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Analysis of Fictive Interaction Compounds in English:

Details, Constructed Dialogue, and Internal Evaluation[*]

Ryota HOSOYA

1. Introduction

"Writing the introduction of your paper in 'deadline-is-tonight!' haste is bad for your mental health, but it always happens." This sentence, representing the author's current state of mind, contains *a fictive interaction compound* in English (i.e., "'deadline-is-tonight!' haste"), defined as an English nominal compound "whose modifier could serve as a self-sufficient discourse unit" (Pascual, 2014, p. 59). This type of expression has been insufficiently investigated, although it has been sporadically mentioned in the literature under different names, such as *phrasal compound* (e.g., Günther et al., 2018; Meibauer, 2007; Trips, 2012; Trips & Kornfilt, 2017) and *hyphenated phrasal expression* (Crawford Camiciottoli, 2018).[1] These studies have pointed out its characteristics, such as "the capacity to express nuanced meanings" (Crawford Camiciottoli, 2018, p. 18) and "wittiness" (Meibauer, 2007). Pascual (2014) has also highlighted its "dramatic, attention-gripping, and involving" nature and a number of other characteristics (p. 70). To these, I contribute the vivid, convincing, and involving nature of this type of expression, providing detailed explanations of the sources of this nature.

It is this vivid, convincing, and involving nature of English fictive interaction compounds that the present paper elucidates, with a particular focus on three key concepts: constructed dialogue, details, and internal evaluation (Labov, 1972; Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Tannen, 2007). It elaborates on the crucial role that constructed dialogue and details play in creating vivid scenes and generating convictive power, corroborating the explanation by observing some authentic examples retrieved from a corpus. The difference between these compounds and phrases that express similar meanings is also considered.

[1] There are many areas of overlap between fictive interaction compounds, phrasal compounds, and hyphenated phrasal expressions, but precisely how they overlap is hard to state. However, since this study deals exclusively with fictive interaction compounds, I will not delve any further into the issue.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 explains the three key concepts in this study: constructed dialogue, details, and internal evaluation (Labov, 1972; Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Tannen, 2007). Overall, Tannen's (2007) view on these concepts is explained in detail. Section 3 provides analysis and discussion. The study's conclusions are presented in Section 4.

2. Constructed Dialogue, Details, and Internal Evaluation

2.1. Constructed Dialogue

The fictive utterance that appears in fictive interaction compounds can be seen as an instance of "constructed dialogue" (Tannen, 2007). Based on the observation that many instances of reporting another's words are actually more or less fabrications by a speaker, Tannen (2007) suggests using the term *constructed dialogue* in place of the misleading "reported speech":

> . . . when speech uttered in one context is repeated in another, it is fundamentally changed even if "reported" accurately. In many, perhaps most, cases, however, material represented as dialogue was never spoken by anyone else in a form resembling that constructed, if at all. Rather, casting ideas as dialogue rather than statements is a discourse strategy for framing information in a way that communicates effectively and creates involvement. (p. 112)

The modifier in fictive interaction compounds can be seen as one variety of constructed dialogue because what seems to be an utterance embedded in the modifier position of these compounds can be attributed neither to the interlocutors in the here and now nor to any specific person in the real world; it is constructed by a speaker. The utterance in the modifier position is fictive and attributed to one or more fictive persons in a fictive scene.

2.2. Details

In a volume dedicated to the elaboration of three involvement strategies, Tannen (2007) cited "imagery and detail" as one of them. She recognized the vital role that details play in creating involvement, as well as "repetition," "dialogue," and other strategies, which are discussed in her book. This subsection provides a brief sketch of Tannen's (2007) view of details as an essential ingredient of mutual sensemaking and creating involvement.

