Synonyms in Action: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses what the methods of conversation analysis (CA) might have to offer the study of linguistic synonymy. It takes as a case study two items commonly held to be synonyms —'actually' and 'in fact'— and shows considerable differences between the two in their interactional implementation: they are implicated in the prosecution of differing courses of action. Such cases argue that it is analytically more profitable to consider what a lexical item does in the context of talk than what it means.

KEYWORDS: synonymy, conversation analysis (CA), actually, in fact.

I. INTRODUCTION

In this paper I discuss what a rigorously empirical methodology —that of conversation analysis (CA)— has to offer one of the abiding concerns in the highly theoretical domain of linguistic semantics —the issue of synonymy. How can we begin to establish the differences between lexical items which appear to have the same meaning? I begin by taking some familiar examples of items which would appear to be differentiable by straightforward means —by reference to the speakers who use them, or by reference to other contexts of use. Establishing the latter, however, proves anything but straightforward and certainly beyond what introspection and intuition can furnish. I argue that it is CA's concern with <u>action</u> —and specifically, what Schegloff has identified as the position and composition of a turn-at-talk— which provides for the possibility

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of identifying differences between items. An investigation of two items commonly held to be synonyms —*actually* and *in fact*— shows the considerable interactional distinctions between them lying in the different actions in which each is implicated. Such cases argue that it is more profitable to consider what a lexical item <u>does</u> in the context of talk than what it <u>means</u>.

II. ON SYNONYMY

There are, it seems, no perfect synonyms: many apparent synonyms differ with respect to the speech communities which use them, or the terms with which they collocate, or degrees of formality. So, to take some familiar examples, *autumn* and *fall* differ because the former is used in British English, the latter in American English; *lunch* and *dinner* are regional variants in British English for referring to the midday meal; *rancid* collocates with butter and bacon, while *stale* collocates with other types of food; *hi* is the informal version of *hello*, and so on. The above distinctions are surely grossly apparent, and available to anyone who (in the case of the first two examples) makes the transition from one speech community to another or (in the latter two) is simply a competent user of the language. In other words, they are determinable by reference to either the populations who use them or the contexts of their use. This much would seem to be utterly uncontroversial. And yet: what I shall suggest in what follows is that <u>how</u> synonyms differ in many cases is anything but grossly apparent, and that 'the contexts of their use' may go far beyond issues of collocation or register; indeed, that it is only by dint of empirical investigation into the <u>interactional</u> contexts of their use that we can establish the distinctions between them. Even in the case of what I have just called 'grossly apparent' distinctions, empirical investigation has provided some startling findings that can subvert intuition. The simplest —and most striking— case in point is that relating to the near-synonyms given above, *hello* and *hi.* What can any methodology add to the characterisation of the difference between them as lying in 'degrees of formality'? Well, work in CA has indeed added to what we know about the contexts of their use. Precisely this distinction is broached in Schegloff's (1986) examination of the beginnings of phone conversations. In his discussion of the first speaking tum in a phone call, Schegloff found that, in his corpus of 450 calls, speakers' first tum when picking up the phone is recurrently 'Hello'. By contrast, it is in the following context (from Schegloff, 1986:121) that 'hi' is deployed in this tum (arrowed):

Mom: Terrific, listen, l'll call you back.
Ed: O.K.
Mom: All right, in about one minute.

             ((ring))
Ed:→   Hi.
Mom: Hello there. I just got some more coffee. We um went to
             see the Rineholts last night.

The context for 'hi' here is clearly what Schegloff characterises as 'call you right back' circumstances (1986:121) in which two parties conclude one conversation with the agreement that one will call back having done some specified task. When the phone rings at a time compatible with the task having been done, the answerer may produce 'hi' instead of 'hello' to display 'super-confidente' in the identity of the caller. The difference between 'hello' and 'hi' in such contexts —responses to the ringing phone— is that between displaying that one does not, or does, know who is calling. The alternative to the 'hi' option in such contexts, Schegloff notes, is 'yeah/yes'; he goes on to note, therefore, that "hi' is a variant (contextually specified) of 'yeah' rather than of 'hello''(*ibid.*) Now the finding that 'yeah' and 'hi' are variants, rather than —in this context— 'hello' and 'hi', seems to me one which lies beyond our powers of introspection, and only reachable by the sort of exquisitely detailed attention to context across a wide set of parallel cases shown in this study. What analysis across a set of cases makes possible is the specification of the <u>action</u> being prosecuted in the tum to which the object of attention belongs; thus one deviant case in a corpus of around 500 calls led Schegloffto establish that the hello which provides the first tum in a telephone encounter was not, as might be assumed, a greeting, but in fact the answer to the summons of the ringing phone (Schegloff, 1967, 1968); 'hi' and 'yeah' are thus forms of answers rather than forms of greetings. Crucial to this analysis is the understanding of how the <u>position</u> of a tum —in such cases, after the ringing of a phone— as well as its <u>composition</u> (Schegloff, 1995a:196) is criterial to establishing the <u>action</u> it performs. In what follows I shall argue that it is in its concem with action that CA has the most to offer linguistics, and I offer here a case in point.

