

ISBN978-4-89476-843-7

C3080 ¥3800E

定価 3800 円＋税



青山学院大学
総合研究所叢書

青山学院大学総合研究所叢書

一 発話のはじめと終わり

語用論的調節のなされる場所

小野寺典子 編



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Periphery: Where Pragmatic Meaning is Negotiated

小野寺典子 編

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第6章

Sort/kind of at the peripheries

Metapragmatic play and complex interactional/textual effects in scripted dialog

Joseph V. Dias

1. Introduction: Why study *sort/kind of* at the left periphery and right periphery?

Even a casual perusal of a corpus, whether it be the BNC (British National Corpus), which contains mostly written samples, or COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English), which is more balanced between the spoken and written, reveals that *sort/kind of* overwhelmingly appears at medial positions in sentences or utterances. In fact, in the analysis of *sort/kind of* at the left and right peripheries that was done for this study, 99% of occurrences in COCA were found at medial positions. So, why study a phenomenon so rare and uncharacteristic of these expressions at these positions?

- Despite their rarity, native speakers do not perceive right periphery and left periphery (henceforth abbreviated LP and RP) *sort/kind of* to sound peculiar and, as we will see in cases at these positions in a Corpus of American Soap Operas (Davies, 2011), scriptwriters feel comfortable enough with this placement to use it in their representations of spoken English.
- Stand alone *sort/kind of* and occurrences at the peripheries might demon-

strate further extensions toward new syntactic, pragmatic, and semantic domains as they move to locations at the edges often taken by more established (or, at least, better documented) discourse/pragmatic markers.

- Looking at language units from a diachronic perspective, Traugott (1982) and Traugott and Dasher (2002) demonstrated that units of language from medial positions can function in stance marking and textual ways in the LP. Movement of these elements to the RP signals their use in more modalising and intersubjective ways. Despite *sort/kind of* being atypical at LP and RP, they might represent emerging usages.

So the questions that will be researched through this study will include:

- Do *sort/kind of* function in any way differently at the peripheries than they do at medial positions?
- Does *kind of* function differently than *sort of* at the peripheries?
- Do LP and RP occurrences of *sort/kind of* in actual speech differ in any appreciable way from fictional representations? In other words, might fiction writers and scriptwriters misrepresent or exaggerate LP and RP *sort/kind of* or, alternatively, might they provide insights into how they function at even deeper metalinguistic levels?

1.2 Function, position and where *sort/kind of* fit in

Beeching and Detges (2014: 1) observe that Western linguistics represents discourse, as it unfurls itself in time, as “progression from ‘left’ to ‘right.’” A corollary to the notion is that elements of language on the left and right margins will take on different functions.

When we speak of periphery, the question arises “periphery of what?”. Beeching and Detges (2014: 1–2) note that it may be defined in relation to an utterance, the argument structure, the sentence, or the turn. It might even be in connection

to an action or something occurring in the context that is nonlinguistic (e.g., a cat’s meow). For Onodera (2014: 93) the LP represents an utterance-initial position where such discourse markers as *well*, *so*, *let’s see* appear, while RP signifies the utterance-final position where we can find expressions such as *y’know* or *then*.

It would be too constraining, and difficult from a practical point of view, if we were to consider *sort/kind of* simply at the periphery of the sentence or argument structure. For one thing, at LP, the utterance is most often a sentence fragment and the referent must be sought in a previous utterance or turn, and, as we shall see, sometimes multiple utterances or turns away. In both the LP and RP positions they may serve as discourse markers that must be looked at in as wide a context as possible, so some of the examples given will display three or four utterances or turns distant from the LP or RP token in question in order to carry out an analysis using as sufficiently wide a context as possible.

1.3 Early examples of *sort/kind of* at LP/RP

For the sake of this investigation, *sort of* and *kind of* will be considered at LP if they, at minimum, are followed by some modifier made up of three words or more, and at RP if they are preceded in an utterance by three words or more, not counting other obvious pragmatic markers or backchannel expressions. When statistical comparisons are made, no case of LP *sort/kind of* followed by a comma or other punctuation mark was counted and, at RP, no cases in which they were preceded by a comma or dash were counted. Although stand-alone occurrences of *sort/kind of* were not counted as being at LP or RP, they will be briefly discussed as they often have rich interactional and textual functions and their relative distributions will give us insights into the extent of the grammaticalization of *sort of* vs. *kind of*.

Cases of *sort/kind of* at RP and LP have been discovered and documented even in the OED and, thanks to a passion for “old time radio” drama, I have discovered earlier examples in the scripts of these dramas, as the following examples, in

reverse chronological order, attest:

- (1) a. Except I feel like, well, what you're doing anyway is just sitting here and saying all these things just to tease me and to taunt me, **sort of**.

OED 1959 Psychiatry XXII. 293/1

- b. WALTER: They come from outside the solar system. **Sort of** an advance scouting party.

Series: X Minus One Show: Knock Date: May 22 1955

Available online at https://archive.org/details/OTRR_X_Minus_One_Singles

- c. (TO ELMER) What, Elmer? Oh, do you think you could? Well, if you wouldn't mind trying ... You see, I'm so nervous with him and he senses it. He's like a horse. You might ... Well, don't exactly rock him, but just a little motion, **sort of**. That's it. Well, he's quiet. You certainly know how, don't you, Elmer?

Fleischmann's Yeast Hour Show: Nurse's Day Out Date: Aug 09 1934

Available online at <http://www.oldtimeradiodownloads.com/>

The first example, taken from what seems to be an interview with a psychiatric patient, displays the sole case of *sort of*, at either LP or RP position, in the OED; no cases at all are listed for *kind of*. The second earliest example was found in a science fiction radio broadcast. In an analysis of tokens of *sort/kind of* in the five fiction subgenres in COCA carried out for this paper, science fiction was found to have the highest representation for both LP and at all positions combined (normalized for the number of tokens per million), while at RP it was second only to juvenile fiction (for *sort of*) and fictionalizations of movies (for *kind of*).