Tannen (2007) argued that "involvement is created by the simultaneous forces of music (sound and rhythm), on the one hand, and meaning through mutual participation in sensemaking, on the other" (p. 134). Concerning the latter, she remarked: "I now regard

mutual participation in sensemaking as essentially a response to scenes, and much of the power of scenes as coming from images which are often made up of details" (Tannen, 2007, p. 30). These arguments boil down to the conclusion that details play an essential role as the starting point of a chain that ultimately leads to mutual sensemaking and to the creation of involvement.

This chain of evocations, from details through images and scenes to mutual sensemaking and involvement, is accompanied by certain feelings in the minds of hearers or readers. They entertain feelings that are associated with scenes and feel intangible qualities that are tied to scenes or to various entities that appear in scenes. Tannen (2007) stated that "in response to specific details, hearers and readers imagine a scene in which the described characters, objects, and actions figure, and their ideas and feelings associated with such scenes are thereby triggered" (p. 40). The evocation of feelings associated with scenes metonymically set up by fictive interaction modifiers is also observed in Pascual's (2014) discussions on fictive interaction compounds.

2.3. Internal Evaluation

The two involvement strategies—details and constructed dialogue—serve as *evaluation*: the indication by means of evaluative devices of "the point of the narrative, its raison d'être: why it was told, and what the narrator is getting at" (Labov, 1972, p. 366).[2] To be more concrete:

> Evaluative devices say to us: this was terrifying, dangerous, weird, wild, crazy; or amusing, hilarious, wonderful; more generally, that it was strange, uncommon, or unusual—that is, worth reporting. It was not ordinary, plain, humdrum, everyday, or run-of-the mill. (p. 371)

Evaluation differs in its "degree of embedding" and forms a continuum (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). At the poles of this continuum stand two types of evaluation: internal and external evaluation. *Internal evaluation* seeks evaluation from within the discourse (e.g., characters in the discourse making evaluative comments), whereas *external evaluation* does so from outside (e.g., the speaker directly commenting on the discourse from outside) (De Fina & Johnstone, 2015; Labov & Waletzky, 1967).

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[2] Although the term was first devised for narrative, I believe it is also applicable to nonnarrative discourse, as Tannen (2007) claimed it is.

The degree of embedding depends on the evaluative devices that speakers use. The use of constructed dialogue provides internal evaluation. Commenting on the use of constructed dialogue, Tannen (2007) argued that "by setting up a little play, a speaker portrays motivations and other subtle evaluations internally—from within the play—rather than externally, by stepping outside the frame of the narrative to make evaluation explicit" (p. 125). The use of details also leads to internal evaluation. Details allow hearers or readers to create mental images, and those images trigger internal evaluation. "They lead hearers and readers to draw the conclusion favored by the speaker or writer" (p. 136).

Details and constructed dialogue are convincing and persuasive because, as mentioned above, they bring about internal evaluation. As Tannen (2007) argued, "hearers and readers who provide interpretations of events based on such story-internal evidence as dialogue and images are convinced by their own interpretations" (p. 136). They are linguistic strategies that make hearers and readers actively participate in the creation of meaning, believe in the product of their own imagination, and persuade themselves.

To summarize Section 2, it has been seen that the modifier of fictive interaction compounds can be recognized as an instance of Tannen's (2007) concept of "constructed dialogue." It has also been explained that details make images, which evoke scenes, in response to which mutual participation in sensemaking occurs. Tannen (2007) argued that the use of details and constructed dialogue provide internal evaluation, meaning that they lead hearers and readers to draw the conclusion themselves from their own imagination. Consequently, using details and constructed dialogue is a convincing and persuasive way of communicating.

3. Analysis and Discussion

This section provides an argument for fictive interaction compounds as a vivid and convincing way of communicating. The originality of this analysis is in explaining these characteristics in terms of the concepts introduced in Section 2: constructed dialogue, details, and internal evaluation. After explaining these features of fictive interaction compounds, I will provide several authentic examples retrieved from English Web 2015 to illustrate how they indeed exhibit these characteristics. I will also discuss the difference between these compounds and alternative ways of expressing similar meanings.