III. 'ACTUALLY' AND 'IN FACT' AS SYNONYMS

In the course of conducting research on the adverbial marker actually in English talk-in-interaction (which appeared as Clift, 2001), it became clear that existing work recurrently treated actually as virtually synonymous with *in fact*, with one rendered in terms of the other for dictionary definitions: thus, Webster*'s* New Collegiate Dictionary defines actually as 'in act or in fact; really'; etymologically,'in act or fact' is recorded as early as the sixteenth century (Onions, 1966; Partridge, 1965). More recently, pragmatic research on actually (Smith and Jucker, 2000) focusing on propositional attitudes also examines *in fact*; and a historical account of the development of *in fact* briefly touches on the development of actually as a so-called 'discourse marker' (Schwenter and Traugott, 2000). Consistent with their focus on the modification of propositional attitudes —and specifically the negotiation of discrepant attitudes—, Smith and Jucker claim that *in fact* 'appears to negotiate the strength of claims on the floor' (2000:216), specifically upgrading and strengthening a claim made. Schwenter and Traugott propose a similar use: that *in fact* can be used 'for the purpose of strengthening (a) rhetorical stance at that point in the discourse' (2000:22). Both of these proposals appear reasonable and perfectly consistent with interactional data; it would seem, moreover, that in the

following, *in fact* could well be substituted for *actually* with little difference in meaning:

(1)   (H(X)C-1-1-3:2; P=Phil; L=Lesley)

1P→   She'll come home .hhh in FACT I think she's staying
         home then .hh[hh
2L   [Yes.

What remains to be established, however, is what precisely *in fact* does here that *actually* could not; how, in other words, *actually* and *in fact* differ in their interactional implementation within sequences of action.

IV. POSITIONING MATTERS: THE CASE OF 'ACTUALLY'

My purpose in investigating *actually* was different from previous studies in its focus on the placement of *actually* in a turn and the position of that turn within a wider interactional sequence. It emerged that both of these factors —placement in a turn, and position in sequence— was highly consequential for the action being prosecuted. In three sequential environrnents —informings, repair and topic movement— the placement of *actually* prosecuted a distinct action when placed at the beginning of a turn or turn-constructional unit from when placed at the end. Turn-constructional units (henceforth TCUs) are the components of which turns are composed; they may comprise sentences, clauses, lexical items or non-lexical features such as response cries (Goffman, 1981:116) and 'can constitute possibly complete turns; on their possible completion, transition to a next speaker becomes <u>relevant</u> (although not necessarily accomplished)' (Schegloff, 1996:55; see Schegloff, 1996, for a discussion of how speakers recognize possible TCU beginnings and ends). So, for example, in the environment of what I called topic movement (Clift, 2001), the placement of *actually* was seen to be consequential for whether the speaker is initiating topic *change,* as in (2) and (3), or topic *shift* (Maynard, 1980), as in (4) and (5) (actually-marked turns are arrowed):

(2)
(C:43:1; BBC Radio 4 'Start the Week'; S=Sue Wilson, TV Pmducer; M=Melvyn Bragg, interviewer. S is the producer of a TV drama series set in some science laboratories; she has just explained how the Cavendish laboratory at Cambridge organizes open days for school pupils)

1S   [(h)<u>A</u>nd that's very good because (.) they
2   do that at the end of summer term so befo:re these youngsters
3   [in the fourth form have made their choi:ce, en the idea is=
4M   [mm
5S   =if you turn them on to the ex↑ci:tement of Physics perhaps
6   those g(h)irls .h will then make a decision to do Physics at <u>A</u>:

7   level. En then go <u>o::n</u> en do it,
8   (.)
9M   I'm ↑very touched by your belief in the inpyu- in the
10   impro:ving (k)uh- possibilities of tele- popular television
11→   actual[ly,
12S   [..hh well I think the point is that you ↑CA:n't really
13   do it as a documentary, (I mean) first of all, television IS
14   the media isn't it...

(3)
(HX[~5:1; L=Lesley; M=Mum)

1L   .hhh Oh: hello I've just bin watching the fi:lm on:
2   Channel Fou:r. Have you- are you seeing i[t
3M   [What is it.
4   (0.4)
5L   .hhh Oh it's a lovely film. i-lt's-u it's about this
6   ma:n who's got to get rid'v a turke:y (0.3) .p.hhh an:d
7   eighty four pou:nds to a poor family f'Christmas:.
8M   Oh: hnh-[hn
9L   [An' he's having the most awful difficulty:
10   he[h heh
11M→   [Oh:. Yah. We've js c'm in fr'm chu:rch actua[lly
12L   [Oh
13   have you:
14M   Mm:.

(4)
(C:28:1. J–Julia, M=Mary. J has brought some books to give M, which she is now sorting through. M's daughter
Vanessa has been ill, which is why M has refused Vanessa's offer to cook lunch.).

1J   =(h)£I haven't bought any for a long ti- I've had a clear
2   <u>ou</u>:t,£ you (see) Jane Grigson English F<u>oo</u>d. (0.2) ↑That
3   Margaret C<u>o</u>sta's is a classic, they've repr<u>i</u>nted [it now.
4M   [Oh well
5   Vanessa'd probably lo:ve that.
6   (0.4)
7M   [I must tell her that. She probably kno:ws [anyway. She's
8J   [So::.   [Yes, now.
9M   =always reading books [on cookery.
10J   [D'you want (.) uh- (.) does she just
11   read cookbooks,
12   (0.3)
13M   She coo:ks.
14   (0.2)
15J   Yea:s. (0.2) Yes,=
16M→   =Actually toda:y, she was (O.1) had a (0.8) complicated lunch

17   packed, a- [uh- pl<u>a</u>nned.
18J   [Mm.
19   (0.4)
20M   And I said firmly (0.2) <u>n:o::</u>.
21   (0.1)
225   Uh huh.

