Creative meaning in interaction

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In naturally occurring interaction, interlocutors conceptualise various kinds of meanings that are not simply 'retrieved from the lexicon'. Speakers can signal such non-conventionalised meanings in different ways: (i) by attributing them to an appropriately contextualised established expression, (ii) by vaguely approximating them with an established expression, (iii) by indexing them with a novel expression specifically designed for this purpose, and (iv) by providing the addressee with mere cues to the relevant meaning without directly labelling it at all.

In (i), creative meanings are deployed as local meanings of an established linguistic unit. Local meanings are tailored to current interactive needs by integrating properties of the present context and cancelling out other, currently irrelevant facets of the item's conventional meaning potential (Norén & Linell 2007). In (ii), an established expression with its conventional semantics is presented as a mere approximation of intended meaning, as signalled by various kinds of mitigation devices (Schneider 2010). In (iii), speakers coin a creative ad hoc-expression that is specifically designed to signal an ephemeral, creatively constructed meaning (Helmer 2022). Finally, in (iv) speakers neither use a more or less fitting conventional expression nor a dedicated ad hoc-formation to categorise a given target, but resort to more indirect strategies of indicating intended meaning (as in e.g. exemplification as a cue to higher-level ad hoc categories, Mauri 2017).

Speakers standardly assume that their intended meanings are recoverable on the basis of shared linguistic knowledge and different kinds of non-linguistic common ground. In case they are mistaken, the relevant meaning must be negotiated with their addressee(s). For this, speakers can resort to a range of communicative practices that profile, explicate, illustrate or enact the intended local meaning of an expression and build it up incrementally (Deppermann 2020).

Using authentic conversation data from the reference corpus of spoken German, FOLK, the talk gives an overview of these different manifestations of creative meaning and how they are constituted in situated interaction.

References: • Deppermann, A. (2020). Interaktionale Semantik. In: J. Hagemann & S. Staffeldt (eds.): *Semantiktheorien II*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 235-278. • Helmer, H. (2022). Okkasionalismen im gesprochenen Deutsch. *Deutsche Sprache* 2/2022, 97–123. • Mauri, C. (2017). Building and Interpreting Ad Hoc Categories. In: J. Blochowiak et al. (eds.), *Formal Models in the Study of Language*. Cham: Springer, 297–326. • Norén, K. & Linell, P. (2007). Meaning potentials and the interaction between lexis and contexts. Pragmatics 17:3, 387–416. • Schneider, S. (2010). Mitigation. In: M. A. Locher & S. L. Graham (eds.), *Interpersonal pragmatics*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 253–269.