The mean value of the number of posts within DINs is 29 and the median value is 24. The standard deviation is 24. The mean value for the total amount of posts within an entire thread is 559 posts per thread, and

the median value is 307 posts per thread. Here, the standard deviation is 724. The numbers indicate that there is a large variance in the sample showing that the DINs are very different from each other with regards to the number of posts in each WMN sequence, and the number of posts in each thread in which the WMN sequence is located.

There is also a great difference between the DINs regarding the proportion of the WMN sequence to the entire thread. In the WMN of 'homogen' (homogenous), six out of seven posts within the thread are a part of the WMN, which means that practically the whole thread is a part of the WMN sequence. In contrast, in the WMN of 'giltig' (valid), only 10 out of 1728 posts are negotiating the meaning of the trigger word, which is less than one percent of the thread. The mean value for how great the share of the WMN is compared to the entire thread is 22 %, the median value is 11 %, and the standard deviation is 24.

Turning to the participation activity, and specifically looking at how many participants are active in each DIN sequence, another heterogenous distribution pattern is identified. The mean value of the number of participants is 16, the median value is 12, and the standard deviation is 13, which indicates that there is a big difference between longer and shorter DINs with regards to the total number of active participants.

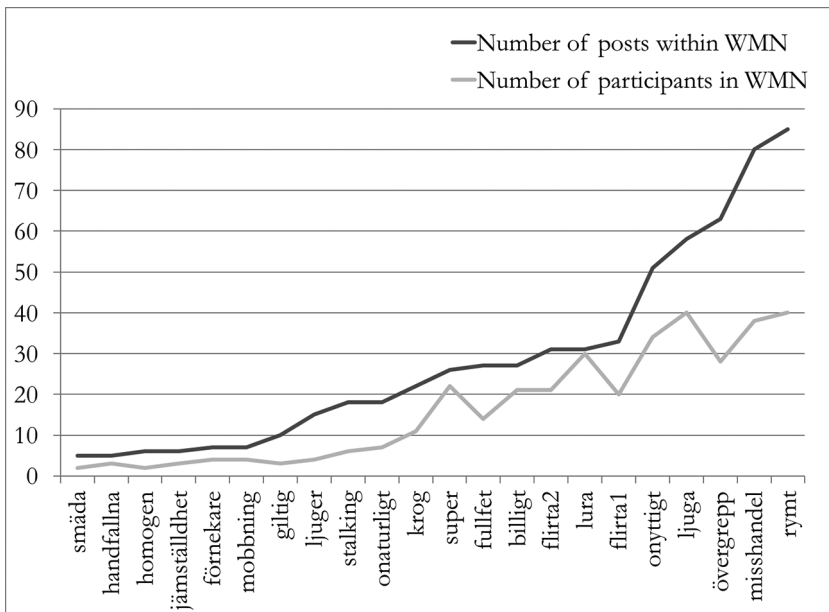


Figure 11: Number of posts and number of participants in DINs

Within shorter DINs, where only a few participants are active, it is usually the case that participants are almost equally active in the negotiation. On the other hand, in longer sequences, where many participants are active, the participation activity is very unevenly distributed amongst the participants. Generally, in longer DINs, the great majority of the participants in a thread only make one or two contributions, while the lion's share of the posts in longer DINs is provided by a minority of the participants (see Figure 11).

The participation activity in a longer DIN sequence thus typically follows a power law distribution pattern, which is a general pattern of activity found in other social media communication. According to Shirky (2009), the power law distribution holds for participation activity across social media, ranging from e-mailing lists and blog/commentary activity to wiki activity. Figure 12 displays the typical power law distribution pattern of participation activity, taken from the discussion thread in which both of the DINs 'super' (boozing) and 'krog' (dive) are located. In Figure 12, the

discussion participants are displayed on the x-axis and the percentage of each participant's contribution of posts within the entire thread is displayed on the y-axis.

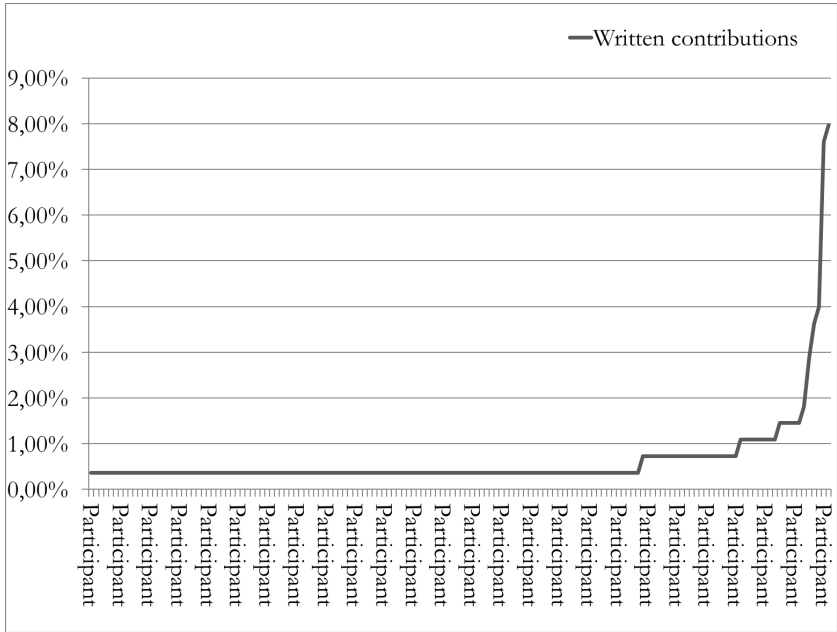


Figure 12: Example of power law distribution pattern of communication activity in social media (this particular distribution was found in the thread in which the WMNs of ‘super’ and ‘krog’ were located)

As mentioned, the power law distribution pattern of participation activity (as presented in Figure 12) seems to generally apply to discussion forum communication. A recent study by Graham and Wright (2014) confirms that a very small minority of so called “superposters” (0,4 % of the active posters in a particular forum) contribute almost half of the total number of posts (47 % of the 25 million posts in the forum). Figure 13 displays the actual pattern of activity found in the longest DIN sequence in this study, displaying a power law distribution pattern. Again, the participants

are displayed on the x-axis and the number of posts each participant has contributed in the DIN sequence is displayed on the y-axis.

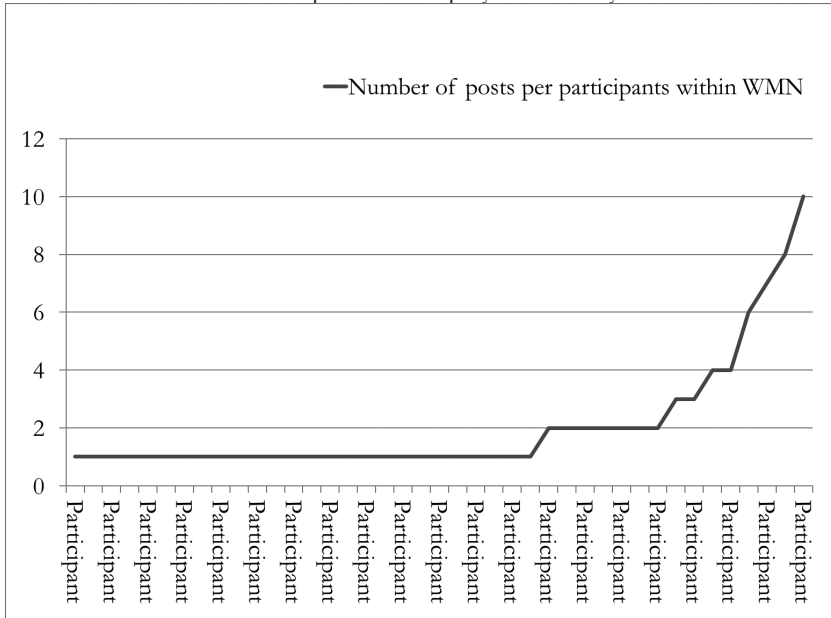


Figure 13: Activity pattern in the longest DIN sequence, concerning the trigger word ‘rymt’ (escaped)

5.3 DISTINGUISHING DINS FROM NONS

Within the sample of DINS, the variants of the utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?” are used to perform several different functions. On the one hand, similar to the case with NONs, “What/How do you mean (by) X?” can be used to perform the function of a *meta-linguistic clarification request*, i.e. signalling a need to clarify the situated meaning of the trigger word. On the other hand, in DINS, the very same phrases can also be used to perform a function of a *meta-linguistic objection*, signalling a need to oppose the use of the trigger word in the current discussion context.

5.3.1 DISTINGUISHING META-LINGUISTIC CLARIFICATION REQUESTS FROM META-LINGUISTIC OBJECTIONS

Deciding if a particular instance of the utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?” performs the function of a meta-linguistic clarification request or a meta-linguistic objection mainly hinges on how the utterance construction is interpreted in the following turns responding to the utterance construction. If the next turn provides clarification about word meaning, the previous turn has clearly been interpreted as the need to clear up a problem of insufficient understanding about what the word means in the current situation. On the other hand, if the next turn responding to the utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?” addresses the issue by defending the original word choice instead of providing meta-linguistic clarification about the meaning of the trigger word, this is taken as a sign of meta-linguistic disagreement between the participants, and the utterance construction is interpreted as a meta-linguistic objection. A few examples of the difference between meta-linguistic clarification requests and meta-linguistic objections are presented in the Excerpt 38 and Excerpt 39.

First, an example of when the utterance construction is interpreted as a meta-linguistic clarification request, taken from the sample of NONs.

Excerpt 38

P2: Hur menar du med “gratis”?

How do you mean by “for free”?

P1: Att du svarar i telefon på din fritid så att du kan bli utkallad. Detta utan att ha beredskap. Har jag en ledig dag så svarar inte jag i telefon.

That you answer the phone in your spare time so that you can be called in. This without being on call. If I have a day off, I don't answer the phone.

In Excerpt 38, P1 interprets P2's utterance as a signal to further explain what the trigger word means in the current conversational context. Had the utterance been interpreted as a meta-linguistic objection rather than

a clarification request, P1's utterance most likely would not have been phrased as an answer providing clarification. Clearly, in this case, P1 perceives that P2 is suggesting that the word 'gratis' ('for free') has been difficult to understand in the current situation, and that there is a need to provide further clarification about the meaning of the word.

Next, an example is presented of when the utterance construction is interpreted as a meta-linguistic objection, rather than a meta-linguistic clarification request. In this discussion, P1 has accused P2 of blasphemy in a previous (trigger) post, as a comment to a story told by P2 (in a separate discussion thread) about how God has killed his girlfriend by giving her malaria during a trip to Africa. The exchange below is located in a sequence from the sample of DINs.

Excerpt 39

- P2: Vaddå smädar Gud? Att säga sanningen är väl inte att smäda någon?
What do you mean blaspheming God? Telling the truth is not blaspheming?
- P1: Du smädar gud den högste när du skyller skäller på gud som dödat din flickvän.
You are blaspheming god the highest when you are blaming scolding god for killing your girlfriend.

In Excerpt 39, the utterance construction "What do you mean X?" is used as part of a meta-linguistic objection opposing the use of the trigger word in the particular context. This can be seen both in the account that follows the objection in P2's indicator post ("Telling the truth is not blaspheming?") and in P1's response post, as P1 does not seem to interpret the indicator post as a meta-linguistic clarification request, but instead repeats the accusation about blasphemy which makes the sequence part of an open disagreement between the participants. To summarise, in this example, P1 has already stated that P2 is blaspheming in the trigger post, P2 has objected to this in the indicator post, and P1 has repeated the accusation of blasphemy in the response post. In the WMN that follows in this discussion thread, the utterance construction "What do you mean

X?” is used as part of a meta-linguistic objection, which launches a WMN sequence originating in disagreement rather than non-understanding between the participants.

5.3.2 CO-EXISTING META-LINGUISTIC CLARIFICATION REQUESTS AND OBJECTIONS

Sometimes, it is not one of the variants of the utterance construction in the indicator post which turns the discussion into a WMN originating in disagreement. In many cases, the meta-linguistic objection comes later in the discussion, and it is not the “What/How do you mean (by) X?” phrase which launches the WMN, but a completely different meta-linguistic objection. An example of a sequence that contains both meta-linguistic clarification requests and meta-linguistic objections is the following negotiation of the trigger word ‘stalking’ (stalking). In this discussion, P1 has stated that she is stalking a woman online, but has been vague as to what the word means more specifically in the current context, i.e. she has not yet described her stalking actions against the woman in question.²⁶ Before the discussion develops into a WMN sequence, several participants ask questions about what P1 is doing and why, not phrasing the questions as meta-linguistic clarification requests, but as questions on topic. For example, P1 is asked:

- Varför? (Why?)
- Är du tänd på henne, egentligen? (Do you have the hots for her, really?)
- Men varför? Vilket uttryck tar det sig? vet hon om det? (But why? How does this manifest itself? Does she know?)
- Vad gör du mot henne? (What are you doing to her?)

P1 answers all of these questions one after the other. It turns out that P1 is secretly reading the woman’s blog and looking at her Instagram profile without the woman knowing about it (which probably constitutes fairly

²⁶ In this particular discussion, the thread starter (P1) explicitly states that she is a woman, which is why she is referred to as ‘she’ in this particular example.

conventional social media behaviour). At this point, the discussion develops into a WMN about the meaning of the word ‘stalking’, and the WMN contains both meta-linguistic clarification requests and meta-linguistic objections.

Excerpt 40

P2: Vad menar du med att du stalkar? Många använder begreppet helt fel.

What do you mean by stalking? A lot of people use the word completely wrong.

Compared to the other clarification requests outlined in the list above, in Excerpt 40, P2 issues a meta-linguistic clarification request, drawing attention to a particular word used by P1, indicating it as a trigger of something problematic in the discussion which needs to be addressed as an issue in itself. In the account following the clarification request, there is more evidence that the discussion needs to shift focus and move onto the meta-linguistic track dealing with word meaning. Specifically, P2 states that it is common for people to use this particular word in an incorrect manner, thus hinting that P1 may also be using it incorrectly. This seems to be addressing the issue of word meaning, and not just the topic of the discussion.

Next, another participant issues a meta-linguistic objection to how the word has been used by P1.

Excerpt 41

P3: Men det är ju INTE alls stalking!!!

But that is NOT stalking at all!!!

This is the first overt meta-linguistic objection in the sequence, turning this negotiation into a disagreement WMN, even though it encompasses a meta-linguistic clarification request which ordinarily is found in NONs.

Another example of co-existing meta-linguistic clarification requests and objections is found in the negotiation concerning the trigger word ‘flirta’ (flirt1). In this discussion, the main topic is whether or not it is OK to flirt with a married person. In the first post of the thread, P1 asks other

participants to give opinions about whether or not it is acceptable to flirt with someone who is married. Shortly after, the need come to a mutual agreement about the situated meaning of the word 'flirt' becomes apparent. The participants first need to agree on what 'flirting' means, in order to answer the question on topic about whether or not it is acceptable to flirt with someone who is married. First, one participant requests meta-linguistic clarification.

Excerpt 42

P2: Vad menar du med flirt? Att le charmigt, fälla någon positiv kommentar om personens klädsel, samt bekräfta personen genom en snabb klapp på armen. Är det flirt?

What do you mean by flirting? Smiling charmingly, saying something positive about the person's clothing and acknowledging them by a light touch on the arm. Is that flirting?

This post contains the ordinary components usually found in NONs, i.e. an indicator phrase requesting meta-linguistic clarification about an identified trigger word, and an extended account providing partial understanding of the trigger word, in this case by providing alternative interpretations about the meaning of 'flirting'. Up until this point, the participants do not seem to have sufficient mutual understanding about the meaning of the trigger word. P1 responds to the indicator post by explaining the meaning of the trigger word in this particular situation, by performing a specific explicification.

Excerpt 43

P1: Jo, med flört så menar jag...

- att skriva mail där man (mannen) uttrycker att känslorna är starka
- att mannen skickar typ 30 sms på en vecka till henne
- att mannen skickar blommor till hennes arbete och tackar för gott samarbete

Well, by flirting I mean...
- *writing e-mails where one (the man) expresses strong feelings*
- *that the man sends her like 30 text messages in a week*
- *that the man sends flowers to her workplace thanking her for a good collaboration*

In the response post in Excerpt 43, P1 puts forward a very precise and local meaning of the trigger word. P1 is not trying to discuss whether or not flirting in general is OK when the other person is married, but is actually addressing a very particular situation in which a man has pursued a woman in quite an excessive manner. In this discussion, P1 has originally chosen to describe the man's pursuing actions as 'flirting'.

At this point of the discussion, it becomes clear that P1's perception of the meaning of the trigger word differs from that of other participants, and this issue is addressed in a DIN sequence, starting with two consecutive meta-linguistic objections.

Excerpt 44

P3: Det där är inte flirt! Det är rena rama uppvaktningen!

That is not flirting! That is downright courtship!

P4: Håller med! Det här låter inte som en "flört" utan rena rama uppvaktningen!

I agree! This does not sound as a "flirtation" but as downright courtship!

In the WMN which unfolds following these meta-linguistic objections, the meaning of the trigger word is negotiated at the same time as the participants discuss the main question on topic about whether or not it is OK to flirt with a married person. Similar to the WMN targeting the trigger word 'stalking', the participants use *both* meta-linguistic clarification requests and meta-linguistic objections to reach a mutual understanding of the word as well as to display when they are in disagreement about what the trigger word can or should mean in the current situation. Again, meta-

linguistic clarification requests typically found in NONs are also found in negotiations characterised as DINs, but as long as there is at least one meta-linguistic objection present in the WMN disputing the word choice and its associated meaning, the sequence is generally characterised as a DIN sequence.

As a consequence, a criterion for determining when a sequence should count as a DIN rather than a NON is that there is at least one post which is subsequently interpreted as a meta-linguistic objection to a particular trigger word, that there is overt disagreement between the participants regarding word meaning, and that this is dealt with in a meta-linguistic negotiation sequence following the meta-linguistic objection.

5.4 IDENTIFYING AND CHARACTERISING DINs

DINs typically contain one or several meta-linguistic objections, which identify the trigger word and function as a catalyst for launching the negotiation sequence. Typically, the meta-linguistic objection challenges the use of the trigger word in the current conversational context, and thus signals that the objecting participant disagrees with the participant who previously used the trigger word about what constitutes an appropriate use of the word. This section will discuss three different kinds of meta-linguistic objections found in the example collection, and give some examples illustrating the ways in which DINs can be initiated. Typically, it is *not* one of the variants of the utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?” that initiates the word meaning negotiation sequence originating in disagreement. In most instances in the sample of DINs, it is a completely different form of meta-linguistic objection which serves as a catalyst for launching the DIN sequence (see Section 5.4.1). In some cases, it *is* one of the variants of the utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?” that serves as the meta-linguistic objection (see Section 5.4.2). In other cases, it is the account accompanying the utterance construction that functions as the meta-linguistic objection (Section 5.4.3). Subsequently, this section will discuss one DIN sequence in which there is no overt meta-linguistic objection (Section 5.4.4). Finally, the section will discuss how the scope of a DIN sequence is determined (Section 5.4.5).

5.4.1 PROTOTYPICAL META-LINGUISTIC OBJECTIONS

In the majority of the 22 DIN sequences, it is not one of the variants of the utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?” that launches the WMN. Instead, in 15 sequences, the meta-linguistic objection that initiates the negotiation sequence comes in the form of another utterance construction. This section will describe the kinds of meta-linguistic objections found in the data sample, illustrating using examples of the different kinds of objections used to launch DINs.

In many cases, when enough circumstances surrounding the discussed topic have been presented in the discussion, one or several participants may issue meta-linguistic objections disputing that the circumstances, as they have been described, do not accurately match the meaning potential of the word which has been used in describing them. This was illustrated in Section 5.3.2, in the examples of the negotiation of ‘stalking’ and in the negotiation of the word ‘flirta’ (flirt1). In both of these DINs, meta-linguistic objections are put forward when participants suggest that the behaviour which has been described does not accurately match their take on the meaning potential of the chosen trigger word. In the WMN of ‘stalking’, multiple such meta-linguistic objections are issued by several different participants, one after the other.

Excerpt 45

P3: Men det är ju INTE alls stalking!!!

But that is NOT stalking at all!!!

P4: Du stalkar henne inte, du följer hennes öppna blogg, bland annat.

You are not stalking her, you are following her open blog, amongst other things.

Similarly, in the WMN of the word ‘flirta’ (flirt1), more than one meta-linguistic objection of this kind are presented by different participants.

Excerpt 46

P3: Det där är inte flirt! Det är rena rama uppvaktningen!

That is not flirting! That is downright courtship!

P4: Håller med! Det här låter inte som en "flört" utan rena rama uppvaktningen!
I agree! This does not sound as a "flirtation" but as downright courtship!

P5: detta är INGEN flirt. detta är ren o skär uppvaktning/raggning/förklarande av en förälskelse!
this is NOT flirting. This is pure and utter courtship/coming on to someone/declaring love for someone!

As shown in Excerpts 45 and 46, in longer DINs where many participants take part in the negotiation, multiple meta-linguistic objections often occur one after the other in a sequence. It seems that being active in the negotiation originating in disagreement involves taking a stance towards the perceived appropriateness of the word currently being negotiated, even if that means repeating what someone else just wrote. Also, in the negotiation of 'ljuga' (lie), multiple such consecutive meta-linguistic objections are found in the WMN sequence. This particular discussion is about whether or not it is acceptable to fool children into believing that Santa is real, or if this in fact constitutes lying. Several participants disagree that the trigger word 'ljuga' (lie) can accurately be used to describe allowing children to believe in Santa. For example, the participants raise the following meta-linguistic objections:

- Det är inte ljug - det är sagor! (It is not lying – it is storytelling!)
- Jag tycker inte att man ljuger när man säger att tomten finns.. (I don't think it is lying when you say that Santa exists..)
- Äh, det är väl inte riktigt ljug!? (Huh, that is not really lying?!)
- Jag ser det inte som ljug. (I don't see that as lying.)
- Jag ser det inte som att man ljuger. (I don't see that as lying.)
- Sedan är det väl skillnad på och ljuga och ljuga. (There is a difference between lying and lying.)
- Därför kommer vi att fortsätta prata om tomten, för jag anser inte att jag ljuger eftersom han kommer varje år. (For that reason we

will keep talking about Santa, because I don't think that I'm lying since he comes every year.)

- Tycker inte det är att ljuga. (Don't think that is lying.)
- Vadå ljuga!! Klart att tomten finns! (What do you mean lying!! Of course Santa exists!)
- Det handlar inte om att ljuga...Det är fantasi. (This is not about lying.. It's a fantasy.)
- Efter hand kommer de förstå att det är på låtsas, men jag kallar det inte att ljuga, det är som en lek för barnen. (In time they will figure out it is only make-believe, but I don't call it lying, it's like a game for the children.)

The examples in the list above are taken from one of the longer DINs in the sample. In total, there are 58 posts in the WMN of 'ljuga' (lie), written by 40 participants. In this particular WMN, 23 posts contain a meta-linguistic objection similar to the examples presented above, which indicates that objecting to the word being used in the current context is an important act in the negotiation about the meaning of the trigger word, even when the objection has already been made by another participant.

As Table 15 shows, 14 of 22 DIN sequences in the data sample contain more than one meta-linguistic objection in the negotiation sequence. Seven sequences contain only one meta-linguistic objection in the negotiation, and one sequence does not contain any meta-linguistic objection (See Section 5.4.4 for more on this case).

Table 15: Relationship between the length of DINs and the number of meta-linguistic objections²⁷

	Long DINs (posts>24)	Short DINs (posts<=24)	Total
More than 1 ML objection	11	3	14
1 ML objection or less	1	7	8
Total	12	10	22

²⁷ The median number of posts in the sample of DINs is 24.

There is a positive correlation between the length of the DIN and the number of meta-linguistic objections raised in the negotiation ($r = 0.77$, $p < 0,01$). This means that longer DIN sequences are likely to contain more than one meta-linguistic objection, whereas shorter DINs are likely to contain just one meta-linguistic objection. As the conclusion has already been drawn that there is a correlation between the number of posts in a WMN and the number of participants, it is most likely the case that when many individuals participate in a WMN, they collectively make more meta-linguistic objections, than when the number of participants in a WMN is low. Table 16 displays precisely the same correlation, when comparing the number of meta-linguistic objections to the number of participants in each DIN sequence.

Table 16: Relationship between the number of participants in DINs and the number of meta-linguistic objections²⁸

	Many participants ($n > 12$)	Few participants ($n \leq 12$)	Total
More than 1 ML objection	12	2	14
1 ML objection or less	1	7	8
Total	13	9	22

Again, a positive correlation is found between the number of participants and the number of meta-linguistic objections ($r = 0.81$, $p < 0,01$).

To summarise, the prototypical meta-linguistic objection is not one of the variants of the utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?”. Instead, meta-linguistic objections typically come as a variation on the form “That is not X!”

²⁸ The median number of participants in the sample of DINs is 12.5.

5.4.2 META LINGUISTIC CLARIFICATION REQUESTS FUNCTIONING AS META-LINGUISTIC OBJECTIONS

In some instances, the utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?” itself functions as a meta-linguistic objection. In such cases, it is the interpretation of the phrase which shows that the utterance construction is interpreted as an objection rather than a request for clarification. This occurs in the WMN of the trigger word ‘handfallna’ (perplexed), where a post containing a variant of the utterance construction is interpreted as a meta-linguistic objection rather than a meta-linguistic clarification request.

