THE IMPLICIT INTERPERSONAL MEANING OF LINGUISTIC ITEMS

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ABSTRACT

The meaning of linguistic items may include an interpersonal or evaluative component which derives from its typical use. This paper supports the view that words cannot be defined only in terms of denotation, since that would imply neglecting the interpersonal function of language. The phraseology of an item (i.e. its typical lexico-syntactic environment) may confer an implicit meaning to this item. Additionally, the typical discourse function of an item also contributes to its meaning. This paper explores the concept of implicit meaning and looks at different types of implications and presuppositions that an item may convey.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a means to describe and construct experience but also a means to express attitude and evaluation and to establish and maintain social relations. This view of language as a multifunctional system is basic to understand that utterances express simultaneously propositional information and the addresser's attitude towards the information (Stubbs, 1996: 197). Although this multifunctional perspective of language has been accepted for years and has been the structuring framework of current and influential linguistic theories (e.g. Halliday's functional theory),[1] there are areas of linguistics where only the conceptual or ideational component seems to be taken into account. This is the case in the description of the meaning of words. The traditional accounts of the meaning of words have made a distinction between content and form words and have described content words in terms of their conceptual componet, regarding lexis as only being responsible for the information content of discourse. The study

of meaning has focused on what has been called referential, cognitive, denotative or informative meaning, neglecting componets of meaning that are referred to as emotive or attitudinal. Lyons (1981: 235-6) regards "subjectivity of utterance" as a basic notion to explain the structure of language and regrets that work in semantids and pragmatics has not given enough prominence to the concepts of modality and subjectivity.

Several researchers consider that a central topic for linguistics is the description of the markers of the speakers' communicative intentions and point of view encoded in utterances (Stubbs, 1996; Fraser, 1997). Stubbs (1996: 202) regards the expression of the speaker's attitudes as pervasive in language and proposes a modal grammar of English, "organized in such a way as to reflect the communicative functions of language" (Stubbs, 1996: 226), which describes these markers of the speaker's/writer's attitude. Fairclough (1989: 112) proposes that to undertand a text we should take into account the experiential, relational and expressive value both of grammar and words. Although the concept of modality has been mostly associated with grammar (and more specifically with modal verbs), lexical items can also be used to express attitude and to imply negative or positive evaluation. Similarly, Stubbs (1996: 196) observes that the linguistic features which express point of view occur at different levels of language, including individual lexical items. The meaning of many words includes a modal, attitudinal or evaluative function. Hanks (1996: 97) also points out that presupposition and implication are important features of word meaning.

Items such as *unfortunately, probably, I regret, auntie* or *pussy* convey interpersonal, pragmatic meaning. These are explicitly evaluative words or explicit markers of pragmatic force, where the evaluative or pragmatic meaning is considered as part of the meaning of the word. For instance, in the case of *auntie* or *pussy* the pragmatic meaning is encoded in the morphological ending *-y (-ie)* (Stubbs, 1996: 206). However, the expression of attitude is not restricted to these items, explicitly evaluative. Krzeszowski (1990) claims that lexical items should not only be described within truth-conditional semantics but also within evaluative semantics, on an axiological (good-bad) scale. Hanks (1996: 89) remarks that although this statement is too strong, the description of the meaning of words should not only be based on the polarity true-false, but also on other polarities, such as good-bad. For instance, knowing the meaning of the word *incite* implies knowing that you incite people to an action that is bad, although this is not a necessary condition of *incite*. The implication that you incite people to do negative things derives from the typical use of *incite*.

This paper is concerned with the interpersonal and evaluative implicit component of the meaning of linguistic items.[2] In the remaining of the paper we will first present a cursory overview of the principles of a contextual theory of meaning, necessary to account for implicit meaning. Then, we will discuss the concept of implicit meaning; and, finally, we will exemplify this concept by examining the implicit meaning of several items.

2. TYPICAL USE AND WORD MEANING: A CONTEXTUAL THEORY OF MEANING

The meaning of words depends on two types of relations with other words: paradigmatic, i.e. relations between different words which can occur in the same place in the text, and syntagmatic, i.e. relations between words that occur together in discourse.

