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Summary

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SUMMARY

Polysemy has received considerable attention in the study of language, and the body of research devoted to this issue has grown considerably since the 1980s. However, in the description of polysemy so far, little attention has been given to the role of context. The present study aims to narrow this gap by delineating the possible connections between the meaning in use of a lexical item and its context, by treating meaning as contextualized patterning of usage.

The present study adopts a two-fold definition of context. The first aspect is linguistic context, which will be strictly defined as the co-text of the target lexical item; and the second aspect is world knowledge, organized in the form of conceptual domains.

The target word of the present study is *up* in English, due to its productivity, semantic versatility and conceptual significance. However, so that we can formulate a more general claim on the making of lexical meaning, a near-equivalent, *shàng* in Mandarin, is also studied and compared to *up*.

In order to come to a more well-rounded understanding of polysemy, the present study asks the following research questions:

If meaning is to be construed as patterned sets of context, is there a connection between the patterning of context and the semantic clustering of a lexical item's usages? If so, what is the relation between the senses of *up* and its variety of contexts? In particular, how do the factors of co-text and conceptual domain come into play in the polysemy of *up*?

At first glance, some meanings of *up* are highly abstract and figurative, which suggests metaphor as the mechanism of semantic extension (e.g. Boers 1994; Lindstromberg 1997). Nevertheless, little attention has been given to how co-text can trigger the cross-domain conceptual mapping that is responsible for those

figurative readings. To properly deal with this issue, I ask: What is the relationship between co-text, conceptual domain, and the metaphorical senses of *up*? Are all abstract meanings of *up* derived by cross-domain conceptual mapping?

Previous analyses on *up* (e.g. Boers 1994; Lindner 1983), besides investigating metaphor, also approach its usage from an image-schematic point of view. But these studies have not said much about the relationship between the co-text of *up* and the underlying image-schematic representation. Therefore, another concern of the present analysis will be: What is the connection between the co-text of *up* and the underlying imagistic representations?

In order to make a more generalizable claim on the interconnection between form, meaning and concept in language, I have chosen to analyze the Mandarin *shàng* as a counterpart of *up*. However, due to space limitations, I will focus on the relationship between the co-text of *shàng* and image schema. My key question is: In what way do the senses of *shàng* relate to its co-text and the image schematic structure? What can the similarities and differences between *shàng* and *up* tell us about the making of lexical meaning and the workings of semantic extension?

Conceptual metaphor and image-schema are two important factors that have received a good deal of attention in the study of polysemy of *up* and *shàng*. However, is there any other underexplored cognitive factor that is involved in understanding their polysemy?

To answer the above inquiries, I base the present research on the theoretical models of Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987, 1991, 2008) and Principled Polysemy (Evans 2004; Tyler and Evans 2001, 2003).

First, Cognitive Grammar (henceforth CG) is a theoretical model that can adequately explain the usage of spatial terms, in the sense that it takes a radical stance, from which language is viewed as grounded in basic human cognitive abilities. It is this particular belief that renders my choice reasonable, since I hope to figure out the mystery of lexical meaning by exploring the linguistic representation of space. Another rationale for this choice comes from Croft's (1993) application of semantic valence in CG to a discussion on metaphor. I suspect metaphor to be the mechanism of sense extension for some abstract meanings of *up*.

I adopt Principled Polysemy for its rigorous methodology in sense distinction and its capacity to accommodate the contextual element of co-text, based on Evans' (2004) Grammatical Criterion and Concept Elaboration Criterion. Principled Polysemy is chosen for its compatibility with CG, given their shared concern for the possible connection between language and space, and their commitment to the usage-based nature of language.

The data employed are mostly authentic and come from three sources. The English data are extracted from the British National Corpus and the Corpus of Contemporary America English. The Mandarin data are drawn from the Aca-

demia Sinica Balanced Corpus of Modern Chinese. The excerpts are examined in terms of the three criteria of sense distinction in Principled Polysemy.

Chapter 4 investigates the core senses of *up* that do not involve a cross-domain conceptual mapping, looking into the interaction between *up*'s meaning, co-text and image-schematic representation. This chapter analyzes three semantic clusters – ‘vertically higher,’ ‘approaching’ and ‘completive’ – and presents the following findings.

By distinguishing between sub-schemas that belong to the same sense, I show that each sense should not be understood as a homogeneous lump but should be construed as a composite formed by different minor clusters of usage in the form of constructional schemas. An observation of authentic data also reveals that each sense does have its own pattern of co-text, and that distinguishing between minor clusters of usage within a sense helps us better capture the relation between the senses. I find that some cases of ‘approaching’ may invoke dual interpretations, which happens only within certain constructional schema, and that the re-categorization must take place in discourse, since the motivation behind the re-categorization is pragmatics-based. My findings here are in line with the basic tenet of CG, that language use is based on basic human cognitive abilities. This is because the different core meanings of *up* correlate with its imagistic structure, which reflects a basic operational mechanism in human perception. I observe that meaning is perspectival, since ‘approaching’ involves a non-default vantage point within the scope of predication, and this shift in point of view is another basic operating principle in human perception.