Although it is tempting to speculate that science fiction writers see the use of RP/ LP *sort/kind of* as the future, it seems to be the case that they favor it at all positions compared with writers in other genres.

Example 1C, although it is the earliest example discovered, shows a sophisticated use of multiple discourse markers (*oh, well, you see, sort of*) demonstrating remarkable metalinguistic sensibilities by the scriptwriter in using language to finesse emotional nuance and create interactional richness, processes that linguists would not begin to explore until more than 50 years later. Aijmer and Stenström (2004: 8) note that spoken English includes markers like these that are not generally considered in grammars and have, for the most part, interactive functions.

1.4 Prescriptions against *sort/kind of*

One of my earliest memories of being conscious that there was something unique about *sort/kind of* was when a nun teaching my fourth grade class made a pronouncement that she did not want to hear us sprinkling our speech with *you know, like, sorta* and *kinda* (the latter being the phonologically reduced forms of *sort/kind of*). There is no greater spur to a child's interest in something than when a nun forbids it. Much later in life I came to know that these forbidden linguistic fruits were something called discourse, or pragmatic, markers. Like other habits I was cautioned against, avoiding them proved futile.

In prescriptive grammars, even one based on the 524 million-word Bank of English corpus, pronouncements like the following can be found:

Particularly in spoken English, you may hear 'these' and 'those' used before 'sort of', 'kind of', and 'type of' followed by a plural noun, although 'sort', 'kind' and 'type' themselves are in the singular. However, many people regard this usage as ungrammatical..." (Chalker, 1996: Section 5.26, p. 86)

This leads the author to declare that the following sentence is perceived by

“many people” as ungrammatical:

I was asking her what it was like, you know, I mean, what's your weather like
and all these sort of boring questions. (Ibid, p. 28)

As will be shown later, this lack of agreement between *sort* and the plural noun is not due to a problem of careless usage, it can be traced back to a stage in the grammaticalization of *sort of* when it began to be used as a “degree modifier” (Traugott, 2008) rather than just to reference a member of a set. Inconsistent lay and pedagogical prescriptions against current usages of *sort/kind of* spring from a lack of knowledge of this heretofore invisible history, that have ultimately led to their use at the very edges of utterances and sentences, and even as complete stand-alone expressions.

2. Previous research on *sort/kind of*

As ubiquitous as they are in the English language, *sort/kind of* and the role they play both in grammar and for achieving various complex interactional undertakings have in no way been thoroughly or adequately described in the literature. The more we learn about them from corpus studies, the greater the number of quandaries arise concerning just how *kind of* is different from *sort of*, and how they came to be unshackled from their binominal roots with concrete propositional meanings to carry the rich discourse and pragmatic functions that they exhibit today.

Due to the serendipity of *sort/kind of* being part of binominal constructions, they have received considerable attention and reanalyses from a construction grammar perspective by a number of linguists (Brems, 2011; Denison, 2002 & 2005; and Traugott, 2008), who have convincingly made a case for the grammaticalization of these humble expressions. This paper will focus on the relatively

recent usages of *sort/kind of* in the forms that they have been variably referred to as “discourse markers/particles” or “adjusters” (Aijmer, 2002: 175), “free adjuncts” (Traugott, 2008: 229), or as “pragmatic markers” (Aijmer, 2008: 74). However, it will be helpful in better understanding the functions and usages of *sort/kind of* today if we review historical linguistic scholarship on the expressions.

2.1 The grammaticalization of *sort/kind of*

Traugott (2008: 219–250) considered *sort of* (and to a lesser extent *kind of*) within a diachronic analysis of degree modifiers in English. She persuasively demonstrated the path of the grammaticalization of *sort of* and fit it into a construction grammar perspective. It may best illustrate her approach by relating how *sort/kind of* are connected with the four levels of constructs/constructions that she conceptualized:

- **constructs:** tokens such as those accessed through corpora—these are considered the “locus of change” (Traugott 2008: 236) e.g., I'm sort of numb right now.
- **micro-constructions:** individual construction types e.g., From [NP1 [of NP2]] to [[NP1 of] NP2] as *sort of* moved from the sense of a set/group/class to carrying more degree marking and hedging functions.
- **meso-constructions:** sets of particular constructions that behave similarly e.g., Traugott noticed that *sort of*, *a lot of*, and *a shred of* had much in common (as degree modifiers)
- **macro constructions:** form-meaning pairing understood in terms of their structure and function e.g., degree modifier constructions in general

Grammaticalization was defined by Hopper and Traugott (2003: 1–2) as a process of language change. How, for example, lexical units in particular contexts come

to serve grammatical functions or grammatical units take on novel grammatical functions. The concerns of this research framework extend to morphosyntactic, semantic-pragmatic, and even phonological changes over time. The changes through time in *sort of* which Traugott describes fall mainly in the latter two categories. Traugott (2008: 225) chronicles some of the local steps toward the grammaticalization of *sort of* and showed how they “involve equally fine-grained and constrained semantic and pragmatic shifts, sometimes with indeterminate intermediate states.” She begins by noting the diverse range of expressions that have the NP1 of NP2 pattern in English, which display a wide variety of functions—from approximative (a sort of snail) to locative (the back of the hotel). The abstract string that represents such expressions can be rendered as [NP1 [of NP2]], with the head (part that is seen as being in the foreground) being N1. Traugott (Ibid: 227) schematizes the commonality of the changes undergone by kind of/ sort of/ a bit of/ a shred of/ as follows:

[NP1 [of NP2]] to [[NP1 of] NP2] — in which the head moved from NP1 to NP2, leading to a reversal of modification

Long before *sort* came to have a more intimate relationship with *of* in a two-word lexical unit, it had the meaning of ‘set’ or ‘group,’ as shown in these examples from the OED:

- (2) To beholde so fayre and good a sorte Of goodly knyghtes.