(5)
(C:28:1; J=Julia, M=Mary, C=Carrie. M has been complaining about highlights in her hair looking like 'blobs'. J is trying to think of the name of a good hair colourist she has heard of)

1M   [You see, 1 want the very f<u>i</u>ne ones and mine
2   ju[st=
3J   [Mm.
4M   =does great l<u>u</u>mps.
5   (0.4)
6M   [I mean I've got lumps here,=
7C?   ([Hehehe)
8J   =Well that's- (0.6) you don't kn- uh- she's called J<u>o</u>::
9   somebody who's a:: (.) she's (1.4) got a salon in London, she
10   does <u>on</u>ly c<u>o</u>louring, and [she's-
11M   [Really?
12J   Oh yes::. (0.9) And she's [(said to----)
        ...
        (15 lines omitted, during which M's husband arrives, offering a drink, and then leaves)
28J   [No, (she) says you
29   shouldn't <u>do</u>: this (front). (.) She's- she's called <u>Jo</u> someone,
30   she's an <u>ex</u>[pert
31M   [Does she have strands that sh<u>o</u>:w,
32   (0.4)
33J   Yea:[:h.
34M→   [<u>A</u>ctually: (.) a girl in John Lewis's was pinning up a
35   sk<u>i</u>rt for me: [recently,
36J   [Ye:s,
37   (0.4)
38M   I bought a s- a s<u>ui</u>t in the s<u>a</u>:le.
39   (0.8)
40M   U:hm, (0.8) a:n:d, (0.3) 1 was looking d<u>ow</u>n on her head, I mean
41   you know she was about twenty s<u>e</u>ven. (0.5) F<u>ai</u>rish. .h She had
42   (.) <u>thi</u>ckish strands, but they °l(h)ooked (.) ma:g°n<u>i</u>ficent.=
43J   =Ye:s, well that is the thing °Mary°...

In both (2) and (3), *actually* is placed at the end of a TCU, and in these cases a tum, which introduces a change of topic, such that the turn to which it is appended introduces a topic disjunctive with what preceded it. In (2) the *actually*-tagged tum (from lls.9-11) does not orient

to the prior turn, instead introducing a new topic. In (3) Lesley has clearly embarked on a description of the film which, judging by 1.9, she has not finished by the time Mum has responded in 1.11. Lesley's oh-marked —and overlapping— response to Mum's announcement in 1.11 (talk about the church service is continued subsequently) confirms the change to a new topic.

By contrast to these two actuallys placed TCU- and tum-finally, in (4) and (5) actually is placed at the beginning of a TCU and turn; in this position it serves as a 'touch-off marker' (Sacks, 1992a:761; 1992b:88-92; Schegloff, 1992:1330). In marking a shift of topical direction triggered by prior talk, actually in this position serves to launch a story; the character with which it invests its TCU —that of an observation or anecdote that has just been triggered— serves to suggest that it is something in the prior talk which has served as that trigger. Thus within the general domain of topic movement, the position of actually in the TCU and turn has implications for the kind of movement —change or shift— is thereby signalled.

Examining data with respect to the actions being performed allows us to identify very clearly those distinctions between lexical items which appear synonymous. Thus the data collected for infact yielded no instances of *in fact* which were implicated in topic shift or topic change, like actually. In this way one whole domain of activity is provided for with actually that is not available to infact.

V. 'ACTUALLY' AND 'IN FACT' IN SEQUENCES OF ACTION

Just as the positioning of actually was seen to be consequential in the environment of topic movement, so was it equally relevant to the other two environments investigated: informings and self-repair. Thus in self-repairs, in TCU-final position, actually marks its TCU as a parenthetical insert:

(6)
(H:1:1; L=Lesley, F=Foster. L has rung up F to check that there will be no Sunday school that week.)

1F   T's & group service'n the evening whi[ch is very suitable=
2L   [Yes.
3F   =f' youngsters.
4   (.)
5L   Yes.=l js s-u thought l'd che:ck=
6F   =M[m:.
7L   [l:n case there wz a: misprin:[t. °(Again.)°
8F   [Yes no no we're havin:g
9→   ehm: (0.4) w'l l'm away actually b't uh: it's just a group
10 Sundee,
11L Yes.

Here, an explanation of what will happen on Sunday in 1.8 is abandoned as Foster repairs an

implication, attached to 'we', that he will be there in the actually-marked TCU; 'but' marks his reversion to the original point, of which he then produces an amended version. The resumption of his original explanation gives the actually-marked TCU its parenthetical character, without which the following TCU would appear disjunctive.

In TCU-initial position, by contrast, actually launches a new topical trajectory:

(7)
(C:1:1. G=Gill, A=Alice, M=Mike, H=Harriet. The bathroom wall has been stripped ready for redecorating, and parts are crumbling off)

```
1G    If- ↑when you wash your hai:r, (0.3) try not to: (0.6)
2A    Why ↑↑wh[at do 1 do no::w,
3G                [swish::: (0.8) too much (0.2) of the wa::ll, (0.2)
4     off (.) into the ba:th,
5     (0.5)
6A    ↑l ↑DO::N'::T:.
7     (0.4)
8G    No 1 mean at the minute.
9     (0.8)
10A   l ↑do:n't though.=
11G   =Cos l just cleaned the bath, yet again.
12    (0.4)
13A   Well ↑l cleaned the bath the other day and it's sti:ll uhm
14    coming off,
15    (0.1)
16G   Well l kno:w, (0.2) but try not to swish the shower around the
17    walls.
18    (1)
19A   You end up having a bath and coming out more dirty than you
20    went in.=
21G   =(----) brown bits.
22    (0.8)
23A   Yea::h.
24    (1.2)
25A   Happened when l washed my face the other day anyway.
26    (1.4)
27G→  Well I've been up and reclea:ned- actually he's miraculous at
28    cleaning up.
29    (0.9)
30M   Yes he [is.
31G          [He cleans up better than anybody we've [ever ha:d.
32H                                                  [Rally.
```