Semanticists have been more interested in the paradigmatic aspects of lexis, in meaning as a result of the internal relationships between the elements of the system. This interest is reflected in such approaches to meaning as field theory, sense relations and componential analysis. The syntagmatic approach to lexis was initiated by J.R. Firth (1935, 1957), who gave prominence to the term "collocation." He states that words and single sentences cannot be examined without taking into account their specific environment, since they do not have meaning in and by themselves: meaning is always contextual. Firth claimed that an important component of the meaning of a word is the items with which it habitually co-occurs (i.e. its collocates) (Firth, 1935: 37). "Meaning by collocation" is just one of the possible meanings of a linguistic expression: collocational meaning is "an abstraction at the syntagmatic level and not directly concerned with the conceptual or idea approach to the meaning of words" (Firth, 1957). The importance of collocational meaning is summarised in his utterance "you shall know a word by the company it keeps" (Firth, 1957). Corpus-based research has revealed that certain items co-occur more often than their respective frequencies would predict. The words that co-occur habitually with an item and the lexico-syntactic patterns in which it participates provide information about the meaning and use of that item.

This leads to a view of meaning as closely related to and dependent on use. Hanks (1996) argues that the semantics of words is determined by the syntactic and collocational environment in which the word participates regularly and proposes that investigating the "behavioural profiles of normal usage" of a word or utterance will provide evidence about its meaning. As an example he presents the following behavioural profile of *incite* (Hanks, 1996: 87):

One pattern with three variations:

1.1. [PERSON OR SOMETHING] incites [PERSON] to-INF [DO [BAD]]
1.2. [PERSON OR SOMETHING] incites [PERSON] to-PREP [ACTION or ATTITUDE [BAD]]
1.1. [PERSON OR SOMETHING] incites [ACTION or ATTITUDE [BAD]]

Figure 1. Hanks' account of the behavioural profile of "incite" (extracts)

The behavioural profile includes the lexical items which can occur in each set. For instance, the behavioural profile of *incite* includes the information that the lexical items in the set [DO [BAD]] which occur in this context are, among others: *rebel, revolt, go on, strike, assassinate, commit* [CRIME], *go shoplifting*, [VP] *illegally, breach* [NP]; and those in the set [ACTION [BAD]] include: *riot, arson, debauchery, discord, dissension, denunciation, hatred, crime, lewdness, murder, trouble, unrest, violence* (Hanks, 1996: 87).

3. IMPLICIT MEANING

Channell (1994: 24) uses the word "meaning" as a broad term which refers to "the propositions which a hearer can reasonably derive, taking account of contextual and background knowledge, from the utterances of a given sentence on a particular

occasion." It encompasses, therefore, concepts such as *propositional content, entailments,* and *implicatures*. Channell considers that "semantics+ pragmatics= meaning." Although she points out that the boundary between pragmatics and semantics in the analysis of meaning is unclear, she regards semantics as concerned with unchanging and stable aspects of the meaning of a particular string or word sense, while pragmatics is concerned with those aspects of meaning which may change across contexts (*ibid.*: 29). This view of meaning includes what McCarthy (1988: 181) calls "meaning" (i.e. abstract notion of meaning or meaning in the language system, related to semantics) and the "value" of the item in discourse (i.e. meaning in context, related to pragmatics). We share this view of meaning and consider that the assumptions or implications conveyed by a linguistic item are also part of its meaning.

Implicit meaning is the interpersonal or pragmatic component of the meaning of linguistic items that is not inherent to them, but has been conferred by typical use. For instance, Sinclair (1991) has shown that the word *happen,* which seems to be neutral, tends to co-occur with words which refer to unpleasant events (e.g. *accidents, tragedies*), which confers a negative meaning to the word. Another revealing example is provided by Hunston (1995: 139), who shows that *acknowledge, insist, claim* and *argue* imply "some kind of disagreement between the attributor and the writer who is quoted or paraphrased," although "none of these words appears to have this meaning in itself." This is the reason why she calls it implicit meaning. An interesting approach where implicit meaning is taken into account is that of Wierzbicka (1987), who in her dictionary of *speech act verbs* describes these verbs in terms of the implications and presuppositions they convey. Drawing on Wierzbicka, Hanks (1996: 85) proposes that "a list of presuppositions and implications would be at least as interesting as a list of conventional definitions."