Excerpt 47

P1: Ganska många kommuner står handfallna när det “dyker upp” ett barn som ska adopteras bort och vet inte vad de ska göra.

Quite a lot of municipalities become perplexed when a child “shows up” for adoption, and don’t know what to do.

P2: Vadå “handfallna”???

What do you mean “perplexed”???

P1: Handfallna kanske inte är rätt uttryck men i och med att det sällan hanteras inhemska adoptionen i en kommun kanske det är första gången detta sker för alla som arbetar på familjeenheten i just den kommunen-det är ju inte otänkbart.

Perplexed might not be the right expression but since they rarely deal with domestic adoption it may be the first time this happens for all of the employees at the family department in that particular municipality - it is not unthinkable.

In the exchange in Excerpt 47, P2’s use of the utterance construction “Vadå X?” is interpreted as an objection to the trigger word being used, and not as an indication of insufficient understanding regarding the meaning of the trigger word. In the response, P1 acknowledges that the word

may be incorrect to use, but explains his or her reasons for using it in the current conversational context. P1's response appears to be a justification of the use of the trigger word, rather than a clarification of meaning. In this way, P1's response indicates that P1 has interpreted P2's post as a meta-linguistic objection and not a request for meta-linguistic clarification regarding the meaning of the trigger word. The exchange in Excerpt 47 develops further into a longer negotiation sequence, which concludes with P1 apologising for possibly offending the other participants by her choice of word.

5.4.3 META-LINGUISTIC OBJECTIONS EMBEDDED IN ACCOUNTS OF CLARIFICATION REQUESTS

In other cases, the meta-linguistic objection comes in the form of co-text accompanying one of the variants of the utterance construction "What/How do you mean (by) X?". One such example was presented in Excerpt 39, in the WMN of 'smäda' (blaspheme) in Section 5.3.1. Another example of the same kind is found in the WMN of the trigger word 'rymt' (escaped). The backstory in this discussion is that a well-known Swedish blogger, Katrin Zytomierska, had posted a blog entry about her nanny running away from her during a family trip to the U.S. In the blog post, the word 'rymma' (escape) was originally used to describe the nanny's leaving the family without giving notice or telling anyone that she was planning to leave. In the beginning of the discussion thread, the participants start off using the same word as the blogger, but very early in the discussion meta-linguistic objections are raised regarding the appropriateness of using the word 'rymt' (escaped) applied to the current context. In the example in Excerpt 45, one of the variants of the utterance constructions "What/How do you mean (by) X?" is used to dispute the particular word choice, and together with the account that follows as co-text in the utterance, it is

clear that the utterance should be interpreted as an objection, and not as a request for clarification.

Excerpt 48

P2: Vad då rymt? Ägde Katrin henne eller? Katrin var hennes arbetsgivare, och det är visserligen fullt gjort att bara dra ifrån sin anställning utan att säga upp sig först, men rymt? *What do you mean escaped? Did Katrin own her or what? Katrin was her employer, and I agree that it is bad to just leave your employment without giving notice first, but escape?*

In the account that follows the utterance construction, P2 explains why he or she disagrees with the use of the trigger word in the current situation. P2 suggests that the word is not accurately used since ownership did not apply between the two people in the story. Here, it is this account that allows for other participants to interpret the utterance as a meta-linguistic objection. If the account would have been left out, the isolated utterance construction “vad då rymt?” could possibly have been interpreted as a meta-linguistic clarification request and not as an objection.

5.4.4 DINS WITHOUT OVERT META-LINGUISTIC OBJECTIONS

21 of 22 DINs in the sample contain at least one meta-linguistic objection, but in one instance, there is no explicit meta-linguistic objection present which overtly questions the appropriateness of the trigger word, ‘fullfet’ (full fat). Yet, there is still disagreement about the meaning of that particular word, even though there is not one singular act which objects to the word being used in the current context. In this instance, the disagreement about word meaning originates in utterances in which several participants raise repeated meta-linguistic clarification requests about the meaning of the trigger word. In the various responses that follow the clarification requests, it soon becomes clear that individual participants hold diverging opinions about the meaning potential of the trigger word.

In the beginning of the discussion, the participants are repeatedly using the word without the communication running into any difficulties. There seems to be an assumption of enough mutual understanding concerning the meaning of the (soon to become) trigger word 'fullfet' (full-fat). Excerpt 49 displays the beginning of the discussion, where the word is used without any signs of disagreement about word meaning between the participants.

Excerpt 49

P1: Däremot anser jag att människan behöver fett så här serveras fullfettsprodukter istället för margariner och lättprodukter.

However, I believe that humans need fat, so I only serve full fat products instead of margarines and light products.

P2: Håller med dig! Vi har alltid riktigt smör istället för margarin. Tror inte heller på lättprodukter.

I agree with you! We always have real butter instead of margarine. I don't believe in light products either.

P3: Får de fullfettsprodukter i förskolan också? Varför tror du att människan behöver fullfettprodukter?

Do they get full fat products in preschool as well? Why do you think humans need full fat products?

P1: Ja, de får fullfettsprodukter i förskolan också. Jag är bara övertygad om att kroppen behöver fett.

Yes, they are given full fat products in preschool as well. I'm just convinced that the body needs fat.

P4: Jag följer kostråden i stort men väljer alltid fullfeta mejeriprodukter i mat tex vispgräddor och alltid smör i stället för margarin.

I follow the dietary advice in general but always choose full fat dairy products in food, for example double cream and butter instead of margarine.

- P5: Vi kör ett liknande upplägg. Till varje måltid serveras kokta grönsaker eller ugnstrostade rotfrukter, färska grönsaker, någon proteinkälla och fullfeta produkter i måttliga mängder.
We have a similar setup. Each meal is served with cooked vegetables or roasted root vegetables, fresh vegetables, some kind of protein source and full fat products in moderation.
- P6: Vi äter nyttig och god mat. [...] Lagar nästan allt från grunden och använder endast fullfeta produkter.
We eat healthy and tasty food. [...] Cook almost everything from scratch, using only full fat products.

In Excerpt 49, there is not yet any problem regarding the meaning of the word ‘fullfet’ (full fat). The participants seem to be in agreement about what the word means, or at least there seems to be sufficiently shared understanding about the meaning of the word, so that the discussion can continue on topic. The participants are contrasting the word with a perceived antonym ‘lättprodukter’ (light products) and they are providing examples of food products from each group. Real butter and double cream are examples of full fat products, whereas margarine is an example of light products. So far, there is no disagreement about word meaning, and there is no negotiation taking place on the meta-linguistic level, even though the participants are providing clues about what they believe the word ‘fullfet’ (full fat) means.

A little later in the discussion, something happens which disturbs the perceived agreement about the meaning of the word. One participant is contrasting the word with artificially produced foods, suggesting that full fat does not only refer to products with higher fat percentage than light products, but proposing that full fat products are also more naturally produced. This is addressed by another participant issuing a clarification

request targeting the meaning of the trigger word, presented in Excerpt 50.

Excerpt 50

P7: Dessutom så behöver man inte dö av åderförkalkning bara för att man använder sig utav fullfeta produkter man behöver ju inte bada i det, jag anser att fullfeta produkter är bättre än kemiskt framtagen skit som tex margarin. *Besides, you don't necessarily die from atherosclerosis just because you use full fat products you don't have to bathe in it, I believe full fat products are better than chemically produced shit like for example margarine.*

P8: Vad räknas som fullfeta produkter? Vart går gränsen liksom? Ni använder aldrig mjölk eftersom det finns grädde? Och i så fall varför? Är det fettet i sig ni vill åt? Eller menar du att framställningen av grädde är mycket mer naturlig än framställningen av mjölk? *What counts as full fat products? Where do you draw the line? You never use milk since there is cream? And in that case why? Is it the fat itself you want? Or do you mean that the production of cream is more natural than the production of milk?*

In Excerpt 50, the participant (P8) who produces the clarification request receives a reply from one of the other participants (P3) (see Excerpt 51). In the response, P3 does not explicitly address the clarification request. Instead, a new concept is introduced, which also concerns the manufacturing process of dairy products, namely pasteurisation. P3 connects full

fat products to unpasteurised products, but does not address P8's clarification request, which drives P8 to re-issue the clarification request.

Excerpt 51

P3: Vældans tänkvärda saker som du skriver om. De borde absolut inte ge barnen standardmjölk och vanligt smör, för det är opastöriserade produkter som de pratar om, men som de sällan serverar men ändå kallar man det för "fullfeta" produkter.

Very insightful things you are writing about. They definitely should not be giving the children full fat milk or regular butter, because it is unpasteurised products they are talking about, but that they rarely serve but still call "full fat" products.

P8: Jag har inga invändningar mot standardmjölk eller smör, är bara nyfiken på vad folk menar med "fullfeta produkter" och vad det är de menar är så bra med dessa.

I have no objection to full fat milk or butter, just curious as to what people mean by "full fat products" and why they think they are so good.

From this point onward, a meta-linguistic negotiation takes off focusing on the meaning of the trigger word, specifically targeting fat percentage and manufacturing processes such as homogenisation and pasteurisation. The WMN has started without any explicit meta-linguistic objection to how a particular word has been used in a specific discussion context. In fact, it starts very similar to WMNs originating in non-understanding, i.e. by someone issuing a meta-linguistic clarification request regarding the meaning of a particular word. However, since it becomes clear that individual participants have very different ideas about the meaning potential of the trigger word (drawing upon aspects of fat percentage as well as aspects of the manufacturing process of dairy products), the negotiation of the word cannot be resolved as easily as in ordinary cases of non-

understanding. When it becomes clear that individual participants actually disagree about what the word can or should mean, this WMN is characterised as originating in disagreement rather than non-understanding.

Although this DIN sequence is unusual in the way it is initiated, without the presence of a meta-linguistic objection, it nicely illustrates the phenomenon of lexical entrainment, i.e. that participants in conversation choose the same word to refer to a specific entity in the world. Before it becomes evident that the participants are not actually in agreement about the situated meaning of ‘full fat’, they are assuming that they are using the word in a similar way. The word is used in 10 different posts before the first clarification request is issued. When it becomes apparent that there are relevant differences in how the participants are using ‘full fat’, they need to address this issue on a meta-communicative level, and more specifically on the meta-linguistic level dealing with the meanings of words. Up until the first clarification request is raised, this WMN sequence also illustrates what Rommetveit calls *pseudo-agreements*, since there is a verbal convergence on the word level, camouflaging an actual divergence of opinions (Rommetveit, 1968, p. 265).

To summarise, this section has described how DINs can be identified, particularly by focusing on the presence of meta-linguistic objections functioning as initiators of the meaning negotiation. In 21 out of 22 WMNs originating in disagreement, there is at least one meta-linguistic objection disputing the meaning of the trigger word applied to the particular circumstances of the discussed situation. In one out of the 22 DINs, an exception is found, and this WMN unfolds without the presence of a meta-linguistic objection. In this case, multiple clarification requests questioning the word meaning are issued, and from the various responses provided by the participants, it soon becomes clear that they are not in agreement concerning the meaning of the trigger word.

This section has also showed that DINs regularly contain more than one meta-linguistic objection. 14 out of 22 DINs contain more than one meta-linguistic objection, whereas eight DINs contain one meta-linguistic objection (or fewer, in one case). In addition, it has been concluded that the length of the sequence and the number of participants engaged in the negotiation influence the number of meta-linguistic objections. In longer DINs, where many participants take part in the negotiation, there are likely to be more meta-linguistic objections present than in shorter DINs between fewer participants.

5.4.5 DETERMINING THE SCOPE OF DINs

This section will discuss how the scope of a DIN sequence is determined, which involves deciding whether or not a post within a discussion thread is also a part of the DIN sequence negotiating the meaning of the trigger word.

Even after the meta-linguistic shift has occurred, and participants have begun negotiating word meaning on the meta-linguistic level (Track 2b), the discussion on topic still continues in parallel (Track 1). In cases where the negotiation originates in disagreement about the appropriateness of a particular word, the WMN sequence cannot be as neatly isolated as in cases where the negotiation originates in non-understanding. DINs do not display the T-I-R-(RR) pattern which has been found in most of the NONs. On the contrary, DINs are more complex for a number of reasons. For example, there is often an underlying divergence of opinion on topic between the participants who are in disagreement on the meta-linguistic level about the appropriateness of a particular word. In these cases, the participants are regularly *also* opponents in the discussion on topic, taking different stances for or against the discussed issues. The fact that they are often on opposing sides in the discussion on topic may make them less prone to accept their co-participants' opinions about the meanings of particular trigger words. By contrast, in cases of non-understanding, the participants engaged in the WMN are simply trying to solve an issue of insufficient understanding, and in these cases participants may be more prone to accepting an interlocutor's response clarifying the local meaning of the word under negotiation. DINs are also more complex due to the fact that they involve a higher number of participants, compared to NONs, where typically only a few participants are engaged.

For these reasons, a WMN sequence originating in disagreement cannot be as neatly isolated as in cases where the negotiation originates in non-understanding. Since a higher number of participants generally are involved in DINs, many posts solely discussing the topic (Track 1) can interrupt the sequence negotiating word meaning (Track 2b). These posts need to be identified and excluded from the WMN sequence, since they

do not contribute anything on the meta-linguistic level.²⁹ Also, since posts in forum discussions are highly multi-functional, many times a single post addresses several issues one after the other, making contributions both on topic and on the meta-linguistic level. The question is then how to determine if a post within a discussion should count as being part of a particular WMN sequence or not. As explained in the introduction to this chapter, the criteria for deciding if a post is part of a WMN sequence or not are the same as in NONs, but with a few additions.

The first addition concerns posts that contain so called passive endorsements of the trigger word, i.e. posts which continue using the trigger word after it has been made the trigger of a WMN sequence. In DINs, passive endorsements are included in the WMN sequence as such posts are seen to contribute something to the negotiation, although in a less active manner than overtly objecting to or defending the use of a particular word. Passively endorsing the continued use of a word entails simply insisting on using it to describe the situation in question after this has been pointed out as inappropriate by someone else.

Another addition to the criteria for determining which posts are considered being a part of a DIN sequence is that posts which suggest alternative words also count as being part of the WMN sequence. Substituting the trigger word for an alternative word is seen as an act of contrasting in the meta-linguistic negotiation, since this can be a way of avoiding taking an active stance in the negotiation but still being a part of it by *not* supporting the continued use of the word which has been pointed out as inappropriate and instead opting for another, perhaps less controversial, alternative.

5.5 SEQUENTIALITY IN DINs

Unlike the NONs, DINs display a very different pattern of sequentiality compared to the T-I-R-(RR) structure commonly found in NONs. As discussed in Chapter 4, in cases where participants do not fully understand

²⁹ In the analyses, these intervening posts have been looked at to preserve the context of the discussion on topic, but they have not been treated as part of the WMN sequence and have therefore not been analysed in this study.

the meaning of a word, and therefore need to address the issue of insufficient understanding by entering into a non-understanding WMN, the negotiation is generally wrapped up in three or four turns, typically involving two (in some cases three) participants.

As discussed in Section 5.2, the distribution of participation activity follows a completely different pattern in DINs. In shorter DINs, there is typically a dyadic flow of communication, between two participants taking turns back and forth. In longer DINs, the distribution of participation activity tends to display a power law distribution pattern. This means that the majority of the active participants make only one contribution to the WMN, whereas a minority of the participants dominate the discussion, by making several contributions in the ongoing negotiation. This section will focus on patterns of turn-taking identified in the data sample of the 22 DINs, and will specifically address the issue of how turns are related to each other within sequences. Here, the analysis will focus on the presence of the same dialogical traits as in the sequentiality analysis of the NONs, i.e. aspects of responsive and projective dialogicality, which display how posts are intended to relate backwards and forwards in the negotiation sequence (see Section 4.3).

Table 17 shows the various responsivity and addressivity features identified in the study of sequentiality, and displays the number and the percentage of total posts in each DIN which contain each feature.

Table 17: Findings from the analysis of sequentiality of the DINs

Trigger	Posts	R1: Quote or direct-reply	R2: 2 nd person pronoun	R3: Next turn	R4: 2 nd part of adjacency pair	A1: 2 nd person pronoun	A2: 1 st part of adjacency pair
billigt	27	9 (33%)	4 (15%)	1 (4%)	13 (48%)	6 (22%)	7 (26%)
flirta (flirt1)	33	32 (97%)	10 (30%)	21 (64%)	16 (48%)	5 (15%)	10 (30%)
flirta (flirt2)	31	1 (3%)	14 (45%)	7 (23%)	25 (81%)	2 (6%)	13 (42%)
fullfet	27	15 (56%)	7 (26%)	3 (11%)	6 (22%)	7 (26%)	10 (37%)
förnekare	7	5 (71%)	2 (29%)	3 (43%)	2 (29%)	2 (29%)	4 (57%)
giltig	10	9 (90%)	7 (70%)	4 (40%)	4 (40%)	2 (20%)	5 (50%)
handfallna	5	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)
homogen	6	5 (83%)	5 (83%)	5 (83%)	4 (67%)	4 (67%)	5 (83%)
jämställdhet	6	5 (83%)	3 (50%)	2 (33%)	3 (50%)	2 (33%)	3 (50%)
krog	22	14 (64%)	4 (18%)	7 (32%)	7 (32%)	1 (5%)	10 (45%)
ljuga	58	3 (6%)	22 (38%)	6 (10%)	30 (52%)	4 (7%)	14 (24%)
ljuger	15	13 (87%)	8 (53%)	3 (20%)	4 (27%)	3 (20%)	6 (40%)
lura	31	0 (0%)	10 (32%)	4 (13%)	14 (45%)	4 (13%)	14 (45%)
misshandel	80	16 (20%)	20 (25%)	5 (6%)	4 (5%)	18 (23%)	30 (38%)
mobbing	7	6 (86%)	5 (71%)	3 (43%)	1 (14%)	4 (57%)	5 (71%)
onaturligt	18	16 (89%)	5 (28%)	2 (11%)	8 (44%)	6 (33%)	8 (44%)
onyttigt	51	25 (49%)	15 (29%)	3 (6%)	17 (33%)	6 (12%)	8 (16%)
rymt	85	30 (35%)	3 (4%)	9 (11%)	9 (11%)	4 (5%)	30 (35%)
smäda	5	4 (80%)	3 (60%)	4 (80%)	3 (60%)	3 (60%)	3 (60%)
stalking	18	13 (72%)	6 (33%)	4 (22%)	8 (44%)	7 (39%)	9 (50%)
super	26	6 (23%)	10 (38%)	5 (19%)	8 (31%)	6 (23%)	14 (54%)
övergrepp	63	14 (22%)	23 (37%)	3 (5%)	10 (16%)	21 (33%)	32 (51%)

5.5.1 RESPONDING BY QUOTING OR DIRECT-REPLYING

One strategy for explicitly manifesting how a post connects backwards in the negotiation sequence is to quote an entire previous post, or a part of that post, indicating that the new post is responding to the previous post.

As discussed in Chapter 4, both Familjeliv and Flashback have the quoting feature built into the discussion interface, which facilitates the quoting practice amongst the participants on these two forums. In contrast, Passagen Debatt does not have a quoting button, but instead uses a direct-reply function which makes it impossible to write “the next post” in a discussion thread without explicitly directing that post at a previous post. Both quoting and direct-replying are manifest ways of overtly responding to a particular previous post.

In the 22 DINs, the quoting and direct-replying feature is regularly used. On average, 55 % of the posts within a DIN sequence respond to another post within the sequence either by quoting that post, or by direct-replying to it. This is comparable to the NONs, where an average of 57 % of posts within NON sequences respond to another post within the same sequence by use of quote or direct-reply.³⁰

5.5.2 RESPONDING BY USE OF NAME OR PRONOUN

As explained in Section 4.3.4, another way of explicitly connecting a post in a backwards manner to a particular other post is by referring to that participant by name (alias) or by use of a pronoun, typically “du” (you, second person singular) or “ni” (you, second person plural). By including a second person pronoun in a post, this post is explicitly linked to something already written by someone else. Even if many other posts will end up intervening the chronological flow of communication between the original post and the new post responding to the original post, it will be possible to trace how these two posts are relationally adjacent, even without being chronologically adjacent, as the name or pronoun is pointing backwards in the negotiation.

Out of the 22 DINs in the sample, a little over one third of the posts in the WMN sequences (38 %) include a name or a second person pronoun, explicitly connecting the posts to previous posts. Again, this is similar to the results of the sequentiality analysis of NONs, where an average of

³⁰ The results of the sequentiality analysis of NONs is presented in Section 4.4. In that section, the results are presented with regards to how each of the four turn components is related to the other turn components within the T-I-R-(RR) sequence.

40 % of the posts respond to another post within the same sequence by use of name or second person pronoun.

5.5.3 RESPONDING BY ATTEMPTING TO TAKE “THE NEXT TURN”

As discussed in Section 4.3.5, there is no guarantee that an attempt to take the next turn in an ongoing discussion will lead to the new post being displayed as the next chronological post in the thread, due to the fact that there may be many participants online taking part in the discussion at the same time. However, in some cases, in slow threads where there are long “silent” periods between each post, attempts to take the next turn in the discussion can be successful. Chronological adjacency is therefore one way for posts to display a relation of responsivity towards other posts, although this strategy is beyond the control of the participants since they cannot be certain that their post will end up in the intended spot.

Chronological adjacency is found to be relatively uncommon amongst the posts within the 22 DIN sequences in the sample. On average, 28 % of posts within a sequence constitute the next turn (X+1) compared to the previous turn (X). This means that 72 % of posts in the sequences do not constitute the next chronological turn within the negotiation sequence, hence that there are intervening posts interrupting the chronological flow. The corresponding number from the sequentiality analysis of the NONs is 49 %, which may indicate that posts within NON sequences are more often “the next turn” than in DIN sequences.

5.5.4 RESPONDING BY PRODUCING THE SECOND PART OF AN ADJACENCY PAIR

As discussed in Section 4.3.6, when a post constitutes the second part of an adjacency pair, there are manifest properties of responsivity since the second post is functionally dependent on the first post. The second post is a part of a two-part exchange and relates to the first part post, regardless of how far back in the chronological flow of discussion that the first part post is located. For example, when a participant writes a post containing an answer, this answer is a response to a particular question asked in a pre-

vious post in the discussion. Providing answers to questions is therefore one way of showing how a particular post relates in a backwards manner to another, earlier post.

In the sample of the 22 DINs, on average 38 % of the posts contain answers to questions asked in earlier posts. In many cases, one particular question can receive multiple answers by many participants. For example, when the very first post in the thread, written by the thread starter (TS), contains a specific question regarding a certain topic, many of the less active participants in the discussion (who make only one contribution in the entire thread) often direct their post specifically at TS and only answer that particular question, instead of reading through the entire thread and taking part in the discussion as it makes progress. Compared to the sequentiality analysis of the NONs, 50 % of posts within NON sequences contain the second part of an adjacency pair.

5.5.5 ADDRESSING SOMEONE BY USE OF NAME OR PRONOUN

As discussed in Section 4.3.7, discussion posts do not only have responsive but also projective dialogical relations with other posts. The projective dialogical traits of a discussion indicate how posts are intended to relate to other posts in a forward-pointing manner. By examining features of addressivity in discussion posts, it is possible to analyse how they are intended to be read and responded to by other participants. Many times in multi-party communication, posts are not addressed to *all* of the other participants engaged in the discussion. Often, posts are intended for particular addressees, which can be indicated by directing posts at these specific interlocutors by using their name or alias, or simply by using a second person pronoun.

In the 22 DINs, the addressivity feature of including names or pronouns of particular addressees is used in 26 % of the posts. Seemingly, this feature is less commonly used in DINs than in NONs, where an average of 55 % of posts within a NON sequence is addressed to a particular participant by use of name or a second person pronoun.

5.5.6 ADDRESSING SOMEONE BY PRODUCING THE FIRST PART OF AN ADJACENCY PAIR

As discussed in Section 4.3.8, producing the first part of an adjacency pair can be another way for participants to address specific interlocutors in a projective manner, since the first part of the adjacency pair creates an expectation that the second part will follow in the future discussion to come. Therefore, identifying the first parts of adjacency pairs can be another way to trace manifest properties of addressivity within WMN sequences.

On average, 44 % of posts in the DIN sequences contain the first part of an adjacency pair, such as a request, appeal or invitation. This is comparable to the findings from the sequentiality analysis of NONs, where an average of 49 % of posts contain the first part of an adjacency pair. Among the DIN sequences, the most common adjacency structure is by far the question-answer pair, and almost all of the first pair parts in the sample are questions. This suggests that a little less than half of the posts within a WMN sequence contain a question which projects the anticipation of an answer by an imagined addressee in the continuation of the discussion, based on this particular sample.

As stated earlier in this section, the mean value for posts containing the *second* part of an adjacency pair is 38 %, which means that there are more questions than answers in the DIN sequences. In addition, in many instances the second pair parts (answers) are addressed to one and the same question (which is often the case when multiple participants answer a question posed by TS in the very first post of the thread). This means that the amount of unanswered questions is likely to be even higher. Nevertheless, a question directed at an imagined addressee is still a dialogical feature, displaying a relation of addressivity between posts in the discussion.

5.5.7 SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS OF SEQUENTIALITY IN DINS

To summarise, all of the posts in discussion forum communication bear dialogical traits of responsivity and addressivity. They are written as a response to something, and they are also written in anticipation of being read and responded to in the future. In this part of the study, the sequentiality of the DINs has been analysed by focusing on manifest properties of responsivity and addressivity of the communication. The analysis has looked at how participants use ways of explicitly directing posts at other addressees, both in a responsive, backward-pointing direction, and in a projective, forward-reaching manner.