OED 1509 S. Hawes Pastime of Pleasure (1845) xxvii. 129

- (3) One sorte of them was burnt, another sort hanged, the thirde drowned, and the fourth sorte had no more hurt but their heades cut off.

OED 1583 T. Stocker tr. Tragical Hist. Ciuile Warres Lowe Countries i. 2

At some time in the 16th century—and becoming firmly established by the following century—the partitive usage of *sort*, to mean “a member of a set,” emerged, as in this example:

- (4) Al sort of erroneous teachers, and licentious livers, were tolerated.

OED 1641 J. Tombes Leaven of Pharisaicall Wil-worship (1643) 14

Traugott (2008: 228) contends that when the partitive meaning appeared and both NP1 and NP2 could take on indefinite articles (e.g., a sort of a(n) (ap) prentice) an inference was made possible that “class membership is not uniquely identifiable; it is not exact.” This opened the way for their use as degree modifiers as in:

- (5) Bishop Burnet is even kind enough to make a sort of an excuse for Sir Thomas More.

OED 1846–9 S. R. Maitland Ess. 47

The implication in the previous example is that an excuse was made but it may have been an inadequate one; so we might see excuses on a degree continuum. Partitive uses continued alongside those of degree modifiers, and when the use of the indefinite article with NP2 declined and it behaved like other degree modifiers (e.g., *awfully*), the interpretation that *sort of* was being used as a degree modifier became more salient, as in:

- (6) Just before Christmas, the workload, it sort of doubles and you suddenly think, ‘Okay. It’s gone from I can do this to why am I doing this’, I think has gone through my head quite a few times.

COCA ACAD StudiesInEducation Spring 2015, Vol. 47 Issue 1, p. 17

Then, as a degree modifier, *sort of* was not constrained in a NP construction and its propositional meaning declined, even becoming phonologically reduced as *sortuv/sorta*, and often having the properties of an adverb. Most recently, it came to appear as an independent utterance and at utterance initial and utterance final positions. *Sort of* continues to be used in all the ways illustrated here except those which appeared at step one when it carried the meaning 'set' or 'group.'

Also taking a construction grammar perspective, and using empirical data gathered from corpora, Brems (2011: 2) has looked at *sort of*, *kind of*, and *type of*—like Traugott (2008)—in the context of a consideration of binominal structures, but she divided these expressions into two types of structures that include either a ...

- 1) size (or shape) noun expression (e.g. *a bunch*, *heaps of*, *a bit*, etc.)—SN for "Size Noun Constructions"
- 2) type noun expressions (e.g., *sort of*, *kind of*, *type of*)—TN for "Type Noun Constructions"

Examining the *sort/kind of* TN constructions diachronically and synchronically, Brems' eclectic approach (2011) offers many important insights along the way to show how polysemous uses in contemporary usage can be accounted for. Although her interest in them is primarily for their grammatical pedigree, how synchronic uses reflect that heritage—and especially for insights they provide into processes of grammaticalization—she (Ibid : 317–320) realizes that when used as discourse markers they are no longer tied to grammatical boundaries and do not necessarily have scope over what precedes or follows them. Her book-length treatment of these expressions includes discussions of their textual, (inter) subjective, and various extended uses, including when they appear as stand alone expressions.

3. *Sort/kind of* as discourse markers

Functional theories of language have shown that beyond the grammatical systems that form propositional content, various structures and resources—often embedded in the grammatical system—convey the interactive position of a speaker regarding the proposition. For example, it is well recognized that English modal auxiliaries are associated with the interpersonal functions of utterances (Verstraete, 2001). "You must be kidding," for example, conveys disapproval of what an interlocutor has just expressed, and may actually cast doubt about whether humor was being engaged in at all, rather than making a claim about the certainty of the previous utterance being in jest.

Although the present paper does not focus on modal auxiliaries, it does concern expressions, *sort/kind of*, that have been labeled variously as downtoners (Quirk, et al., 1985: 446), degree modifiers-cum-free adjuncts (Traugott, 2008: 226), discourse particles with phatic functions (Aijmer, 2002: 48), or type-noun constructions used as adjuncts (Brems, 2011: 317) and have, as one element in their complicated functioning, a connection to epistemic modality, that is, in utterances they provide a window into how confident speakers are about knowledge, or how they evaluate and believe in knowledge that is behind a proposition (Nuyts, 2001).

When the question arises of what might be considered a discourse marker, Schiffrin (1988: 327) suggests that the researcher/explorer begin by concentrating on units of discourse, segmenting the stream of interaction into chunks that can be identified and differentiated by both the analyst and, very importantly, by the participants themselves. She further encourages us to look at "how they display the boundaries between their jointly constituted activities."

The proposals Schiffrin (1988: 328) put forward for identifying discourse markers have stood the test of time. They include:

- syntactic detachability from an utterance or sentence
- typically appearing at the initial position (LP) of an utterance
- phonological reduction
- exhibiting a range of prosodic contours
- ability to operate at global and local levels of discourse, on different planes (i.e., having indeterminate meaning or being reflexive (of the language/ of the speaker))

We can see how some of these identifiers apply to the following example:

(7) ALISON: Well, we're on the mend, actually, kind of.

EMILY: Really?

ALISON: Yes. As friends.