Chapter 5 discusses the metaphorical senses of *up* and the interplay between co-text and conceptual domain. In this chapter, four semantic clusters are addressed: ‘more,’ ‘good,’ ‘happy’ and ‘accessible.’ In this chapter, I present the following findings.

Firstly, the above meanings are extended from ‘vertically higher’ by means of domain mapping that occurs in the process of joining smaller symbolic assemblies into a larger complex one. The source of concept elaboration comes from an autonomous predication in the co-text of *up*. There are three possibilities for this source: the verb that combines with *up*; a noun phrase as an argument of the verb; or a noun phrase in the prepositional phrase that follows. My analysis furthermore demonstrates that the meaning of ‘completive’ and some of the metaphorical meanings are related in highly intricate ways. Such cross-cutting semantic connections illustrate that the mechanisms of image-schematic transformation and cross-domain mapping operate not in an exclusive manner but in conjunction. In many cases where a cross-domain mapping and the GOAL-prominent feature co-exist at the conceptual level, it is usually the metaphorical reading that wins out, with the ‘completive’ reading remaining immanent, unless somehow profiled (e.g. by a past participle).

Chapter 6 examines the core senses of *shàng* by looking at the relation between the senses, co-text and image schema. In this chapter, six semantic clusters are identified – ‘vertically higher,’ ‘forward,’ ‘vertically attained,’ ‘attached,’ ‘completive’ and ‘inceptive’ – with the following findings shown.

First of all, two clusters of meanings extend from the prototypical sense of ‘vertically higher,’ from which the sense of ‘forward’ is derived via the cognitive mechanism of self-projection. For the other cluster, from the prototypical sense comes the sense of ‘vertically attained,’ with the notion of SURFACE that characterizes it. Along this route of semantic change, the conceptual substrate of SURFACE is gradually attenuated, leaving behind a semantic gradation formed by the other senses. Moreover, I find that the concept elaboration of a sense for *shàng* is closely associated with the image-schematic structure prompted by the constructional schema, which also illustrates the close relation between meaning and perception. The cluster of ‘forward’ similarly involves an onstage vantage point, which also attests to the perspectival grounding of meaning. Furthermore, the semantic extension from ‘completive’ to ‘inceptive’ involves different allocation of attention to the sub-parts of the same conceptual scene, and this can give rise to different construals of an identical conceptual content. This focal adjustment is a key operating principle not only in human perception but also in lexical semantics.

Chapter 7 is a discussion on the findings in the previous chapters. First of all, I note that the respective arrays of senses for *up* and *shàng* each constitute a clear case of semantic attenuation, where the onstage conceptual content gradually diminishes. The array of the core senses in the semantic networks of both *up* and *shàng* meets Langacker’s (1999) four parameters of attenuation: a shift in status, in focus, in domain and in the locus of potency. In addition to semantic attenuation, the semantic networks of *up* and of *shàng* involve different repertoires of onstage conceptual contents, with *up* prompting VERTICAL ELEVATION and *shàng* both VERTICAL ELEVATION and REST ON A SURFACE. In the process of semantic attenuation, the fading away of the conceptual substrate leaves behind various related senses, each being a result of the reduced archetypal concepts. The other side of semantic attenuation is subjectification (Langacker 1999, 2006), since as the onstage conceptual content gradually fades away, the conceptual archetype’s role in the construal becomes less prominent, which leads to a less objective, or more subjective if put another way, construal of the conceptual substrate. I claim that the mental simulation of the subject of conception is equally essential in understanding the meaning of a lexical item, in the sense that the subjective processing is imminent in all usages, with its role remaining implicit until the lexical meaning has undergone a high degree of attenuation.

With the above findings, the present study makes the following contributions: In the first place, I have delineated the interconnection of the polysemy of *up* and *shàng* with their co-text and the associated image-schematic structures. Secondly,

I have clarified the interplay of co-text and conceptual domain, and how these two factors relate to the metaphorical senses of *up*. More importantly, I have argued that attenuation and subjectification are important factors in the study of lexical semantics, alongside metaphor and image schema.

The implications of the present study are two-fold. For one, the findings and discussions show that basic cognitive abilities, such as perception and archetypal conception, are critical factors in studying the semantics of spatial terms. Furthermore, subjectification and attenuation work on archetypal concepts to produce an array of interrelated senses, with highly abstract meanings being a consequence of extreme attenuation. I thus propose that an investigation into the highly abstract meanings of a lexical item will have much to do with its associated conceptual archetypes and the path of semantic attenuation.