Table 18 displays the relationship between the posts in the various DIN sequences and the responsivity and addressivity features analysed in this part of the study.

Table 18: Manifest properties of responsivity and addressivity identified in the DINs

Trigger	Posts	At least 1 responsivity feature	No responsivity feature	At least 1 addressivity feature	No addressivity feature	Both responsivity and addressivity features present	Neither responsivity features nor addressivity features present
billigt	27	22 (81%)	5 (19%)	7 (26%)	20 (74%)	3 (11%)	2 (7%)
flirta (flirt1)	33	32 (97%)	1 (3%)	10 (30%)	23 (70%)	9 (27%)	0 (0%)
flirta (flirt2)	31	25 (81%)	6 (19%)	13 (42%)	18 (58%)	8 (26%)	0 (0%)
fullfet	27	20 (74%)	7 (26%)	11 (41%)	16 (59%)	11 (41%)	2 (7%)
förnekare	7	5 (71%)	2 (29%)	4 (57%)	3 (43%)	4 (57%)	1 (14%)
giltig	10	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	0 (0%)
handfallna	5	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)
homogen	6	5 (83%)	1 (17%)	5 (83%)	1 (17%)	5 (83%)	1 (17%)
jämställdhet	6	5 (83%)	1 (17%)	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	1 (17%)	0 (0%)
krog	22	16 (73%)	6 (27%)	10 (45%)	12 (55%)	4 (18%)	0 (0%)
ljuga	58	47 (81%)	11 (19%)	14 (24%)	44 (76%)	11 (19%)	8 (14%)
ljuger	15	13 (87%)	2 (13%)	6 (40%)	9 (60%)	6 (40%)	0 (0%)
lura	31	11 (35%)	20 (65%)	14 (45%)	17 (55%)	9 (29%)	8 (26%)
misshandel	80	27 (34%)	53 (66%)	30 (38%)	50 (62%)	14 (18%)	20 (25%)
mobbing	7	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	5 (71%)	2 (29%)	5 (71%)	1 (14%)
onaturligt	18	17 (94%)	1 (6%)	8 (44%)	10 (56%)	6 (33%)	0 (0%)
onyttigt	51	43 (84%)	8 (16%)	8 (16%)	43 (84%)	6 (12%)	3 (6%)
rymt	85	32 (38%)	53 (62%)	30 (35%)	55 (65%)	12 (14%)	21 (25%)
smäda	5	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	1 (20%)
stalking	18	16 (89%)	2 (11%)	11 (61%)	7 (39%)	9 (50%)	0 (0%)
super	26	14 (54%)	12 (46%)	14 (54%)	12 (46%)	11 (42%)	8 (31%)
övergrepp	63	31 (49%)	32 (51%)	32 (51%)	31 (49%)	18 (29%)	11 (17%)

The results indicate that a large proportion of the posts in the various DINs display at least one of the responsivity features analysed in this study. The most commonly found responsivity feature in the sample corpus is a quote or a direct-reply of a previous post within the WMN sequence, indicating that the current post is a response to that particular post. The second most commonly found responsivity feature is to write a post which constitutes the second part of an adjacency pair, typically producing an answer to a question, which was previously asked in the WMN sequence.

As shown in Table 18, almost half of the posts within the DIN sequences in the sample display at least one of the addressivity features analysed in this study, which can be used to indicate that a post is written to elicit a response from other addressees. This is done either by use of a name or pronoun, to elicit a response from a particular intended addressee, or by writing a post which constitutes the first part of an adjacency pair, typically writing a question which prompts other participants to respond.

5.6 SEMANTIC OPERATIONS AND OTHER DIALOGUE ACTS IN DINs

This section will look into how situated meaning is established in the 22 DINs and will investigate how the participants throughout the negotiation combine aspects of the conversational context with aspects of the meaning potential associated with the trigger word. Because of the lack of any strict sequentiality pattern in DINs (discussed in Section 5.5), it is possible for any participant at any time in the WMN sequence to make a contribution to the meta-linguistic negotiation as it is developing.

This section will describe the semantic operations found in all of the posts within the DIN sequences, and will present the findings thematically with illustrative examples of each semantic operation used to contribute to the negotiation of word meaning. It is important to underline that the semantic operations described in this section are not mutually exclusive. It is possible for one specific post to contain more than one semantic operation. For example, a post may perform the function of a meta-linguistic objection, and simultaneously propose meaning to the WMN by

performing an act of explicification or exemplification. This section will look into how participants contribute to the word meaning negotiation by (1) proposing meaning through acts of explicification and exemplification (Section 5.6.1 and Section 5.6.2), (2) opposing meaning through various acts of meta-linguistic objection (Section 5.6.3), (3) contrasting meaning through for example acts of delimitation and highlighting of aspectual differences (Section 5.6.4), (4) endorsing meaning through acts of meta-linguistic endorsement or passive endorsement (Section 5.6.5), (5) specific constructions carrying out other semantic operations (Section 5.6.6), and (6) displaying meta-linguistic awareness towards fact that they are engaged in negotiation about word meaning (Section 5.6.7).

From this point onward, when exemplifying findings from the analyses by presenting excerpts from the data, the discussion posts will be labelled using the consecutive ID number assigned to each post by the discussion forum instead of being called P1, P2... Pn. When exemplifying the different semantic operations identified in the sequences, there is no apparent need to demonstrate how turns relate to each other within each sequence, in contrast to the illustration of findings from the sequentiality analysis.

5.6.1 PROPOSING MEANING: GENERIC AND SPECIFIC EXPLICIFICATIONS

Similar to the NONs, one way of proposing meaning to a word under negotiation in a DIN sequence is to introduce an explicit definitional component, i.e. to make an *explicification* (Ludlow, 2014). As was shown in Section 4.2.3, an explicification can be made by foregrounding aspects of the trigger word's meaning potential, which is called making a *generic explicification*. Another way of producing an explicification is by foregrounding aspects of the discussed situation, which is called making a *specific explicification*. As discussed in Section 4.2.3, it is possible to apply both kinds of semantic operations within a single post, i.e. to draw upon both aspects of meaning potential and aspects of context when proposing meaning in the meaning negotiation. Explicifications are found in most of the DINs. 17 out of 22 DINs in the sample contain at least one act of explicification, and the total number of instances of explicification is 67.

GENERIC EXPLICITIFICATIONS

Generic explicitifications are found in 13 out of 22 WMNs in the sample, and the total number of instances of (positive) generic explicitification is 30. Generic explicitifications, which foreground aspects of meaning potential of the trigger word, on occasion come in the shape of attempted full definitions. For example, this occurs in the WMN of the trigger word ‘misshandel’ (abuse1). In this discussion, the participants are discussing whether or not piercing the ears of small children is morally acceptable or if it can be viewed as child abuse. When the negotiation has been going on for a long time, a few participants attempt to produce far-reaching definitions of the trigger word, using text from law paragraphs as a foundation for their definitions of the word.

Excerpt 52

P #2154:Man gör i lagtexten ingen skillnad mellan misshandel och barnmisshandel utan bådadera regleras i brottsbalkens (BrB) 3:e kapitel. § 5: Den som tillfogar en annan person kroppsskada, sjukdom eller smärta eller försätter honom eller henne i vanmakt eller något annat sådant tillstånd, döms för misshandel till fängelse i högst två år eller, om brottet är ringa, till böter eller fängelse i högst sex månader. § 8: Den som av oaktsamhet orsakar annan person sådan kroppsskada eller sjukdom som inte är ringa, döms för vållande till kroppsskada eller sjukdom till böter eller fängelse i högst sex månader.

*The law does not differentiate between abuse and child abuse, instead both are regulated in the 3rd chapter of the Penal Code.
§ 5: Whoever causes another person bodily injury, illness or pain, or renders him or her in impotence or another similar condition, shall be sentenced for assault to*

imprisonment not exceeding two years or, if the crime is minor, to a fine or imprisonment not exceeding six months. § 8: Anyone who negligently causes another person such bodily injury or illness that is not minor, shall be sentenced to involuntary bodily injury or illness to a fine or imprisonment not exceeding six months.

The participant in Excerpt 52 uses paragraphs from the Swedish Penal Code to make a generic explicification of the word ‘misshandel’, defining what the word means by using an external source of information. Using external sources as a basis for generic explicifications is also found in the negotiation of ‘stalking’.

Excerpt 53

P #26: Att stalka är: sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Förföljelsesyndrom (Förföljelsesyndrom, stalking (av eng. stalking), är att tvångsmässigt smyga på och förfölja en annan person. [...])
To stalk someone is to: sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Förföljelsesyndrom (Stalking, stalking (from Eng. Stalking), means to obsessively follow or pursue another person. [...]).

Attempting to make an explicit definition of the trigger word by drawing upon an external source of information is one way of producing a generic explicification, but it is not the most common way of making generic explicifications found in the sample of DINs. Instead, the prototypical generic explicification comes in the form of an informal account attempting to explain what is perceived to in the meaning potential of the trigger word. For example, in the negotiation of ‘misshandel’ (abuse1), many

such generic explicifications are found, without using external sources as support for the proposed definitional component.

Excerpt 54

P #134: Klart det är barnmisshandel om man utsätter barnet för en onödig smärta som dom inte bett om.

Of course it is child abuse if you subject the child to unnecessary pain which they have not asked for.

P #264: Det är misshandel när man orskar ONÖDIG smärta!!!

It is abuse when you cause UNNECESSARY pain!!!

P #2085: Barnmisshandel är det att tillfoga sitt barn smärta.

Child abuse is to inflict pain upon your child.

In the two first examples of generic explicification in Excerpt 54, the participants suggest conditions perceived as (at least) sufficient for describing a particular action as ‘abuse’. In the first post, the participant states that an action may be called abuse if a child is exposed to unnecessary pain. Likewise, in the second post, the participant proposes that causing unnecessary pain is a sufficient condition for something to be called ‘abuse’. In the third post in Excerpt 54, the generic explicification also proposes that inflicting pain upon a child is a sufficient condition for characterising something as ‘abuse’.

Similarly, in the parallel WMN occurring in the same discussion thread, where the word ‘övergrepp’ (abuse2) is negotiated, another generic explicification is found.

Excerpt 55

P #825: det är ett övergrepp/kränkning, ja kalla det vad du vill, att göra något med någon annans kropp utan att den är med på det...

it is an act of abuse/violation, well call it what you want, to do something to another person's body without that person consenting to it.

In all of the generic explicifications in Excerpts 54 and 55, the participants are introducing definitional components to the negotiation of the trigger words which are foregrounding semantic properties of the words themselves, i.e. aspects of meaning potential associated with the trigger words. In effect, the participants are proposing that there are aspects of meaning potential associated with the two Swedish equivalents of the word 'abuse' which have to do with inflicting unnecessary or uninvited pain upon another person's body, or more generally doing something to another person's body without that person giving consent. Essentially, the participants are proposing that these particular aspects of meaning potential function as sufficient conditions for appropriately applying the trigger word onto the current conversational context, i.e. if there has been something going on which involves inflicting pain upon another person's body or doing something to that person's body without their consent, the word 'abuse' is appropriate to use when referring to this particular action, since the sufficient conditions of the trigger word's meaning potential have been met.

Similarly, in the WMN of 'mobbnig' (bullying), there are instances of generic explicifications in the form of informal accounts explaining what is perceived to within the meaning potential of the trigger word. For example, one participant produces a generic explicification when explaining his or her understanding what is in the meaning potential of the trigger word.

Excerpt 56

P #2: Att mobba nån är att kränka och förnedra.
To bully someone is to violate and humiliate them.

In the example in Excerpt 56, the participant introduces a definitional component that foregrounds an aspect of meaning potential associated with the trigger word. The participant suggests that violation and humili-

ation is part of the meaning potential of the trigger word ‘mobbing’ (bullying).

Another example of a generic explicification is found in the WMN of the trigger word ‘fullfet’ (full fat).

Excerpt 57

P #217: De flesta menar det alternativ som är fetast och ändå har en viss likhet med varandra.
Most people mean the fattest available option which still has a kind of similarity with each other.

In Excerpt 57, the participant proposing what is in the meaning potential of the trigger word is claiming that the explicification holds for “most people”, i.e. that the proposed definitional component corresponds to what people generally mean when using the word. Here, the definitional component of the explicification highlights an aspect of meaning potential of the trigger word which states that ‘full fat’ means products which constitute the fattest available option in that food group.

SPECIFIC EXPLICIFICATIONS

11 out of 22 DINs in the sample contain specific explicifications. In specific explicifications, aspects of the conversational context concerning the particulars of the discussed situation are foregrounded as the main part of the proposed definitional component, and not the semantic properties of the trigger word itself (as in generic explicifications). The total number of (positive) specific explicifications in the sample is 22. For example, in the WMN of the trigger word ‘smäda’ (blaspheme), one participant makes a specific explicification by stating what the word means, by highlighting aspects of the particular context in which it has been used.

Excerpt 58

P #50: Du smädar gud den högste när du skyller skäller på gud som dödat din flickvän.

*You blaspheme god the highest when you blame
scold god who has killed your girlfriend.*

In the post in Excerpt 58, the participant produces an explicification highlighting what is in the meaning potential of the trigger word, by foregrounding the specifics of the discussed situation. The participant is explicitly referring to the story told by the interlocutor (“you”), and the fact that this interlocutor previously has stated that God had killed his girlfriend. This particular act is referred to in the specific explicification of the trigger word, and the contextual aspects of the discussed situation are thus drawn upon in the explicification.

Similarly, many other examples of specific explicifications are found in the negotiation of the trigger word ‘övergrepp’ (abuse2), which is the second trigger word being negotiated in the discussion thread about piercing the ears of young children.

Excerpt 59

P #410: Ett klart ÖVERGREPP att ta hål i öronen på små barn! [...] - man förorsakar barnet smärta och en fysisk förändring som barnet själv inte har valt och som inte går att återställa.

It is clearly abuse to pierce the ears of young children! [...] - you inflict pain upon the child and a physical change which the child herself has not chosen and which cannot be made undone.

P #497: Övergrepp mot barn : hål i öronen, [...] ni tvingar er på era barn håller fast dom fast dom skriker och gråter gör hål i deras öron. och varför ? inte för att det är något viktigt eller bra. Ni tvingar er på era stackars barn !!!!!!

Child abuse: piercing their ears, [...] you are forcing yourselves upon your children, holding them down and piercing their ears even though they are screaming and crying.

and why? Not for any important or good reason. You are forcing yourselves upon your poor children!!!!!!

The definitional component of the first specific explicification is foregrounding the pain and physical change *caused by the piercing of a child's ears*, which is picked up from the context of the discussed situation. By producing this specific explicification, the participant in post #410 proposes that pain and physical changes is part of the meaning potential of the trigger word 'abuse', but what is foregrounded are the specific circumstances of the discussed situation ("att ta hål i öronen på små barn" – "to pierce the ears of young children"). In the second post in Excerpt 59, the definitional component of the specific explicification focuses on the act of forcing someone else against their will, and even against their verbal protests. Similar to the previous explicification, these are contextual aspects picked up from the discussed situation (and from specific inserted YouTube clips of videos showing infants getting their ears pierced while screaming and crying), but again we learn something about what the participant in post #497 considers to be a part of the meaning potential of the trigger word. By explicifying the word and foregrounding aspects of the discussed situation, the participant here argues *for* the use of the word, and endorses that the word *is* appropriate to use when referring to the situation being discussed in the discussion thread.

NEGATIVE EXPLICIFICATIONS

Specific explicifications are sometimes formulated as negative statements. As such, these statements can often function as meta-linguistic objections, addressing the perceived inappropriateness of the use of the word applied in the current conversational context (see Section 5.6.3). Negative specific explicifications are pointing to a particular contextual aspect of the discussed situation which in one way or another is perceived to be incompatible with the meaning potential of the trigger word. By issuing a negative specific explicification, the participant underlines which aspect of the discussed situation is perceived to be incompatible with the use of the trigger word in the current context. By highlighting this particular aspect, the

participant is essentially pointing out what is not in the meaning potential of the word. This means that even by foregrounding a particular aspect of the discussed situation, we learn something about the meaning potential of the trigger word, or rather what is not in the meaning potential of the word, according to this participant. Some examples of negative specific explicifications are presented below. The first one is from the second WMN of the trigger word 'flirta' (flirt2).

Excerpt 60

P #54: Nej, det är inte att flirta att säga att någon har en häftig solbränna.
No, it is not flirting to say that someone has a cool tan.

In this particular discussion, the thread starter (TS) has been accused of flirting with a friend's boyfriend, although TS does not think that what she has been doing constitutes flirting behaviour. A sequence of the discussion turns into a meta-linguistic negotiation about the meaning of the trigger word. The post in Excerpt 60 contains an example of a negative specific explicification, since the aspect of saying that someone has a cool tan is foregrounded. This particular aspect is taken directly from the situation under discussion, since TS has paid the friend's boyfriend a compliment about his tan. By referring to this event in the utterance in Excerpt 60, the participant in post #54 is making a negative specific explicification, and is basically suggesting that (merely) saying that someone has a nice tan is not compatible with the meaning potential of the trigger word.

Another negative specific explicification is found in the WMN of the trigger word 'stalking'. As discussed earlier in this section, this discussion is about a woman (TS) who claims to be stalking another woman. As the discussion makes progress, it soon becomes clear that all TS is doing is following the woman on social media without her knowing about it. At this point the discussion develops into a WMN sequence negotiating the

meaning of the trigger word. At one point, one participant makes a negative specific explicification.

Excerpt 61

P #26: Att stalka är inte att läsa öppna bloggar och folks facebook!
Stalking is not reading open blogs or people's facebook!

The definitional component of this specific explicification is highlighting what the trigger word *cannot* mean, by foregrounding the (reported) fact that TS has been reading open blogs and looking at people's pages on Facebook. Again, this negative specific explicification functions also as a meta-linguistic objection.

More examples of negative specific explicifications are found in the WMN of the trigger word 'super' (boozing). This discussion is about a woman who is denied alcohol in a restaurant. The bartender refuses to serve the woman a second glass of wine when he notices that she is breastfeeding her baby at the table. The thread starter in this discussion originally describes the woman's behaviour as 'boozing' which is immediately questioned by several other participants. This launches a WMN sequence negotiating the trigger word 'super' (boozing).

Excerpt 61

P #6: Sen tycker jag väl inte 2 glas vin är att supa så väldigt... Men man ska inte vara full när man har hand om barn. Amningen är dock skitsamma...
I don't really think that 2 glasses of wine is boozing that much... But you shouldn't be drunk while taking care of children. The breastfeeding doesn't matter a damn.

P #211: 2 glas vin är inte att supa och är inte heller farligt att dricka när man ammar.
2 glasses of wine is not boozing and it is not dangerous to dink while breastfeeding.

In the two posts in Excerpt 61, the participants are explicitly relating to a particular aspect of the discussed situation which has to do with the amount of alcohol that the woman intended to drink. The participants issuing the negative specific explicifications are foregrounding the contextual aspect ‘two glasses of wine’ and are highlighting that this particular amount of alcohol is not enough for the trigger word to be appropriately used in this particular situation. What the participants are essentially pointing out in the explicifications is that there is an ‘amount’ aspect in the meaning potential of the trigger word, and that the reported facts of the situation are not such that the ‘amount’ aspect is fulfilled. Again, by foregrounding aspects of the discussed situation, the participants are proposing what is *not* in the meaning potential of the trigger word.

In the sample corpus, eight out of 22 DINs contain acts of negative explicifications. In total, there are 14 occurrences of negative explicifications. A majority of the negative explicifications are specific, not generic. There are 11 occurrences of negative specific explicification and only three instances of negative generic explicification. This is perhaps not unexpected considering that the DINs originate in disagreement about the meaning and appropriate uses of the various trigger words. In DINs, participants to a very high degree are arguing *against* the appropriateness of a particular word in a particular conversational context. By formulating negative statements expressing disagreement towards the trigger word being used in the current context, the participants need to include explanations which explain why the word is perceived to have been misused – and to do this they need to foreground aspects of the discussed situation which they perceive as incompatible with the meaning potential of the word. Therefore, the appropriateness of the trigger word typically needs to be related to particular aspects of the discussed situation when expressing disagreement towards the use of the word. This perhaps explains why the majority of the negative explicifications are specific explicifications, and not generic.

As mentioned, in the sample of the 22 DINs, there are a few examples of negative *generic* explicifications. For example, two such explicifications are found in the WMN of the trigger word ‘krog’ (dive). This WMN takes place in the same thread as the previous WMN of ‘super’, i.e. the thread discussing the woman who was breastfeeding while drinking wine. In

this particular WMN, the participants are negotiating the meaning of the word originally used to refer to the establishment in question, i.e. the place where the events took place. This establishment is originally described as 'krogen' in the first post in the thread, but the appropriateness of this word is questioned by several participants, which launches another WMN sequence negotiating the meaning of this particular word.

Excerpt 63

P#1197: Krogar har i min uppfattning sällan disco.
In my opinion dives rarely have disco.

P#1200: Krogar brukar inte ha mer musik än typ en
stereo i baren - i min värld då.
*Dives normally do not have more music than
like a stereo at the bar - at least in my
world.*

The examples in Excerpt 63 constitute negative generic explicifications, since the 'music' aspect referred to by both participants is not picked up from the conversational context regarding the particulars of the current situation under discussion. There is no discussion about whether or not music was played, or if the woman intended to go out dancing that evening. In the WMN sequence negotiating the word 'krog', the participants are addressing the meaning on a more general level, and by doing so they have temporarily moved away from the context of the situation being discussed. They are engaged in a meta-linguistic negotiation about the meaning potential of the trigger word, and they seem aware of this since they frame the negative generic explicifications as subjective statements. The first participant in Excerpt 60 (P #1197) expresses what is *not* in the meaning potential of the trigger word, *in his or her opinion*. The second participant (P #1200) makes a similar statement, and adds that this explicification is valid *in his or her world*. By framing the negative generic explicifications as subjective statements, the participants are displaying meta-linguistic awareness towards the fact that other people may have diverging opinions about what the trigger word can mean.

To summarise the findings of explicification in the sample of DINs, explicifications are found in most, but not all, of the DINs in the sample.

Producing an explicification involves introducing an explicit definitional component to the word being negotiated in the WMN sequence, either by foregrounding the semantic properties of the negotiated word (generic explicifications) or by foregrounding aspects of the discussed situation (specific explicifications). Both kinds of explicification are utilised to a fairly equal extent in the sample of the 22 DINs. In some cases, explicifications are formulated as negative statements, proposing what is *not* in the meaning potential of the negotiated trigger word. Negative explicifications often function as meta-linguistic objections and serve as arguments against the use of the word applied to a particular conversational context. Therefore, negative specific explicifications are more commonly found in the sample, than negative generic explicifications.

5.6.2 PROPOSING MEANING: EXEMPLIFICATIONS

Another commonly found semantic operation used to negotiate meaning in DINs is *exemplification* of what the trigger word can mean, or usually means, in circumstances other than the particular discussed situation. This section will discuss the various ways participants use acts of exemplification in negotiation of word meaning identified in the sample of DINs.

DISTINGUISHING EXEMPLIFICATION FROM EXPLICIFICATION

In contrast to specific explicification, exemplification does not draw upon circumstances pertaining to the discussed situation, but instead introduces other (real or imagined) situations into the negotiation. By accounting for illustrative examples of what the word can refer to in other situations, and explaining why the word is suitably applied to these particular instances, participants display their understanding of the meaning potential of the negotiated word through acts of exemplification. However, the semantic operation of exemplification does not directly state what is, or is not, within the meaning potential of the trigger word. There needs to be some kind of abstraction process applied to the exemplification in order to work out what the participant is contributing to the meaning negotiation. This is what distinguishes the semantic operation of exemplification to that of explicification, since explicification introduces a definitional compo-

ment of the negotiated word (either by explicitly drawing upon aspects of meaning potential or by foregrounding aspects of the discussed situation and putting these in relation to the meaning potential of the word). Thus, from instances of explicification we directly learn something about the participant's take on the meaning potential of the word. In contrast, from instances of exemplification we do not directly learn about the meaning potential of the trigger word. Instead, we simply learn what the word may refer to in other situations.

Accordingly, the main difference between positive explicification and positive exemplification is that the former introduces a definitional component to the negotiation by suggesting what the meaning potential of the trigger word encompasses, whereas the latter illustrates what is in the meaning potential of the word by accounting for instances of when the word appropriately can be applied in other situations. Similarly, the main difference between negative explicification and negative exemplification is that the former highlights aspects of meaning potential which are *not* in the meaning potential of the trigger word (stating what the word cannot mean), whereas the latter enumerates instances which do not constitute appropriate examples of the word in use. To make this distinction clearer, some examples illustrating the difference between explicification and exemplification will be presented below.

Typically in DINs where the trigger word is a noun or an adjective, participants use exemplification by enumerating entities which are either instances of the noun or which possess the quality described by the adjective. For example, in the WMN of the trigger word 'fullfet' (full fat), there are many mentionings of products which constitute examples of full fat products, such as the ones mentioned in Excerpt 64.

Excerpt 64

P #210: Gällande mejerier vanlig standardmjölk, fetaste osten och vanlig vispgrädde
When it comes to dairy products ordinary full fat milk, the fattest cheese and regular double cream

Compare the instance of positive exemplification in Excerpt 64 to an instance of positive explicification, taken from the same WMN, presented in Excerpt 65.

Excerpt 65

P #217: De flesta menar det alternativ som är fetast och ändå har en viss likhet med varandra.
Most people mean the fattest available option which still has a kind of similarity with each other.