SOAP 2010 As the World Turns

In the first utterance, *kind of* appears in conjunction with two other discourse markers (*well* and *actually*) that frame the central argument. Although there is not phonological reduction (in this particular case, though we often see *sort/kind of* rendered as *sorta/kinda* or *sortuv/kinduv*) and *kind of* is not placed at LP, it is syntactically detachable and it certainly operates on different planes and at the global and local levels of discourse. It demonstrates a move toward self-repair (Aijmer, 2002: 198–199; Kitzinger, 2013: 232) of the statement “we’re on the mend,” offering the disclaimer that it may be an overstatement. In that sense, we see its local influence at the level of utterance (subjectivizing the content), while at the same time, an awareness and projection of how the proposition will be taken by the interlocutor (intersubjectivizing—anticipation of a possible misinterpretation by Emily).

(8) # “But, darlin’, “she cooed,” you look so handsome in a tuxedo. Sorta like James Bond, Clint Eastwood on Oscar night, and Elvis all rolled into one.”

“Now, when did you ever see the King wearing a tux?”

COCA 2014 Fiction Killer physique: A Savannah Reid Mystery

In this case we see *sort of* phonologically reduced to “sorta” and appearing on the LP, the position Schiffirin (1988: 328) believed was the most frequently occurring location for discourse markers. We can see a layering of deictic and (inter)subjective functions at this position, points that will be expanded in Section 8 of this chapter.

Following Bazzanella (1990: 630), Aijmer (2002) classifies *sort/kind of* with other “discourse particles” that have phatic functions that underpin the interactive nature of exchanges. Called phatic connectives, *sort/kind of* are grouped with other expressions—I think, actually—that can be considered evidentials (forms that indicate the nature of evidence for a given statement). Aijmer cites Chafe (1986: 270) as claiming that *sort of* “has less than optimal codability,” meaning that it may be disputable as to whether what it modifies accurately describes, represents, or characterizes what is being referred to.

4. Corpora used in current study and reasons for selection

Two corpora were used in the present study to investigate differences in distributions and possible grammatical and functional differences in *sort/kind of*; one that includes samples of actual face-to-face conversation along with various genres of fiction and broadcast and print news sources, and the other a more specialized corpus dealing solely with American television melodramas (so-called “soap operas”).

The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) was selected partly

due to its size. At 410+ million words, it is more than four times the size of the British National Corpus (BNC) that has already been used by others to research *sort/kind of* (e.g., Gries and David, 2007). The enormity of it provides obvious advantages for the study of lower-frequency constructions such as *sort/kind of* at LP and RP. It is also a well-balanced corpus in terms of the genres represented and registers.

Also hosted and maintained by Mark Davies (2011) on servers at Brigham Young University, The Corpus of American Soap Operas (henceforth “SOAP”) contains 100 million words from 22,000 transcripts from U.S. soap operas from the early 2000s. It was thought that the scriptwriters might be tempted to draw from the rich (inter)subjective and textual possibilities of *sort/kind of*, particularly at LP, to further their melodramatic ends. The use of this database gives us a window into metalinguistic uses of the forms that are beyond the “built in” metalinguistic qualities that are a basic characteristic of pragmatic markers.

4.1 The results summarized

Charts comparing the distributions of *sort of* and *kind of* at LP, RP, and at medial positions can be found in Appendix 1a for SOAP and Appendix 1b for COCA. We see that *kind of* appears more than 5 times more often than *sort of* overall in SOAP, whereas there are only twice as many instances of *kind of* (compared to *sort of*) in COCA. This shows a clear preference for *kind of* by soap opera scriptwriters that goes far beyond the strong preference for it in the more balanced COCA corpus. Just as Aijmer (2013: 124) found in her study of *actually* and *in fact*, *sort of* and *kind of* are not different from each other categorically; they appear in the same text types but with varying frequencies. A tantalizing question, which could not be adequately answered in this chapter, is why it should be the case that *kind of* is used so much more frequently in SOAP even though *sort of* is further along in its grammaticalization and might be presumed to have richer (inter)subjective and textual functions that would be attractive for scriptwriters to

capitalize on?

A striking similarity in how *sort/kind of* is used in samples from the two corpora is that the medial position was overwhelmingly favored for both forms; 94% or more of the occurrences. However, as a percentage of the total tokens used at all positions, *sort/kind of* is represented more at both RP and LP in SOAP than in COCA (see appendices 1a and 1b). This is particularly pronounced in the case of *sort of* at RP (4.67% of total tokens at RP vs. .53% in COCA at the same position), suggesting that scriptwriters have taken note (whether consciously or unconsciously) of the potentialities of *sort/kind of* at the peripheries and have made use of them for interactional and textual effects that shall be explored below, at even higher rates than they are used in the actual face-to-face encounters reflected in COCA. It is curious that the greatest representation is at RP (at least for *sort of*) since it is the LP uses that seem to contribute more to textuality in addition to being (inter)subjectively complex.

When we look at the breakdown according to genre in COCA (which was not done for SOAP since we were dealing with a single genre), it was found that although the overall frequency of both *kind of* and *sort of* over all positions in the spoken categories was three times that of the fictional sub-genres, representation was greater (albeit not by such a wide margin) at both LP and RP for *sort of* in fictional compared to spoken genres (See Appendix 2). This provides evidence that fiction writers in general, not only the writers of soap operas, are attentive to RP and LP uses of the form and use it at even higher rates than it is used in reality. That this was the case for *sort of* but not *kind of* might be reflective of the former being further along in its grammaticalization, as we see in the following section.

4.2 Evidence for the more “advanced” grammaticalization of *sort of* and insights that position might offer in that regard

As we saw in Section 2 of this paper, *sort/kind of* are on a trajectory of grammati-

calization (Brems, 2011; Denison, 2002 & 2005; and Traugott, 2008) that has brought us from partitive uses of the forms to those—co-occurring in time—used as degree modifiers, hedges, and in other pragmatically complex ways, bringing us so far from the forms' binominal roots that stand alone and RP/LP occurrences have come to be commonplace. We can use the distributions of stand alone instances of *sort/kind of* (i.e., cases in which they form an entire utterance or are only accompanied by other pragmatic markers such as *well, yeah* or *actually*) as one benchmark indicating relative levels of grammaticalization.