The concept of implicit meaning is not a new one. It underlies the traditional distinction between denotation and connotation, reflected in several works about meaning. Zipf (1932) distinguishes between primary meaning or denotation and secondary meanings, metaphors or connotations. Ogden and Richards (1927) use terms such as "referent," "intention," "value" and "emotion" to explain meaning. They study the referential function of words and the emotive function, which depends on context and situation. Garza-Cuarón (1991: 205-240) discusses some oppositions, used in linguistics, semiotics and literary studies, which are related to the concepts of denotation and connotation. Some of them are specially relevant to our study because they characterise connotation in a way that also applies to implicit meaning: primary or only meaning *versus* secondary, added, or cluster meanings; cognitive meaning, with a referential function, *versus* appelative, emotive or aesthetic meaning; fixed meaning *versus* variable meaning and contextual meaning, concerned with larger units than the word; meaning within a synchronic view *versus* meaning within a diachronic view.

Although scholars have always accepted that there is something else in the meaning of words, when defining a word the concern has been mainly with denotation, since connotation seems to be more difficult to grasp and systematise. Fortunately, this problem has been solved by the use of large corpora and computer-based techniques. Researchers interested in implicit meaning (Louw, 1993; Hunston, 1995; Stubbs, 1996) have rightly observed that this concept can only be examined from a corpus-based perspective, since it is necessary to look at a considerable number of

occurrences of a word in order to discover whether its collocates share any semantic feature and in order to establish a reliable correlation between co-text and meaning.

A semantic notion that the analysis of meaning in context with computer-based techniques has brought to the foreground is the *semantic prosody* of words. Following Firth, Sinclair (1987, 1991) uses the term "semantic prosody" to refer to the connotations that a word has owing to the fact that it co-occurs typically with a set of words that share a semantic feature. A clear example of a word with a negative semantic prosody is *happen*. Similarly *set in, cause*, or *bent on* have themselves negative connotations as a result of their habitual co-occurrence with negative words, e.g. *cause accidents/ trouble/ damage; decay/ infection/ malaise/ despair set in* (Sinclair, 1991; Louw, 1993; Stubbs, 1995b).[3] Although there seems to be a predominance of words with negative prosody, there are also words with a pleasant or positive prosody, such as *provide* (Stubbs, 1995b). There are also words with mixed or incomplete prosody (Louw, 1993; Stubbs, 1995a), such as *create*. The most significant collocates of *create* include negative, neutral and positive words (e.g. *problems, conditions, opportunities)* (Stubbs, 1995a: 44).

Hunston (1995: 137) suggests that semantic prosody may be just a case of a larger phenomenon based on the principle "that typical use confers implicit meaning and that that meaning, if strong enough, may be exploited." Hunston (1995) makes two important points that should be taken into account in any analysis of implicit meaning. First, the identification of implicit meaning may require looking at a large co-text, not only to the lexical items that co-occur typically within a short span (i.e. a specified number of words on either side of each occurrence), as is the case with semantic prosodies. Secondly, the implicit meaning of some words depends on the discourse context and discourse function, not only on their collocates.

The implicit meaning of an item may have different degrees of strength. There are items with a strong implicit meaning (e.g. *cause* has a strong negative prosody, because it always collocates with negative items, and *acknowledge* always implies disagreement). With other items the implicit meaning is less strong (e.g. *be bound to* is frequently used with items which refer to a negative situation, but it may also occur with items which refer to a positive situation) or depends highly on context (e.g. with *claim* the implication that the attributor disagrees with the speaker depends on factors such as grammatical pattern or type of discourse). Stubbs (1995a: 50) puts forward that the notion of semantic prosody results from the fact that "an increase in frequency of use can (...) change the system." As he puts it, "CAUSE is near the state where the word itself, out of context, has negative connotations (AFFECT is already at this point). The selection restrictions on CAUSE are not (yet?) categorial: it is not (yet?) ungrammatical to collocate CAUSE with explicitly positive words." But the frequent use of *cause* with negative words may lead to a point where the collocation of *cause* with a positive term may be ungrammatical. That is, the implicit meaning may become an inherent part of the semantics of the word.

When items that usually occur with negative elements occur in a neutral context the default interpretation leads the addressee to derive the negative meaning. Hanks (1996) illustrates this point clearly with the following example:

(1) John incited Barry to speak to Astrid.

There is nothing intrinsically bad in the semantics of *speak*, and you do not necessarily incite people to do negative things. As Hanks correctly points out (1996: 87), "the implication that speaking in this context is disobedient or bad is inherited, in the absence of anything to the contrary, from the default interpretation of *incite*." Hunston (1995) also exemplifies this point with reporting verbs such as *acknowledge* or *insist*. Usually *acknowledge* occurs with a co-text which reveals that the subject of *acknowledge* accepts reluctantly an opponent's point of view (e.g. concession clause+ counter-assertion clause). However, in some cases the only signal of concession is the choice of this verb. The use of the reporting verb *acknowledge* always implies the addresser's judgement about the subjects' viewpoints.