In the post in Excerpt 65 (containing the explicification), the participant contributes to the WMN by introducing a definitional component to the trigger word. In the post in Excerpt 64 (containing the exemplification), the participant is not explicitly saying anything about what is in the meaning potential of the trigger word, but is merely providing some examples of what the word appropriately refers to in the world. In order to draw conclusions about what is in the meaning potential of a trigger word operating from an instance of exemplification, some kind of abstraction process needs to be involved, which abstracts away from the concrete examples onto the abstract word level with the associated meaning potential.

In DINs where the trigger word is a verb, the line between explicification and exemplification is fuzzier than in WMNs where the trigger word is an adjective (describing what is in the adjective's meaning potential vs enumerating entities which possess the quality of the adjective) or a noun (describing what is in the noun's meaning potential vs enumerating entities which are instances of the noun). When negotiating the meaning of a verb X, providing an example of what it means to be X:ing is clearly very close to introducing a definitional component which directly explains what is in the meaning potential of the trigger word. Therefore, the distinction

between acts involving explicification and exemplification is more difficult to make when the trigger word is a verb.

Excerpt 66

P#2: Jag ler med mina ögon och bekräftar personen i fråga, jag får denne att känna sig avspänd och harmonisk och kan skratta.

I smile with my eyes and acknowledge the person in question, I make him feel relaxed and harmonious and able to laugh.

The example in Excerpt 66 is taken from the negotiation of 'flirta' (flirt1). In this post, the participant is exemplifying what he or she perceives to be flirting activity by referring to a new situation in which the speaker describes how he or she flirts. The invented example below would have been classified as an instance of explicification rather than exemplification, even though the two posts are clearly very similar to each other.

Example 4

P: Flirta betyder att man ler med ögonen och bekräftar personen i fråga, så att denne känner sig avspänd och harmonisk och kan skratta.

Flirting means smiling with your eyes and acknowledging the person in question, so he or she feels relaxed and harmonious and able to laugh.

The main difference between the posts in Excerpt 66 and Example 4 is that the former is illustrating the perceived meaning potential of the trigger word by providing an example of the poster's own flirting activity, thus introducing a new situation into the discussion context, whereas the latter explicitly introduces a definitional component of the meaning potential of the trigger word without introducing a new situation.

In the sample corpus of the 22 DINs, instances of exemplification are found in 20 sequences. Exemplifications are typically formulated as positive statements (83 instances in total), but there are some instances of negative exemplifications in the 22 DINs (28 instances in total).

POSITIVE EXEMPLIFICATION

In addition to the instances of exemplification discussed in the previous section, this section will analyse a few more examples of positive exemplification, and will return to the WMN of the trigger word ‘fullfet’ (full fat). In this negotiation, several participants propose candidate examples of what they perceive to constitute an appropriate application of the word in other situations, i.e. they are producing acts involving positive exemplification.

Excerpt 67

- P #14: Vi har alltid riktigt smör istället för margarin. Tror inte heller på lättprodukter.
We always have real butter instead of margarine. I don't believe in light products either.
- P #79: Jag följer kostråden i stort men väljer alltid fullfeta mejeriprodukter i mat tex vispgrädde och alltid smör i stället för margarin.
I follow the dietary advice in general but always choose full fat dairy products in food, eg. double cream and butter instead of margarine.
- P #210: Gällande mejerier vanlig standardmjölk, fetaste osten och vanlig vispgrädde [...]. Köttfärs alltid fetaste varianten osv.
When it comes to dairy products ordinary full fat milk, the fattest cheese and regular double cream [...]. Minced meat always the fattest kind and so on.

From the posts containing acts of positive exemplification in Excerpt 67, the participants are putting forward candidate examples of what they perceive to be appropriate uses of the word. From this, there is also something to be learned about the meaning of the negotiated word, i.e. what is in the meaning potential of the trigger word ‘full fat’. However, making

the leap from the instances of exemplification to the more abstract word level involves an abstraction process which needs to generalise from the concrete instances of full fat products to the meaning potential of the trigger word. What all of the acts of exemplification in Excerpt 67 have in common is that the percentage of fat in products seem to be a deciding factor in deciding whether or not a product should count as 'full fat'. When analysing all of the acts of exemplification one after another, this aspect of meaning potential of the trigger word becomes revealed, even though the participants in these cases have not attempted to define what is in the meaning potential of the word, for example by an act of explicitation.

NEGATIVE EXEMPLIFICATION

In some instances in the sample corpus, acts of exemplification are formulated as negative statements, enumerating what is not an appropriate application of the word. In the WMN of the word 'onyttigt' (unhealthy), there are many instances of proposing meaning by negative exemplification.

Excerpt 68

- P #77: Hamburgare med sallad och vatten är inte speciellt onyttigt.
Hamburgers with lettuce and water is not especially unhealthy.
- P #133: Elliot äter då Happy Meal med morötter, äppelbitar, nuggets och mjölk. Inte alltför onyttigt.
Elliot eats Happy Meal with carrots, apples, nuggets and milk. Not too unhealthy.
- P #337: Tycker inte att det är så fasligt ohälsosamt när man tar bort läsk och strips.
I don't think it is so terribly unhealthy when you remove soda and french fries.
- P #385: Man kan få hamburgaren med fullkornsbrön, mortötter istället för pommes, juice istället för läsk. dessutom får man äpplen

efteråt. PLUS en leksak !! Underbart ställe för barn, och inte det minsta onyttigt om man inte vill att de ska va de.

You can have the hamburger on wholegrain bread, carrots instead of french fries, juice instead of soda. And you get apples afterwards. PLUS a toy!! Wonderful place for children, and not unhealthy in the least unless you want it to be.

P #406: Jag ville bara poängtera att det behöver inte vara så onyttigt som folk vill få det att framstå. Man KAN äta en sallad där, man KAN få fullkornsbröd, man KAN skita i läsk.

I just wanted to point out that it does not have to be as unhealthy as people are trying to make it seem. You CAN have a salad there, you CAN have wholegrain bread, and you CAN skip the soda.

In Excerpt 68, participants exemplify what constitutes both unhealthy and healthy foods. Examples of healthy foods include lettuce, water, carrots, apples, nuggets, milk, salad, juice and wholegrain products. Examples of unhealthy foods include soda and french fries. The abstraction leap from acts of negative exemplification to the meaning potential of the trigger word is perhaps not as straightforward to make as for positive exemplifications. Therefore, from these acts of negative exemplification, it may be difficult to draw a conclusion about what the trigger word can mean, i.e. what is within the meaning potential of the word 'unhealthy'. In this particular WMN, we merely seem to learn what the word cannot be applied to in the world, but it may be difficult to draw more general conclusions about *why* the word cannot be applied in the suggested manner, i.e. what specifically it is in the word's meaning potential which conflicts with the appointed entities in the acts of negative exemplification. As so many participants point to soda and French fries as examples of unhealthy food, one could perhaps draw the conclusion that unhealthy means 'sugary or fat food', but this abstraction is made from the acts of positive exemplification (stating what the word *can* be applied to in the world) which in this negotiation co-exist with the acts of negative exemplification.

5.6.3 OPPOSING MEANING: META-LINGUISTIC OBJECTIONS

As discussed earlier in this chapter, one or several meta-linguistic objections often function as the catalyst for initiating a WMN sequence originating in disagreement. Meta-linguistic objections are found in 21 out of 22 DINs in the sample, and the total number of instances of meta-linguistic objection is 155. This section will focus on the functions performed by meta-linguistic objections within meaning negotiation sequences. In most cases in this sample, the meta-linguistic objection is raised towards the original use of the trigger word, indicating disagreement towards that word being used in the situated discussion. In other cases, the meta-linguistic objection targets a specific aspect of meaning potential already proposed by someone else. In these cases, the WMN has been going on for a while, and another participant has suggested an aspect of meaning potential, for example by an act of explicification. The participant issuing the meta-linguistic objection directed at this suggested aspect is therefore rejecting that it is part of the meaning potential of the trigger word.

META-LINGUISTIC OBJECTIONS DIRECTED AT THE ORIGINAL USE OF THE TRIGGER WORD

Meta-linguistic objections which address the original use of the trigger word seem to be very common in WMNs originating in disagreement, as they are found in 19 out of 22 DINs. In total, there are 128 instances of this kind of meta-linguistic objection in the entire sample. Typically, this kind of objection comes as a variation on the form “That is not X!”, and is regularly followed by an account explaining why the meta-linguistic objection is raised. Sometimes, the account contains an act of contrasting the trigger word with an alternative word (see Section 5.6.4).

Excerpt 69

- P #1: Klart att vi berättar sagor om tomten! Det är inte ljug - det är sagor!
Of course we tell stories about Santa! That is not lying - they are stories!
- P #18: Jag tycker inte att man ljuger när man säger att tomten finns...

I don't think you are lying when you say that Santa exists...

P #28: Äh, det är väl inte riktigt ljug!? Barn behöver få leva med i fantasins värld så länge de kan.

Huh, that is not really lying, is it!? Children need to live in a fantasy world for as long as they can.

P #30: Jag ser det inte som att man ljuger, tomten finns ju o kommer på julafton, vilken skepnad han kommer i spelar ju mindre roll ;) *I don't see that as lying, Santa exists and comes at Christmas, the shape in which he comes is irrelevant ;)*

P #43: Därför kommer vi att fortsätta prata om tomten, för jag anser inte att jag ljuger eftersom han kommer varje år. *That is why we will continue talking about Santa, because I don't think that I'm lying since he comes every year.*

In this DIN alone, there are 23 instances of meta-linguistic objection of this kind. All of the meta-linguistic objections in Excerpt 69 are protesting against the the trigger word being used to refer to the discussed action, which is essentially fooling or misleading children into believing that Santa is real. Meta-linguistic objections which target the original use of the trigger word typically come in one of the following variants:

- Det (där) är inte X (That is not X)
- X är inte att (X is not)
- Det är fel att säga/kalla det X (It is wrong to say/to call it X)
- Jag ser inte det som X/anser inte det som X/tycker inte det är X (I don't see that as X/consider that to be X/think that is X)
- Du kan inte säga/kalla det (för) X (You cannot say/claim that (it is) X)
- Du vet inte vad X är/betyder (You don't know what X is/means)

META-LINGUISTIC OBJECTIONS DIRECTED AT
A SUGGESTED ASPECT OF MEANING POTENTIAL

In some cases when a negotiation has been going on for some time, and aspects of meaning potential have been proposed by different participants, meta-linguistic objections targeting the proposed aspects can occur. This kind of meta-linguistic objection is less common than the kind targeting the original use of the trigger word, and is only found in seven out of 22 DINs in the sample of this study. The total number of instances of this kind of meta-linguistic objection is 20.

One example is found in the WMN of the word 'krogen' (dive), where one participant highlights that the word does not always apply to sleazy establishments with people behaving badly.³¹

Excerpt 70

P #23: Varför tar man med ett litet barn (kanske tom ett spädbarn) till krogen.. där det kan finnas fulla människor och hög volym.

Why would you bring a small child (maybe even an infant) to a dive.. where there may be drunk people and high levels of noise.

P #50: Gud tror folk verkligen att krogen är lika med fylla och slagsmål överallt? Det finns massor med fantastiska restauranger och krogar som är extremt lugna och familjevänliga. Blir så irriterad på okunskapen.

God do people really think that dives are equal to drunkenness and fights? There are plenty of fantastic restaurants and dives which are extremely calm and family friendly. I get so annoyed with the ignorance.

31 The word 'krog' is especially difficult to translate into English, because it can be used to refer to many different kinds of restaurants in Swedish. Until the mid-19th century, the word was used to refer to simpler inns located in the country or along highways. These establishments typically served simple food, beer and snaps. From the beginning of the 20th century and onwards, the word has been used to refer to restaurants in general. More recently, the word has also been used to refer to fancier restaurants, so called 'lyxkrogar' (upscale restaurants).

In the second post in Excerpt 70, the participant objects to the derogatory aspect of the trigger word being a necessary aspect of meaning potential. The participant opposes that the word can only be used to denote establishments in which people are drunk and have bar fights with each other.

Meta-linguistic objections directed at an aspect of meaning potential can also be used to oppose to the suggested aspect being used in the current context, i.e. that the suggested aspect is not true in the present situation and therefore that the word should not be used. An example is the following post from the WMN of ‘flirta’ (flirt2), where one participant has just endorsed the use of the trigger word (i.e. that TS may in fact have been flirting with her friend’s boyfriend), by suggesting that what TS was doing involved ‘smicker’ (flattery). TS then objects to that word being used in the current context. In this case, part of the meaning of ‘smicker’ (flattery) is negotiated as an aspect of the trigger word ‘flirta’ (flirt2).

Excerpt 71

P #8: Jag tycker inte att det är smicker. Jag drar inte på smilbanden, jag rör inte vid honom när jag säger det och jag tror inte ens att jag tog ögonkontakt. Jeansen var verkligen skitsnygga och solbrännan skulle jag kunna dö för och eftersom att jag är en ganska spontan människa så säger jag oftast vad jag gillar.

I don't think that it is flattery. I'm not smiling, I'm not touching him when I say it, and I don't even think I had eye contact with him. The jeans really were very nice and the tan was to die for and since I'm quite a spontaneous person I often say what I like.

In Excerpt 71, the participant objects to the word ‘smicker’ (flattery) being used applied to the current context, but she does not object to that the proposed aspect of flattery really is a part of the meaning potential of the trigger word ‘flirta’ (flirt2). This post could in fact be interpreted as

an implied agreement that flattery can be seen as an aspect of meaning potential of the trigger word, but that the circumstances were such that neither word can be applied to the discussed situation, according to TS in Excerpt 71.

META-LINGUISTIC OBJECTIONS AND DELIMITATION

In a few instances in the data sample, a meta-linguistic objection is used to address the issue of delimiting the meaning potential of the trigger word, which means that it serves the function of questioning or objecting to the suggested boundaries of the meaning potential of the negotiated word. This occurs in six out of the 22 DINs, and the total number of instances of this kind of meta-linguistic objection is seven. Sometimes, this occurs when the account included next to the objection contains an act of contrasting the trigger word with another word or expression (see Section 5.6.3).

For example, in the WMN of the trigger word ‘misshandel’ (abuse1), a post containing a meta-linguistic objection also includes a meta-linguistic clarification request addressing the issue of delimiting the boundaries of the trigger word. In Excerpt 72, the meta-linguistic objection is highlighted using bold font.

Excerpt 72

P #924: **Jag tycker inte det är misshandel**, bara väldigt osmakligt att utsätta sina barn för det. [...] Jag undrar vart gränsen för "riktig" misshandel går?
I don't think that it is abuse, just very distasteful to put your children through that. [...] I wonder where the boundaries for "real" abuse are drawn?

In other cases, the boundaries of a trigger word are not questioned, but are instead commented upon as part of the meta-linguistic objection. This is the case in the WMN of the trigger word ‘flirta’ (flirt1).

Excerpt 73

P #34: **Det du skriver nu handlar ju om något helt annat än en flirt.** Det du beskriver ovan är en gift person som stöter på en annan gift person på ett sätt som är ganska uppenbart. Det har passerat gränsen för flirt för länge sedan.
What you are writing about now is about something completely different from a flirt.
What you are describing is a married person coming on to another married person in a quite obvious way. That has crossed the boundaries for flirting a long time ago.

In both of the examples in Excerpt 72 and Excerpt 73, the participants show that they perceive that there is something delimiting the meaning potential of a particular negotiated word, a border which can serve as a limit for deciding if a word can be applied to a certain situation or not.

Interestingly, it seems like the meaning potential of words in some cases may have both lower and upper limits, which the participants here explicitly touch upon. In the post in Excerpt 72, the participant asks about the lower boundary of the trigger word ‘abuse’, and suggests that a line should be drawn if you inflict pain upon someone else. Actions which cause someone else pain can be called ‘abuse’. (Clearly, this participant does not perceive ear piercings to be painful enough.) By contrast, in Excerpt 73, a participant addresses the upper boundary of the trigger word ‘flirt’ and states that in this particular case, the upper boundary has clearly been crossed, and the discussed behaviour cannot accurately be described using the trigger word, since the behaviour lies beyond the scope of the meaning potential of the word.

MITIGATING AND ACCOUNTING FOR META-LINGUISTIC OBJECTIONS

The 155 instances of meta-linguistic objection identified in the sample vary with regards to the manner in which they are delivered. Most meta-linguistic objections in the sample are made directly, without any of the mitigating strategies which are often used in face-to-face communication (see Section 2.2.4). Meta-linguistic objections are thus often formulated without the inclusion of hedges or partial agreements. Such direct meta-linguistic objections are found in 119 instances in the sample. 36 of the meta-linguistic objections are mitigated in different ways, either by including hedging words or other uncertainty markers or by framing the objection as a subjective viewpoint highlighting that the objection may not represent an absolute truth but only the viewpoint of that particular participant issuing the meta-linguistic objection. The difference between direct and mitigated meta-linguistic objections is illustrated in the excerpts below, taken from the WMN of the word 'ljuga' (lie).

Excerpt 74

- P #1: Det är inte ljuga - det är sagor!
That is not lying - they are stories!
- P #28: Äh, det är **väl** inte **riktigt** ljuga!?
*Huh, that is not **really** lying, **is it!**?*

In the first post in Excerpt 74, the participant delivers the meta-linguistic objection directly, without any hedges or mitigation markers. In the second post, the participant is hedging the objection, as indicated by the added bold font.

As discussed in Section 5.4.2, many of the meta-linguistic objections in the sample corpus include an account explaining why the objection is made. This account typically provides an explanation of why the participant raising the objection perceives that the meaning of the trigger word does not accurately match the use of the word in the current context. Out of the 155 instances of meta-linguistic objection in the sample, 140 objections are accounted for in this way. 15 meta-linguistic objections stand completely alone, without any explanation as to why they are made. The difference between objections which are accounted for and unaccounted

for is illustrated in excerpt below, taken from the WMN of the word ‘stalking’ (stalking). In Excerpt 75, the first participant does not provide an account next to the meta-linguistic objection, but the second participant includes an account explaining why the trigger word is perceived to have been misused in this particular situation.

Excerpt 75

- P #20: Men det är ju INTE alls stalking!!!
But that is NOT stalking at all!!!
- P #26: Att stalka är inte att läsa öppna bloggar och folks facebook! Att stalka är: sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Förföljelsesyndrom (Förföljelsesyndrom, stalking (av eng. stalking), är att tvångsmässigt smyga på och förfölja en annan person. [...]).
Stalking is not reading open blogs or people’s facebook! To stalk someone is to: sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Förföljelsesyndrom (Stalking, stalking (from Eng. Stalking), means to obsessively follow or pursue another person. [...]).

Table 19 summarises the ways meta-linguistic objections are delivered in the sample of DINs, with regards to directness/mitigation and presence of accounts explaining why the objection is made.

Table 19: Manners in which meta-linguistic objections are delivered in the sample corpus of DINs

Direct, non-accounted for	Direct, accounted for	Mitigated, non-accounted for	Mitigated, accounted for	Total
14	105	1	35	155

5.6.4 CONTRASTING MEANING

Contrasting is performed when a participant positions the trigger word against another word. Acts of contrasting are found in 17 out of the 22 DINs. In total, there are 220 instances of contrasting in the sample of DINs. Acts of contrasting can perform a number of different functions in word meaning negotiation. For example, contrasting can be used for delimitation purposes, i.e. for drawing boundaries between the trigger word and another more or less closely related word. Contrasting can also function to highlight aspectual differences between the meaning potentials of the two contrasted words. A third function served by contrasting is advocating a more suitable word, i.e. arguing against the use of the trigger word and instead promoting the use of the contrasting word. This section will focus on dialogue acts of contrasting found in the 22 DINs, and illustrate by using examples of the different functions performed by contrasting.

CONTRASTING FOR DELIMITATION PURPOSES

Acts of contrasting can serve a delimitation function, when used to draw up the boundaries of the negotiated trigger word. This kind of contrasting is found in 10 of the DINs, and the total number of instances of this form of contrasting is 54. For example, in both of the negotiations of the word 'flirta' (flirt1 and flirt2), acts of contrasting are used to delimit the trigger word. As the participants are negotiating the meaning of the word, i.e. what it means to be flirting, they draw up boundaries between the trigger word and other, closely related words. In the examples in Excerpt 76, the contrasting word or expression is highlighted using bold font.

Excerpt 76 (flirt1)

P#6: Och jag kan hålla med om att det finns en del oskyldig flört, fast kanske det går mer under kategorin att **vara social**?
*And I can agree that some flirting can be innocent, but maybe that falls more into the category of **being social**?*

P#7: Gränsen mellan att flirta och att **vara social** kan vara hårfin. Och saknar man omdöme, mognad och självinsikt t.ex. så kan man gå över gränsen.

*The line between flirting and **being social** can be very thin. And if you lack judgement, maturity and self-awareness for example you may cross that line.*

P#11: detta är ren o skär **uppvaktning/raggning/förklarande av en förälskelse!** Så här flirtar man inte...inte jag i alla fall. Det är ju långt långt från flirteri i min värld. **this is utter and pure courtship/picking up someone/declaration of infatuation!** *This is not how you flirt... at least not how I flirt. This is clearly way way beyond flirting in my world.*

P#24: Det du beskriver kallar jag mer för att **uppvakta** än att flörta. Vanlig flört kan vara ganska oskyldigt, så länge man inte ger signaler som kan misstolkas som intresse och ger fel förväntningar.

*What you are describing I would rather call **courting** than flirting. Ordinary flirting can be quite innocent, as long as you are not sending out signals that can be misinterpreted as interest and give the wrong expectations.*

P#25: Detta är inget annat än **början på en kärlekshistoria** beroende på gensvaret, som jag ser det. Det är inte normalt med detta antal sms på en vecka. Det är överdrivet och tyder på attraktion och känslor oavsett vilka förklaringar han kan komma med.

*This is nothing other than the **beginning of a love affair** depending on the response, as I see it. This amount of text messages per week*

is not normal. It is exaggerated and a sign of attraction and feelings regardless of any explanation he might have.

Excerpt 77 (flirt2)

P#18: **jesus**, att **ge komplimanger** har väl inget med flörtande att göra? att tala om att ett par byxor eller en solbränna är fin är för fasiken ingenting.

*jesus, **giving compliments** doesn't have anything to do with flirting, does it? Telling someone that a pair of trousers or a tan are nice is bloody nothing.*

P#53: Varför är det att flirta att säga att nån har snygg bränna... ??? Fattar det inte.. det är ju en komplimang till personen, att den har snygga jeans är ju en komplimang till designern [...] Herreguuuuud, det är väl skillnad på att **ge komplimanger** och på att **försöka få nån på fall??**

*Why is it flirting to say that someone has a nice tan... ??? Don't get it... it is a compliment to the person, and saying that he has nice jeans is a compliment to the designer [...] Oh my Goooooood, there is a difference between **paying someone compliments** and **trying to get them to fall for you??***

As illustrated by the examples in Excerpt 76 and Excerpt 77, when participants perceive the use of the trigger word as coming close to the boundaries of the meaning potential of the trigger word – which occurs when the reported behaviour may be perceived as too innocent or too extreme to be called ‘flirting’ – they are prone to suggesting an alternative, contrasting word. On the “innocent” side of flirting, it is suggested that the behaviour may be described as ‘being social’ (Excerpt 76). At the other extreme, the behaviour may be called ‘courtship/picking up someone/declaration of infatuation’ (Excerpt 76). By drawing up the boundaries between the trigger word and the contrasting words, the participants highlight just how

far they perceive that the meaning potential of the trigger word can be stretched, and that it cannot be stretched far enough to be applied to the actual behaviour described in the situations under discussion in Excerpts 76 and 77. Thus, it appears that the participants delimit the word 'flirt' by comparing it to words which constitute the lower and upper boundary of it.

In both WMNs concerning the word 'flirt', it is concluded that the lower limit of flirting is close to "being social/socialising" and "being friendly" or "being nice". The lower limit is especially in focus in the WMN of 'flirt' in the thread discussing whether or not paying compliments to a friend's boyfriend can be called flirting (flirt 2, Excerpt 77). In its entirety, this WMN primarily focuses on whether or not the line between just being friendly and being flirtatious has been crossed in the current situation. Throughout the WMN, the participants bring up different aspects of the meaning potential of 'flirt' which they perceive need to be minimally fulfilled for the behaviour to be called flirting, i.e. what needs to happen for it to move across the boundary from socialising to flirting. By calling the behaviour 'paying compliments' instead of 'flirting', the participants in Excerpt 77 point out that the lower boundary of the trigger word has not been crossed, and that the word therefore cannot properly be applied to the discussed situation.

The upper limit of the meaning potential of the trigger word is in focus in the other WMN of 'flirt', which takes place in the discussion concerning whether or not it is acceptable to flirt with someone who is married (flirt1, Excerpt 76). In this WMN, the participants conclude that flirting is not a strong enough word to describe the current behaviour of the male person in question, since what he has been doing is too extreme to be labelled 'flirting'. Here, contrasting words such as 'uppvaktning' (courtship), 'raggning' (trying to pick up someone) and 'förklarande av förälskelse' (declaration of infatuation for someone) are used to highlight the difference in meaning potential between the words, which also draws attention to the upper limit of the word's meaning potential, describing actions which have crossed the line from being flirtatious to being more serious.