SOAP

kind of .08% of total occurrences (50 out of 60,637)

sort of .76% of total occurrences (81 out of 10,650)

COCA

kind of .02% of total occurrences (31 out of 190753)

sort of .16% of total occurrences (132 out of 83,353)

Table 1: Distribution of “stand alone” *sort/kind of* in both SOAP and COCA

Although the actual number of occurrences are small, which must temper our conclusions, there is a consistent pattern of *sort of* being favored as the form of choice for stand alone use.

Just as when it stands alone, when we move to the left or right peripheries there are practically no instances of the form being used in a purely denotative manner, and, even when they are found, as the following noteworthy example attests, they differ markedly from medial occurrences:

(9) PETE: Whoa, no, Adam Chandler is a pretty scary guy. I mean, he's the kind of guy who says, “You're toast,” and you're looking over your shoulder for the rest of your life.

COLBY: The kind of guy who collects enemies. Kind of guy people want to kill.

SOAP 2009 All my children

Kind of is introduced in a medial position with its referential meaning of “variety of” or “type of,” but as it gradually moves to LP, after the turn is transferred to Colby, its referential meaning, although not lost entirely, is subordinated to textual and social cohesive functions. Nearly all other cases of LP *sort/kind of* were found to not even contain vestigial referential meaning. Approximative or hedging meanings, along with similar textual and intersubjective characteristics were the norm. This held true even when LP *sort/kind of* was followed by a noun phrase beginning with the indefinite article “a,” which at medial position indicates a high likelihood of the form conveying its denotative meaning.

That *kind of* (as opposed to *sort of*) is more likely to carry a denotative meaning—i.e., as variety or type of—when used in the medial position is further evidence of *sort of* being the more grammaticalized form of the two. In checking the first 100 of the 60,637 cases of *kind of* appearing in medial position in SOAP, it was found that 57 of them (57%) carried the referential “type/variety of” meaning, whereas when examining the first 100 of the 10,650 instances of *sort of* in medial position, only 36 (36%) carried the referential meaning.

5. The influence of position on meaning and function – similarities with *actually* and *in fact*

In her discussion of the textual and pragmatic functions of *actually* and *in fact*, Aijmer (2013: 125) stated that “position is probably the most important formal feature constraining [their] interpretation.” Although this may be an exaggeration for *sort/kind of*, there is no doubt that position plays a highly valuable role. The following example of *sort of* at LP in a sample from SOAP illustrates this.

(10) JESSE: What is this, Tad?

TAD: Uh, it's a coming-out party. Sort of a celebration to welcome you back to the land of the living.

Even though *sort of* might be taken primarily in its denotative sense if the expression was reconfigured as one utterance with medially positioned *sort of*, as in "The coming-out party is sort of a celebration...", when placed at LP, the contestibility of characterizing this "coming-out party" as a celebration becomes prominent, enhancing its (inter)subjective qualities.

Following the work of Tognini-Bonelli (1993), Aijmer (2013: 112) notes that *actually* can be used strategically to take on a different position by rephrasing what has been said. *Sort/kind of* at LP (although not exclusively at that position) can also involve rephrasing, topic shifts, and self-corrections that are done, generally, in cooperative rather than adversarial, ways as this example from SOAP illustrates.

(11) VICTOR: I guess you're right. (Sighs) she was rather distant with me at the hospital. Sort of overjoyed to see Brad Carlton.

NICK: Well, of course. That's the way it should be.

SOAP 2004 Young and Restless

More of a re-focusing than a genuine topic shift, this ironic downtoning of a characterization too extreme to be downtoned, is interesting in that *actually* may be substituted for *sort of* to create a perfectly conceivable exchange but without the irony or the clearer invitation to dispute the characterization that *sort of* implies. At LP, the choice of *actually* versus *kind/sort of* often seems to be more of a stylistic one for scriptwriters or other fiction writers despite the core meaning of "unexpectedness" (Oh, 2000: 243) that *actually* has come to have, and a core meaning of "fuzziness" for *sort/kind of*. This interchangeability is not possible at medial positions from a grammatical point of view and at RP it would generally lead to utterances so unnatural that they could not be seen as stylistically similar.

This is further evidence of characteristics peculiar to LP. Which is not to say that there are not important differences between how *actually* and *sort/kind of* function at LP. For one thing, the use of *actually* does not involve the elided personal pronouns (or optional copular or auxiliary verbs) that are characteristic of LP *sort/kind of* and help to create richer textual cohesive effects through person deixis and the corresponding anaphoric relationships set up by it ... more on this later in the paper.

Aijmer (2013: 107) contends that *actually* does not have meaning so much as "meaning potential," which is "a rich semantic representation consisting of senses, subsenses, implications, salient and non-salient meanings and connotations." The same may be said of *sort/kind of*. We will explore some of that meaning potential at RP and, especially, LP in the following sections in respect to cohesive functions and how they affect, and are influenced by, complexity and metapragmatic functions.

6. Metapragmatic usage of *sort/kind of* by scriptwriters

It may be argued that pragmatic markers are by their very nature metalinguistic in that they are indexical and depend on the context for meanings to unfold. The metalinguistic level that will be discussed here, however, will be in cases where interlocutors bring up the pragmatic markers themselves as objects of discussion. This may be termed metapragmatic (Jaworski et al., 2004: 62).

