



# LUND UNIVERSITY

## Semantic profiles of antonymic adjectives in discourse

Paradis, Carita; Löhndorf, Simone; van de Weijer, Joost; Willners, Caroline

*Published in:*  
Linguistics

*DOI:*  
[10.1515/ling-2014-0035](https://doi.org/10.1515/ling-2014-0035)

2015

*Document Version:*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Paradis, C., Löhndorf, S., van de Weijer, J., & Willners, C. (2015). Semantic profiles of antonymic adjectives in discourse. *Linguistics*, 53(1), 153-191. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ling-2014-0035>

*Total number of authors:*  
4

### General rights

Unless other specific re-use rights are stated the following general rights apply:

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Read more about Creative commons licenses: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

### Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117  
221 00 Lund  
+46 46-222 00 00



1 Carita Paradis\*, Simone Löhndorf, Joost van de Weijer and  
2 Caroline Willners

3  
4 **Semantic profiles of antonymic adjectives**  
5 **in discourse**  
6

7  
8 **Abstract:** This study has two goals: First, to give an account of the semantic orga-  
9 nization of individually used antonymic adjectives in discourse and second,  
10 based on those findings and previous work on antonymic meanings, to contribute  
11 to a comprehensive theoretical account of their representation within the frame-  
12 work of Cognitive Linguistics. The hypothesis is that the members of the pairs are  
13 used in the same contexts and in the same type of constructions, not only when  
14 they co-occur and are used to express binary opposition as shown in previous  
15 studies, but also when they do not. The manually coded corpus data from the  
16 BNC are analyzed along four semantic parameters: (i) the configuration of the  
17 adjectives in terms of gradability, (ii) the way they modify the nominal meanings,  
18 i.e., attributively or predicatively (iii) the meaning type of the modified nouns,  
19 and (iv) the status of the constructions with respect to whether their meanings are  
20 what we refer to as “basic”, metaphorical or metonymical. Correspondence anal-  
21 ysis technique is used to identify similarities and differences on the basis of  
22 the totality of the data. As predicted, our findings confirm a high degree of pair-  
23 wise similarity – but also some differences. On the basis of these results, it can be  
24 argued that the long-standing controversy within Structuralism between pro-  
25 ponents of the co-occurrence hypothesis and the substitutability hypothesis in  
26 antonym research is a non-issue.

27  
28 **Keywords:** opposition, gradability, nominal meaning, metaphor, metonymy, lit-  
29 eral, scalar, corpus, adjectives, English, semantics, noun, attributive, figurative,  
30 syntagmatic, paradigmatic, substitution hypothesis, co-occurrence hypothesis

31 DOI 10.1515/ling-2014-0035  
32

33  
34 **\*Corresponding author: Carita Paradis:** Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University,  
35 Box 201, 221 00 Lund, Sweden. E-mail: carita.paradis@englund.lu.se

36 **Simone Löhndorf:** Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University, Box 201, 221 00 Lund,  
37 Sweden. E-mail: simone.lohndorf@ling.lu.se

38 **Joost van de Weijer:** Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University, Box 201, 221 00  
39 Lund, Sweden. E-mail: joost.van\_de\_weijer@ling.lu.se

40 **Caroline Willners:** Formerly Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University.  
E-mail: caroline.willners@gmail.com

# 1 Introduction

Recent research has established that there are a number of opposable adjectives that have special status as canonical antonyms, in which case antonym canonicity is defined as the degree to which antonymic word meanings are entrenched in memory and conventionalized as pairs in language.<sup>1</sup> Antonymic pairs that have been shown to be strongly canonical are expressive of properties of salient dimensions. For instance, *thin* and *thick* evoke opposite properties of the dimension of THICKNESS, as do *bad* and *good* of MERIT. Corpus-driven investigations of English, Swedish and Dutch have demonstrated that canonical antonym pairs are frequent in language as individual words, and they co-occur pair-wise significantly much more often in the same sentence than other possible antonyms and other semantically related word pairs (Willners 2001; Paradis et al. 2009; Lobanova et al. 2010; Willners and Paradis 2010; Lobanova 2012). Moreover, the members of these pairs elicit one another strongly in elicitation experiments. They are assessed to be excellent antonyms in judgment experiments, and they have facilitating effects on each other in psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic experiments (Paradis et al. 2009; Paradis and Willners 2011; Crutch et al. 2012; van de Weijer et al. 2012; van de Weijer et al. 2014).