Compared to each other, the two WMNs portray a slightly different picture of the meaning potential of the word 'flirt'. This most likely has to

do with the fact that the discussions are about very different behaviours which both may or may not be described as ‘flirting’. In one situation, the behaviour is quite extreme (explicitly expressing feelings, sending flowers and e-mails). In the other situation, the behaviour is quite innocent (complimenting clothes and a sun tan). The described circumstances lead the WMNs in different directions. By acts of contrasting, flirt1 turns its focus on the upper limit of flirting and discusses when flirting moves into something more serious. Similarly, by other acts of contrasting, flirt2 focuses on the lower limit of flirting and negotiates what the necessary conditions are in order for behaviour to be categorised as flirting.

CONTRASTING FOR DELIMITATION PURPOSES
BY HIGHLIGHTING DIFFERENCE IN
ASPECTS OF MEANING POTENTIAL

As illustrated above, contrasting can be used to delimit the boundaries of a trigger word, by using another, closely related word as a contrast to the trigger word. These kinds of near contrasts can also be used to perform a delimitation function by highlighting an aspect of meaning potential *shared* by the contrasted words, but which display an aspectual *variation* which therefore highlights a difference in that particular aspect of meaning potential. Contrasting by highlighting aspectual differences is found in seven out of the 22 DINs in the sample, and in total there are 26 occurrences of this form of contrasting.

Several interesting examples of this form of contrasting are found in the WMN of the trigger word ‘super’ (boozing). As discussed earlier in this chapter, the participants in this discussion start off by focusing on the ‘amount’ aspect of the meaning potential of the trigger word, i.e. that the drinking action needs to be more excessive than the two glasses of wine which was the amount intended for consumption in the discussed situation. In this part of the WMN, the participants are highlighting that there is an ‘amount’ aspect of the meaning potential of the trigger word which is essential for determining whether or not a certain drinking behaviour can be characterised as ‘boozing’. A little later in the WMN, the participants draw attention to another aspect of meaning potential, namely the ‘pace’ (or ‘speed’) aspect. In this part of the negotiation, the participants

are highlighting that the pace at which the woman consumed the wine matters in determining whether or not she was 'boozing'. In effect, there is an aspect of pace within the meaning potential of the trigger word, which becomes apparent by positioning contrasting words against each other in the discussion.

The words used in the act of contrasting all share the 'pace' aspect, but display a variation along a scale with regards to the pace of the drinking activity in question. By positioning the words which display this variation concerning the 'pace' aspect against each other in an act of contrasting, this particular aspect of meaning potential becomes highlighted, and thereby serves a delimitation function between the contrasting words and the trigger word.

Excerpt 78

P #215: Dessutom har jag svårt att tro att kvinnan **halsade** i sig vinet, utan satt säkert och **sippade** på det som normala människor brukar göra på stan.

*Also I find it difficult to believe that the woman was **necking** the wine, she was probably **sipping** on it like normal people do when they are out.*

P #463: Jag tycker att det var moraliskt helt riktigt att vägra sälja mer vin till kvinnan. Att livsmedelsverket säger att 2 glas vin i veckan är ok när man ammar är inte samma sak som att det är ok att **bälga** i sig två glas under en kort tid när man ammar.

*I think it was morally correct to refuse to sell more wine to the woman. That the National Food Agency says that 2 glasses of wine per week is ok when you are breastfeeding is not the same as saying that it is ok to **chug** two glasses in a short period of time while breastfeeding. [...]*

- P #465: [Citat av inlägg #463] Hur tänker du då? Du la till en tidsaspekt där som vi inte heller vet något om. Min tanke är att kvinnorna **suttit några timmar** och du tänker **bälga** i sig på **kort tid**. Varför tänker du så?
*[Quote of post #463] How do you mean? You added a time aspect there which we don't know anything about. I'm thinking that the women were **sitting there for a few hours** and you're thinking **chugging** wine down in a **short time span**. Why are you thinking that way?*
- P#1060: I fallet med TS var det ju inte direkt så att modern i fråga satt och **halsade** i sig rödvin under tiden som hon ammade.
*In TS's case it wasn't exactly like the mother in question was **necking** red wine while she was breastfeeding.*

In all of the posts in Excerpt 78, the participants use words and expressions which display a variation with regards to the 'pace' aspect. Seemingly, the contrasting words are used to form arguments *for* or *against* using the trigger word 'super' (boozing), with the underlying assumption that this word also shares the same aspect of meaning potential, i.e. that there needs to be a certain pace of the drinking activity for it to accurately be characterised as 'boozing'. The participants who are arguing *for* describing the behaviour as 'boozing' are using contrasting words which correspond to "drinking quickly", such as 'necking' (halsa), or 'chugging down the wine' (bälga). On the other hand, the participants who are arguing *against* characterising the drinking behaviour as 'boozing' are opposing the use of both of these words, and are instead suggesting another word which corresponds to "drinking slowly", namely the word 'sipping' (sippa). The difference in form (sippa-halsa-bälga-suppa) clearly marks a difference in meaning, focusing on that particular aspect of meaning potential which is shared between the words, but which displays a variation along a scale with regards to this particular aspect. What can be learned from all of these acts of contrasting is that there is an aspect of pace in the meaning potential of the trigger word 'super' (boozing), which is significant for determining if a behaviour can be described using the trigger word, or not.

CONTRASTING BY CREATING LOCAL OPPOSITES

Another way to contribute to a meaning negotiation sequence is by introducing a contrasting word against which the trigger word can be juxtaposed in the negotiation. This semantic operation thus serves as a tool for creating a local opposite in the negotiation. In this form of contrasting, the chosen contrasting word cannot be characterised as a word which is closely related to the trigger word, which is generally the case in contrasting used for delimitation purposes. The contrasting word and the trigger word cannot be described as points along a particular scale, as is the case in the various contrasts for characterising flirting behaviour and drinking behaviour in Excerpts 76, 77 and 78. Instead, in this form of contrasting, the chosen contrast and the trigger word are typically further apart and bear fewer obvious similarities with each other.

Seven out of 22 DINs contain acts of contrasting by positioning the word against a local opposite in the discussion. The total number of occurrences for this other form of contrasting is 24. A few examples are found in Excerpt 79, taken from the negotiation of the trigger word 'ljuga' (lie).

Excerpt 79

- P #17: Jag kommer att läsa sagor om tomten, ha tomte på julafton och låta mina barn dra skägget av morfar/farfar när han tomtar. ☺
Det är en del av julmagin.
I will read stories about Santa, have a Santa at Christmas and let my children pull off granddaddy's beard when he dresses up as Santa. ☺ It is part of the Christmas magic.
- P #26: Jag väntar ivrigt på att få berätta om tomten (och feer och älvor och snälla troll) för Fanny! Som alla andra här säger är det en underbar och magisk grej som jag verkligen vill unna mitt barn att få uppleva. Julen ska vara magisk och sagolik!
I'm eagerly awaiting telling Fanny about Santa (and fairies and pixies and kind trolls)! I agree with everyone who is say-

ing that it is a wonderful and magical thing which I really want my child to experience. Christmas should be magical and wonderful!

P #81: Jag vill inte ge mina barn en barndom som saknar fantasivärldar! Vår värld är ganska trist, en stor del av tjusningen med att våra barn är att man får tro på bättre saker än det som händer på nyheterna.
I don't want to give my children a childhood which lacks fantasy worlds. Our world is pretty dull, and a big part of the charm of being a child is that you are allowed to believe in better things than what is happening on the news.

P #119: Låt ditt barn få känna samma glädje som andra barn, hon avgör själv när hon inte tror på tomten. Man behöver ju inte pranta in med hull och hår att tomten finns. Utan bara leka med när tomtar och troll dyker upp i hennes liv.
Let your child experience the same joy as other children, she can decide for herself when she doesn't believe in Santa anymore. You don't have to force feed her with details about Santa. Instead just play along when magical creatures enter into her life.

In all of the posts in Excerpt 79, the trigger word is contrasted with an expression which is more distantly related to the trigger word than in the other forms of contrasting described earlier in this section. For example, 'lying' is contrasted with behaviours described as 'reading magical stories', 'telling wonderful stories', 'giving children fantasy worlds' and 'playing along'. The trigger word and the contrasting expressions do not share any obvious aspects of meaning potential. Similar to Deppermann's study, the contrasted words are not by any means mutually exclusive (Deppermann, 2005). It is possible for something to be both storytelling and lying, or for something to be both playing along and lying.

In Excerpt 79, the participants arguing *for* allowing children to believe in Santa are refraining from describing their actions as ‘lying’. Instead, they are describing their actions using other, locally contrasting expressions, which are seemingly more positively charged than the trigger word. These acts of contrasting are very similar to the findings described by Deppermann (2005), who suggests that the currently relevant interpretation of a word or expression can be affected when the lexical items are contrasted with other words or expressions. This is explained by the fact that such acts of contrasting *focuses* on certain semantic aspects of lexical items, while other aspects are *defocused*. In this way, contrasting activities can establish local opposites in conversation, which in turn can provide the conversation with a locally established meaning for the contrasted words. According to Deppermann, in these kinds of contrasting acts, using a contrasting word with positive connotations can deflect negative attention away from the use of the original word (see Section 2.2.4). As a result, the situated meaning of the original, negative word is influenced by the positively loaded connotations of the contrasting word. This lessens the impact of the original word’s negativity. This is similar to what seems to be going on in the WMN of ‘ljuga’ (lie) in Excerpt 79.

Another such act of contrasting by creating a local opposite in the discussion is found in the WMN of ‘fullfet’ (full fat). In this negotiation, one participant positions the trigger word against a seemingly unrelated word.

Excerpt 80

P #118: Jag anser att fullfeta produkter är bättre än kemiskt framtagen skit som tex margarin.
I think that full fat products are better than chemically produced shit such as margarine.

In Excerpt 80, the participant is positioning the trigger word against a clearly negatively loaded expression, and by making this contrast, the trigger word may be assigned a more positively loaded meaning, by establishing a local opposite in the discussion through an act of contrasting.

CONTRASTING BY OPTING FOR AN ALTERNATIVE WORD

Eve Clark writes “Contrast (...) captures the insight that when speakers choose an expression, they do so because they mean something that they would not mean by choosing some alternative expression.” (E. V. Clark, 1993, p. 70). This suggests that opting for alternative words instead of reusing the already introduced trigger word can be interpreted as an act of contrasting, and therefore a way of highlighting a difference in meaning between the trigger word and the contrasting word. Furthermore, studies on lexical entrainment within psycholinguistics have concluded that when dialogue partners repeatedly refer to particular objects or activities, they tend to reuse the same terms throughout the conversation (Brennan, 1996; Brennan & Clark, 1996; Garrod & Anderson, 1987). These findings suggest that dialogue partners converge on the lexical level with regards to referring expressions as the conversation makes progress. Since the expectation seems to be that dialogue partners are influenced by the previous word choices of other participants, opting to choose an *alternative* word instead of the already introduced trigger word is here regarded as another form of contrasting. Contrasting by opting for an alternative word occurs in 15 out of 22 DINs, and the total number of instances of this form of contrasting is 116.

In the WMN of ‘rymt’ (escaped), there are many examples of this form of contrasting, where participants choose alternative words instead of the already introduced trigger word. In Excerpt 81, the chosen contrast to the trigger word ‘rymt’ (escaped) is highlighted by use of bold font.

Excerpt 81

- P #21: Jag tycker det är oproffsigt att blogga om ens anställda som man anser svika en genom att **sticka ifrån** sitt arbete.
*I think it is unprofessional to blog about an employee who you think has let you down by **running away** from her job.*
- P #22: Antagligen så har Katrin skrämt skiten ur barnflickan som valde att **lägga benen på ryggen**.

- Katrin has probably scared the nanny shitless, since she chose to **make a run for it**.*
- P #28: Att **smita** i usa när hon vet att Katrin har gått i god för henne (och ställt upp en massa överlag) är väl knappast inom ramen för att vara en pålitlig anställd?
***Sneaking off** in the USA when she knows that Katrin has vouched for her (and been there for her in general) is hardly being a reliable employee?*
- P #40: Katrin gick i god för henne och tjejen **drar** utan att säga ett pip.
*Katrin vouched for her and the girl **takes off** without saying anything.*

In this WMN, there are 27 occurrences of the alternative word ‘sticka’ (run away), one occurrence of the expression ‘lägga benen på ryggen’ (make a run for it, or literally: lay ones legs on ones back), three occurrences of the word ‘smita’ (sneak off), and 21 occurrences of the alternative word ‘dra’ (take off). As a comparison, the trigger word is used (and endorsed) in 17 posts.

Compared to the WMN of ‘super’ (boozing), in which the participants are more explicitly and actively making arguments for or against the use of the trigger word by using contrasting words to highlight important differences in aspects of meaning potential, the uses of an alternative word in Excerpt 81 are not as obviously taking a stance against the trigger word. Therefore, this category of contrasting has been used in cases where the connection to the trigger word is less clear, and the act of opting for an alternative word can be interpreted as a more passive way of taking part in the negotiation, circumventing taking a stance for or against the use of the trigger word by opting for a more neutral alternative. This form of contrasting is reminiscent of corrective feedback (E. V. Clark, 2003), discussed in Section 2.2.1, and it is also similar to Jefferson’s description of embedded corrections (Jefferson, 1987), discussed in Section 2.2.4.

5.6.5 ENDORSING MEANING: PASSIVE ENDORSEMENTS AND META-LINGUISTIC ENDORSEMENTS

Participants regularly display which of the sides of the negotiation they affiliate with by taking a stance in the negotiation. For example, issuing a meta-linguistic objection (as described in Section 5.6.3), is one way of taking a stance in the WMN. Another way of taking a stance in an ongoing WMN is by endorsing the continued use of the trigger word after it has been made the trigger of a negotiation. Once a DIN sequence has been initiated and a trigger word has been identified, the use of that word is being overtly questioned, and opting to use it again can therefore be interpreted as taking part in the meaning negotiation process. Passively endorsing the continued use of a trigger word, i.e. continuing to use the word even after it has been made the trigger of a WMN sequence, occurs in most of the DINs. 21 out of 22 DINs in the sample contain at least one act of passively endorsing the continued use of the trigger word. In total, there are 148 posts containing passive endorsements of a trigger word.

Note that when a word is put within quotation marks, it is not viewed as a passive endorsement, since this can be interpreted as a way of taking a stance *against* the use of the word, or disaffiliating with the use of the word applied to the current context (see Section 5.6.7). Also, an utterance is interpreted as an endorsement only when it does not add anything else to the WMN. This means that acts of explicification and exemplification, which may in fact also be using and endorsing the trigger word, are not considered passive endorsements, but as acts of more actively proposing meaning to the WMN.

Interestingly, in a few cases, there are also instances of *meta-linguistic* endorsement in the sample. This occurs when a participant explicitly endorses the continued use of the trigger word by commenting on the word choice on a meta-linguistic level. Meta-linguistic endorsements are found in three out of the 22 DINs, and the total number of instances is

eight. One instance of a meta-linguistic endorsement of the trigger word being used is found in the WMN of the trigger word 'övergrepp' (abuse2).

Excerpt 82

P #513: Helt ute och cyklar är hon inte när hon **säger övergrepp**. Hade någon tvingat med dig och satt dig ner i en stol, och sedan skjuttit hål i dina öron utan att du hade någonting att säga till om, hade du inte ansett det vara övergrepp då?

*She isn't completely wrong when she **calls it abuse**. If someone had forced you along and sat you down into a chair and then pierced holes in your ear lobes without your approval, wouldn't you have considered that to be abuse?*

In the post in Excerpt 82, the participant explicitly supports another participant who has used the trigger word and has been disputed regarding that word choice as part of the ongoing WMN. Here, the participant provides a meta-linguistic endorsement of the continued use of this word, by stating that the last participant who used the word is not completely wrong in using that particular word.

Another example of a meta-linguistic endorsement is found in the WMN of the word 'rymt' (escaped).

Excerpt 83

P #483: Fast det handlade ju om visumet. K gick i god för att hon skulle ansvara för barnflickan under USA-vistelsen, eftersom hon var hennes arbetsgivare. Så ja, då är rymma **faktiskt rätt ord att använda**.

*But this was about the visa. K vouched that she would be responsible for the nanny during the stay in the USA, since she was her employer. So yes, escape is **actually the correct word to use**.*

Similarly, in this example in Excerpt 83, the participant is explicitly supporting another participant's use of the trigger word, and is endorsing the continued use by commenting on the word choice on a meta-linguistic level.

5.6.6 OTHER SEMANTIC OPERATIONS

In a few instances, certain utterance constructions are identified which contribute to the word meaning negotiation in specific ways. For example, the 'x-och-x' (x-and-x) construction is found in three instances, in three different DINs. As discussed in Section 2.1.6, this construction has been investigated in a study by Norén and Linell, who conclude that participants in conversation can use this particular construction to simultaneously highlight different aspects of meaning potential associated with a particular word (Norén & Linell, 2006, 2007). Norén and Linell show that participants in conversation are able to put a chosen word into perspective by using the 'x-and-x' construction. By using the construction, the interlocutors are able to reflect upon the fact that the word may be appropriate to use with respect to one particular aspect of meaning potential (fulfilled in the actual situation), but inappropriate with respect to another aspect of meaning potential (unfulfilled in the situation at hand). The following example is taken from Norén and Linell (2007, p. 397).

Example 5

- 1.A: har du köpt ny bil?
have you bought a new car?
- 2.B: ny å ny, den e sju år gammal
new and new, it is seven years old.

What B is highlighting in his response is that the car in question is new with respect to one aspect of meaning potential associated with the trigger word, namely that it is new to him as the owner, but he is simultaneously problematising if the word is entirely appropriate to use, since the car itself in fact is not brand new, but has been used by the previous owner for seven years. In this case, the construction 'x-and-x' is used to highlight precisely that the trigger word encompasses different aspects of meaning

potential, which may not all apply to the particular conversational context in which the word is used.

In the sample of this study, the ‘x-and-x’ construction is found in three instances (in three different DINs) but the construction does not appear on its own in any of the instances. Two examples are presented in Excerpt 84, concerning the trigger word ‘ljuga’ (lie), and Excerpt 85, concerning the trigger word ‘ljuger’ (lying). In both cases, the construction appears as part of a longer construction, namely “det är skillnad på x och x” (there is a difference between x and x).

Excerpt 84

P #36: Skulle aldrig falla mig in att beröva min dotter tron på Tomten! [...] Att han inte existerar förstår man ju ändå när man blir äldre. [...] Sedan är det väl **skillnad på och ljuga och ljuga**. Att beskriva tomtens existens som en ren och skär lögn är ju helt absurt.

*Would never occur to me to deprive my daughter of her belief in Santa! [...] You realise that he doesn't exist as you get older anyway. [...] Also, there is **a difference between lying and lying**, is there not? To describe Santa's existence as a pure and utter lie is totally absurd.*

Excerpt 85

P #110: Ja, men jag håller inte med om “att ljuga oavsett är lika fult”. Jag tycker att det är **stor skillnad på lögner och lögner**. Om jag ljuger för min tjej och säger att jag ska åka ifrån henne om hon inte kommer så tycker JAG att det är mycket värre än om jag ljuger och säger att tvn är trasig, hon sjunger fint, osv.

*Yes, but I don't agree that “lying is equally bad regardless”. I think there is **a big difference between lies and lies**. If I lie*

to my girl and say that I'm leaving without her if she does not come I think this is much worse than if I lie and say that the TV is broken, that she sings nicely, etc.

What the participants in both of the examples in Excerpt 84 and Excerpt 85 are highlighting is that there are different degrees of lying (or lies), and although the word may be appropriate to use with regards to certain aspects of meaning potential of the word, it may be inappropriate with regards to other aspects. The participants are not spelling out which aspects are making the word appropriate or inappropriate to use, but one of them is exemplifying why certain lies are worse than others, and thereby implying that there are nuances in the meaning potential of the word which have to do with the intentions of the person doing the lying.

This is reminiscent of the description of 'prototypical lies' which, according to Coleman and Kay (1981), should satisfy three conditions. A prototypical lie is (1) a statement which is in fact *false*, (2) which the speaker utters with the *intention* of it being false (3) the purpose of *deceiving* the hearer. In ordinary conversation, the word 'lying' is typically used to describe acts of making consciously false statements or deliberately misleading someone using false statements, which is generally considered dubious or despicable behaviour. By using the 'x-and-x' construction, the participants in Excerpts 84 and 85 are highlighting that the aspect of providing false statements may have been fulfilled in the current conversational context, but that the word is still inappropriate to use. In this regard, the participants are drawing attention to the aspect of depravity or shamefulness associated with lying, highlighting that this aspect has not been fulfilled in the particular situation, and that the word therefore is not completely appropriate.

Another utterance construction used to negotiate meaning identified in the sample of DINs is the 'x-är-x' construction (x-is-x), which is found in two instances in the sample, in two different DINs. This construction seems to function in a different way than the previously described 'x-and-x' construction. While 'x-and-x' operates to problematise two different aspects of meaning potential associated with a particular word, the 'x-is-x' construction operates to disqualify or cancel out an aspect of mean-

ing potential suggested by someone else. The construction ‘x-is-x’ can therefore be used stress the fact that an aspect of meaning potential suggested by someone else in fact does not matter in deciding whether or not a trigger word can be used applied to a certain conversational context. The previously mentioned aspect of meaning potential is therefore made irrelevant by the ‘x-is-x’ construction, since it underlines that x is always x, regardless of any mitigating circumstances (i.e. suggested aspects of meaning potential). This occurs in the WMNs of ‘ljuga’ (lie), which takes place in the discussion about whether or not it is acceptable to fool children into believing in Santa. In Excerpt 86, the construction is highlighted using bold font.

Excerpt 86

P #81: Jag vill inte ge mina barn en barndom som saknar fantasivärldar! Vår värld är ganska trist, en stor del av tjusningen med att våra barn är att man får tro på bättre saker än det som händer på nyheterna. Jag skulle själv inte vilja vara utan min barndoms tomtetro, det var så oerhört spännande när han skulle komma! Det är stor skillnad på detta och lögner.

I don't want to give my children a childhood which lacks fantasy worlds. Our world is pretty dull, and a big part of the charm of being a child is that you are allowed to believe in better things than what is happening on the news. I wouldn't want to be without my own childhood's belief in Santa, it was so very exciting when he was coming. There is a big difference between this and lying.

P #82: [Nämner P #81s alias] Inte för mig. Det är inte ok att ljuga bara för att det är jul.

En lögn är en lögn är en lögn.....

[Mentions P #81's alias] Not to me. It is not ok to lie just because it is Christmas.

A lie is a lie is a lie...

In the exchange in Excerpt 86, the participant in the first post highlights the “no-bad-intentions” aspect, arguing against calling the behaviour ‘lying’, and another participant responds, disqualifying this aspect, and persisting in calling the behaviour ‘lying’ using the construction ‘x-is-x’, or in this case, actually ‘x-is-x-is-x’, thereby attempting to weaken or cancel out this aspect of meaning potential of ‘lie’.

Another example of the ‘x-is-x’ construction is found in the WMN of the word ‘övergrepp’ (abuse2), presented in Excerpt 87. The example occurs as part of a longer dyadic exchange between two participants.³² A little earlier in the exchange, P1 has compared ear piercing to hitting children, and P2 has responded that there is a difference between hitting children and piercing their ears.

Excerpt 87

- P1: ja, att pierca och att slå är olika saker men de resulterar båda i smärta. Vilket en del hjärndöda föräldrar inte verkar få in i huvudet. Tro mig, det är minst lika traumatiskt för bebisen i youtube-klippet att få sina öron genomborrade som det skulle vara att få en rak höger.
yes, ear piercing and hitting are different things but they both result in pain. Which some braindead parents do not seem to understand. Believe me, it is just as traumatising for the child in the youtube clip to get her ears pierced as it is to get punched.
- P2: Till skillnad från slag är det dock en engångsgrej, om man nu ska ta till en skillnad till. Men jag betvivlar inte att bebisen ogillar båda delarna.

32 Instead of referring to the participants using the serial numbering of the posts, they are here called P1 and P2 in order to show how the turns are related, i.e. that the first and third posts are written by the same participant, which had not been apparent if the posts had been called using only the consecutive ID numbers.

Unlike a slap this is a one time thing, if one is to point out another difference. But I don't doubt that the baby dislikes both.
 P1: Spelar det någon roll om man gör ett övergrepp 1, 2, 3, 50, 70, 105 eller 1000 gånger? **Ett övergrepp är ett övergrepp** och är lika illa oavsett hur många gånger de sker. [...] Visst snackar vi olika saker nu, men egentligen.. att slå en bebis på käften eller skjuta hål i öronen på den? Vad är skillnaderna ur en bebis perspektiv? Båda är traumatiskt. Båda gör ont som fan. Och båda går över. Är det mindre fel för det? *Does it matter if you abuse someone 1, 2, 3, 50, 70, 105 or 1000 times? Abuse is abuse no matter how many times it occurs. [...]* Sure we are talking about different things, but really... hitting a baby in the face or punching holes in their ear lobes? What is the difference from the baby's perspective? Both things are traumatising. Both things hurt like hell. And both pass. Is it less wrong just because of that?

In Excerpt 87, the 'frequency' aspect of meaning potential highlighted by P2 is disqualified by P1 using the 'x-is-x' construction underlining that abuse is abuse regardless of frequency. According to P1, this aspect is not a part of the meaning potential of the trigger word, or at least not an important part in this case. Instead, P1 highlights aspects of pain and degree of traumatisation as relevant for determining if an act can be classified as abuse or not.