Strong implicit meanings can be exploited by speakers or writers to produce specific pragmatic effects. This was observed by Louw (1993), who showed that the forms that run counter the semantic prosody of a word may produce an ironical effect. In a corpus of 18 millions words Louw discovered that *utterly* had negative prosody. He only found 4 occurrence of *utterly* with good collocations. After analysis he found that these forms had an ironical effect.

The framework which will be used to discuss the following examples of implicit meaning can be summarised here. We assume that knowing the meaning of a word implies knowing how it is used. No statement about the meaning of a word can be done without taking into account the contexts where it typically occurs, its typical syntactic environment and the words with which it collocates. As Stubbs (1996: 173) puts it, the collocations in which a word occurs "show the associations and connotations (words) have and therefore the assumptions they embody." We also assume that meaning is determined by the contexts where an item occurs, typical use confers implicit meaning (Hunston, 1995: 138).

The material for this study has been the Bank of English corpus at COBUILD. The corpus includes different types of texts: written and spoken discourse taken from different sources and different varieties of English. We have used a concordancer to search for all the occurrences of the analysed items in the corpus. The statistical tools used at COBUILD produced a record of the most significant collocates of these items.

4. SOME EXAMPLES OF IMPLICIT MEANING

4.1. ITEMS WITH NEGATIVE AXIOLOGICAL VALUE

Some items indicate that the speaker/writer evaluates some element of the propositional information as bad. We will illustrate that with three clear examples: *end up, find oneself+ past participle, be liable to*.

To *end up* somewhere or doing something always implies to get to a state or to do something you did not intend to. When *end up* is followed by a prepositional group, this group is used to refer to an unwanted situation. When what follows is a verb the verb itself need not be negative but the whole non-finite clause is clearly negative (i.e. it includes negative words) or is evaluated as negative by the speaker.

(2) a. I remembered how at the approved school they had told me I would end up in prison.

b. I thought that if they picked up on that she'd end up being the street bitch.

Two frequent preceding expressions are *don't want to* (e.g. 3a), and *I'm not going to*, which express unwillingness. *Having to* occurs frequently after *end up*, indicating that the subject is forced to do something (e.g. 3b):

(3) a. But we do not want to end up in a strongman competition, for we would lose.
b. Although glass filters can sometimes be adapted you may end up having to buy a completely new set of filters in a different size.

The negative meaning of the pattern arises not only from the following prepositional group or non-finite clause, but also from other elements. *End up* collocates with preceding verbs and nouns which indicate that the following situation is negative and undesirable (e.g. *risk, fear, avoid, terrify, danger*):

(4) Audrey Droisen says the *problem* is how to *avoid* ending up with a whole festival of Holocaust films.

End up also co-occurs frequently with expressions which indicate that something is different from what was expected:

(5) a. ... your loan could end up costing you *more than you had expected*.
b. The total cost will end up being around *double the sum budgeted*.

Owing to the strong negative implicit meaning of this pattern if there is no indication to the contrary the default interpretation is negative. The use of *end up* imposes the interpretation that what follows is not what the subject really wanted:

(6) Julie's convinced she'll eventually end up with a garden, a kid and a dog and glance back misty-eyed at their illustrious career.

There are only a few occurrences of *end up* followed by a clause which expresses a situation positively evaluated, which shows that *end up* is not necessarily negative. In the following example the clause where *end up* occurs is subordinate to a clause with the verb *dream*. *I never dreamed* is an expression with a strong positive meaning, which supersedes the negative meaning of *end up*.

(7) Lucky punter scooped a record 2.1 million pounds jackpot on the football pools yesterday (...). The married office worker said: "I never dreamed it would end up like this."

Another linguistic item with strong negative prosody is the pattern *find+ reflexive pronoun+ past participle*. The past participles that collocate most frequently in this pattern refer to states that the object of *find* reaches unwillingly and that involve a damage or loss for him/her: verbs meaning "being forced" (e.g. *forced, obliged, compelled*), verbs implying confinement, lack of freedom to act (e.g. *surrounded,*

trapped, locked, stuck, squeezed), verbs implying isolation, rejection, or movement to an undesirable position (*isolated, stranded, excluded, reduced, relegated, outvoted, ostracised, demoted, drawn, thrown),* verbs implying antagonism and face loss (*confronted, faced, attacked, accused, exposed, arrested, charged),* verb implying negative involvement (*caught up, embroiled, involved, engaged, committed)*.