A curious aspect of dialog in naturalistic settings is that the use of *sort/kind of* is seldom challenged even when its function seems to be evading difficult truths, maintaining a frustratingly noncommittal stance, or simply as a strategy to be minimally responsive. Challenges to the use of *sort/kind of* by interlocutors that explicitly focus on the propriety of deploying these pragmatic markers in particular contexts were found to be non-existent in the spoken samples that involved interaction among adults. In COCA just one challenge was uncovered

and that was in a televised interview with a child who was teased by the journalist for resorting to sort of repeatedly (sometimes as stand alone complete utterances) instead of answering questions explicitly. An implicit rule in conversation, perhaps toward mutually face-saving ends, seems to be to avoid making the use of *sort/kind of* an issue of discussion.

However, in the SOAP corpus it was not difficult to find examples of irritation and frustration with the use of *sort/kind of* by an interlocutor leading to the expression itself becoming a focus of the interaction, as in the following examples:

(12) ABBY: Yeah. But, like I said, I mean, I'm seeing someone, kind of.

JED: How "kind of" is "kind of"?

ABBY: Well, you know, not hot.

JED: Kind of.

ABBY: Right. Kind of understood.

JED: Hard to compete with "kind of understood."

SOAP 2007-02-27 Days of Our Lives

The confirmation check that the RP *kind of* triggers reveals a metalinguistic understanding, on the part of the speaker (and therefore the scriptwriter) of the scalar nature of the expression used in a context where a categorical response is expected. Considering that the question may have been the more face threatening (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61) "Are you or aren't you seeing someone?", the one that was used, "How "kind of" is "kind of"?", might be seen as "playing along" with the scalar implications, possibly in a playfully flirtatious manner. The RP *kind of* is seen by the scriptwriter as a resource to stimulate interaction and used for dramatic effect, even though this level of metapragmatic awareness hardly ever appears in actual communicative contexts, as evidenced by a careful search for possible specimens in COCA. The fact that RP occurrences of *sort/kind of* appear in fiction counter the possible argument that the forms are primarily

displacements from medial position when found in naturally occurring discourse. They are clearly more than a mere artifact of cognitive processing demands.

The next example shows how, with a less cooperative interlocutor, any possible scalar readings of *kind of* are not entertained and no patience is shown for the maintenance of what is perceived as a contradictory expression. In fact, the absurdity of it is mocked by a wholesale appropriation of the repeated utterance. Again, this metapragmatic playfulness with RP elements on the part of the scriptwriter may be indicative of a recognition of the potentiality that RP holds for this marker by the scriptwriter.

(13) ATTENDANT: Their mother, a Miss China Lee, left us your name in case of emergency. You're the boys' stepfather?

NICK: Technically, kind of.

ATTENDANT: You've married the boys' mother?

NICK: Technically, kind of.

ATTENDANT: Then technically, kind of, they're your children, sir.

SOAP 2007-08-17 Days of Our Lives

The repetition of "Technically, kind of." by each interlocutor provides lexical cohesion that helps to hold the dialog together as a text and the speakers as negotiators of meaning. The importance of grammatical cohesive devices surrounding LP *sort/kind of*, particularly reference and ellipsis, will be covered in the next section.

7. Cohesion, coherence and complex textual functions at LP

Most of the major concerns of text linguistics (de Beaugrande, 1980; van Dijk, 1972), which include aspects that sentence grammar cannot cope with—such as ellipsis, pronouns, cohesion, and coherence—come to the fore when *sort/kind of* as

discourse or pragmatic markers are the focus of attention. Citing Enkvist (1976: 65), Hasselgård (2004: 65) remarks that cohesive functions are often found in elements located at the initial part of a sentence or utterance.

Fetzer (2012: 447) points out that coherence involves logical consistency and connection, whereas cohesion concerns the use of language to signal semantic relations between segments of discourse. Grammatical cohesion would pertain to issues such as ellipsis, reference, conjunction and substitution, while lexical cohesion would have more to do with collocation, repetition, metonymy, synonymy, and antonymy.

In the following discussion of LP *sort/kind of*, grammatical cohesion will be the main concern, although the cohesive function of repetition will be briefly covered as well. LP *sort/kind of* act as discourse connectives as described by Fetzer (2012: 457) in that they are “processed bottom-up, [and] they fulfill an important indexical function, connecting local domains of discourse with global ones.”

Ellipsis and deixis are particularly relevant to a discussion of LP *sort/kind of* because, except for the relatively uncommon appearance of the expressions at LP that function purely as fillers, personal pronouns (including it) and optional copular and auxiliary verbs are elided, making it necessary for an interlocutor, audience member or other observer to create coherence by following the cohesive threads.

Although deixis refers to expressions representing person, place or time—such as “he,” “there,” or “now”—the type of deixis that surrounds *sort/kind of* at LP is almost invariably person deixis in which the person, thing or proposition must be inferred from the context. Although it may be presumptuous, for the present discussion elided pronouns (+/- copular or auxiliary verbs) will be considered as semantizations of LP *sort/kind of*. The elided items can be consistently and reliably inferred when analyzing the expressions at this position. Those inferences make it possible to locate anaphors (and more rarely cataphors) in the wider discourse and appreciate the rich textuality that is thereby imbued. To be clear, this is a

position-specific semantization.

8. Varying levels of complexity and their possible influence on cohesion and coherence

Baicchi (2004) and Bruti (2004) have worked to create a scale for the textual complexity of textual and linguistic phenomena using written and spoken data in Italian and English. Baicchi’s work shows how complexity, markedness, and interpretability are interrelated in her focus on titles and headlines, while Bruti looked at cataphoric devices. Inspired by their independent work toward similar ends, I have tried to formulate criteria for determining the complexity of the deictic functions and phoric relations of LP *sort/kind of* and it is hoped that the discussion of specific examples here will clarify points raised in the previous section. This is simply exploratory and no way exhaustive.