5.6.7 META-LINGUISTIC INDICATIONS AND COMMENTS

Another way of participating in a WMN is by displaying meta-linguistic awareness towards the WMN itself. One way of doing this is by using the trigger word within quotation marks. Simply using the word *without* quotation marks is interpreted as a passive endorsement of the word,

i.e. supporting the continued use of it applied to the current context (as described in Section 5.6.5). By contrast, putting the trigger word within quotation marks displays meta-linguistic awareness in the sense that the participant may not fully endorse the use of the particular word. Instead, using quotation marks can be interpreted as disaffiliating with the use of the negotiated word in the present situation. It could also be a sign that the participant is entraining lexically on the already introduced term, but is explicitly indicating that this is the word chosen by someone *else* and that the use is simply a quote and not an endorsement. 12 of the 22 DINs contain scare quoted endorsements of the negotiated trigger word, and the total number of uses of the trigger word within quotation marks is 40.

In other instances, participants make different kinds of meta-linguistic comments about the word meaning negotiation itself. This way of displaying meta-linguistic awareness can be interpreted as a sign that the participants are aware of that they are engaged in a meta-linguistic negotiation about word meaning. Meta-linguistic comments that do not also serve as objections or endorsements are present in 10 out of the 22 DINs. In total, there are 20 posts which contain meta-linguistic comments in the entire sample. Many of them occur in the WMN of the trigger word 'krog' (dive), from which the examples in Excerpt 88 are taken.

Excerpt 88

P #561: Det beror kanske på vilken syn man har på
en "krog"

*That perhaps depends on your view of a
"dive"*

P#1190: Men... jag kanske har en annan bild av vad
"krogmiljö" är än hur det faktiskt var i
ditt fall...

*But... I may have another impression of what
a "dive bar environment" is like than what
it was like in your case..*

P#1194: [Citat av #1190] Sen är det ju som du säger
väldigt olika vad man lägger i just ordet
krog.

*[Quote of #1190] Like you say it varies
what you put into the word dive.*

P#1199: Fast här säger man krog om just de ställena som spelar musik.

But here you say dive precisely about the places that play music.

P#1201: Kanske inte så konstigt att vissa reagerar som de gör när man har så olika bild av vad krog är.

Perhaps it is not so strange that some people are reacting the way they do when we have so different opinions about what a dive is.

P#1202: Intressant språkdiskussion! Men helt OT.³³

Interesting language discussion! But completely OT.

As shown in Excerpt 88, towards the end of the WMN concerning the word 'krog', the participants seem to be aware about the fact that they are taking part in a negotiation about word meaning. They comment on the fact that they are discussing a particular word and acknowledge that they seem to be in disagreement about what is in the meaning potential of that word. Earlier in the sequence, the participants have brought up several aspects of meaning potential of the word 'krog' (dive), ranging from the degree of intoxication amongst the people visiting the establishment to whether or not the establishment plays loud music or not. It turns out that the participants have very different opinions about what a 'krog' means. Some participants write that it is typical for a 'krog' *not* to have more music than a stereo in the bar, and it certainly cannot be used to refer to a disco. Another participant suggests that this is precisely the meaning of the trigger word, since it regularly is used (at least locally where that participant lives) to refer to establishments where people go to dance. In the end of the long discussion, a few participants sum up the negotiation and conclude that perhaps there is no consensus about what the meaning potential of the trigger word encompasses. The very last post in the entire thread comments on the interesting language discussion, but adds that it is completely off topic.

33 OT is an abbreviation of Off Topic.

5.6.8 SUMMARY OF SEMANTIC OPERATIONS IN DINs

This section of the chapter about DINs has described and analysed how participants contribute to the meaning negotiation in different ways. Various semantic operations have been identified as more or less typical ways of contributing in an ongoing negotiation originating in disagreement.

Acts of *explicitification* are found in most of the DINs. Generic explicitifications, in which aspects of meaning potential are foregrounded as the main part of the introduced definitional component, are found in 13 out of 22 WMNs in the sample. Specific explicitifications, in which particular aspects of the discussed situation are highlighted as the focal point in the suggested definitional component, are found in 11 out of 22 WMNs in the sample. There are eight DINs containing acts of negative explicitification, and the majority of these explicitifications are specific explicitifications.

Acts of *exemplification* are found in 20 of the 22 DINs in the sample. In exemplifications, the meaning of the trigger word is illustrated by an example of what the trigger word usually means in circumstances other than the particular discussed situation. Exemplifications are normally formulated as positive statements, i.e. providing examples of what the trigger word normally denotes, but there are also some instances of negative exemplifications in the sample, which enumerate examples demonstrating what the trigger word cannot be used to refer to.

Acts of *contrasting* are found in 17 out of the 22 DINs in the sample corpus. Contrasting can perform a number of different functions. For example, acts of contrasting can operate to delimit the boundaries of meaning potential of the trigger word. Contrasting can also be used to highlight differences in aspects of meaning potential between two contrasted words. Further, contrasting can be used to create local opposites in the discussion, which serves as a mitigator for lessening the negative impact of negatively loaded words. Also, contrasting can be used for advocating that another word should be used instead of the trigger word.

Acts of *objecting* to the trigger word are found in various meta-linguistic objections. 21 out of 22 DINs in the sample contain at least one meta-linguistic objection. The most typical meta-linguistic objection functions to dispute the use of the trigger word by making a comment on the form "That is not X!". Other meta-linguistic objections are directed at certain

aspects of meaning potential already proposed in the negotiation. Another kind of meta-linguistic objection specifically addresses the delimitation issue, and questions where the relevant boundaries of the meaning potential of the trigger word should be drawn.

Acts of *endorsing* the continued use of the trigger word are very commonly found in the DINs. 21 out of 22 DINs in the sample contain at least one act of passively endorsing the continuous use of the trigger word. There are also a few instances of *meta-linguistic* endorsements to be found in the sample, in which a participant explicitly endorses the continued use of the trigger word by commenting on the word choice on a meta-linguistic level.

Occasionally, specific utterance constructions have been found which can contribute to the meaning negotiation in particular ways. For example, the 'x-och-x' (x-and-x) construction is used on three occasions to highlight that the trigger word encompasses different aspects of meaning potential which may not all be fulfilled in the current conversational context. By contrast, the utterance construction 'x-är-x' (x-is-x) is used on two occasions to disqualify suggested aspects of meaning potential, and declare them irrelevant for determining if a trigger word is appropriate to use in a particular situated context.

Finally, it is important to underline that it is common for a single discussion post to simultaneously contain several of the semantic operations discussed in this section. In word meaning negotiation, participants constantly move between foregrounding semantic properties associated with the trigger word and highlighting relevant aspects of the discussed situation. For this reason, it is not uncommon to move from an act of a specific explicification [1], to acts of exemplification [2] and to conclude with a generic explicification [3], which is precisely what happens in the last example in Excerpt 89 below, taken from the WMN of the trigger word 'rymt' (escaped).

Excerpt 89

P #478: [1] Bara genom att säga att barnflickan har rymt så har K pratat om henne som något som tillhör henne privat. [2] Rymma kan interner göra...en hund kan rymma...men man kan

inte rymma från sitt arbete, man kan sluta på stående fot om man vill. [3] Rymma betyder att någon som inte klarar sig själv eller inte ska vara ute i allmänheten har avvikit.

[1] Just by saying that the nanny has escaped means that K has talked about her as something which privately belongs to her.

[2] Prisoners can escape... a dog can escape... but you cannot escape from your place of work, you can simply quit if you want to. [3] Escaping means that someone who cannot fend for him-/herself or should not be out in public has fled.

CHAPTER 6

TOWARDS AN ANNOTATION SCHEME FOR CATEGORISING SEMANTIC OPERATIONS IN WMNS

During the analyses of the NONs and the DINs, recurring ways of contributing to an ongoing WMN sequence have been identified and classified into a set of categories based on which function they perform within the WMN. The analyses have been performed through an iterative process, in which findings of each particular sequence have been compared to the general findings of the entire example collection. Throughout the stages of this iterative process, categories have been developed which identify and classify the most typical ways of contributing in word meaning negotiation. The categories have been continuously modified when needed, to capture the generality of the example collection. New categories have been added when new distinctions needed to be made or when existing categories were insufficient to capture the findings of the analyses of the negotiation sequences.

In the analyses, the posts within each WMN sequence have been classified as containing one or several semantic operations which capture how a particular utterance combines aspects of the negotiated word's meaning potential with aspects of the surrounding conversational context when making a contribution to the WMN. This iterative classification process has resulted in a taxonomy of semantic operations, which will be presented in the following sections. This chapter will discuss how the various categories of semantic operations have been identified and how they are distinguished from each other. The chapter will also outline a preliminary annotation scheme which hopefully can be used as a basis for continued development of a more complete scheme to be used in future studies on word meaning negotiation. The annotation scheme presented in this chapter has not been tested for reliability, but this could be part of the future development of the scheme in future research (see Section 7.6).

This chapter will first discuss how to distinguish between meta-linguistic clarification requests and meta-linguistic objections (Section 6.1). Next, the chapter will discuss the distinction between the semantic operations explicification and exemplification (Section 6.2). Subsequently, the chapter will discuss how to identify acts of contrasting (Section 6.3) and acts of endorsements (Section 6.4).

6.1 DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN META-LINGUISTIC CLARIFICATION REQUESTS AND META-LINGUISTIC OBJECTIONS

The results of the analyses have shown that the variations of the utterance construction "What/How do you mean (by) X?" can be used either to request meta-linguistic clarification regarding the meaning of the trigger word or to object to the use of the trigger word in the current context, indicating that the word is used in an inappropriate manner. A lengthy discussion on how these two semantic operations are distinguished from each other has been provided in Section 5.4.

A decision tree with tests for distinguishing between meta-linguistic clarification requests and meta-linguistic objections is presented in Figure 14. The inspiration for using decision trees comes from the DAMSL model presented in Section 3.1.4, in which decision trees were used to guide the annotators when coding each utterance according to the various categories in the annotation scheme (Allen & Core, 1997).

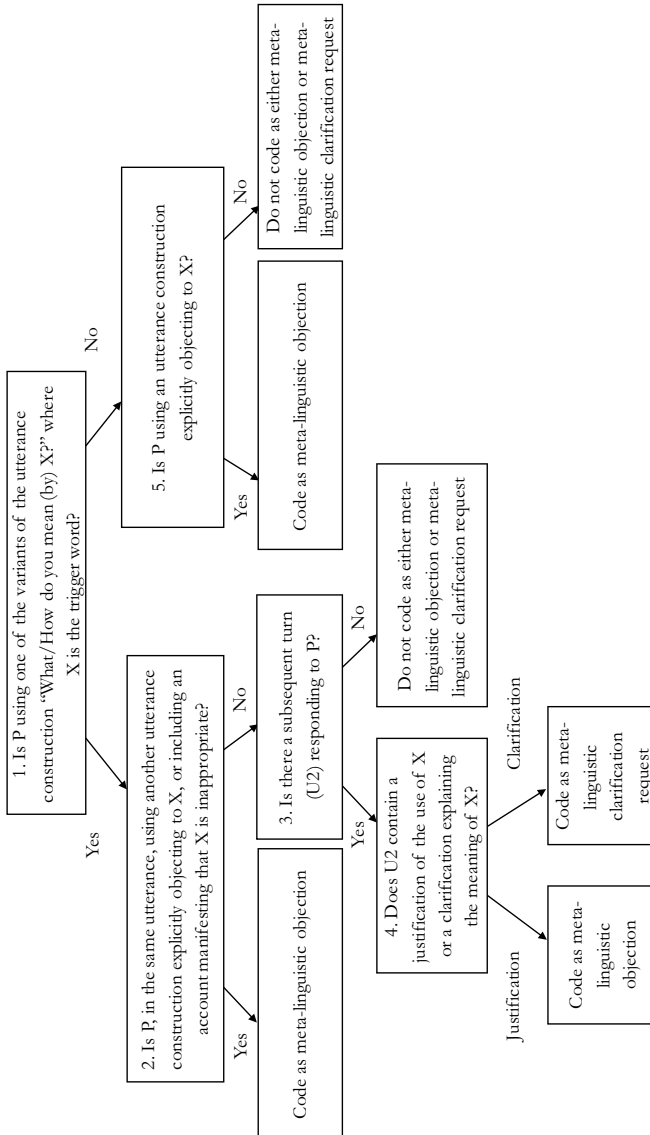


Figure 14: Decision tree distinguishing between meta-linguistic clarification requests and meta-linguistic objections

The most common function of a meta-linguistic clarification request is to elicit clarification of meaning from the participant who originally used the problematic word. The functions of meta-linguistic objections are more multifaceted, and include:

- Disputing a particular word choice made by another participant.
- Objecting to a definition/explanation proposed by another participant.
- Objecting to the application of the trigger word onto the current conversational context.
- Objecting to an aspect of meaning associated with the trigger word, as proposed by another participant.

In state 1, the annotator needs to determine if the participant (P) in the current utterance (U) is using one of the variants of the utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?”.³⁴ The utterance constructions investigated in this particular study are:

- Vad menar du (med) X? (What do you mean (by) X?)
- Hur menar du (med) X? (How do you mean (by) X?)
- Vaddå X? (What do you mean X?)
- Vad då X? (What do you mean X?)
- Vadå X? (What do you mean X?)

If the answer to the question in state 1 is ‘yes’, the annotator must move to state 2, otherwise to state 5.

In state 2, the annotator needs to decide if P in the same utterance U is also including an account protesting against the use of X, suggesting that X is inappropriate in the current conversational context. This can be done by including one of the typical constructions for meta-linguistic objection, for example:

- Det (där) är inte X (That is not X)
- X är inte (att) (X is not (to))

³⁴ This particular annotation scheme only codes for the variations of the indicator constructions used in this study, but could be expanded to include other possible forms of clarification requests, such as ”X?”.

- Det är fel att säga/kalla det X (It is wrong to say/to call it X)
- Jag ser inte det som X/anser inte det som X/tycker inte det är X (I don't see that as X/consider that to be X/think that is X)
- Du kan inte säga/kalla det (för) X (You cannot say/claim that (it is) X)
- Du vet inte vad X är/betyder (You don't know what X is/means)

However, the account does not necessarily need to include an explicit construction objecting to the use of X on the form above. Instead, the account can manifest disapproval towards the use of X in other, less explicit ways, for example by drawing upon aspects of context. A few examples of accounts found in the sample corpus accompanying one of the variants of “What/How do you mean (by) X?”, displaying disapproval towards the use of X, without explicitly objecting to it:

- “Vaddå ”lurar”? jag tror själv att tomten finns...” (What do you mean ”tricking”? I believe in Santa myself...)
- “Vadå lurar?? Tomten finns ju visst!!” (What do you mean tricking?? Santa exists!!)

Although being used in an ironical sense, the account which follows the “What do you mean X?” construction in the second example above is signaling disapproval towards the use of the trigger word, rather than requesting clarification of meaning from the participant to whom the utterance is directed.

If the annotator decides that U contains a manifestation of disapproval towards the use of the word X, the utterance should be coded as containing a meta-linguistic objection. Otherwise, a move should be made to state 3.

In state 3, the annotator needs to look at the next utterance (U2) responding to P's original utterance, which displays how P's utterance U containing the construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?” has been interpreted. If there is no such next turn, it is impossible to determine how the utterance construction has been interpreted in the current conversational context, and U should not be coded as either a meta-linguistic clarification request or a meta-linguistic objection. However, if there is such a next turn (U2) responding to P, a move should be made to state 4.

In state 4, the annotator needs to determine if U2 is providing clarification, explaining the intended meaning of X or if U2 is providing a justification defending the original use of X. If U2 is providing clarification, U should be coded as a meta-linguistic clarification request. If U2 is providing a justification of the original use of X, U should be coded as a meta-linguistic objection.

When ending up in state 5, U has been categorised as not containing one of the variants of the utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?”. Here, the annotator must decide if U contains another utterance construction explicitly objecting to X, for example one of the variants of the “That is not X!” constructions enumerated above. If the answer is ‘yes’, U should be coded as a meta-linguistic objection. If the answer is ‘no’, U should not be coded as either a meta-linguistic clarification request or a meta-linguistic objection.

6.2 DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN EXPLICIFICATION AND EXEMPLIFICATION

The analyses of the NONs and DINs have shown that two common ways for participants to contribute to an ongoing negotiation is by either explicifying meaning or by exemplifying meaning (see Section 4.5, Section 5.6.1 and Section 5.6.2). A decision tree with tests for distinguishing between acts of explicification and exemplification are presented in Figure 15.

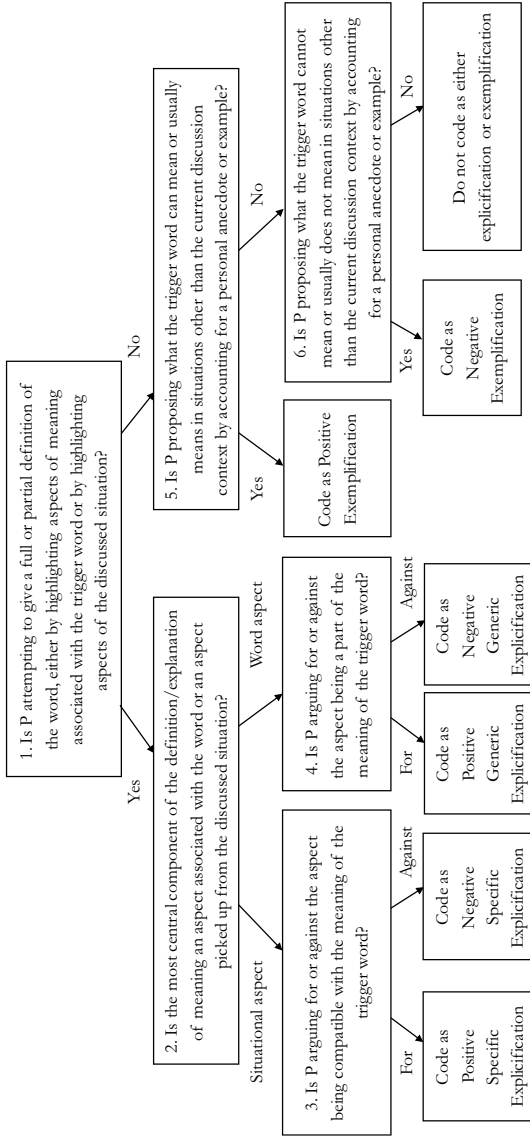


Figure 15: Decision tree distinguishing between explicifications and exemplifications

In state 1, the annotator needs to determine if the participant (P) in the current utterance (U) is attempting to give a partial or full definition of the word (X) or attempting to explain what the trigger word can or should mean by proposing aspects of meaning associated with the trigger word itself or by highlighting aspects of the discussed situation. Answering ‘yes’ to this question will lead to one of the explicification codes, which means that the U contains a proposed definitional component of X.

Typical ways of formulating utterances which should be coded as answering ‘yes’ to the question in state 1 are the following:

- “X är (att) (inte)...” (“X is (to) (not)...”)
- “X betyder (att) (inte)...” (“X means (to) (not)...”)
- “X =”
- “Dvs.../Alltså...” (“Eg...”)
- “Liksom...” (“Sort of...”)

If the answer to the question in state 1 is ‘yes’, the annotator must move to state 2, otherwise to state 5.

In state 2, the annotator must decide if P in U is foregrounding aspects of the discussed situation as the most central part of the definition/explanation of the meaning of X. An aspect picked up from the discussed situation is typically something very concrete which has to do with the particular situation under discussion. If the definition/explanation of meaning revolves around an aspect picked up from the discussed situation, the question should here be answered ‘yes’. On the other hand, if the most central part of the definition/explanation of meaning of X highlights an aspect of meaning associated with the word itself, this question should be answered ‘no’.

Examples of aspects of the discussed situation being foregrounded as the most central part of the definitional component:

- ”Två glas vin är inte att supa!” (“Two glasses of wine is not boozing!”)
- ”Du smädar gud den högste när du skyller skäller på gud som dödat din flickvän.” (“You blaspheme against god the highest when you blame scold god who has killed your girlfriend.”)

In the examples above, the proposed aspects points to something very specific and concrete taken from the particulars of the discussed situation.

If the answer to the question in state 2 is ‘yes’, the annotator must move to state 3, otherwise to state 4.

In state 3, the annotator must decide if P in U is arguing *for* or *against* the contextual aspect being compatible with the meaning potential of X. In Example A above, P is arguing *against* the contextual aspect (“two glasses of wine”) being compatible with the meaning potential of X (the amount of alcohol in the particular context is insufficient and therefore incompatible with the trigger word), whereas P in example B is arguing *for* the contextual aspect being compatible with the meaning potential of X (by explaining that the blaming and scolding of God is enough to call something blasphemy). Answering ‘for’ to this question leads to U being annotated as Positive Specific Explicification, whereas answering ‘against’ here leads to U being annotated as Negative Specific Explicification.

In state 4, the annotator must decide if P in U is arguing *for* or *against* the aspect being part of the meaning potential of X. When ending up in state 4, it has already been decided that the highlighted aspect is not taken from the context of the discussed situation, but instead is an aspect which is associated with X on a more general level. Examples of utterances to be coded in this state are:

- ”Att mobba nån är att kränka och förnedra.” (“Bullying someone is to violate and humiliate them.”)
- Att stalka betyder inte nödvändigtvis att man hotar personen. (“Stalking does not necessarily mean that you threaten the person in question.”)

Answering ‘for’ to this question leads to U being annotated as Positive Generic Explicification, whereas answering ‘against’ here leads to U being annotated as Negative Generic Explicification.

In state 5, the annotator must decide if P is exemplifying the meaning of X, by proposing what X can mean, or usually means, in situations other than the current discussed situation. If the annotator decides that P is proposing meaning to the negotiation by accounting for a personal example or anecdote, U should be coded as a Positive Exemplification. If the answer is ‘no’, a move should be made to state 6.

In state 6, the annotator must decide if the example is used to illustrate what the trigger word cannot mean, or usually does not mean in other context. If the answer is ‘yes’, U should be coded as a Negative Exemplification. If the answer is ‘no’, U should not be coded as an explicification nor an exemplification.

6.3 IDENTIFYING ACTS OF CONTRASTING

The analyses of the WMNs have shown that contrasting can be used for a number of different purposes in word meaning negotiation (see Section 5.6.4). This section will outline a list of questions which can be used for determining whether or not an utterance within a WMN sequence contains an act of contrasting.

- Does the participant (P) compare or juxtapose the meaning of the word X to that of another word (X1)?
- Does P draw up boundaries between X and X1?
- Is P advocating the use of X1 instead of X?
- Does P opt to use X1 (without commenting on the fact that X is not chosen) after the negotiation has started and X has been made the trigger of the WMN?

If ‘yes’ to any of the questions above, code the utterance as containing an act of contrasting. Note that *both* promotion of another word in the trigger word’s place (i.e. explicitly advocating that X1 is better suited than X) *and* opting to use an alternative word without explicitly advocating for why this word is more suitable are interpreted as acts of contrasting in this study.

6.4 DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN PASSIVE ENDORSEMENTS AND META-LINGUISTIC ENDORSEMENTS

The analyses of the DINs have shown that there are two ways of endorsing the continued use of a particular word after it has been made the trigger of a word meaning negotiation. When a participant (P) is using

the trigger word X after a negotiation has already started, an utterance U containing X (which does *not also* contain a meta-linguistic contribution in the form of an explicification, exemplification or contrasting act) should be classified as either a passive endorsement or as a meta-linguistic endorsement. The difference between the two kinds of endorsements is that the latter contains an explicit meta-linguistic comment supporting the continuous use of the trigger word, whereas the former simply uses the trigger word without any meta-linguistic comment regarding the meaning or use.

A decision tree with tests for distinguishing between acts of meta-linguistic endorsement and passive endorsement are presented in Figure 16.

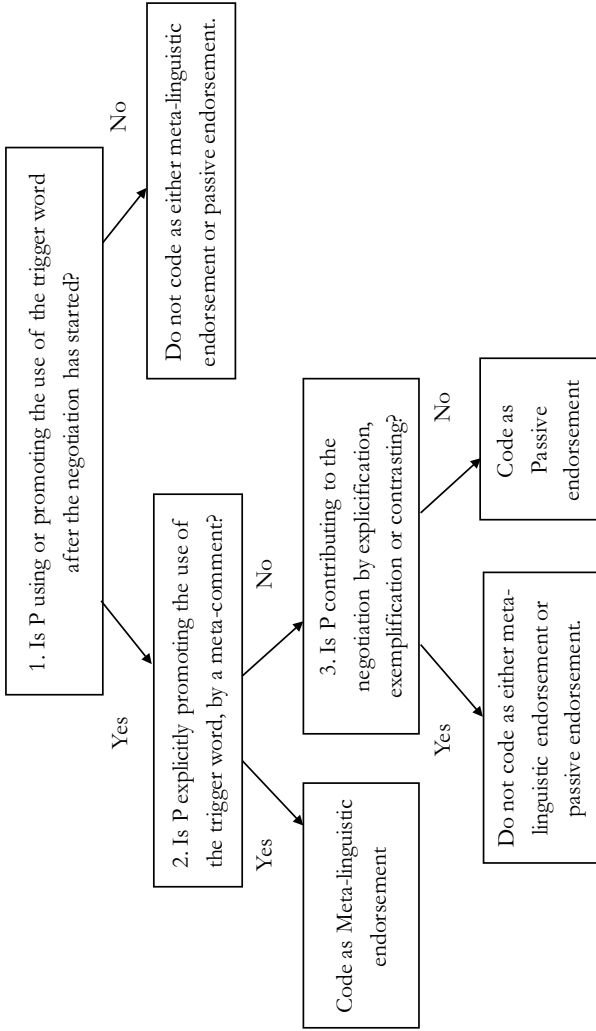


Figure 16: Decision tree distinguishing between passive endorsements and meta-linguistic endorsements

In state 1, the annotator needs to determine if the participant (P) in the current utterance (U) is using the trigger word which indicates that P supports the continued use of the word in the current conversational context. If the answer to the question in state 1 is 'yes', the annotator must move to state 2. If the answer is 'no', U should not be coded as containing either an act of meta-linguistic endorsement or an act of passive endorsement.