In (7) Gill's actually-marked TCU forms part of a response to a challenging complaint in lls.19-20 by Alice over the state of the bathroom. This complaint itself follows from Alice's own

apparent understanding of lls.1 and 3-4 as a complaint against her, and Gill's subsequent attempts, never fully accepted, in 1.8 to persuade her that she has misunderstood, and in 1.16-17 to clarify what she originally said. Gill's first response to the complaint is an apparent attempt, in 1.21, through a hearably affiliative description, to sympathize – one which, judging by Alice's agreement in 1.23 and subsequent mitigation in 1.25, does indeed secure a partial backing down. However, the initial projection adumbrated by this beginning of 1.27 is that Gill is meeting Alice's challenge ('well' here again signalling a potential upcoming objection to the prior tum) by detailing her own possible attempt to clean the bathroom. Given that Gill was beginning to say, in what clearly amounts to a counter move, and in what may be a reiteration of some of the substance of her 1.11, 'well I've been up and recleaned...' it is possible to conjecture that she is thereby 'reminded' that there was relatively little to do as 'he's miraculous at cleaning up'. The product of that reminder represents a shifi away from the potential counter challenge towards a summary assessment designed to elicit agreement —which it duly gets, at least from Mike— and potentially termination of the sequence. Thus the actuaffy-prefaced TCU serves to propose a new topical line, one taken up, if not by Alice, by two others present.

Again, a striking feature of the *in*fact data is its absence in self-repair. Another look at (1) confirms that Phil is not replacing what he has just said with the *in*fact-marked TCU, but adding to it:

(1)   (H(X)C-1-1-3:2; P=Phil; L=Lesley)

1P→   She'll come home .hhh in FACT I think she's staying
    home then .hh[hh
2L   [Yes.

Thus 'she'll come home' is not deleted by *in*fact, as the TCU-tagged *actually* serves to delete part of its prior TCU in (6), but here added to. Indeed, the *in*fact data set as a whole shows that, far from displaying the disjunctive qualities of actuaffy, *in*fact serves to link one TCU —the TCU to which it is appended, in initial position— back to the one before it:

(8)   (H(X)C-1-1-3:2; L=Lesley; P=Phil)
1L   [Well 'f's anything you c'n (.) we c'n do:
    let us know.
2P   .phh Uh:m:: (.) no I think we're: s:orta (.) fairly
3→   well or:ganized in FACT uh .hh Vanessa's:: uh:m (0.9)
4   Vanessa's: home:: for a few- .hh few days she: .hhhh
5   1 don't know she u-she had a:: a week's holiday: (0.2)
6   that she had t'take before the end a'th'year 1 think'n
7   she deci't'take it this weeken:d[so she's .hhh here=

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8L                                              [Yes.
9P       =for a few days 'n'en I think she's in: London for a
10   day or two'n then back 'e:[re for two .hhhh
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(9)   (from Schegloff, 1996:57; TG:4:35; B=Bee; A=Ava)

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1B       Eh-yih have anybuddy: thet uh:? (1.2) I would know from
2        the English depar'mint there?
3A       Mm-mh. Tch! I don't think so.
4B       °Oh, =<Did they geh ridda Kuhleznik yet hhh
5A-3     No in fact I know somebuddy who ha:s huh [now.
6B                                                     [Oh my got hh[hhh
A                                                                    [Yeh...
```

Thus in both of the above extracts, *in fact* is TCU-initial, but not tum-initial; one (in 9) or more (in 8) TCUs occupy the turn before it. It would seem, then, that *in fact* is designed specifically to occupy a position after the first TCU of a tum. What are the implications, then, for the actions in which it is deployed, and how does this compare with what we know about *actually?* Recall that both topic movement and self-repair make use of *actually* but not *infact*. The environment in which both seem to be implicated is informings, and it is this to which we now turn.

V.1. 'Actually' in informings

In contrast to what we have seen of the position of *infact, actually* may be placed, not just TCU-finally and -initially, but also turn-finally (as in 10) and -initially (as in 11):

(10)   (H:(2)H7&~2:2; L=Lesley; G=Gwen)

```
1L       An' he's just had a fortnight with his mothe:r,
2G   Ye:s?
3        (0.5)
4L   An' he's going off to have a- a week with his siste:r
5    an' you know there's a third grandchi:ld do you?
6    (.)
7G   Ah:::m (.) n:no I think I wz only aware of two
8-3  actua[lly.
9L        [Mm:. There's a third one,
10       (.)
11G   Well with Hele:ne.
12   (0.7)
13L   °I s'poze so:,"
```

(11)   (H:HU&~3:1; G=Gordon; D=Dana)