The pattern collocates with adverbs which indicate the subject's negative attitude towards the situation (e.g. *reluctantly, hopelessly, inevitably*) and also with time adverbs with a present and future reference (e.g. *suddenly, quickly, soon, now*), which in fact convey the same meaning as *inevitably*.

(8) After one or two years of wonderfully low interest rates, borrowers *suddenly* find themselves clobbered by reality, and with no means of escape.

The negative implicit meaning of the pattern is exploited by the writers to express negative evaluation even in the absence of negative elements. The fact that this pattern collocates with linguistic items expressing negative states impinges on the meaning of the pattern and makes the receiver perceive it as negative, as the following examples illustrate:

(9) a. The next day, Ralph was snapped outside the Empire clutching Demi Moore's hand after rave reviews. Alex has suddenly found herself married to the most wanted man on the planet.
b. The victims find themselves invited to a gem and jewellery shop —the scenario is usually that your found friend is picking up some merchandise for himself and you are just along for the ride.

While to be married to the most wanted man on the planet is not per se negative, it is evaluated negatively in example (9a), presented as a threat. In example (9b) the meaning of "invited" is negative. The implication is that behind the invitation there is an intention to deceive.

The last item with negative prosody that will be discussed is *be liable to. Be liable to* is followed by an infinitive clause or by a noun group which is negatively evaluated by the speaker. This negative meaning is reflected in the verbs that most significantly collocate with *be liable to*:

pay, be, have, collapse, carry, change, find, indemnify, nullify, repay, compensate, engage, cause, end up, suffer, break, explode, dissolve, damage, fall

And it is even more evident if we examine the passive verbs:

shot, detained, attacked, punished, arrested, called, disappointed, exacerbated, prosecuted, expelled, fined, damaged, improved, caught, tried, turned, taken, left, surcharged, gossiped, lynched, conscripted, nabbed, traversed, subverted, tarred, wafted, reshaped, agonised, whipped

Be liable to collocates significantly with words with negative prosody, such as *cause* (e.g. *be liable to cause accidents/ trouble/ erosion*). It also collocates with pat-

terns with negative meaning (e.g. *end up+ -ing*) or with mixed prosody (e.g. *have+ something+ past participle, get+ past participle*).

(10) a. As a "persona non gratis" she has no right to health care and is, therefore, liable to have her life support unit cut off at any time.

The collocation of *be liable to* with patterns like *have+ object+ past participle, get+past participle,* which have mixed prosodies, selects only the negative sense of these patterns.

With verbs that express the beginning or existence of a situation (e.g. *arise, be*) the subject referring to this situation is negative.

(11) ...the early identification, perhaps at birth, of problems that are liable to arise in the future if left untreated.

The negative meaning can be exploited by the user to express negative attitude and thus to show disapproval or criticise an action. For instance, it is clear in example (12) that the speaker does not approve of Pierre-Yves' behaviour.

(12) Going out to dinner with Pierre-Yves and Sylvie (...) is always frustrating. Just as you are getting your teeth into an interesting aspect of the nuclear testing row, Pierre-Yves is liable to exclaim: "Look at that figure" or, after a few drinks, "What a great arse."

4.2. ITEMS WHICH IMPLY EPISTEMIC ATTITUDE

Some items imply that the addresser has doubts about the performance of an action or that he/she regards a situation as contrary to expectation. Some words or phrases are habitually preceded or followed by specific types of clauses, signalled by conjunctions, connectors and pragmatic markers. The collocation of a word or phrase with a specific set of conjunctions or connectors provides a clue about the meaning of these items. For instance, the t-score (i.e. a statistical measurement of the association between two items) of the association between *fail to* and *but* is {8.236131}[4] because of the frequent occurrence of *fail to* in a clause beginning with *but* (e.g. "but he failed to"), which reflects that *fail to* is used to express counterexpectation:

(13) Then he phoned the police to say they were about to have a dead corpus on their hands. But the civilian operator hung up- and failed to act on the warning.

The implication is that the civilian operator was expected to act on the warning, but he didn't. In addition to *but*, there are other prompters that reflect the use of *fail* to express counterexpectation, e.g. *appointment, expected, promised, arranged*.