The criteria to be examined for determining complexity—which can be seen to be loosely correlated with difficulty—include:

- 1) Whether the elided deictic element represents a single word/concept or stands for an entire proposition
- 2) How complicated the implicature is (e.g., if causal or other logical relationships must be inferred)
- 3) Cataphoric rather than anaphoric reference
- 4) How distant the referent is from LP *kind/sort of*—related to this is reference within one’s own turn vs. situated in another turn

Examples will be given in the order of less to more complex. Some of the criteria overlap in the same illustrations. There is a rough correspondence between greater complexity and increased textual richness.

8.1 Single word/concept vs. entire proposition

The first example, on the lowest end of the complexity scale, has an anaphoric referent that immediately precedes LP *sort of* and it is a single word/concept rather than a whole proposition that must be inferred.

- (14) I was only vaguely aware of it. But aware enough to be puzzled. It was an unpleasant smell. Sort of sweet but putrid.

COCA FIC: Postmortem Author: Patrucua Daniels Cornwell Publisher: Charles Scribner's Sons

Even when reference seems fairly straightforward, as in the following example, a combination of endophora and exophora adds to the complexity of the implicature.

- (15) BUZZ: The church is pretty, though. Sort of gives you a new way of looking at weddings.

OLIVIA: Can I ask you a personal question?

SOAP 2005-11-23 Guiding Light

The anaphoric reference for the elided deictic pronoun “it” seems to be “church” at first glance but the knowledge that pretty things or places may help to change one’s perspective adds to the complexity by requiring resources from within and outside the text.

8.2 Implied causality

The following has a rather complex implicature in that it requires drawing an inference about a causal connection: “his reason for running out was due to an emergency.” This is not too difficult an inference to make as it involves commonly held knowledge about the consequences of emergencies, but it does add to the complexity.

- (16) LIZZIE: Josh. Where’s the reverend?

JOSH: Hi. He had to run out. Sort of an emergency thing. Are you okay?

SOAP 2007-07-18 Guiding Light

8.3 Cataphoric reference

The implicature involved in the following is much more complicated, particularly if one does not possess the detailed background knowledge of the interlocutors.

- (17) OCTAVIO: Sonia – more beautiful than ever. I guess you know why I’m here.

SONIA: Somebody’s got to avenge Padilla’s death. Sort of thought I’d see you sooner than this.

OCTAVIO: Good. Let’s not make this hard.

SOAP 2004-08-06 One Life to Live

The implicature here is that Octavio has come to avenge Padilla’s death and he has taken his time coming. It requires knowledge of the kind of person Octavio is, which is tied with why he has come. This is a cataphoric reference as we cannot infer that the referent of *sort of* is “I” (i.e., Sonia). She might have been intending to say “Sort of thought [you’d walk right into this bar, did you?]. So we have to wait for the cataphoric referent until we can begin to make sense of the expression.

These examples were meant to illustrate just some of the complex textual functions sort/kind of take on at LP and how some of them are tied to social cohesion (intersubjectivity) as well.

9. Brief discussion of some remarkable rhetorical uses of *kind/sort of* at RP

The vast majority of cases of RP *kind of* in COCA appeared in broadcast news, both scripted and more spontaneous. In the case of spontaneous speech, *kind of* often appears to be a fairly random displacement from medial position that might be motivated by cognitive processing demands or even part of a speech mannerism, as the following example shows.

- (18) CAITLIN: I remember one time, I was going up to get a math sheet, and there was this person who I thought was beginning to be my friend kind of. And I was going up to get a sheet, and she touched my elbow which was really dry and rough at that time. And she, like, yelled really loud, ew.

COCA SPOK: NPR—Skin Deep 15/04/09

In news stories that are scripted, however, or in transcribed interviews found in newspapers and magazines, *sort/kind of* is used as a rhetorical device to signal that what follows will somewhat contradict the preceding content, as in the following example. It is a calculated displacement from medial position.

- (19) # He and his now ex-wife, Lesly, a fitness instructor, would take Svein and his older brother up to a ski hill for days on end in their motor home. They were in full support, sort of.

“I was thinking what any other mother would think. It was pretty frightening,”

Lesly said. “I was worried about him.”

COCA NEWS: Denver Post: An example of Tuft love 09/02/27

RP *sort of* could have been placed in medial position in the same utterance—“They were *sort of* in full support”—but in that position it is clearly marked in the context of a news story, even though in naturalistic conversations it is not uncommon for *sort/kind of* to be placed amidst what appear to be categorical expressions. Whereas it would have a predominantly subjective (stance marking) function at the medial position, at RP it is intersubjective since it is intended to communicate a shift in direction to the audience. It might be paraphrased as “with a caveat that will now be explained.” This usage has rather local discourse marking (textual) influence in comparison to what can be achieved by *sort/kind of* at LP. This example of *sort of* at RP is not anomalous in news stories. Dozens of examples of this rhetorical use of *sort of* can be found in both scripted broadcast and transcribed newspaper and magazine interviews.

The unscripted samples, like the following, did not exhibit the rhetorical and discourse marking features of the scripted ones, but had a pronounced intersubjective function similar to the Japanese utterance ending particle ‘ne.’

- (20) WHITFIELD: Welcome back to the NEWSROOM where really right now it’s the chat room, which means you join Jacqui and I in a little chitchat about all kinds of interesting novel things going on. I guess our selection, they’re all kind of economy-related sort of.

JACQUI-JERAS: A little bit.

COCA SPOK: CNN Newsroom Duct Tape Prom 09/03/15

The *sort of* at the end of sample 20 simply seems to be a reiteration of the earlier (in the same sentence) *kind of*, with similar softening functions. The *sort of* in this sample is used completely differently from that used at RP in sample 19, which was imbued by the writer with the clear discourse function of signaling that what follows will undercut what was just expressed, in other words, a betrayal of expectations.