In state 2, the annotator must decide if P is explicitly promoting the continued use of the trigger word, by including a meta-comment in U. Typical ways of formulating meta-linguistic endorsements include:

- Det är rätt att säga/kalla det X (It is correct to say/call it X)
- Det är (faktiskt/ju) X (It is (actually) X)
- X är (faktiskt/ju) rätt ord (X is (actually) the correct word)

If the answer to the question in state 2 is 'yes', the annotator should code U as containing an act of meta-linguistic endorsement. If the answer is 'no', the annotator should move to state 3.

In state 3, the annotator needs to determine whether or not P is contributing to the WMN by including an act of explicification, exemplification or contrasting. This is necessary in order to distinguish passive endorsements from other ways of contributing to an ongoing negotiation. An utterance U can only be coded as containing an act of passive endorsement, if no other semantic operation is present. If the answer to the question in state 3 is 'yes', U should not be coded as containing either an act of meta-linguistic endorsement or passive endorsement. If the answer to the question in state 3 is 'no', U should be coded as containing an act of passive endorsement.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

This chapter will discuss and expand on the findings of this study and summarise the conclusions that can be drawn about word meaning negotiation in online discussion forum communication. First, the general conclusions about the characteristics of word meaning negotiation will be discussed (in Section 7.1), mainly focusing on the similarities and differences between the NONs and DINs. Next, the semantic operations identified in the two types of WMNs will be elaborated upon (Section 7.2). Subsequently, the findings of the analyses will be discussed in relation to semantic theory (Section 7.3) and in relation to methodological issues (Section 7.4). Finally, the discussion will be wrapped up in a few concluding words (Section 7.5), after which some possible extensions to and applications of the findings of this study will be outlined (Section 7.6).

7.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF WORD MEANING NEGOTIATION

This section will discuss the characteristics of WMNs, and compare the two types of negotiations to each other, especially focusing on similarities and differences between the NONs and the DINs. In this study, both kinds of WMNs have been analysed as Miscommunication Events (MEs), as outlined in Section 2.1.3. Related to the categorisation of MEs, NONs and DINs display some similarities with regards to the *indications* dimension since they both involve many of the same the semantic operations used to contribute to the process of word meaning negotiation. Meta-linguistic clarification requests constitute the most typical indication of NONs, whereas meta-linguistic objections serve as the most typical indication of DINs. On the other hand, NONs and DINs are clearly different with regards to the *objects/matters* dimension (the trouble source) and the genesis dimension (antecedents of the trouble source). In NONs, the trouble source is a lack of understanding concerning the situated meaning of a particular word. In DINs, the trouble source is disagreement about word meaning, manifested as at least one articulated opinion expressing that a particular word has been misused in the current conversational context. Comparing NONs and DINs with regards to the *genesis* dimension, and analysing possible antecedents of the trouble source, one factor which may explain the origin of the communicative trouble in DINs is the fact that participants are sometimes already in a polarised dispute, in which challenging the word choices of the opposing side serves as a tool for gaining ground in the ongoing argumentation on topic. With regards to the *treatment* dimension, NONs are typically resolved, which means that they end up restoring sufficient mutual understanding of the problematic word to be able to move on in the communication. By contrast, DINs only sometimes end up in consensus about word meaning. Analysing the treatment dimension, this suggests that NONs are more often resolved by the interactants than DINs. Finally, with regards to the *extension and progression* dimension, the typical NON sequence constitutes a local, focused ME, whereas DINs are typically global and thus present in a larger portion of the overarching communicative sequence.

7.1.1 GENERAL DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN NONS AND DINS

The WMNs investigated in this study have been identified as originating in either insufficient understanding about the meaning of a trigger word, or in disagreement about what constitutes an appropriate use of a trigger word in a particular context. Compared to each other, these two types of WMNs display some similarities and some obvious differences. The most noticeable difference is that NONs typically are short, involve only a few participants, and are concluded in a low number of turns (typically three or four), and that the sequence forms a clear side-sequence distinct from the discussion on topic. By contrast, DINs are generally longer, involve more participants, and are highly integrated into the main discussion on topic.

What the two types of WMNs have in common is that they both contain at least one post which identifies a trigger word as problematic in some way, and that there subsequently is a move from discussing the topic of the thread to also discussing the language used. More specifically, this meta-linguistic shift targets the meaning of the trigger word in relation to the current conversational context, even though the purpose for shifting into a meta-linguistic negotiation about word meaning differs between the two types of WMNs.³⁵ Another similarity between the two types of WMNs is that many of the same semantic operations used to contribute to the word meaning negotiation are found in both types of negotiations. Thus, it seems that the strategies adopted by participants who are clearing up a state of insufficient understanding concerning a particular problematic word to a large extent are the same as those adopted by participants who are arguing for or against the appropriateness of a certain word in a particular context.

³⁵ A more in-depth discussion on causes and motivations for engaging in WMNs is presented in Section 7.1.3.

7.1.2 DIFFERENCES IN SEQUENTIALITY

Sequentially, the two types of WMNs are very different. In cases of non-understanding, the WMN sequence typically takes the shape of a short side-sequence addressing the issue of insufficient understanding. As discussed earlier, most of the NONs display the traditional T-I-R-(RR) pattern corresponding to the model of non-understanding proposed by Varonis and Gass (1985). Typically, NONs are found as part of a dyadic communication exchange, but in some cases more than two participants can be involved, for example when a third participant provides the requested clarification in the response post.

In DINs, a higher number of participants are typically involved in the negotiation than in cases of non-understanding, contributing to a much more complex pattern of turn-taking (see Section 5.5). However, even in this more multifaceted sequentiality pattern, participants still seem to orient towards a dyadic pattern of interaction as they often affiliate with one of the opposing sides in the discussion (typically *for* or *against* using the trigger word which is the target of the negotiation). These findings are in line with Egbert's conclusions (2004) pointing towards a dyadic pattern of interaction even in multi-party communication. The findings are also consistent with recent work on compound contributions which suggest that participants in multi-party communication generally orient to a turn-taking mechanism in which *parties*, not individual participants, operate as the main conversational entities (Howes, Purver, Healey, Mills, & Gregoromichelaki, 2011).

Egbert's findings indicate that the practice of other-initiated repair in multi-party communication often is used to build alliances between participants. Egbert looked into repair sequences in spoken multi-party conversation, and found that it is common for *more* than one participant to initiate repair directed at one particular trouble-source, even when this action on the surface is completely redundant as someone else has already indicated the problem. Egbert concluded that this kind of apparent redundant repair action is taken to display affiliation with the participant who first initiated the repair (Egbert, 1997). By adopting this practice, participants in multi-party conversation can orient themselves towards each other and build affiliations with each other. As a consequence, they can also simplify

the complex pattern of sequentiality by forming a more dyadic pattern of communication. As discussed, this is similar to what seems to be going on in DINs, since the participants here often affiliate with either one of the opposing sides in the negotiation. For example, it is common in longer negotiations to find multiple meta-linguistic objections repeatedly indicating the trouble-source, even when this action on the surface is just a repetition of someone else's previous objecting action. By issuing multiple (identical or similar) meta-linguistic objections, participants affiliate with either side of the negotiation, and thus create a more dyadic pattern of interaction which simplifies the turn-taking organisation in the often quite complex, multi-party and asynchronous flow of communication.

7.1.3 DIFFERENCES IN CAUSE AND MOTIVATION

The question *why* NONs are shorter and simpler than DINs needs to be addressed further. One part of the answer lies in the surrounding conversational context, i.e. in the discussion on topic which surrounds the WMN sequence. NONs typically occur in discussion threads where there is no ongoing dispute between the engaged participants. These threads deal with relatively neutral topics, and the participants are not on opposite sides of an underlying conflict. When instances of miscommunication occur under these circumstances, when one participant does not understand the situated meaning of a particular word used by another participant, it is probably not perceived as face-threatening to request meta-linguistic clarification. When one participant is trying to work out what another participant means by a certain word, the participant requesting clarification is probably also more prone to accepting the clarification provided in the response, when there is no underlying conflict. NONs are therefore to a high degree about eliciting meta-linguistic clarification from the participant who originally used the word, with the purpose of understanding what that *particular participant meant* by the word – not to engage in a general negotiation about word meaning. The primary purpose of engaging in WMNs under these circumstances is to get the discussion back on topic, which can be accomplished as soon as sufficient understanding for current purposes has been restored. This probably explains why NONs are dealt with more swiftly than instances originating in disagreement.

By contrast, when the negotiations originate in disagreement about word meaning, the participants are often already at opposite sides in the discussion on topic. Many of the threads which contain DINs deal with controversial topics, often concerning moral issues about what is considered right and wrong with regards to certain actions or behaviours. These topics in themselves typically divide the participants into two groups depending on their stance on topic, where typically one group is arguing *for* a certain position, and the other group arguing *against* it. Hence, the polarisation exists before the negotiation has even started. Ludlow even suggests that meta-linguistic disagreement is likely very common in moral disputes. “Is it feasible to think that all moral disputes [...] are metalinguistic? I believe the answer to this is yes. Many (perhaps all) moral disputes are fundamentally metalinguistic disputes.” (Ludlow, 2014, p. 62)

Under such circumstances, where the polarisation on topic exists prior to the word meaning negotiation, the key words used by the two opposite sides become very important as tools for gaining ground in the ongoing argumentation. This is reminiscent of what Danet referred to as “fitting of words to deeds” (Danet, 1980). In her study on courtroom interaction from a trial where a physician was charged with manslaughter for performing an abortion, Danet found that the defence lawyer continuously referred to the aborted foetus as “the foetus”, whereas the prosecutor referred to it as “the baby”. Clearly, each party refrained from using a shared vocabulary when referring to the aborted foetus since both parties strategically attempted to convey different impressions of the committed act to the jury. If the defence lawyer instead had passively adopted the referring term of the opposing side, the defence would likely have lost ground in the overall argumentation, since they then would have accepted that the act of aborting a foetus entails killing a baby.

Similar to the defence lawyer and the prosecutor in Danet’s study, participants in the DINs are often at opposing sides on the discussion on topic when a word meaning negotiation is initiated. For example, in the discussion whether or not it is acceptable to fool children into believing in Santa by actively not telling them the truth, the two trigger words ‘ljuga’ (lie) and ‘lura’ (trick) are negotiated, and the negotiations are carried out in parallel with the discussion on topic. The participants who are arguing *against* fooling children into believing in Santa opt to describe the action

using the two trigger words, since these words in themselves carry negative undertones characterising questionable or immoral behaviour. Had the participants managed to get away with characterising the action of fooling children as lying or tricking, they would likely have gained ground in the overall argumentation, since most people probably agree that lying to someone or tricking someone is wrong.

Similarly, in the discussion about piercing the ears of babies and young children, the participants who are arguing *against* ear piercings are opting to use words which characterise the action as 'abuse' (using two Swedish words, 'misshandel' and 'övergrepp'). Similar to the discussion about Santa, the words characterising the action as 'abuse' are used as tools for making arguments in the discussion on topic. If the participants arguing against ear piercings are allowed to describe these actions using various words for 'abuse' surely they have already won the discussion on topic, since everyone agrees that abuse against children is wrong. The participants defending piercing the ears of children must therefore strike against the chosen trigger words, and argue *against* the action being described by those two words; otherwise the discussion on topic is likely lost. These counter-arguments come in the shape of meta-linguistic objections protesting against characterising the current action using the trigger words.

Consistently, in the discussion about breastfeeding while consuming alcohol, the participants arguing *against* the woman's drinking behaviour opt to describe it using the trigger word 'super' (boozing), which in itself is a negatively loaded word characterising a distasteful drinking behaviour. The participants on the opposite side, supporting the woman's drinking in spite of the fact that she was breastfeeding at the time, must oppose the use of the trigger word to be able to form counter-arguments in the discussion on topic. It seems reasonable to assume that if everyone agrees that the behaviour can be called 'boozing', the discussion on topic has already concluded that the woman's drinking in fact was immoral and generally bad.

As a consequence, in these mentioned threads, the DINs concerning the meaning of the trigger words and the discussions on topic are highly intertwined with and dependent on each other. In these cases, the WMN sequences serve as tools in the overall discussion on topic. Due to the fact that the DINs are so profoundly integrated into the discussion on topic,

this type of WMN sequence can ordinarily not be concluded as swiftly or simply as in cases of non-understanding. Even though the same utterance construction (“What/How do you mean (by) X?”) can initiate WMN sequences of both kinds, the underlying reasons for entering into WMNs of the two kinds are so very different, which may explain why the two kinds are so different with regards to complexity, length and participation activity.

However, it is not always the case that the participants are already in a conflict with each other in the discussion on topic when a WMN sequence originating in disagreement is launched. In some DINs which take place in more neutral discussions, the participants do not realise until after the discussion has been going on for a while that they are using a key word to refer to very different things. This is the case in the WMN of ‘fullfet’ (full fat), ‘stalking’ (stalking) and both of the WMNs concerning ‘flirta’ (flirt1 and flirt2). In these discussions, in order for the participants to take a stance on topic, they must first work out what the trigger words mean in their respective context. For example, in order to be able to say whether or not a particular flirting behaviour is acceptable during different circumstances, the participants must first be in agreement about what it means to be flirting. Since the participants only share a limited initial common ground with respect to the meanings of words, they must first negotiate what the key words mean before they can make up their minds about whether or not a certain discussed behaviour is appropriate, for example towards a friend’s boyfriend (flirt2), or towards another married person (flirt1). In these DINs, the meaning negotiation does not serve as a tool for making arguments in a polarised discussion, but it constitutes a necessary part of and is integrated into the discussion on topic, since it needs to be worked out in order for the discussion on topic to continue.

From these observations, DINs can be grouped into three subtypes, depending on underlying cause and motivation. The first subtype is when the WMN occurs in a discussion thread where an underlying polarisation on topic pre-exists the negotiation sequence, i.e. when the WMN takes place in (and as part of) a polarised discussion on a more or less controversial topic. In this type of DIN, the trigger word typically carries a value judgement which in itself functions as a tool in the discussion on topic. This first subtype of DINs will here be called

Conflict DINs, since they occur as part of an ongoing polarised discussion where a conflict on topic pre-exists the WMN. 11 out of 22 DINs fall into this subtype, among them 'ljuga' (lie), 'lura' (trick), 'misshandel' (abuse1), 'övergrepp' (abuse2) and 'super' (boozing). The second subtype of DINs is found in sequences where a mismatch of meaning goes undetected for a long time in the discussion on topic. In this subtype of DIN, the participants realise after the discussion has been going on for quite some time that they are using a key word in the discussion in significantly different ways, and that there is a need to calibrate the local meaning of the trigger word in order for the discussion to continue smoothly. Here, this subtype of DINs is called Pseudo-agreement DIN, and seven DINs fall into this category, among them 'fullfet' (full fat), 'stalking' (stalking) and 'flirta' (flirt1 and flirt2). The third subtype of DINs occurs when the mismatch of meaning is apparent immediately, and this is pointed out in a meta-linguistic objection directly after the word has been used the first time. This third subtype of DINs is called Exposed Mismatch DIN, and four DINs in the sample are of this type. Table 20 displays the variations in cause and motivation found in the 22 DINs.

Table 20: Subtypes of DINs, categorised according to cause and motivation

	Polarisation on topic prior to WMN	Word choices used as arguments on topic	Mismatch of meaning, detected Early/Late or Non-existent (None)	Type of DIN
billigt	Yes	Yes	None	Conflict
giltig	Yes	Yes	None	Conflict
ljuga	Yes	Yes	None	Conflict
ljuger	Yes	Yes	None	Conflict
lura	Yes	Yes	None	Conflict
misshandel	Yes	Yes	None	Conflict
onaturligt	Yes	Yes	None	Conflict
onyttigt	Yes	Yes	None	Conflict
rymt	Yes	Yes	None	Conflict
super	Yes	Yes	None	Conflict
övergrepp	Yes	Yes	None	Conflict
firta (firt1)	No	No	Late	Pseudo-agreement
firta (firt2)	No	No	Late	Pseudo-agreement
fullfet	No	No	Late	Pseudo-agreement
homogen	No	No	Late	Pseudo-agreement
krog	Yes	No	Late	Pseudo-agreement
mobbing	No	No	Late	Pseudo-agreement
stalking	No	No	Late	Pseudo-agreement
förnekare	No	No	Early	Exposed Mismatch
handfallna	No	No	Early	Exposed Mismatch
jämställdhet	No	No	Early	Exposed Mismatch
småda	No	No	Early	Exposed Mismatch

Note that in most of the DINs which take place in polarised discussions, the trigger word is used as an argument in the discussion on topic. In one case, however, in the WMN of the word ‘krogen’ (dive), the trigger word is not used as an argument in the discussion on topic. In this particular WMN, there is rather an undetected mismatch of meaning between the participants as to what is meant by this word, and this mismatch is only discovered after the discussion on topic has been going on for a long time.

7.1.4 DIFFERENCES IN HOW WMNS ARE CONCLUDED

As already discussed in this chapter, NONs are concluded more swiftly than DINs. NONs tend to conclude as soon as the participants have cleared up the issue of insufficient understanding, and restored enough mutual understanding concerning the problematic word, so that the discussion on topic can continue. Even in the deviant cases, NONs tend to end up resolving the issue of non-understanding, although it may take a little longer in deviant cases when participants do not behave as expected and refrain from providing meta-linguistic clarification in the third turn. DINs, on the other hand, conclude in a number of different ways. Generally, there is not one specific post that distinguishes itself as “the last post” in a DIN sequence. Typically, in DINs, the meaning negotiation fizzles out and the discussion on topic takes over without there being any overt track shift (as is often found in reaction posts in NONs, where the negotiation is wrapped up and the discussion moves from Track 2b back to Track 1). However, even though DINs tend to fizzle out without reaching any explicit conclusion about word meaning, a negotiation sequence originating in disagreement can still accomplish something in the surrounding discussion.

In six of the 22 DINs, full agreement about word meaning is reached. In two of these DINs, the participant who first used the trigger word explicitly retracts the use of the word in the end of the negotiation. In the other four cases, the negotiation goes on until there are no more objections being put forward as to what the trigger word means in the current conversational context. In seven of the DINs, partial agreement about word meaning is reached. In these cases, the participants end up in agreement about certain aspects of meaning potential of the trigger word, but are still in disagreement about other aspects of meaning potential when the word meaning negotiation ends. In nine of the DINs, the positions remain locked throughout the negotiation, and the participants do not reach any agreement about word meaning. These nine DINs therefore end without resolving the issue of disagreement concerning word meaning. Interestingly, six out of these nine DINs are Conflict DINs. This means that a few of the 11 DINs categorised as Conflict DINs (in Section 7.1.3) actually end up in partial or full agreement about the meaning of

the trigger word. This suggests that word meaning negotiations can end up reaching consensus regarding word meaning even in discussions where a conflict on topic exists prior to the meaning negotiation.

7.1.5 PREFERENCE ORGANISATION

As discussed in Section 2.2.4, there seems to be a general preference for agreement between interlocutors in ordinary spoken conversation, which indicates that participants work together in conversations to accomplish successful communication rather than disalignment and dispute. Generally, if disagreement does occur in spoken conversation, it is weakened by various mitigating strategies that push the disagreeing component back into the utterance (Sacks, 1987). In the WMNs in the sample of this study, very little evidence is found to suggest that participants in computer-mediated discussions adopt similar mitigating strategies for weakening the clarification requests or the meta-linguistic objections in their written contributions.

Focusing on the NONs, where the second turn component of the T-I-R-(RR) structure is the one which delivers the possibly face-threatening clarification request questioning the meaning of the used trigger word, very few indicator posts in fact contain hedges or other mitigating strategies. In the DINs, assuming that the preference for agreement holds for written forum discussions, it would be expected that the posts delivering meta-linguistic objections would contain hedges or mitigating components since the objection is clearly signalling disagreement towards another participant. However, only 28 % of the meta-linguistic objections in the sample corpus contain hedges or other mitigating strategies. This may partly be explained by the fact that the participants in some of the DINs are already in a polarised dispute on topic when the WMN is launched (Conflict DINs). As discussed in Section 2.2.4, Kotthoff (1993) has shown that the preference organisation changes when conversations are re-framed as disputes or arguments. Once this happens, the expectation is no longer that participants strive for agreement, but that they instead hold their respective positions by being more explicit and including fewer reluctance markers and other hedges. This pattern would be expected in the Conflict DINs, but even in the discussions where there is

no ongoing dispute on topic (Pseudo-agreement DINs and Exposed Mismatch DINs), the participants delivering meta-linguistic objections only occasionally include hedges or mitigating strategies when signalling disagreement towards the word choices of other participants. Therefore, in this sample, there is little evidence of a general principle of preference for agreement in word meaning negotiation in online discussions. However, since the sample is small and not randomised, no general conclusion can be drawn, but it is interesting to note that hedging and other mitigating strategies appear to be rare occurrences, both in NONs and DINs in this study. As a consequence, no general preference for agreement has been found in this study.

However, another possible preference structure has been detected that concerns what is expected of responses to clarification requests. In the data sample, participants who direct a meta-linguistic clarification request at a particular identified addressee explicitly orient to the lack of clarification in later utterances, if the addressed interlocutor continues to post in the discussion thread but *without responding to* the clarification request. This suggests that once a meta-linguistic clarification request has been directed at an addressee, there is an expectation that this addressee will respond to the request in a certain way. Thus, the preferred response to a meta-linguistic clarification request is that the response will indeed contain the requested meta-linguistic clarification. If the addressee responds to the post containing the clarification request, but does *not* include a clarification as part of the response, this is explicitly remarked upon by the participant requesting clarification, and the issue is addressed as a communication problem in itself (see Section 4.4.5). Note that participants do not seem to orient to a general absence of responses to questions, based on the data sample of this study. This means that questions on topic regularly remain unanswered, when participants come and go in the discussion. When a participant who has been directed a question within a discussion disappears from the thread, the general absence of a response is not remarked upon by the participant asking the question. It is likely that participants engaged in online discussions are used to other participants coming and going, and therefore there is no general expectation that questions will always receive answers, in contrast to face-to-face communication. However, when an addressed participant in fact *does* return to a discussion, the

expectation appears to be that a clarification should be provided as part of the response, when the participant has been directly urged to provide clarification about the meaning of a trigger word.

7.2 SEMANTIC OPERATIONS IN NONS AND DINS

As discussed in the previous chapters, participants engaged in word meaning negotiation collaborate to establish situated meaning by producing dialogue acts associated with semantic operations which take words with meaning potentials combined with aspects of contexts as input and produce situated meaning as output. This section will discuss the various semantic operations identified in the participants' contributions in negotiation sequences, and highlight differences and similarities between the NONs and DINs. As presented in Section 3.4.3, the notion of a semantic operation is broadly defined to include all dialogue acts which contribute to the word meaning negotiation by combining aspects of the negotiated word's meaning potential with aspects of the discussed situation.

Many of the most commonly found semantic operations used to contribute in word meaning negotiation are found *both* in NONs and DINs. In NONs, there are regularities regarding where particular semantic operations are found in the turn components in the T-I-R-(RR) sequence. In DINs, no such regularities have been found. On the contrary, in DINs, none of the identified semantic operations seem to be tied to any particular given point in the negotiation sequence. Instead, throughout the entire sequence, participants seem to be moving freely between the various semantic operations.

As discussed in Section 4.5.3, it is typically the third turn component of the T-I-R-(RR) structure in NONs which contributes most to the meaning negotiation, since the response post generally provides the requested meta-linguistic clarification which conveys the speaker's take of the intended meaning of the trigger word. In this study, the provided clarification generally comes in the form of an *explicitification*, which introduces an explicit definitional component to the negotiated word. This suggests that when urged to clarify the situated meaning of an identified problematic word, the participant to whom the clarification request is directed typically interprets this as an invitation to explain the meaning of the word

by introducing a definitional component. Another possibility would have been to use the semantic operation of *exemplification*, which is a very common way of proposing meaning in word meaning negotiation originating in disagreement, but this is not a common practice of clarifying meaning in response posts in the NONs in the sample. Acts of exemplification do occur in NONs, but typically in indicator posts, as a way for participants to put forward a candidate understanding of the trigger word, and as part of an account explaining why the meta-linguistic request is issued in the indicator post, for example “Do you mean X as in Y1 or Y2 or ... Yn?”, as discussed in Section 4.5.2.

Another semantic operation commonly found both in NONs and DINs is *contrasting*, i.e. using another word to create a contrast between the trigger word and the contrasting word. Contrasting serves many purposes in the WMNs in this study. In cases of non-understanding, contrasting is typically performed in trigger posts, where the contrasting word typically is a word closely related to the trigger word. The contrast generally serves to highlight a difference between the two words. However, when a participant perceives that the two words are too closely related to each other for the contrast to appear clearly, this kind of “near-contrasting” can sometimes cause communicational problems. This occurs in both NONs and DINs, and in all instances this kind of miscommunication is overtly addressed by the participants who are involved in the WMN at that particular point in time. In the sample of NONs, examples were found in the WMN of ‘smutsig’ (dirty) and ‘näthat’ (online expressions of hate), and in the sample of DINs, there is one example found in the WMN of the trigger word ‘onyttigt’ (unhealthy). In one post, a participant (P1) uses two Swedish near synonyms when describing fast food from Mc Donald’s, namely both ‘onyttigt’ (below called unhealthy1) and ‘ohälsosamt’ (below called unhealthy2). This is remarked upon by another participant (P2), who clearly does not perceive a relevant contrast between the two contrasted words.