```
1G   How are you.
2    (0.5)
3D   I['m okay
4G    [.tplk
5    (.)
6G   .pk Good,
7    (0.5)
8D→    Actually I'm no[t but (.) the(h)re we go:,=
9G             [.hhh
10G  =.hhhh ehhhhe:hh .hh But (.) yih (.) you are but you're
11   not. .hh[h (sniff) Hey listen I'm sorry about last=
12D         [(Right)
13G  =ni:ght, .hmhh
14D  [Mm:,
15G  [.km.tch I didn't think your mum would go (0.5) .pt.k
     over the top,hh
```

Nowhere are the differing consequences of placement so strikingly illustrated as in the context of informings. In TCU-final position, actually is an explicit marker of informing —thus in (10), a question which is built to prefer 'yes' (see Schegloff, 1988 on preference), gets a 'no' answer. In TCU-initiai position, by contrast, actually serves to indicate a 'change of mind': a revision of the speaker's own prior tum. With respect to positioning, it is with this instantiation of actually that *in fact* bears some comparison; but by the same token, it is also this which allows us to see the distinctions in use very clearly.

V.2. 'In fact' as tagging a subsequent TCU

The most obvious difference, suggested by the earlier observation that *in fact* is not used in self-repair, but confirmed by the sort of case represented by (11), is that *in fact* does not seek to replace what it follows, as does actually in (11). In being placed tum-initially, actually serves to revise —indeed reverse— the stance taken up in the prior tum. The position of *in fact* —TCU-but not tum-initial — gives it no such scope over prior tum, but serves, as we have noted, to link its TCU to its predecessor. And, as we noted with respect to (1), the infact-marked TCU seems in some sense to add to its prior; the following cases show very clearly that infact introduces an upgrade on what is offered in the first TCU of the tum:

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(12) (HX:2:2; D=Dana; M=Mark; D asks after Mark's daughter)
1D                    [Yeh b't wuh] where is she
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2D   now[Mark?
3M   [She's st<u>i</u>ll at Yo:rk she's: she's: gone b<u>a</u>ck to
4   York University to do 'er Ph.<u>D</u>:, whi[ch is angther (.)
5D   [Yes,
6M   three years well (.) bit'll be another t<u>wo</u> years,=
7D   =[Ye:h?
8M   =[.hhhhhhh <u>u</u>h:: before she gets tha:t?h .hhhhh h<u>U</u>h:::m
9   (0.2) .p.hhhhh h<u>A</u>nd she's: uh::: sh' s<u>ee</u>ms pr<u>e</u>tty
10→   h<u>a</u>ppy up the:re (0.2) fact very h<u>a</u>ppy..h[hhhh
11D   [<u>O</u>h goo:[d.

(13) (H5:3; M=Mike; L=Lesley)

1M   [Bec<u>u</u>z (.) you know (.) the w<u>ea</u>ther
2   is n<u>o</u>t v(h)<u>e</u>ry (.) pr<u>o</u>misi[ng
3L   [.hhh (0.2) No–:. <u>O</u>kay,h[h
4M   [They
5   pr<u>o</u>mise <u>us snow</u> here th<u>is</u> afternoon[(----------------)]=
6L   [<u>Oh</u>:. No: we've got]=
7M   =[(---)
8L   =[<u>We-:-:</u> haven' got sn<u>o</u>w[here,
9M   [No
10   (0.2)
11L→   .hhh In f<u>a</u>ct we've got blue sk<u>y</u> outsi[de
12M   [Rihhght a<u>w</u>::
13   hu-hu .hh B't I th<u>i</u>:nk yo<u>u</u>:- you kn<u>o</u>:w? you n<u>e</u>ver
14   kn<u>o</u>w d<u>o</u> you.

In (12), 'pretty happy' is upgraded to 'very happy', the upgrade signalled by the infact which follows it;[1] in (13) 'We haven' got snow here' upgraded in a similar manner to 'we've got blue sky outside' —the positive 'blue sky' constituting a stronger case than the negative 'no snow' for Lesley to contrast with Mike's claim about snow in his area. In both of the above cases, the infact-tagged TCU follows a slight pause: an opportunity for the recipient to respond to the first claim made. In (12) there is no response, in (13) a minimal one in overlap ('No' at 1.9) before the end of Lesley's turn. The infact-tagged TCU may be seen in both cases as an upgrade in response to the lack of engaged uptake by the recipient, and the speaker's attempt to buttress the case originally made in the initial TCU in order to pursue a more engaged response. The subsequent uptake by the recipients of the infact-tagged TCU duly indicates an embrace of the claim being made[2].

V.3. 'In fact' in intensifying action
In deploying 'in fact' to herald the upgrade of a claim made in a prior TCU, speakers are thus

able to intensifj the action being formed up in a turn. Thus in (12) and (13) claims are escalated; and in the following two fragments, the infact-tagged tums serve to step up the degree of reassurance being done by the speaker:

(14)   (H(X):9:1; M=Moira; L=Lesley)

```
1M    Les I just wanted a'_sa:y .hhhhh eh:m::: .t I'm sorry
2     about what I hea::rd abou:t (.) an' I'm not being nosey
3        is there anything I c'n do: or (.) can I help in any
4        wa[y o::]r would you]rather not]talk about it. ]
5L    [eh:: ]he h heh ]What about]the bu::rgelar ]
6     (0.2)
7M    .t Ye:s
8        (.)
9L    Uhhh! .hh (.) No:::. It's very kind of you: .h
10–1  No:::. .hh In fact (.) we thought it wz killingly
11       funny really,
12       (0.4)
13M   Oh: good.
```

(15)   (H5/88:1:5:5; R=Rob; L=Lesley. R. and L. are comparing experiences of a class they both teach; L. has been commiserating with R. with respect to the tight space in the class)