Fictive interaction compounds are convincing and persuasive because they prompt internal evaluation; they cause hearers and readers to believe in their own interpretations and draw the conclusion themselves. Fictive interaction compounds serve this function because

their modifier, consisting of fictive utterances, is an instance of constructed dialogue, and as mentioned in Section 2, the use of constructed dialogue brings about internal evaluation. A fictive speaker in a fictive environment expresses the noteworthiness of the content in a fictive voice from within the compound.

Details that often appear in fictive interaction modifiers also contribute to the production of internal evaluation and, hence, the convictive power of fictive interaction compounds. This is so because details cause hearers and readers to create vivid images and scenes wherein a fictive speaker makes evaluative comments. In response to details, hearers and readers create images, conjuring up vivified scenes associated with them, as well as calling up relevant memories of analogous experiences. In tandem with this process, they entertain certain feelings toward and impressions about what emerged in the hypothetical scene: persons and their actions, remarks, appearances, or manner; things and their qualities; the atmosphere of the imaginary environment; and other elements and their features. The scene, colored by these various details, bring about internal evaluation.

I have argued above that the details and constructed dialogue embedded in the modifier of fictive interaction compounds evoke vivid scenes and prompt internal evaluation and that these compounds are therefore convincing and persuasive. To support this claim, I will present several examples of fictive interaction compounds and examine their characteristics. Focusing on hyphens, I found the examples of English fictive interaction compounds examined below in English Web 2015, which is a large-sized web-based corpus containing more than 13 billion words on the internet.

Excerpt (1) is taken from a story about a woman who has just lost her father. It expresses her frustration with a man who slurps linguine and talks to her drunkenly, without regard to her grief. The use of words with concrete meaning, such as "grab" (instead of more abstract verbs, such as "take"), and details such as "fork," "out of your hand," and "in the eye," in the modifier helps readers create a vivid scene in which the woman looks at the man with a particular look of irritation on her face. The modifier can be construed as a fictive utterance that occurred inside the woman's head. This is an instance of constructed dialogue. The combination of details and constructed dialogue provides internal evaluation. The woman's fictive utterance in the modifier position allows readers to conclude that this event is unusual and worth reporting.

(1) I gave him the **"if-you-say-one-more-word-I-may-grab-that-fork-out-of-your-hand-and-stab-you-in-the-eye" look**.

The next example of fictive interaction compounds appears in the words of a lesbian woman to a woman named Hannah. As in the previous example, several details are found in the modifier ("divorce my husband," "move in," and "spend the rest of my life"). Although the compound is uttered by the woman, the modifier should be seen as an independent fictive utterance whose viewpoint expressed by the personal pronoun "I" happens to coincide with the speaker. The modifier can be seen as an instance of constructed dialogue, which voices the importance of the part of the story from within the story.

(2) "No, Hannah. I love you, love you. I love you in the **I want-to-divorce-my-husband-move-in-with-you-and-spend-the-rest-of-my-life-with-you kind** of love you."

The next examples are found in (3). There are four fictive interaction compounds in this excerpt. All of these examples represent specific types of relationships. As in (1) and (2), the modifier of these compounds contains concrete words and details ("play basketball together," "doctor," "physical therapist," "yea high," "small business owner," and "build our new clinic"), which allow readers to create images that evoke vivid scenes. Each of the modifiers can be seen as a fictive utterance produced by a fictive resident in the community. These fictive utterances are instances of constructed dialogue and provide internal evaluation. Moreover, the importance of this story is reinforced by the repetition of the word "relationships."

(3) Community hospitals aren't made up of strangers. No, the great ones are filled with relationships; and I'm not just talking about doctor-nurse or supervisor-subordinate relationships. I'm talking about **our-kids-play-basketball-together relationships** and **yeah-my-doctor-is-my-neighbor relationships** and **I-knew-that-physical-therapist-when-she-was-yea-high relationships** and **that-small-business-owner-helped-build-our-new-clinic relationships**. It's an incredible sense of belonging that promotes health care.