Excerpt 90

P1: Skälen till varför jag dissas familjemiddagar på
McDonalds kan väl sammanfattas med ocharmigt,
onyttigt, dyrt och ohälsosamt.

The reasons why I don't like family dinners at McDonalds can be summed up by saying uncharming, unhealthy1, expensive and unhealthy2.

P2: onyttigt: mja, skiter du i pomfritten så är det faktiskt inte så fruktansvärt farligt. [...] ohälsosamt: är inte det samma som onyttigt o nej det är inte särskilt ohälsosamt om det faktiskt bara är ett par tre ggr i månaden.

unhealthy1: well, if you skip the fries it is actually not so terribly bad. [...] unhealthy2: isn't that the same as unhealthy1 and no, it isn't especially unhealthy2 if it only happens twice or three times a month.

P1: Onyttigt och ohälsosamt är nog samma, det har du helt rätt i.

Unhealthy1 and unhealthy2 are probably the same, you are completely right about that.

Again, when a contrast between two used words is not perceived as clear or relevant enough due to the fact that the two contrasted words are perceived as too similar, this is overtly addressed as an issue of miscommunication in the discussion. This seems to support Eve Clark's proposed *principle of contrast*, which states that a difference in form marks a difference in meaning (E. Clark, 1993). The assumed difference in meaning appears to be absent when the two contrasted words appear to mean almost *exactly* the same thing. Consequently, when the contrast is lost, the participant orients to this issue as a trouble-source in the communication. The solution is to explicitly address the apparent redundancy in the communication, which is precisely what happens in both types of WMNs, in the negotiations of 'smutsigt' (dirty), 'näthat' (online expressions of hate) and 'onyttigt' (unhealthy).

Unlike NONs, acts of contrasting are not found to be tied to any particular point in the negotiation in DINs, but are continually used throughout the negotiation sequence. In DINs, acts of contrasting are generally used for delimitation purposes, or for establishing a local opposite in the discussion, operating as a backdrop against which to position the trigger word.

Some dialogue acts are found in DINs which are not found in NONs. For example, passive endorsements and meta-linguistic endorsements are only found in DINs. Perhaps this is expected, since the typical non-understanding sequence is brief, and focused around restoring sufficient mutual understanding of the trigger word so that the discussion on topic can continue. The typical NON sequence is thus not inviting other participants to take a stance for or against the trigger word, which is the case in instances of disagreement where the communication typically takes the form of a dyadic interchange between two opposing sides, one supporting the continuous use of the trigger word, and one side arguing against it.

The lists below summarise the semantic operations found in the NONs and DINs, in order of frequency (from the most commonly found semantic operation to the least).

NONs:

- Meta-linguistic clarification request
- Explicification
- Exemplification
- Contrasting
- Meta-linguistic objection (deviant cases)

DINs:

- Contrasting
- Meta-linguistic objection
- Passive endorsement
- Exemplification
- Explicification
- Meta-linguistic clarification request
- Meta-linguistic endorsement

In their study of the 'x-and x' construction, Norén and Linell (2007) identify several semantic operations performed by the 'x-and-x' construction that can be used in situated interaction to combine aspects of meaning potentials with aspects of the conversational context when establishing situated meaning. As discussed in Section 2.1.6, the operations identified by Norén and Linell include problematisation, foregrounding, confirma-

tion, cancellation (denial), and contrasting. Compared to the operations identified in the 'x-and-x' study, many of the operations identified by Norén and Linell are also found in this study, although they have been portrayed in a different way, and have been given names which better suit this particular study.

Contrasting is identified as a semantic operation both in this study and by Norén and Linell. In fact, the 'x-and-x' construction itself can function precisely to contrast two aspects of meaning potential which are both associated with the word x. The contrast also functions to problematise or relativise the mentioned aspects of meaning potential by putting them against each other, as for example the aspect of meaning potential "short time of existence" relative to the aspect "new to the owner" with regards to the example of "ny-och-ny" discussed in Section 5.6.6. Problematization (relativisation) is also found in this study, in the various functions of contrasting discussed in Section 5.6.4, although these acts have not been labelled as 'problematization'. For example, contrasting used for delimitation purposes by highlighting differences in aspects of meaning potential serves a purpose of problematization or relativisation.

Operations of foregrounding (and backgrounding) have not been explicitly coded in this study, but these operations apply in acts of explicification, as participants here precisely foreground aspects of the conversational context (specific explicification) or aspects of the word's meaning potential (generic explicification) when introducing a definitional component of the negotiated word is introduced.

Operations similar to confirmation and cancellation are in this study found in acts of endorsement and meta-linguistic objection. However, there are differences in the ways these operations function in the two studies. In this study, endorsements and meta-linguistic objections always target the viewpoint expressed by another participant, but in the study by Norén and Linell confirmation and cancellation often function within an individual's own utterance as an individual may first use the word x and then confirm or deny a certain aspect of meaning potential of the word x by employing the 'x-and-x' construction.

7.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS IN RELATION TO SEMANTIC THEORY

7.3.1 DIALOGICAL THEORY OF MEANING

The findings of this study on word meaning negotiation in online discussion forum communication appear to support the dialogical theory of meaning. As described in Section 2.1, the dialogical theory on word meaning distinguishes between meaning potentials, which are semantic properties associated with linguistic resources that have been abstracted away from repeated use in interaction over time, and situated meanings which are interactionally accomplished in actual, situated communication. Dialogical theory assumes that participants in communication collaborate by applying specific operations using both aspects of meaning potential and aspects of context as input, and producing situated meaning as output. This study has illustrated using empirical evidence how these processes are at work, in instances where participants openly negotiate the situated meanings of particular words, in cases of non-understanding and disagreement about word meaning. The findings support the notion that there are in fact specific operations at work, which combine semantic properties associated with the words themselves and aspects of the surrounding conversational context. This study has shown that the participants move between drawing upon perceived aspects of meaning potential and relevant aspects of contexts when negotiating the situated meaning of a particular word in a specific conversational context.

By applying the operation of explicification, i.e. introducing a definitional component to the negotiated word, participants are able to illuminate what they perceive to be within the meaning potential of the trigger word. The semantic operation of explicification can foreground semantic properties associated with the word itself (generic explicification), which likely have been abstracted away from previous usages of the word experienced by the participants. Acts of explicification can also foreground aspects of the discussed situation (specific explicification), which means that the participant applying this particular semantic operation is essentially using something very specific from the situation under discussion

and relating it to the meaning potential of the trigger word. In both generic and specific explicifications, the participant is contributing something to the negotiation about what the meaning potential of the trigger word can encompass, but from different perspectives. Also in operations such as exemplification and contrasting, participants are able to move between particular aspects of the context and aspects of meaning potential when negotiating what the situated meaning of a particular word should be in the situated interaction.

The theory of meaning potentials and situated meanings also highlights that meaning potentials of words are open and dynamic, and can change over time depending on how language users use them in different situations over longer periods of time (see Section 2.1.1). The findings of this study clearly support the idea that the meaning potentials of lexical entities are open and up for negotiation. Although, the meaning potentials of words do not seem to be *endlessly* open. The findings of this study indicate that there seem to be boundaries of what a word can mean, and aspects beyond these boundaries fall outside the scope of the meaning potential of that word.

Furthermore, certain aspects of meaning potential appear to be so central that they are never negotiated at all. It is interesting to note that some expected aspects of meaning potential of a particular negotiated trigger word are in fact never touched upon in the negotiation. Instead, they seem to be silently assumed to be shared between the participants. Perhaps these aspects constitute the innermost core aspects of the trigger words, since they are tacitly and intersubjectively assumed to be shared in the communication. This would be in line with Rommetveit's ideas about communication and intersubjectivity. As discussed in Section 2.1.4, Rommetveit claims that there needs to be at least an assumed minimal intersubjective foundation to build on for any interaction to be successful. Rommetveit suggests that in order to successfully interpret any utterances in communication, the participants need to acknowledge what is shared between them, since this common ground constitutes the intersubjective foundation on which new meaning can be built. Rommetveit suggests that this basic intersubjectivity between participants "in some sense has to be taken for granted, in order to be achieved" (Rommetveit, 1974, p. 106). In this study, it seems that the participants are addressing *some* aspects of

meaning potential that presumably are perceived as possible to problematise and negotiate, but that other aspects are not touched upon at all, but are in fact left completely out of the negotiation, perhaps assumed to be shared between all participants. For example, in the negotiation of what it means to be ‘boozing’, the participants are explicitly negotiating aspects of meaning potential of the word which have to do with the amount of alcohol consumed, the speed of the drinking activity, and the intention of the person doing the drinking. There is no mention whatsoever about the aspect of meaning potential which concerns what type of activity ‘boozing’ refers to, i.e. that it has to do with drinking and not guarding sheep or going swimming. This fundamental aspect of meaning potential is most likely silently assumed to be shared by all participants, which perhaps serves as the minimal intersubjective foundation on which the continued negotiation of the word’s other aspects of meaning potential can build. They at least need to agree on this aspect to be able to negotiate about the other aspects of meaning potential.

7.3.2 REIFICATION: MEANINGS AS SPACES

The findings of this study indicate that the meaning potentials of words in practice are not endlessly open. Based on the empirical findings of this study, words cannot mean *anything*. On the contrary, there seem to be limits as to what a word can mean. These limits are regularly mentioned by the participants engaged in word meaning negotiation. Participants explicitly ask each other about perceived boundaries of negotiated trigger words, using phrases such as ‘What counts as X?’, ‘Where do you draw the line of X?’. They also use other, contrasting words to indicate when a boundary appears to have been crossed and to show that they perceive that the limits of the meaning potential have been reached, and that another word is more appropriate to use when referring to the described circumstances.

The ways of positioning words against each other through acts of contrasting can be seen as a kind of *reification practice* amongst participants engaged in word meaning negotiation. To make abstract semantic properties more concrete and turn them into more substantial entities, participants engaged in word meaning negotiation seem to develop various practices, in order to be able to address and negotiate what word meanings

really are. Consequently, the development of these practices can be seen as a kind of *reification* of word meaning.

In many of the DINs, the reification of word meaning appears to take the form of a spatial conceptualisation. Several participants approach the notion of word meaning from a focal point which conceptualises meaning as a kind of space with boundaries against the meaning potentials of other, related words. Positioning the negotiated trigger word against the boundaries of the space is an important practice in negotiation process. As a result, it is relevant not only to negotiate what is *inside* the space, but also where the *boundaries* to other nearly related words should be drawn. On occasion, participants also address what lies *outside* of the space, i.e. what falls outside the scope of the meaning potential of a particular word.

In the data sample, there is ample evidence of reification using the spatial conceptualisation of word meaning, especially in DINs. Participants frequently address and negotiate word meanings using the space representation as a point of departure. Comments depicting word meanings as spaces with boundaries are found in many instances in the sample corpus of DINs, and include the following examples, from the WMN of the word 'flirta' (flirt1). In Excerpt 91, bold font is used to highlight the conceptualisation of meanings as spaces.

Excerpt 91

P #7: **Gränsen mellan** att flirta och att vara social kan vara hårfin. Och saknar man omdöme, mognad och självinsikt t.ex. så kan man **gå över gränsen.**

*The line between flirting and being social can be very thin. And if you lack judgement and maturity and self-awareness for example you may **cross that line.***

P #11: detta är ren o skär uppvaktning/raggning/förklarande av en förälskelse! Så här flirtar man inte...inte jag i alla fall. Det är ju **långt långt från** flirteri i min värld.

*this is utter and pure courtship/picking up someone/declaration of infatuation! This is not how you flirt... at least not how I flirt. This is clearly **way way beyond** flirting in my world.*

P #34: Det du skriver nu handlar ju om något helt annat än en flirt. Det du beskriver ovan är en gift person som stöter på en annan gift person på ett sätt som är ganska uppenbart. Det **har passerat gränsen** för flirt för länge sedan.

*What you are writing about now is about something completely different from a flirt. What you are describing is a married person coming on to another married person in a quite obvious way. That has **crossed the boundary** of flirting a long time ago.*

In all of the examples in Excerpt 91, the boundaries of the meaning potentials of the trigger words are highlighted. In the first post, the lower boundary is in focus, as one participant is stating that there is a *fine line* between (innocent) flirting behaviour and just being social. In the last two posts, participants are stating that the upper border has been crossed, since the (now) discussed behaviour is *way beyond* the boundary of the meaning potential of the trigger word.

Similarly, in the negotiations of ‘misshandel’ (abuse1) and ‘övergrepp’ (abuse2), the spatial conceptualisation is used as a focal point in the word meaning negotiation.

Excerpt 92

P #161: Var **går gränsen**? Är det de 60 sekundernas smärta vid piercingen som gör det till ett övergrepp?

*Where do you **draw the line**? Is it the 60 second of pain that makes piercing abuse?*

P #924: Jag undrar vart **gränsen** för "riktig" misshandel går? Jag tycker det är när man orsakar smärta för någon annan.

*I wonder where **the line** for "real" abuse is drawn? I think it is when you inflict pain upon someone.*

P #979: måste säga att ta håll i öronen inte riktigt passar **inom** misshandel (men **icke långt ifrån...**) däremot en kränkning!
*have to say that ear piercing does not fully fit **within** abuse (but **not far from** it...) but it is a violation!*

P#1721: Vart går **din gräns**? **Min gräns** kanske går vid att man misshandlar sina barn för att de ska vara "fina".
*Where do you **draw the line**? Maybe I **draw the line** at when you abuse your children to make them look "nice".³⁶*

P#2008: det borde falla **inom** barnmisshandel redan när ingreppet görs [...]
*it should fall **within** child abuse already at the time of the procedure [...]*

In all of the examples in Excerpt 92, either the boundaries of the meaning potential of the trigger word or the space itself is in focus. Participants explicitly mention and negotiate *lines* and *boundaries* ("gränser") of the trigger word's meaning potential, and they use the word *within* to portray that they are representing the notion of word meaning as a space enclosed by some kind of borders.

7.3.3 FORMAL SEMANTICS

As discussed in Chapter 2, formalistic approaches to language tend to view language primarily as a system or structure. Within formal semantics, it is generally assumed that this structure contains abstract and context-independent meanings which can be described as functions from contexts to contents, where each use determines a specific content (Kaplan, 1979). This view rests on an assumption that abstract meanings are static,

³⁶ A more direct translation of this example may read: "Where does your limit go? My limit perhaps goes when you abuse your children to make them look "nice"."

and therefore not affected by language use in specific situations (with the exception of indexicals which are recognised as context-sensitive and thus only have content in or with respect to contexts). The received view in formal semantics appears to stand in opposition with the dialogical perspective on language and communication, where the notion of *potentiality* is seen as a key concept. In the dialogical view, words are viewed as having meaning potentials and are in this way seen as resources which can prompt situated interpretations of meaning in combination with contextual dimensions (Linell, 2009, p. 266). However, in recent dialogue research, attempts have been made to combine the dialogical perspective of meaning with formalisation. Larsson and Cooper (2009) acknowledge that, as a result of its static view of meaning, traditional formal semantics is ill-equipped to deal with dialogical properties semantic coordination (including WMN). Instead, Larsson and Cooper propose a formalisation model cast in TTR (Type Theory with Records) (Cooper, 2012) which provides structured meaning representations order to allow for modification and interactive and incremental specification of contextual meanings, and which offers a framework for describing dialogue moves and resulting updates to linguistic resources. Taking such steps towards formalisation may eventually enable implementation of semantic coordination in development of dialogue systems; this will be discussed briefly in Section 7.6.

7.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS IN RELATION TO METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this study has utilised an inductive, qualitative approach of first identifying and delimiting the interactional phenomenon of word meaning negotiation, and then building an example collection containing multiple instances of the phenomenon. Each instance in the example collection has then been analysed in detail, especially focusing on the dialogical interaction between participants, i.e. how participants collaborate and relate to the utterances of others when negotiating word meaning. During the analyses, patterns and regularities have been discovered, and these have been described in this thesis. Both the general method of investigation, i.e. moving back and forth between the detailed examination of individual instances and a more synoptic view of

the entire example collection's emerging patterns and regularities, and the focus of investigation, i.e. how turns in interaction are related and form sequences with regards to a particular interactional phenomenon, can be placed within the CA tradition (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). The next section will discuss some of the methodological choices and considerations in this study, in relation to the findings from the analyses.

7.4.1 GATHERING THE DATA

In this study, the example collection has been gathered using particular search expressions assumed to play a central part in the interactional phenomenon of interest. Five variants of the Swedish utterance construction “What/How do you mean (by) X?” have been used in searches on three different Swedish online discussion forums, resulting in a sample corpus which has been divided into two main types of WMNs depending on the origin and cause of the negotiation. In instances where the negotiation originates in non-understanding between participants with regards to the situated meaning of a particular word, the utterance constructions are generally used as meta-linguistic clarification requests, used to elicit clarification from the participant who first used the problematic word. In NONs, the various variants of the utterance construction have been found to play a very central role in the negotiation sequence as they are used as an indication of the communication problem, as a locator of the trouble-source, and as the focal point of the unfolding negotiation of word meaning. By contrast, in DINs, the variants of the utterance construction have been found to play a less central role in the negotiations. Since the variants have been used in the searches to gather the sample, one of the utterance constructions is always present in the DIN sequences,³⁷ but in DINs it generally does not operate as the main catalyst of the negotiation. Instead, in negotiation sequences originating in disagreement, typically other utterance constructions serve as the starting point of the word meaning negotiation, namely different variants of meta-linguistic objection. This suggests that the search expressions used in this study

³⁷ An exception is the five DINs which were not gathered during the search, but manually added to the sample corpus of DINs.

perhaps are not the most efficient to use, if the objective is to retrieve word meaning sequences originating in disagreement. Instead, it is likely that searching for typical meta-linguistic objections, for example variants on the form “That is not X!”, would produce more sequences of word meaning negotiation originating in disagreement. However, as discussed in Section 3.1.5, the aim of this study has not been to produce a randomised or representative sample collection of the phenomenon. Instead, this work should be seen as exploratory and foundational, as a first step toward investigating how dialogue partners collaborate and interact with each other when engaged in negotiation of word meaning.

7.4.2 MIXING METHODS

According to Hutchby and Wooffitt, the conversation analytical approach of moving between the particular and the general entails studying singular cases in great detail with the objective of developing rigorous, rich descriptions of analytic accounts of the investigated phenomenon (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008, p. 92). In this study, acts of contributing to a WMN sequence have been identified and described in great detail, for example the various semantic operations such as explicitification, exemplification, contrasting and so on. When categorising utterances as containing one or several of the semantic operations, a method has been developed inspired by dialogue annotation schemes (such as DAMSL), where decision trees are used to guide the analyst in making decisions with regards to classifying utterances as instances of the various categories. This way of formalising the research method, and categorising utterances as containing a particular semantic operation, is to some degree moving away from the original CA method. As discussed in Sections 3.1.3 and 3.1.5, CA studies do not typically involve annotation of utterances using a particular annotation scheme. However, this step towards formalisation does not stand in opposition of the dialogical approach adopted in this thesis. For example, the application of the annotation scheme does not isolate individual utterances, but instead continuously considers the surrounding context and takes into consideration how turns are related to each other within the sequence, when distinguishing between categories. Also, the categorisation step of the research method comes in at a later stage of the

analytical process. In all of the early steps of the analysis, the dialogical interaction and sequentiality of the communication are driving the analytical process, not any preconceived notion based on pre-existing categories. In the early stages of the analysis of word meaning negotiation, it is how an utterance is interpreted in the next relevant turn that determines if a meta-linguistic shift takes place. The approach of categorising the various semantic operations according to a particular annotation scheme is introduced as a tool for capturing and describing precisely how participants go about negotiating the situated meaning of a particular trigger word. The annotation categories themselves have been inductively developed from the data, as part of the data-driven qualitative approach. The expectation from the outset has never been to find any of the particular semantic operations identified in this thesis. Instead, they emerged as more general patterns from the analysis of the individual cases, and were later formulated in an attempt to develop rigorous, detailed descriptions of the general investigated phenomenon.

As discussed in Section 3.1.5, accounting for the number of times a particular semantic operation has been found in the data sample should be seen as an attempt to describe the characteristics of the example collection, not to represent any generalisable conclusions about the phenomenon at large. For example, in this particular study, acts of exemplification turned out to be more common than acts of explicification in DINs, but this should not be interpreted as a universal conclusion regarding the general phenomenon of word meaning negotiation. In this thesis, frequency counts and other statistical measures have been presented with the purpose of outlining how common various findings are in relation to each other with regards to this particular data sample. However, in future research where the aim may be to draw general conclusions about the phenomenon at large, adaptations of the search method need to be made, in order to gather a sample corpus which is a representative sample of the entire population (see Section 7.6).

7.5 CONCLUDING WORDS

As shown in this thesis, word meanings are regularly negotiated in situated interaction in online forum discussions. The negotiations of word meaning generally function either to repair instances of insufficient understanding between the participants, or to display overt disagreement towards the perceived inappropriateness of the use of a word in a particular conversational setting. This thesis has also shown that there appear to be routine ways in which participants negotiate the meanings of words when they engage in online discussions. These negotiation patterns and practices have been described, especially focusing on how aspects of meaning potential associated with the negotiated words interact with aspects of the conversational context.

Although word meaning negotiation occurs in discussion forum communication, the primary objective of the participants taking part in this form of communication is clearly not to negotiate word meanings. The participants engage in forum discussions primarily to discuss various topics of interest. On occasion, however, there is a need to track-shift and negotiate word meanings in order to be able to make progress in the discussion on topic. In this thesis, such sequences have been viewed as instances of so called miscommunication events (MEs) (Linell, 1995). These interaction sequences enable us to study of what otherwise tends to be silently assumed to be shared, i.e. how the situated meaning of words is established in communication. The MEs drive the participants towards restoring the communication on topic, which entails a track-shift and moving the focus of the discussion to being on language instead of being on topic.

By studying the negotiation process as it unfolds, we can learn about the words which are made the focus of the negotiation, and about their meaning potentials. A reason for studying word meaning negotiation is therefore not only to learn about this interactional phenomenon in itself, but also to learn about how meaning is established in actual interaction and to continue developing the dialogical theory of meaning. In the negotiation process, aspects of the perceived meaning potential of a particular trigger word is continually drawn upon by the participants who take part in the negotiation. Consequently, although the participants are negotiat-

ing with the primary purpose of establishing situated meaning, we can still learn about the meaning potentials of words from the participants' dialogue acts in the negotiation process, since these semantic properties surface and become visible in the negotiation. In this way, the negotiation process makes it possible to study how people perceive that words can mean different things, and how they perceive that words have various semantic affordances which related to actual contexts can be utilised in different ways. As a result, even though the main purpose of the participants engaging in online forum communication is not to discuss what words can mean, there are things to be learned from their negotiations of word meaning.

7.6 FUTURE WORK

The work presented in this thesis shows how participants engaged in online discussions negotiate the meanings of the words they use in communication. However, since this study is one of the first studying the phenomenon of word meaning negotiation, there are several issues and questions left unaddressed in this thesis. This section will therefore outline some possible extensions and applications of the work in this thesis.

This study has been based on a relatively low number of discussion sequences, and the method used to gather the sample corpus has not aimed at producing a representative sample of the entire population of possible word meaning negotiation sequences. Therefore, in future research, if the aim is to draw general conclusion about the phenomenon at large, the methods need to be adapted, both with regards to how the sample corpus is gathered and how the various semantic operations used in the negotiations are classified. Better sampling would be possible if more of the utterance constructions identified as initiators of word meaning negotiation sequences in this study were used as search expressions. For example, this study has shown that word meaning negotiation originating in disagreement typically is launched by various meta-linguistic objections; generally on the form "That is not X!". This utterance construction, and several others identified in this study, may be included as search expressions for producing a more representative sample in future research. Also, the use of a more refined search engine than Google's general search would

further help improve the sampling method. For example, if scraping of data is performed on the selected online forums, which would make the discussions available in simple text files, the search engine SCoRE (Purver, 2001) may be used to perform the searches producing the sample corpus. The use of SCoRE would enable inclusion of the search expression “X?”, another utterance construction believed to function as a possible catalyst for word meaning negotiation. Adaptations to the method of classifying the semantic operations used in the negotiation process could also be made as part of future research. The annotation scheme produced in this study may be put to the test by allowing multiple annotators to annotate the utterances within the negotiation sequences, and then comparing the annotators’ results with each other by calculating inter-rater reliability, measuring the degree of agreement between the annotators. The annotation scheme may then be revised, and depending on the results of the reliability tests, categories may be collapsed or modified if they cannot be reliably distinguished by the annotators.

A possible extension of this work involves formalisation of the dialogue acts associated with the semantic operations identified in this study. The purpose of a formalisation would be to make the theory of how word meanings are negotiated in naturally-occurring interaction more precise, and to enable implementation of support for word meaning negotiation in dialogue systems, building on the work by Larsson (2008). As shown in this study, words and associated meaning potentials are dynamic and changeable in interaction between humans, which presents a problem for implementation in spoken dialogue systems. Previous research on human-computer interaction has identified this challenge as the vocabulary problem in spoken dialogue systems (Brennan, 1996). Implementing support for enabling dialogue systems to coordinate with the language users, by allowing them to negotiate the meanings of words, would clearly be very useful in applications of spoken dialogue systems.

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