In spite of this recent boost in research on antonymy, there are still some outstanding problems that need to be addressed in order to complete the picture. One of them concerns whether these strongly opposable antonymic adjectives are used to modify the same meaning structures also when they occur individually in text and discourse, i.e., not only when they are actually used to express opposition as is the case in most of the corpus studies above but also *in absentia* of their partners. This is exactly what this article is about. It carries out a large detailed corpus-based analysis of the usage patterns of 42 individual adjectives in the *British National Corpus* (the BNC). These adjectives have all been deemed to be strongly opposable in the above-mentioned experiments and corpus studies.

Theoretically, there has been a long-standing controversy between advocates of the *substitutability hypothesis* and the *co-occurrence hypothesis*. These different views hark back to the two different approaches to lexical relations in language within the framework of Structuralism, namely the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic approaches. The paradigmatic approach states that two words are antonyms if they can *substitute* for one another in the same slot in a chunk of text, say a sentence (e.g., Lyons 1977; Cruse 1986). Accordingly, the relation of

---

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted already here that we use the term antonym as a general term for lexical items that are used as opposites in text and discourse (Jones et al. 2012: 2).

1 antonymy is a paradigmatic (vertical) relation. Initially, this was a way for the  
2 Structuralist analysts to define antonymy at the same time as it was used as a tool  
3 for identifying antonyms in a manual fashion based on constructed examples.  
4 With the advent of an interest in real language use aided by computational tech-  
5 niques, the empty-slot testing of substitution was replaced by investigations of  
6 words in large corpora of text. The prediction for the use of paradigmatically  
7 related words was no longer that they could substitute for one another in the  
8 same sentence but that they have the same close neighbors, i.e., words that occur  
9 before or after the paradigmatically related words (Schütze and Pedersen 1993;  
10 Sahlgren 2008). Moreover, research using computational methods also took an  
11 interest in relations between words at the syntagmatic level and showed that  
12 one important characteristic of antonyms is that they co-occur at very high fre-  
13 quencies within the same sentence. In particular some pairings, more precisely  
14 the ones that we refer to as canonical pairings, co-occur much more often than  
15 other antonymic pairs and also than other related pairs, such as synonyms. Syn-  
16 tagmatic associates are neighbors of one another in actual text and they co-occur  
17 in sequence (horizontally) (Charles and Miller 1989; Justeson and Katz 1991;  
18 Willners 2001, Mohammad et al. 2013). This is known as the co-occurrence hy-  
19 pothesis and has been shown to hold good for antonymic words too (Jones et al.  
20 2007; Murphy et al. 2009; Kostić 2011; Lobanova 2012).

21 As already stated, this article investigates the individual contextual use of a  
22 set of adjectives that have previously been deemed to be particularly strong lexi-  
23 cal semantic relations and that are known to co-occur close to one another in text.  
24 Unlike the investigations carried out to test the co-occurrence, this study puts the  
25 focus on the semantics of the close neighbors of the individual adjectives in order  
26 to determine whether they are in fact used to modify the same meaning structures  
27 also when they are not used as antonyms. Unlike corpus-driven paradigmatic  
28 work, this study involves manual analysis of each of the uses. The purpose is to  
29 chart the semantic environment and to shed new light on the paradigmatic-  
30 syntagmatic debate from a usage-based, Cognitive Linguistics perspective. We  
31 argue that the outcome of this study resolves the controversy between the above  
32 two approaches as a non-issue. Instead of being relational as is the case in Struc-  
33 turalism, meaning in Cognitive Linguistics resides in actual use and is substan-  
34 tial. Rather than pointing in two different directions, the paradigmatic and syn-  
35 tagmatic approaches actually converge in discourse. The domains in which the  
36 adjectives are instantiated are what matters and the two approaches are just dif-  
37 ferent perspectives on antonym use and different ways of operationalizing the  
38 relation of binary opposition in discourse.

39 The procedure is as follows. In Section 2, we provide a short presentation  
40 of our framework and a description of the meanings of the words and the word

combinations of this study. Section 3 presents the theoretical foundation for the coding schema, followed by a description of the data, the method and the mode of procedure in Section 4. Section 5 makes use of the occurrences of *thin* and *thick* in the corpus to concretize the coding conventions in order to facilitate the task of the reader. The results of the corpus study are presented in Section 6 and further discussed in Section 7. The theoretical implications are presented in the conclusion, Section 8.