(14) The group failed to produce its *promised* statement yesterday.

Sometimes, the only marker of counterexpectation is the verb itself:

(15) People who want plastic surgery on their noses often fail to consider their chins.

Another item which implies that something is contrary to what was expected is *manage to. Manage to* collocates with words such as *finally, eventually, even, somehow, still* and with items which indicate "difficulty:" *pressure, constraints,* etc.

(16) a. When Naomi feels homesick she tucks into a Cadbury's Flake *but still* manages to keep her figure.
b. We have the feeling that if we could just *somehow* manage to get on top of things once, we'd be okay from then on.

It also occurs very frequently with items and structures which imply surprise, such as questions beginning with *how?* or indirect questions with the particle *how* following expressions such as "I wonder," "I don't know," "I can't understand," "I had to explain," "but one puzzles."

(17) Did you ever wonder how the top supermodels manage to look stunning and carry themselves so well on the catwalk?

The use of *manage to* implies the speaker's judgement that the action or situation that follows the verb is desirable but difficult, and that the completion of this action is/was contrary to expectation.

An effect deriving from the fact that what follows *manage to* is usually a desirable action is its use to express irony when the non-finite clause that follows does not express a positive event. *Manage to* implies a previous goal to be achieved and thus tends to be followed by complement clauses which express events which are positively evaluated. The disagreement between the positive prosody of *manage to* and the negative meaning of the following that-clauses in example (18) produces an ironical effect.

(18) a. Just how, in the land of the long, cold beer, do airlines manage to serve their cans so lukewarm?
b. Heard about the driver with three eyes? He has all-round vision but still manages to smash up his car.

4.3. FACTIVE VERBS

Factive verbs trigger the presupposition that the following that-clause encodes a fact. Additionally, these verbs may convey further implications. Hunston (1995) found that there are some verbs which show no consistently typical usage, but "typically carry a particular evaluation" under specifiable discourse conditions (e.g. the reporting verb *claim* only implies that the attributor disagrees with the speaker in certain contexts). Factive constructions such as *I know that, I realise that* or *I understand that* convey the implicit meaning of disagreement when they occur in present tense and other discourse conditions are met.

When these constructions are the first element of the sentence, they have a similar function to *comment clauses* which express the speaker's comments on the content of the following clause (see Quirk *et al.*, 1985). These constructions occur frequently in contexts where the statements that they introduce are subsequently questioned or mitigated. They collocate strongly with item such as *but, although, however*, which

confers them an implicit concessive meaning, even when the co-text does not include a concessive word.

I know that is used to make it explicit that speaker and hearer share the same knowledge, or rather, to inform the hearer that at the moment of speaking some specific previous knowledge is being taken into account. It introduces what people (will) think/say as an argument against what the speaker is saying, in order to deny or to dismiss this argument. It occurs frequently in the pattern *I know that... but*, as the following example illustrates:

(19) There are so many charities and I know that sometimes people think "oh no, not again." But even if you feel you can't dig any deeper, you just have to try.

However, although *I know that* might usually be found in contexts where the clause introduced by *I know that* is dismissed as a weak argument against the following statement, this item may also be used in a different context. In example (20) the idea of concession is missing:

(20) We have not had any news on how much money we will receive. I only know that we are getting expenses.

The analysis of more examples suggests that *I know that* is used to express disagreement only in the context of an argumentative stretch of text, when the writer tries to support his/her claim by rejecting possible objections. The following examples illustrate this point:

(21) a. I was a fat teenager, the fat girl of the class, and even though I'm a size 12 now and logically I know that's about right for me, I am just obsessed with being a size 10.
b. I know your career is important, and you are saving up for our future, and I know that you have to work abroad but please, Andrei, I beg you —do we have to live in England too?

In the following example *I know that* implies that the speaker disagrees with the view or attitude expressed in the that-clause:

(22) I think it is important to be honest about who you are when you go on a date (...). I know that some people who have been going out for a while become yes-men and yes-women and compromise who they are for the sake of keeping the person they are with happy.

I realise that has a similar function to *I know that* and could be considered a concessive expression. In example (23) *I realise that* helps to construe conflict and opposition:

(23) I realise that many so-called "enlightened" types might not agree with this line of thinking, but I think it is high time consideration was given to reintroducing the death penalty for these extreme crimes.