10. Conclusion

This chapter has focused on commonly encountered discourse/pragmatic markers that, on occasion, appear at RP and LP. We saw that 99% of the total occurrences of *sort/kind of* in COCA were medially positioned and that LP and RP placements of *sort/kind of* were somewhat higher, but still quite low, in SOAP, where 94% to 99% of instances were at medial positions. As Chomsky (2016) has said:

“In linguistics we all know that the kind of phenomena that we inquire about are often exotic. They are phenomena that almost never occur. In fact, those are the most interesting phenomena, because they lead you directly to fundamental principles.”

There was value in investigating these rare positionings of *sort/kind of* as they point to emerging usages and meanings and shed light on some common features that pragmatic markers take on as they migrate to the peripheries.

We found dramatic distributional differences between *kind of* and *sort of* in the corpora, with *kind of* appearing more than five times more often than *sort of* overall in SOAP, whereas there were only twice as many instances of *kind of* (compared to *sort of*) in COCA, leading us to conclude that there is a distinct preference for *kind of* by soap opera scriptwriters.

In terms of position, *sort/kind of* was found to be represented more at both RP and LP in SOAP than in COCA, which was especially the case for *sort of* at RP, indicating that scriptwriters have been attentive of how *sort/kind of* operates at the peripheries and are making use of the constructions for textual and interpersonal effects.

Some distinct differences were found in how *sort/kind of* functioned in naturalistic as opposed to fictional settings. Challenges to the use of *sort/kind of* by interlocutors were found to be non-existent in the spoken samples that involved interaction among adults, whereas uses of *sort/kind of* in fictional contexts sometimes led to confrontation.

Finally, metapragmatic play with *sort/kind of* at RP by scriptwriters also provides a window into a keen awareness of the potentialities for these pragmatic markers even though these creative minds may be conceiving of functions that do not yet exist in naturalistic settings and perhaps never will.

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Appendix 1a

Corpus of American Soap Operas

	total/Norm. per M	LP (tokens) /	RP (tokens) /	medial (tokens)/
		Norm. per M	Norm. per M	Norm. per M
Sort of	10650 / 106.5	139 / 1.39 (1.31% of total)	497 / 4.97 (4.67% of total)	10014 / 100.14 (94.03% of total)
	ratio of LP occurrences to those appearing at medial position: 1:75.62			
	ratio of RP occurrences to those appearing at medial position: 1:20.43			
	<i>sort of</i> at the peripheries: total: 636 tokens (6.36 per mil norm. – 5.79% of all occurrences)			
Kind of	total/Norm. per M	LP (tokens) /	RP (tokens) /	medial (tokens)/
		Norm. per M	Norm. per M	Norm. per M
	60637 / 606.37	712 / 7.12 (1.17% of total)	199 / 1.99 (0.33% of total)	59726 / 597.26 (98.50% of total)
	ratio of LP occurrences to those appearing at medial position: 1:83.88			
	ratio of RP occurrences to those appearing at medial position: 1:300.13			
	<i>kind of</i> at the peripheries: total: 911 tokens (9.11 per mil norm. – 1.50% of all occurrences)			

Appendix 1b

Corpus of Contemporary American English

	total/Norm. per M	LP (tokens)/Norm.	RP (tokens)/Norm.	medial (tokens)/
		per M	per M	Norm. per M
Sort of	83353 / 15.84	337 / 0.06 (0.40% of total)	442 / 0.08 (0.53% of total)	82574 / 15.69 (99.07% of total)
	ratio of LP occurrences to those appearing at medial position: 1:245.03			
	ratio of RP occurrences to those appearing at medial position: 1:186.82			
	<i>sort of</i> at the peripheries: total: 779 tokens (0.15 per mil norm. – 0.93% of all occurrences)			
Kind of	total/Norm. per M	LP (tokens)/Norm.	RP (tokens)/Norm.	medial (tokens)/
		per M	per M	Norm. per M
	190753 / 36.24	618 / 0.12 (0.32% of total)	196 / 0.04 (0.10% of total)	189939 / 36.09 (99.57% of total)
	ratio of LP occurrences to those appearing at medial position: 1:307.34			
	ratio of RP occurrences to those appearing at medial position: 1:969.08			
	<i>kind of</i> at the peripheries: total: 814 tokens (0.15 per mil norm. – 0.43% of all occurrences)			

Appendix 2

SORT OF at LP, RP, and all positions in COCA
– Corpus of Contemporary American English

GENRE	LP-481 occurrences			RP-813 occurrences			All positions –83353 occurrences		
	FREQ	SIZE (M)	PER MIL	FREQ	SIZE (M)	PER MIL	FREQ	SIZE (M)	PER MIL
SPOKEN	139	109.4	1.27	234	109.4	2.14	49140	109.4	449.21
FICTION	216	104.9	2.06	349	104.9	3.33	14237	104.9	135.72
MAGAZINE	62	110.1	0.56	111	110.1	1.01	8194	110.1	74.42
NEWSPAPER	59	106.0	0.56	105	106.0	0.99	7338	106.0	69.25
ACADEMIC	5	103.4	0.05	14	103.4	0.14	4444	103.4	42.97

KIND OF at LP, RP, and all positions in COCA
– Corpus of Contemporary American English

GENRE	LP-652 occurrences			RP-302 occurrences			All positions –190753 occurrences		
	FREQ	SIZE (M)	PER MIL	FREQ	SIZE (M)	PER MIL	FREQ	SIZE (M)	PER MIL
SPOKEN	285	109.4	2.61	170	109.4	1.55	96076	109.4	878.28
FICTION	262	104.9	2.5	99	104.9	0.94	30856	104.9	294.14
MAGAZINE	69	110.1	0.63	14	110.1	0.13	24504	110.1	222.54
NEWSPAPER	31	106	0.29	17	106.0	0.16	24593	106.0	232.09
ACADEMIC	5	103.4	0.05	2	103.4	0.02	14724	103.4	142.37