## 2 Adjective meanings and their combining nominal meanings

The meaning structures of antonymic adjectives, such as the ones under investigation in this study, are opposite properties of meaning *dimensions*. A dimension is defined as a simple conceptual structure comprising two opposing poles, which may be expressed by antonymic words in language. Dimensions and their properties are independently defined (Gårdenfors 2000; Paradis 2005, 2016) and not mere parts of more complex concepts or interconnected entities of a region, as in Langacker (1987: 197–198).<sup>2</sup> More complex concepts are typically based on several separable domains in conceptual space. Examples of such conceptual structures are nominal meanings such as ‘book’, ‘office’, ‘discussion’ and ‘death’. In the context of our adjectives, we may say that there is a property THICK expressed as *thick* in English. Speakers’ understanding of *thick* is profiled against the contentful dimension of THICKNESS and the configuration of SCALE. It evokes a meaning within the ‘having-more-than-average-of’ range along the UNBOUNDED SCALE of THICKNESS (Paradis 2001). It only obtains its discursive reading when it is used in human communication as a modifier of nominal meanings. *Thick* in combination with *book*, *wood* and *skin* is different from *thick* in combination with personality traits, as in ‘he thinks I am thick’, and also from ‘thick forest’, ‘thick voice’ or ‘thick jam’.

(1) *The book is thick.*

(2) *Her voice was thick.*

<sup>2</sup> Langacker (1987: 197–198) does not provide definitions of concepts and properties. He defines nominals as THING, i.e., as a set of interconnected entities (a region) in some domain. The interconnections, which are either temporal or atemporal relations, are defined in relation to some entity in a region.

1 (3) He is so *incredibly* thick – he doesn't understand anything.

2 (4) Put all the thick books in the box to the left and the thin ones in the one to the  
3 right.  
4

5  
6 When the discourse interpretive function of the adjective is one of description, as  
7 in (1), (2) and (3), *thick* is profiled against a SCALE along the dimensions of THICK-  
8 NESS, HUSKINESS, and INTELLIGENCE, evoked against the more complex concep-  
9 tual domain structures BOOK, VOICE, PERSONAL PROPENSITY. When used as a clas-  
10 sifier, as in (4), *thick* is still based on the contentful notion of THICKNESS, but it is  
11 not primarily profiled as a scale structure but instead on the basis of a definitive  
12 class of THING deemed to be THICK. In (4), *thick* is not gradable at all, rather its  
13 function is to profile the class of thick books. Like contentful and configurational  
14 meaning structures, descriptive and classifying functions are not inherent struc-  
15 tures of word forms, but interactional functions evoked in discourse.

16 Our approach to adjectival meanings is a conceptual combination view that  
17 states that the interpretation of adjectives derives from its integration with nomi-  
18 nal meanings (see Section 3 where a more detailed discussion of our approach is  
19 provided). It accords with Murphy and Andrew (1993), Murphy (2002) and Rakova  
20 (2003). Murphy and Andrew (1993) contrast the conceptual representation view  
21 with what they call the polysemy view according to which the interaction of ad-  
22 jectival and nominal meanings is a matter of selecting one of two (or more) dif-  
23 ferent, already set senses. Using examples such as *fresh fish* and *fresh shirt*, they  
24 argue that *fresh* in those two examples evoke two different senses: 'not frozen'  
25 and 'unsoiled' respectively due to their conceptual integration with the nominal  
26 meanings. The alternative explanation for the effect of context in relation to ad-  
27 jective meanings that they (and we) argue against is the polysemy view, which  
28 involves the selection of two different already set senses of *fresh*. As is well known,  
29 the notion of sense is very problematic in itself, and there is no straightforward  
30 and uncontroversial way of discriminating between senses and mere readings.  
31 It may well be the case that Lyons (1977: 554) was right when he pointed out that  
32 the whole notion of discrete senses may be ill founded. In the same spirit, Cruse  
33 (1986: 71) states that there "are cases where variant readings of single lexical  
34 forms would seem to be more appropriately visualized as points on a continuum  
35 – a seamless fabric of meaning with no clear boundaries". This is a description  
36 he has modified to some extent after abandoning Structuralism for Cognitive Se-  
37 mantics (Cruse 2002).

38 Our approach to meaning in language accords with the conceptual inte-  
39 gration approach, in which all the readings of a word make up a word's total  
40 meaning in the language users' minds. We refer to this as a word's use potential

(Paradis 2005, 2016). In the individual usage events, only a portion of the total use potential of a lexical item is evoked. The direct mapping between lexical items and conceptual structure is constrained by encyclopedic knowledge, conventionalized mappings between lexical items and concepts, and conventional modes of thinking in different contexts and situational frames. In cognitive approaches to meaning, all linguistic expressions are profiled in relation to a “base” (Langacker 1987), a “frame” (Fillmore 1982), or an “idealized cognitive model” of a situation (Lakoff 1987). All these constructs represent presupposed information available to speakers in the act of communication, and meanings emerge as linguistic communication unfolds. It is important to note that meanings are thus not inherent in the lexical items as such, but they are evoked by lexical items and their contextual frames (Fillmore 1982; Boas 2008; Paradis 2012). In order to portray meaning in language, Cruse (2002) makes use of a spatial metaphor, describing all readings as groupings separated by boundaries in conceptual space. A word’s use profile is not an uninterrupted continuum, but rather discontinuously distributed clusters, showing different degrees of cohesiveness and closeness. Between the clusters are regions of emptiness or sparsely populated areas. These areas are the sense boundaries that separate clusters of readings that make up senses and distinguish them from others.