I understand that may have two quite different functions in discourse: it may have a similar meaning to "I've been told that" (24) or to "I admit that" (25).

(24) With a nonchalance that the FO can muster the mandarin began: "I understand that you are the Red Adair of the pensions world."

(25) The owner of the property does not have the right to immobilise that vehicle for the purpose of personal profit. While I understand that illegal parking in shopping centres and other venues must be controlled, surely it should be the jurisdiction of the Brisbane City Council to regulate these areas in the same way that street parking is regulated.

When the meaning is similar to "I admit that" *I understand that* implies partial disagreement with those who support a different view on the matter under discussion. The speaker accepts some of the opponent's arguments, only to reject his/her final claim. In example (25) the use of *I understand that* implies that, although the speaker agrees that "illegal parking in shopping centres and other venues must be controlled," he/she disagrees with something previously proposed: with the way to control illegal parking. The context where *I understand that* implies disagreement is also that of an argument. Additionally, when it implies concession, *I understand that* always occurs in association with concessive linking words and/ or is preceded by the verb *can* or by adverbs such as *fully*.

(26) I can understand that some service station attendants in isolated areas become very nervous at 3 a.m. when a gang of rowdy youths turn up. However, we cannot turn people away from the forecourt so the attendants remain inside where they are safe.

Other factive verbs express the speaker's emotional attitude towards the content of the following clause. Commonly the subject is *I* and the verb is the simple present (e.g. I hope, I wish). The factive construction *I'm surprised that* implies that the speaker disapproves of somebody's actions or attitude. It usually occurs in the context of a criticism. There are very few cases where the following situation is positively evaluated.

(27) a. I'm surprised that the Liberal Party are calling for truth in advertising when they are the worst offenders.
b. I am surprised that a doctor could tell his readers to "forget about low cholesterol, salt and sugar free diets."

4.4. IDEOLOGICALLY LOADED WORDS

Finally, we should discuss the ideologically loaded words which have an implicit meaning deriving from the words with which they co-occur and the context and types of text where they tend to appear. Recently, much attention has been paid to the encoding of race and gender in discourse. One aspect that has aroused much interest is the way discourse is used to represent non-dominant ethnic groups and to represent men and women differently. In this connection, it is necessary to examine how some words are endowed with implicit negative meanings.

In a previous analysis of the context where the words *immigrant* and *immigration* occur and of their collocations (Luzón, 1998), we found that the term that most significantly collocates with *immigrant* is *illegal*, which to a certain extent confers the implicit meaning of *illegality* to the word *immigrant*. Additionally, *immigrant* occurs with specific lexical groups: with terms related to the law (*inquiry, police, prison*) and to criminal offences (*manslaughter, smuggling, delinquent, unlawfully*). *Immigrant* has frequently the semantic function of Affected of verbs that refer to police processes (*accuse, suspect, condemn, detain, arrest)*. It also occurs frequently with terms that refer to prohibition or expulsion (*deportation, expulsion, ban*). The word *immigration* is associated with terms that belong to the field of bureaucracy (e.g. *policy, minister, department*), but also with negative terms (e.g. *illegal, problem, prison*). The word *control* (verb or adjective) is one of the most significant collocations of *immigration*, implying that immigration is something that needs to be controlled. This implication also derives from the adjectives that tend to collocate with *immigration* (e.g. *mass, massive, uncontrolled, growing*).

If we turn now to the encoding of gender in discourse, a phenomenon widely discussed by linguists which is closely related to the implicit meaning of words is the *semantic derogation* of feminine terms (e.g. the different meanings of *master/ mistress*, *governor/ governess,* where the feminine terms have acquired negative connotations) (Schulz, 1975; Graddol and Swann, 1989). *Lady* and *girl* can be used to refer to an adult female, as an alternative to *woman*, a term that has negative connotations (Graddol and Swann, 1989). However, these words are also acquiring negative meaning, not shared by *boy* or *lord*, owing to their use in specific contexts and their collocation with specific words. *Girl* collocates frequently with items such as *beautiful, bond, pretty, working, lovely, weather, glamour, call, cover, party, good-time, calendar*, in some cases giving way to compounds with sexual connotations, such as *working girl* (e.g. 28). This may result in the word ending up with a negative meaning when it refers to an adult female.

(28) Prostitution's legal there and the town just keeps growing and growing. But up here, folks tend to be real conservative, so a working girl can't come within ten miles of town.