```
44R   Oh [↑I do feel]better I thought it wz me being a lousy=
45L       [.tlk .hhh ]
46R   =te[a:che[r
47L→     [.hhh [Oh no: eh in fact I've not missed .hhhh uh
48       being there- (0.3) much at a:ll. this ter:[m, [becuz=
49R                                              [(Ye:[s
50L   =u-uh:m 1 use t'get e- (.) .hhhh really quite de↑pressed
51       ↓in that staff room,
```


In both fragments, the infact speaker (as it happens, the same speaker in each case) responds with some force to a proposal made by the other. In (14) Moira has phoned to offer Lesley help after a burglary, but hedges her offer with a proposal that she might 'rather not talk about it'. After clarifjing the business which Moira —displaying an orientation to the potential delicacy of the situation— has left inexplicit ('what I heard about', l.2), Lesley first produces an exclamation, then a counter to Moira's proposal and an appreciation ('Uhhhh! No:::. It's very kind of you', l.9), before reiterating the counter and then producing the infact-tagged upgrade. The upgrade serves not just to contradict what was proposed but to completely subvert it; far from the burglary being something too distressing to discuss, 'we thought it wz killingly funny

really' (lls.10-11). This same subversive **property** of the infact-tagged TCU is evident in (15), where Rob has produced a self-deprecation in lls. 44-6 and Lesley —in conformity with the **preference** for disagreement with a prior self-deprecation (Schegloff, 1988)— moves with alacrity to contradict it. Her oh-prefaced 'no' **serves** to contradict his stance with considerable vehemence, marking strong disagreement (Heritage, 2002).[3] That disagreement —in conformity with the sequence-expansion **relevance** of such actions in general (see Schegloff, 1995b)— is followed by in *fact*, introducing a claim designed to further **reassure** Rob and undermine his claim regarding his **own** capabilities: Lesley's **own** negative experience of the same place.

Extracts (13), (14) and (15) all show infact-tagged TCUs as operating in the environment of 'no'-type responses. In each the speaker's in fact follows a **first** item which takes a counterpositional stance to a prior speaker's tum (although as (15) shows, this need not necessarily be an antagonistic one). Indeed, returning to (8) and (9), reproduced in excerpted form here, we can see that they, too, are similar cases:

(8)   (H(X)C-1-1-3:2; L=Lesley; P=Phil)
1L   [Well 'f's anything you c'n (.) we c'n do:
    let us know.
2P   .phh Uh:m:: (.) no I think we're: s:orta (.) fairly
3-1   well or:ganized in FACT uh .hh Vanessa's:: uh:m (0.9)
4   Vanessa's: home:: for a few- .hh few days

(9)   (from Schegloff, 1996:57; TG:4:35; B=Bee; A=Ava)

1B   Eh-yih have anybuddy: thet uh:? (1.2) 1 would know from
2   the English depar'mint there?
3A   Mm-mh. Tch! I don't think so.
4B   °Oh, =<Did they geh ridda Kuhleznik yet hhh
5A-1   No in fact 1 know somebuddy who ha:s huh [now.

Extract (8) shows the declination of an offer of help; (9) displays a negative answer to a question. Both again are expanded responses in the environment of dispreferred actions. As Schegloff notes with respect to (9), Ava's 'no' in 1.5 **also** risks being heard as the second **rejection** of a topic proffer **from** Bee (the first **occurring** at 1.1, the second at 1.4) and its prosodic delivery is thus designed to interdict such a hearing (Schegloff, 1996:58) and so **provide** for another TCU.[4] The design of the **turn,** and the placement of infact, may thus be **seen** to be sensitive not just to tum-organisational but **also** to sequence-organisational factors: the position of a lexical item **within** a tum and the position of that turn within its wider sequence is **criterial** to what any item is understood to be doing. Thus in the exception to the cases cited above, where the in *fact*-tagged turn is not in the environment of a 'no'-type tum, we see that the infact-tagged TCU is produced **some** way into an account which is offered as an answer to a question:

(12) (HX:2:2; D=Dana; M=Mark; D asks after Mark's daughter)
1D   [Yeh b't w<u>u</u>h] where is she
2D   now[Mark?
3M   [She's st<u>i</u>ll at Yo:rk she's: she's: gone <u>back</u> to
4   York Universiiy to do 'er Ph.<u>D</u>:, whi[ch is a<u>n</u>gther (.)
5D   [Yes,
6M   <u>three</u> years well (.) bit'll be another <u>two</u> years,=
7D   =[Ye<u>:</u>h?
8M   =[.hhhhhhh <u>u</u>h:: before she gets tha<u>:</u>t?h .hhhhh h<u>U</u>h:::m
9   (0.2) .p.hhhhh h<u>A</u>nd she's: uh::: sh' s<u>ee</u>ms pr<u>e</u>tty
10→   h<u>a</u>ppy up the<u>:</u>re (0.2) fact v<u>er</u>y happy..h[hhhh
11D   [<u>O</u>h goo:[d.

Unlike the cases in extracts (8) and (9), and (13) to (15), the speaker's upgrade is not motivated by the necessity to build a counter-position to an interlocutor's stance; it is instead **part** of an answer to an inquiry about the whereabouts (and, by implication, wellbeing) of the other's offspring. Mark's upgrade in 1.10 from 'pretty happy' to 'very happy' gets a **highly** affiliative' receipt token from Deena, 'oh good', marking her receipt of the answer to her question. Note that Mark's **response** is possibly complete earlier, at 1.8 after ' …**before** she gets that', but Deena **does** not respond at this point. Given Deena's withholding of a **response here, and,** as we **have** noted, after 'pretty happy up there' (1.1O), it would seem that Mark's upgrade is designed to **secure** just the **sort** of receipt it **does** indeed get. **And** in the example from which (1) is taken we can **also** see that the wider sequential context of the placement of in fact shows the TCU to which it is appended doing the job of reassurance; it comes, at 1.15, in **response** to the offer of help discussed with **reference** to extract (8), after a first infact-tagged TCU at 1.3:

(16)
(H(X)C-1-1-3:2; L=Lesley; P=Phil)
1L   [Well 'f s <u>a</u>nything you c'n (.) we c'n do:
    <u>let</u> us know.
2P   .phh Uh:m:: (.) n<u>o</u> l think we're: s:orta (.) fairly
3→   well or:ganized in FACT uh .hh Vanessa's:: uh:m (0.9)
4   Vanessa's: horne:: for a few- .hh few days sh<u>e</u>: .hhhh
5   l don't know she u-she had a:: a week's h<u>o</u>liday: (0.2)
6   that she had t'<u>take</u> before the end a'th'y<u>ear</u> l think'n
7   she dec<u>i</u>'t'take it th<u>is</u> weeken:d[so she's .hhh here=
8L   [Yes.
9P   =for a few days 'n'en l think she's in: London for a
10   day or tw<u>o</u>'n then back 'e:[re for two .hhhh Melissa's=
11L   [Yes

12P =coming ho:me 'nd uh
13   (0.5)
14L Yes.
15P→ She'll come home .hhh in FACT I think she's staying
16   home then .hh[hh
17L   [Yes.
18P when she comes home on Monday she'll uh I think she's
19   comin' in sometime Mondee 'n uh .hwhh stayin:g over
20   then (.) for the holiday

What these examples show us, then, is that in each case, *in fact* marks an intensification of the action being formed up by the speaker. Furthermore, it is only upon examination of those actions within their wider sequences that we can apprehend the interactional work in which this item is implicated.

VI. POSITION AND COMPOSITION AS UNDERMINING SYNONYMY

I hope to have given some sense now of the interactional differences between two items which are often regarded as synonymous.[5] Those differences, as we have seen, may initially be identified with reference to the position of each in a tum-at-talk, and the composition of that turn. The position of both *actually* and *in fact* was seen to be highly consequential for the action being performed by the tum inhabited by each, and for the subsequent trajectory of the talk. However, while —except for cases of self-repair— it is common for *actually* to be placed at the beginning or ends of tums as well as TCUs, this was not the case for *in fact,* which is routinely placed at the beginning of TCUs but not at the beginnings of tums. *In fact* is thus used to preface subsequent, rather than initial, TCUs in a turn (see Schegloff, 1996, for a detailed discussion of the relationship between TCUs in a turn). As a device for intensifying action, *in fact* may thus be seen as performing very different actions from *actually*. It is, for example, conspicuously absent from the environments of self-repair and topic movement inhabited by *actually*.

What is central to the analysis provided here, and missing from linguistic accounts with their focus on meaning, is of course an account of the *action* within which a given lexical item is embedded. This suggests that it is only by preserving lexical items in their contexts of use —in their tums and those turns in their sequences— for the purposes of analysis, that we can really start to lever open the distinctions which the term 'synonymy' collapses. If we abstract out of those contexts into sentences or utterances, it may make sense to talk of similarities or differences of meaning; but this is ultimately to neglect the interactional projects of the participants themselves, who use linguistic items to *do* things rather than for what they mean.

NOTES

[1] The fact that the 'in' of *in fact* is not identifiable by the transcriber and so not on the transcription only serves to emphasise how the action being performed makes what is said recognisable as 'in fact' despite part of that item being 'missing'. The importance of posiiion —here, the placement of 'fact' between a first item and its upgrade— is again underlined.

[2] Both (12) and (13) share another similarity, which is that in each case before the *in fact* speaker produces the TCU which will subsequently be upgraded by *in fact*, slhe starts to produce a claim which is aborted in its telling in order to downgrade what is said: it is the downgrade which subsequently gets upgraded with the *in fact*-marked TCU. So in (12), Mark starts a TCU 'And she's: uh:::' before self-repairing to 'sh'seems': and Lesley in (13) starts a TCU 'No: we've got' before self-repairing to 'We haven' got': the product of the self-repair is hearably weaker than what was starting to be said. The eventual case that is made is thus made incrementally in contrast to a case which is strong from the outset.

[3] Heritage proposes that 'oh'-prefaced assessments, such as this one, index the speaker's stance of epistemic independence from the assessment to which it is responsive. He notes that in his data set he found no instances of 'oh'-prefaced disagreeing turns which were first disagreements and only such turns as were disagreements with prior disagreements: he remarks that the significance of 'oh'- prefacing iiidisagreement contexts 'is unambiguously one of escalation and intensification of disagreemen t' (xx)...'. The above 'oh'-prefacing is, however, to a disagreement in first position. But in this position it only serves to underline Heritage's observation: if 'oh'-prefaced disagreements are routinely deployed in second position, the 'oh'-prefacing here proposes the escalation of an earlier claim even though this was not formulated. It thereby further upgrades the disagreement which follows.

[4] Schegloff also notes of this extract that the *in fact* construction here: '(in common with many "actually" and "as a matter of fact" constructions) serves to relate the TCU which it initiates to its predecessor: this practice can be used to indicate that what follows has a contemporary relevance to the speaker other than that created by the question just asked, and that what it is abo ut has a reality and "facticity" independent of the circumstance prompting the talk which it introduces. Its effect is often to re gister a so-called "coincidence" (Schegloff. 1996:63). The 'coincidence'-like propeny of *actually* only holds for certain contexts, as discussed in Clift (2001): in informings when the negative polarity of a first pair part is subverted by the positive polarity of its second. In the case of *in fact*, this property does indeed appear to be more salient. In the following extract, the speaker verbalises this sense of coincidence ('at the moment as we speak', 1.12):