### 3 Basic assumptions and theoretical framework

This section offers a short description of the categorization principles used for the analysis of the corpus data in this study (described in Section 4), and the modeling framework of *Lexical meaning as ontologies and construals* (Paradis 2005, 2016, henceforth LOC). The basic assumption of the framework is consistent with the basic assumptions of Cognitive Linguistics more generally. First, lexical meaning is firmly grounded in how we as humans both perceive and understand the world around us. The research is usage based both in the sense that it promotes investigation of “real” language use (such as spoken and written communication and experiments of different kinds) and with reference to the nature of language (i.e., how languages are acquired, how they develop and how they change in the contexts where they are used in social communication; cf. Traugott and Dasher 2005; Tomasello 2003, 2008). People’s ways of expressing themselves are functionally motivated and spring from communicational needs in social intercourse and the settings of the symbolic structures, i.e., the form–meaning pairings. Successful communication in different contexts emerges from the speaker’s intention and the addressee’s wish to interpret an expression in a relevant way in order to obtain socially viable mappings between words and concepts. These fun-



1 damental assumptions presuppose that meanings of lexical items are dynamic  
2 and sensitive to contextual demands, rather than stable and fixed. Construal op-  
3 erations are the source of all readings, conventional as well as *ad hoc* contextual  
4 readings. A leading idea of this approach is that lexical items *evoke* meanings  
5 rather than *have* meanings; lexical meanings emerge in actual language use in  
6 human communication (Cruse 2002; Paradis 2003, 2005, 2008, 2016; Paradis and  
7 Willners 2011). The notion *usage-based* is fundamental to all cognitively oriented  
8 approaches to meaning. It is also central to our treatment of antonymic adjectives  
9 and the nominal meanings that they modify, both as a basic theoretical assump-  
10 tion about language and as a methodological requirement.

11 Our model of lexical meaning makes a fundamental distinction between  
12 *Ontologies* on the one hand and *Construals* on the other. Ontologies are concep-  
13 tual structures or “pre-meanings”. They serve as the raw material for the develop-  
14 ment of meanings in actual communication. These pre-meaning structures are  
15 lower-level conceptual material that contributes to the final creation of discourse  
16 meaning in language use. Ontologies are of two main types: contentful structures  
17 and configurational structures. These two types of structure are not as discrete as  
18 it may sound; rather they are viewed as being on a continuum from primarily  
19 contentful pre-meanings to primarily configurational pre-meanings. The content-  
20 ful and the configurational structures combine in meaning creation and the final  
21 instantiation of some part of the entire meaning potential in its domain on the  
22 occasion of use. Construals are cognitive processes that operate on the onto-  
23 logical structures when we use language to create meaning in communication  
24 with other people. They are imposed on the concepts by speakers and addressees  
25 at the time of use and thereby establish the fully fledged discursive reading (Lan-  
26 gacker 1987, 1999; Paradis 2004, 2005, 2008; Panther and Thornburg 2012).

27 Table 1 provides a break-down of the two types of ontological pre-meaning  
28 structures and the various types of construals that might operate on the concep-  
29 tual structures in the formation of meaning in language use. Contentful struc-  
30 tures involve ‘meaning proper’, i.e., meaning structures pertaining to CONCRETE  
31 OBJECTS, EVENTS, PROCESSES, STATES, and ABSTRACT PHENOMENA. Configurations,  
32 on the other hand, are schematic templates that combine with the contentful  
33 structures when meanings are profiled in discourse. The list of different configu-  
34 rations is not exhaustive but represents a sample of central types of which BOUND-  
35 EDNESS and SCALE are of key importance for the coding schema of this study.

36 The leftmost column of Table 1 gives the three most general contentful pre-  
37 meaning structures, which in turn comprise more fine-grained structures, in-  
38 cluding pre-meaning structures that relate to categories such as BABY, CAR, and  
39 STONE; EVENT structures, such as RUN, DIE, and UGLY, and abstract structures  
40 such as IDEA, PROBLEM, and STRUCTURE (for more detail, see Paradis 2005). The