If we look at the following occurrences of *career girl* in context (e.g. 29), it is also evident that it has specific connotations which reflect a particular worldview. The term usually implies the speaker's judgement that the woman has rejected her "natural" roles: wife and mother. *Career girl* is a term which implies more than an adult female who has a career. Career girls are intruders in the male domain, competitive women without a family life.

(29) a. She's a career girl, out there in the world, scrambling to strut her stuff.
b. Although she's a career girl, there has been one very special addition to her family. A puppy called Molly.

The word *lady* has also undergone a process of semantic derogation (Mills, 1995: 111). It often occurs in collocations such as *dinner lady, cleaning lady, lollipop lady*:

(30) Gardner Merchant is the BBC contractor which tried to sack Linda, the feisty tea lady, when her sixth-floor canteen was "streamlined."

There are also words that usually collocate with positive items. Spender (1980: 87) observes that *motherhood* cannot collocate with words like *unhappy* or *depressing*, which leads women who do not experience motherhood as positive to feel that their experience is unnatural.

5. CONCLUSION

In this paper our aim has been to bring to the foreground a neglected aspect in the descriptions of word meaning: the interpersonal implicit component of the meaning of linguistic items. Implicit meaning is the interpersonal and evaluative component of the meaning of words or strings of words that has been conferred by typical use. Knowing the meaning of an item does not only imply knowing its denotation, but also the way it is used and the implications and presuppositions it conveys. Since implicit meaning derives from typical use, it can only be accounted for within a contextual theory of meaning, which puts forward that words and single sentences cannot be examined without taking into account their specific environment.

We have tried in this paper to provide data to illustrate some types of implicit meaning an item may have. Some items are associated with a specific semantic prosody and imply the user's negative or positive evaluation of an object or situation. Linguistic items may also convey the speaker's degree of commitment or certainty, or they may imply a specific affective attitude on the part of the speaker (e.g. disagreement, criticism). The items which reflect and encode a particular ideology or worldview may also be considered as having an implicit interpersonal meaning. The items analysed in the paper are only a sample to show that if a high number of occurrences of any item are examined we can find regularities in its use which give this item an interpersonal "colouring."

We have seen that implicit meaning is not an inherent part of the semantics of the item, but when this meaning is very strong the occurrences of the item in a neutral context are interpreted as having that meaning. That is, implicit meaning could be seen as being half-way between semantics and pragmatics. It does not necessarily remain unchanged across the different occasions of utterance of a particular string or word sense, but it does not only depend on the context of the specific occurrence under analysis, but on the typical context, on the features of context that tend to recur when this item is used.

The terms "pragmatic markers" or "evaluative words" are used to refer to specific sets of words whose main function is to signal the force of the message or to evaluate some element of the message explicitly. But interpersonal meaning is a pervasive phenomenon, not restricted to these words. Therefore, in order to make safe statements about the meaning of items, it is necessary to study a high number of occurrences of words or phrases so as to see if they convey specific implications.

The findings of this study may have some implications for the teaching of lexis. The production of appropriate materials requires an awareness that linguistic items convey presuppositions and implications, and that teaching their meaning should not only be a

matter of focusing on their ideational function, on their use to convey conceptual meaning. It is important to make the students aware that linguistic items convey not only content but also evaluation and attitude and to develop materials which enable them to exploit and perceive the evaluative and pragmatic component of meaning.

Notes

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[1] See Halliday (1973, 1985), Leech (1983), Widdowson (1984). Halliday (1973) posits three functions for language: *ideational* (the use of language to structure and convey experience), *interpersonal* (the use of language to express the speaker's/writer's attitude and to interact with the others) and *textual* (the use of language to construct a coherent text). Widdowson (l984) distinguishes between the *conceptual function,* related to language used for formulating concepts, and *communicative function,* related to language used for performing certain activities, by means of the interaction between two persons.

[2] The term "item" is used to refer both to words and to expressions consisting of more than one word which can be considered a single unit, e.g. *be able to*.

[3] Although large corpora enable a systematic investigation of this phenomenon, it had already been devoted attention by some researchers: semantic prosody is similar to what Darmesteter (1886) calls "contagion" and to Bäcklund's (1981: 14-15) notion of *pregnancy*, i.e. the semantic imprint which main collocates leave on the semantic set up of lexical items.

[4] When the t-score of the association between two words is 2 or superior, the association between the two words can be considered significative (Barnbrook, 1996).

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