In example (4) below, two fictive interaction compounds can be found. Both of them are meant to express specific types of humbleness. As in previous examples, the use of details and concrete wording in the modifier is observed ("mountains," "stars," "forest," "small role as humans," "the last piece of pie," "at a party," "it was seconds for me," and "someone

didn't get firsts"). These specific details cause readers to create images that evoke vivid scenes in their minds. Both modifiers can be seen as fictive utterances by fictive speakers, and these fictive utterances are instances of constructed dialogue. The fictive words emanating from the vivid imaginary scenes tell us from inside the story that this particular type of humbleness is unusual and deserves to be told.

(4) I felt humbled, but not in the good, **wow-look-at-the-mountains-and-the-stars-and-the-forest-isn't-it-nice-to-be-reminded-of-our-small-role-as-humans way**, but in the **i-just-ate-the-last-piece-of-pie-at-a-party-and-it-was-seconds-for-me-but-someone-didn't-get-firsts way**.

We have seen above that specific details and constructed dialogue in the modifier of fictive interaction compounds yield vivid scenes, internal evaluation, and convictive power. At this point, a question arises: How are fictive interaction compounds different from sentences or discourse that contain specific details and thereby allow hearers and readers to enjoy similar experiences? One possible answer to this question lies in the wordhood of fictive interaction compounds.

Fictive interaction compounds are more convincing than alternative synonymous expressions because their wordhood imparts a sense of pre-establishedness to hearers and readers. By definition, fictive interaction compounds are compounds, meaning that they are single words rather than phrases. This is true no matter how long they are or how rich in detail they are. In support of their compound status, Pascual (2014) argued that "in non-contrastive uses, at least a part of the first element is phonetically more prominent than the second one, as in ordinary productive nominal compounds in English" (pp. 61–62). Words as a linguistic package are associated with pre-establishedness: the status as a socially shared concept that is assumed to be already known by everyone.[3] Using words rather than phrases sends a meta-massage that the meaning conveyed to hearers and readers is already known by them. Words as a vessel for meaning say, "This content is something that you already know." Putting together these two arguments—the word status of fictive interaction compounds and words as a vessel for pre-established concepts—it follows that these

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[3] This effect of words (as opposed to phrases) is also discussed in Hosoya (forthcoming). There, as well as here, I have gained much insight from conversations with my colleagues and other linguists.

compounds differ from other synonymous phrases in that they have special convictive power derived from their pre-established flavor associated with their word status.

4. Concluding Remarks

This paper has provided an explanation of the vivid, convincing, and involving nature of fictive interaction compounds, drawing specifically on the three concepts: constructed dialogue, details, and internal evaluation. It has been argued that a fictive utterance that appears in the modifier of fictive interaction compounds (e.g., the hyphenated part of the "if-you-say-one-more-word-I-may-grab-that-fork-out-of-your-hand-and-stab-you-in-the-eye" look) can be seen as an instance of constructed dialogue. The fictive speaker utters fictive words in a fictive scene and tells readers and hearers of the reportability of the story from within the compound (i.e., internal evaluation). It has also been claimed that the stage which enables internal evaluation is constructed by specific details that appear in the modifier of these compounds (e.g., "fork," "in the eye"). These details cause readers and hearers to create vivid mental images that evoke vivid scenes in their minds, triggering various feelings associated with those scenes. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that fictive interaction compounds are a convincing and involving way of communicating because they provide internal evaluation; they lead readers and hearers to actively participate in mutual sensemaking, to draw the conclusion themselves, and to persuade themselves into believing their own interpretations. Finally, the difference between fictive interaction compounds and their synonymous paraphrases has been attributed to the hearer- and reader-oriented meta-message derived from their wordhood that their content is a socially shared concept that is assumed to be already known by everyone.

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