**Table 1:** Ontologies and cognitive processes in meaning construction, adapted from Paradis (2005).

Ontologies (conceptual structures)		Construals (processes)
Contentful pre-meaning structures	Configurational pre-meaning structures	<i>Gestalt</i> : e.g., structural schematization, profiling
(i) CONCRETE SPATIAL MATTERS	BOUNDEDNESS	<i>Saliency</i> : e.g., metonymization, generalization, zone activation
(ii) TEMPORAL EVENTS, PROCESSES AND STATES	SCALE	<i>Comparison</i> : e.g., metaphORIZATION, categorization
(iii) ABSTRACT PHENOMENA	DEGREE	<i>Perspective</i> : e.g., foregrounding/backgrounding, subjectification
	PART-WHOLE	
	THING-RELATION	
	POINT	
	FREQUENCY	
	FOCUS	
	PATH	
	ORDER	

contentful dimensions evoked for words such as *good*, *wide*, and *small* are STATES, namely MERIT, WIDTH, and SIZE, respectively. Their meanings are interpreted against a meaning configuration, i.e., a simple schematic UNBOUNDED SCALE structure that hosts the properties GOOD, WIDE, and SMALL, which might be expressed by *good*, *wide*, and *small* or expressions that evoke similar meanings such as *respectable*, *broad* or *slight*. Dimensions and properties are of particular importance for antonymic adjectival meanings. SCALE is the structuring configuration of the above lexical semantic couplings and the properties GOOD, WIDE, and SMALL are simple types of content concepts. *Good*, *wide*, and *small* express properties at one end of the scale of which *bad*, *narrow* and *large* are words that evoke the opposite pole of the UNBOUNDED SCALE. *Dead–alive*, *closed–open* and *empty–full* are primarily associated with a BOUNDED configuration which may or may not combine with a SCALE structure in discourse. This short description of the model provides the necessary background to the study and to the description of the analysis in Section 4.

## 4 Aims, data and method

This section states the goals of the study and provides a description of and motivation for the selection of the test items of the study. It also offers a description of the semantic and constructional parameters used in this investigation that relate to LOC and describes how the test items were extracted from the BNC and the

1 coding principles. In Section 5, we describe our coding system in more detail,  
2 using the antonymic pair *thin* and *thick* to exemplify and provide explanations of  
3 the procedure. It should be noted again that the main thrust of this study does not  
4 concern the data set as such but the pairwise patterning of the individual adjectives  
5 in relation to one another – a within-pair approach.

6

7

## 8 4.1 Aims

9

10 The specific aims of this study are:

- 11 – To chart a random sample of the usage patterns of 42 individually occurring  
12 antonymic adjectives in English;
- 13 – To measure to what extent they are used in the same semantic contexts as  
14 their antonymic partners also when they are not used to express binary opposition  
15 *per se*;
- 16 – To assess previous theoretical approaches to lexical semantic relations in  
17 language – notably meaning as relations, as in Structuralism, including both  
18 the paradigmatic (the substitutability hypothesis) and the syntagmatic (the  
19 co-occurrence hypothesis) approaches, and meanings as substantial structures  
20 as within the Cognitive Linguistics framework.

21

22

## 23 4.2 The test items

24

25 The choice of adjectives for this study is based on a large number of extensive  
26 studies of antonym use in text as well results of studies of these and other words  
27 in experimental settings carried out during the past decade (Jones et al. 2012; van de  
28 Weijer et al. 2012, van de Weijer et al. 2014). They have been shown to be strongly  
29 opposable and all of them co-occur with a *p-value* of 0.0001 or lower in the BNC  
30 (the method of identification is described in Willners 2001: 83; Paradis et al. 2009).

31 The conceptual dimensions along which the pairings evoke opposite prop-  
32 erties appear in small capital letters in Table 2, followed by the antonymic word  
33 pairs in italics. With the exception of *slow-fast*, they all evoke stative properties,  
34 some of which can be calibrated using some kind of objective instrument, e.g.,  
35 *long, thin* and *large*, while others are clearly more subjectively evaluative, e.g.,  
36 *bad, good, ugly* and *beautiful*.

37 The data set consists of a good 500 randomly selected occurrences of each  
38 of the above adjectives in their contexts in the BNC (some 21,000 occurrences in  
39 total). The UNIX command *grep* was used to retrieve the sentences containing  
40 the target words tagged as adjectives in the BNC, and the nominal heads of the