```
11:2:03:3
1S       [That that, that's good it well it's useful tuh
2     have a co:nta:ct y'know [even if it doesn'l come to anything=
3L                       [O h  I think  so.]
4S    =I c'n (.) I c'n I-I (.) I still kno:w (.) several people in
5     print'nd .hhh[hh
6L               [Yes I[' m   s u r e Iyou've go[t  f a r   m-]
7S                    [they're getti-]        [they're getti]n:g
8     thrown out as we:ll so I mean that- that w'd be quite useful
9     f(h)or him as well you know .h[hhh
10L                             [Ye:s.
11S→   A::nd u-and an' in fact I have a- (0.9) a friend in, in mind
12    at the moment as you speak, .tch who's uh .hhh jus' recently
13    lost his job he wz a (0.3) f'nance director. .t.hhh (.)
14    i[n th'printing industry eed been in print abou:t I don'kno:w
15L    ['Oh-'
16    (.)
17S   twenty fi:ve (0.3) odd years I s'poze '(b[ut)' .tch.hhhhhhhh
18L                                      [Yes.
19S   So there it i:s.
```

[5] It has only been possible here to give the briefest of overviews, concentrating on but one sequential position of *in fact*: that as TCU-initial but not turn-initial. There are of course other possibilities for the placement of *in fact* that lie beyond the scope of the current paper.

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APPENDIX: Transcription conventions

The transcripts are notated according to the system developed by Gail Jefferson, with the following conventions (adapted from Ochs et al. 1996:461-5):

[Separate left square brackets, one above the other on two successive lines with utterances by different speakers, indicates a point of overlap onset.

]   Separate right square brackets, one above the other on two successive lines with utterances by different speakers indicates a point at which two overlapping utterances both end, where one ends while the other continues, or simultaneous moments in overlaps which continue:

```
J       So you'd like to go fir:s::[t [Well that's]    [very]=
L                         [Oh[first or se]co:n[: d ]=
```

=   Equal signs ordinarily come in pairs – one at the end of a line and another at the start of the next line or one shortly thereafter. They are used to indicate two things:

(1)   If the two lines of transcription connected by the signs are by the sarne speaker, then here was a single, continuous utterance with no break or pause, which was broken up in order to accommodate the placement of overlapping talk:

```
M       If I've got to pa:rk, (.) in a tricky position [and I look fit=
A                                                        [Yep.
M       =enough and 1 think (0.3) .h l drive out and I think no way am l
```

(2)   If the lines connected by the signs are by different speakers, then the second followed the first with no discernable silence between them, or was 'latched' to it.

```
M       So ↑actually it ↑is an idea you know,=
A       =Well if it just saves you walk- when YOU're (.) NOT well.
```

(0.5)   Numbers in parentheses indicate silence, represented in tenths of a second. Silences may be marked either within turns or between them.

(.)   A dot in parentheses indicates a 'micropause', ordinarily less than 2/10ths of a second.
         These options are represented below:

```
V       No::.
        (0.7)
M       Uh:: and sometimes I really (0.3) if l have to walk for a hundred
```

yards I think oh °go:d° (0.2) you know (.) [I can't <u>do</u> this...

.?,   The punctuation marks indicate intonation. The period indicates a falling, or final intonation contour, not necessarily the end of a sentence. A question mark indicates a rising intonation, not necessarily a question, and a comma indicates 'continuing' intonation, not necessarily a clause boundary.

...   Colons are used to indicate prolongation or stretching of the sound preceding them. The more colons, the longer the stretching. On the other hand, graphically stretching a word on the page by inserting blank spaces between the letters of the word does not indicate how it was pronounced; it is used to allow alignment with overlapping talk. Thus:

D   **No: Scottish as i:n .hhh li[ke Sc[ott I mean]**
G   **[.hahh[l s e e :.]**

-      A hyphen after a word or part of a word indicates a cut-off or self-interruptions, often done with a glottal or dental stop.

<u>wo</u>rd   Underlining is used to indicate some form of stress or emphasis, either by increased loudness or higher pitch.

WORD   Especially loud talk relative to that which surrounds it may be indicated by upper case.

"word" The degree signs indicate that the talk between them is markedly softer than the talk around them.

↑↓   The up or down arrows mark particularly emphatic rises or falls in pitch.

>word<   The combination of 'more than' and 'less than' symbols indicates that the talk between them is compressed or rushed.

hh   Hearable aspiration is shown where it occurs in the talk by the letter 'h': the more 'h's, the more aspiration.

.hh   If the aspiration is an inhalation it is preceded by a dot.

£word£   Word or words enclosed by pound sterling signs indicate the word is articulated through a hearably smiling voice.