**Table 2:** The 21 antonym pairs: their meaning dimensions and lexical forms.

DIMENSIONS	antonym pairs		DIMENSIONS	antonyms pairs	
AGE	<i>young</i>	<i>old</i>	SIZE	<i>little</i>	<i>big</i>
APERTURE	<i>closed</i>	<i>open</i>	SPEED	<i>slow</i>	<i>fast</i>
BEAUTY	<i>ugly</i>	<i>beautiful</i>	STRENGTH	<i>weak</i>	<i>strong</i>
EXISTENCE	<i>dead</i>	<i>alive</i>	TEMPERATURE	<i>cold</i>	<i>hot</i>
FULLNESS	<i>empty</i>	<i>full</i>	TEMPERATURE	<i>cool</i>	<i>warm</i>
HARDNESS	<i>soft</i>	<i>hard</i>	TEXTURE	<i>smooth</i>	<i>rough</i>
HEIGHT	<i>low</i>	<i>high</i>	THICKNESS	<i>thin</i>	<i>thick</i>
LENGTH	<i>short</i>	<i>long</i>	WEALTH	<i>poor</i>	<i>rich</i>
LUMINOSITY	<i>light</i>	<i>dark</i>	WEIGHT	<i>light</i>	<i>heavy</i>
MERIT	<i>bad</i>	<i>good</i>	WIDTH	<i>narrow</i>	<i>wide</i>
SIZE	<i>small</i>	<i>large</i>			

adjectives were then identified using a head finder script. The sentence in the written part of the corpus data and the corresponding chunk for the spoken occurrences for each of the adjectives were imported into FileMaker Pro and the adjectives were then manually coded with respect to the four parameters described below. We discriminate between different senses, such as *light* ('not dark') and *light* ('not heavy') as in Table 2, but not metaphorical uses, say *hard* ('not easy'), since we operationalize sense boundaries in terms of the adjectival properties in relation to the meaning dimension they evoke irrespective of whether the instantiation is concrete or abstract.

### 4.3 The parameters

The four different parameters, which are the analytical elements of the study of the 42 adjectives, are described in this section. The parameters are meant to reveal the patterns of these particular test items in every instance of use in the corpus data. We are not making claims about other English adjectives such as *financial*, *pictorial*, *English*, *only*, *first*, *mere*, which are not known to be strongly antonymic, but which of course can express opposition in antonym construals. The parameters under investigation are *gradability*, *constructional use* (attributive or predicative), *nominal meaning*, and *basic or figurative use* (metaphorical and metonymical). The parameters are selected to account for the interpretations of the adjectives in their individual contexts. The level of abstraction and the granularity of the coding schema are high because we did not want to put the cart before the horse and force the data into a pre-determined template rather than letting the data speak for themselves.

### 1 4.3.1 Gradability

2

3 First, the adjectives were categorized with respect to gradability, i.e., as *non-*  
 4 *gradable*, *scalar*, or *non-scalar* (Paradis 2001, 2008). Scalar adjectival form-  
 5 meaning pairings are fully gradable and combine felicitously with such degree  
 6 modifiers as *very* and *fairly*. Non-scalar adjectives are complementaries. They  
 7 divide a conceptual domain into two distinct parts, i.e., a living creature is either  
 8 dead or alive. Such adjectival form-meaning pairings combine felicitously with  
 9 totality modifiers such as *absolutely*, *totally* and *perfectly*. Finally, non-gradables  
 10 have a classifying function and, for this function, they are not compatible with  
 11 degree modifiers. The following three examples illustrate the differences between  
 12 the three categories:

13

14 (5) *That kid is going to be very big.* (scalar)

15

16 (6) *The man had been dead for three days.* (non-scalar)

16

17 (7) *The debate will take place behind closed doors.* (non-gradable)

18

19 *Big* in (5) evokes the meaning ‘much of SIZE’ for CHILD. As indicated by the term  
 20 scalar, such meanings are construed along a scale – an UNBOUNDED SCALE, which  
 21 is relative to the reference point of CHILD in a given context. Such meanings can  
 22 be modified by scalar degree modifiers, e.g., *very*, *fairly*, *extremely*. *Dead* in (6) is  
 23 non-scalar and configured as BOUNDED. It expresses a meaning that is associated  
 24 with a boundary across the dimension of EXISTENCE. Such a meaning configura-  
 25 tion divides the contentful meaning dimension in two distinct parts, e.g., *dead-*  
 26 *alive*. BOUNDED meanings in languages may take totality modifiers, i.e., modifiers  
 27 that highlight the boundary such as *totally*, *completely* or approximators such as  
 28 *almost*, *nearly*. The use of *closed* in (7) is non-gradable, which means that grading  
 29 is not applicable at all. BOUNDED and SCALE are the kind of configurations listed  
 30 in Table 1 in the column for Configurational pre-meaning structures. They are  
 31 central to the semantics of this type of adjectival meanings. The reader should be  
 32 reminded again that configurational structures are evoked in context to express  
 33 certain discursive meanings. They are not part of the structure of the word, since  
 34 no set word meanings are assumed.<sup>3</sup>

35

36

37

38

39 <sup>3</sup> The flexibility of configurational use has been an object of study both in textual and experi-  
 40 mental studies (Paradis 2008; Paradis and Willners 2006, 2013).

### 4.3.2 Constructional use

Secondly, the adjectives were coded according to their use as either attributive or predicative. This parameter is taken to be an important component of meaning and regarded as a CONSTRUCTION in the technical sense, i.e., as two different form-meaning pairings (Goldberg 2006). To simplify, we may say that the main function of attributive adjectives is to express properties that either classify/define or describe an entity where the adjectival property is less newsworthy than a predicative adjective, where the newsworthiness is highlighted through the predication. Consider Examples (8) and (9).

(8) *Tina is wearing her new hat today.*

(9) *Tina's hat is new.*

In (8), Tina is wearing a hat and the hat that she is wearing is new. The example in (9), on the other hand, describes the hat, rather than the fact that Tina is wearing her new hat.

### 4.3.3 The semantics of the noun

Thirdly, the content structure of the nouns modified by the adjectives under investigation were analyzed and tagged according to the three most general meaning types of LOC's noun ontology. As shown in Table 3, the top meaning types are referred to as 1st order pre-meanings (concrete phenomena), 2nd order meanings (events, processes and states) and finally 3rd order meanings, i.e., abstract phenomena. In Table 3, we give some examples of such discursive meaning types of each level. 1st order meanings primarily evoke meanings of spatial matters, comprising word meanings pertaining to the areas of experience given in the leftmost

**Table 3:** Examples of lexical items that may be used for the three different meaning types, when they are used in discourse.

1st order meanings	2nd order meanings	3rd order meanings
animal, people, plant, artefact, natural object, location, substance, sound, vision	<i>Event:</i> destruction, death, victory <i>Activity/process:</i> jog, bake, discussion <i>State:</i> happiness, sadness, pain, smell, taste	fact, system, thing, point, linguistics, question, knowledge, science, context, area, degree amount, year, day, autumn

1 column. Their main domain of instantiation is SPACE. Next, 2nd order meanings  
 2 are profiled against the time domain and involve meanings relating to events,  
 3 activities and states that ‘happen’ or ‘take place’. Their primary domain of in-  
 4 stantiation is TIME. Finally 3rd order meanings are meanings that are abstract  
 5 constructs or ideas that may be referred to as Mental Objects or Shells, whose  
 6 primary domains of instantiation are neither SPACE NOR TIME.<sup>4</sup>

7 As shown in Table 3, our tagging is a semantic tagging of the readings of  
 8 the nominals for each one of the instances that make up the data set for the indi-  
 9 vidual antonymic words. First-order meanings in discourse are no longer pre-  
 10 meanings as in the model in Table 1, but fully-fledged discursive meanings in use.

11

12 (10) *The big animal disappeared behind the trees.*

13

14 (11) *Yes, the going will be slow tonight but erm not as slow as it has been in the*  
 15 *past erm so it should be good.*

16

16 (12) *This old system is outmoded.*

17

18 *Animal* in (10) is a 1st order meaning, profiling ANIMAL as instantiated in concrete  
 19 space. Example (11) profiles *going* as 2nd order meaning, i.e., it has its primary  
 20 instantiation in time, and (12) profiles an abstraction which serves as a shell for  
 21 some content.

22

23

#### 24 4.3.4 Basic, metaphorical and metonymical uses

25

26 Finally, as has already been touched upon, the adjective-noun combinations  
 27 were coded according to whether their uses were one of metaphorizations and  
 28 metonymizations or not (which we refer to as basic for lack of a better term) in the  
 29 analysis. Combinations of adjectives and nouns were coded as basic if they refer  
 30 to concrete interpretations of nominals. They were tagged as metaphors when  
 31 the adjectives induce a non-concrete interpretation onto the nominal or when the  
 32 adjective induces a reification of a 2nd and 3rd order meaning. For instance, the  
 33 integrated meaning of *thin qualifications* evokes the meaning of ‘basic and insuf-  
 34 ficient’ qualifications in mental space rather than something that is calibratable  
 35 in three-dimensional space and so does the use of *hard* in (13), while (14) and (15)  
 36 are metaphorical uses.

37

38

39

40 <sup>4</sup> These terms were introduced by Lyons (1977).

- (13) *Erosion of hard rocks is usually very different.* (basic) 1
- (14) *Not all beautiful women are as hard as you make out!* (metaphor) 2
- (15) *It was a tribute to the hard work and team effort put in by staff and children from the top four classes.* (metaphor/reification) 3
- (16) *More financial support would help improve her chances against the big names.* (metonymy) 4

The nominals were coded as metonomies when the use of the nominal either deviated from its conventional use, i.e., metonymization proper, as in (16) where *big names* profiles PEOPLE and not NAME, or in cases of facetization of lexical meanings such as in *a thin report*, where ‘thin’ induces one of the possible facets of report, i.e., as TOME or CONTENT. An extended discussion about the treatment of such meanings is included in the next section. More subtle uses *within* senses are beyond the scope of this investigation. Meanings, such as ‘teacher’, ‘writer’ and ‘priest’, e.g., *he’s a good teacher*, were classified as basic, since the sense of what the person is *good* or *bad* at is very central to the nominal meaning, which is a 1st order profiling (a more detailed description is given in Sections 5 and for the argumentation the reader is referred to Paradis 2004).

#### 4.4 Practical procedure

The methodological procedure used in the analysis of the data proceeds from the lexical items in each case to their actual discursive interpretations in context, i.e., from linguistic items to their contextual readings. For instance, if the actual reading of say *short report* refers to the paper copy, it was analyzed as a concrete object since its basic domain of instantiation is SPACE/CONCRETE OBJECT, and if it refers to the content it was coded in its domain of instantiation which is neither SPACE NOR TIME, but ABSTRACT/MENTAL SPACE. Although LOC is a semantic model for meaning making in general, it is primarily used as a practical analytical tool for the identification of ‘real’ discursive meanings in text in this study. Crucially, this method then also involves a close analysis of the combining nominals and the meanings they express in each instance. The method of identifying discursive meanings of the antonymic word pairs in their contexts serves to make it possible to make generalizations across the interpretations of the lexical items rather than focusing on the lexical items as such without taking their meanings into account, which is the case in corpus-driven analyses of antonym use.



1 The nominal meanings modified by the adjectival dataset were coded on  
2 the basis of what the meanings they profile in each and every particular con-  
3 text, which means that the analyst always also had to examine the broader  
4 context. For instance, the word *organization* may be used to refer to the abstract  
5 idea in one context, in which case it would be coded as a 3rd order meaning;  
6 (no such examples of the use of *organization* were found in the current data).  
7 It may profile the group of people who form the organization in another con-  
8 text (1st order meaning), as in (17), or the actual activity of organization in a yet  
9 another context, in which case it would be tagged as a 2nd order meaning, as  
10 in (18).

11

12 (17) *But achieving policy change is never an easy process, particularly if one is a*  
13 *comparatively junior participant in a large organization.*

14

15 (18) *Other crowned heads enjoyed less smooth organization on their travels than*  
16 *did Queen Victoria.*

17

18 The absolute numbers of the adjectives that fulfil the requirements of being in-  
19 cluded in this study vary. For various reasons, quite a few occurrences from the  
20 data set had to be excluded. Many of them were from the spoken part of the  
21 BNC. In the majority of cases, exclusions were due to the fact that there was  
22 not enough context for any type of analysis. Spoken language is inherently prob-  
23 lematic since speakers change their minds in the middle of the utterance, are  
24 interrupted, or for some reason or another simply stop short. Furthermore, some  
25 of the target words were incorrectly tagged as adjectives in the BNC and there-  
26 fore had to be removed from the study. For instance, in some contexts, *fast* and  
27 *high* were erroneously coded as adjectives by the BNC tagger, such as in *the un-*  
28 *armed plane flew very fast and very high*, where *fast* and *high* are adverbs. Also,  
29 some occurrences of *fast* were not related to SPEED, but to other uses such as  
30 ‘firmly fixed’, as in *the horse was fast in the mud*. In other words, we excluded uses  
31 that are not associated to the dimensions in Table 2. Another example of such a  
32 use is the response marker *Good!*, i.e., meaning ‘alright’ or ‘okay’. As Table 2 also  
33 shows, the adjective *light* occurs twice in the study, both in the sense of ‘not  
34 heavy’ along the meaning dimension of weight, and in the sense of ‘not dark’  
35 along the dimension of heaviness. Needless to say, we could not a priori dis-  
36 tinguish these two meanings; this was done during the coding of the data. As it  
37 turned out, there were more instances of *light* meaning ‘not heavy’. This made the  
38 number of the instances of the two senses used in the analysis rather unbalanced.  
39 We therefore found it necessary to code another couple of hundred random in-  
40 stances to achieve the right balance so that the relevant calculations could be

made. In the analysis, we refer to the two instances of light as *light (heavy)* and *light (dark)*.

Finally, in order to ensure robust analyses, 10% of the data was double coded for four of the test items, *bad*, *good*, *thin* and *thick*. Kappa analyses were performed on the results showing that the inter-coder reliability was satisfactory (92% agreement,  $kappa = 0.902$ ).

## 5 Case study of *thick* and *thin*

This section introduces a case study of the usage patterns of *thick* and *thin* with the purpose of fleshing out our method of analysis and coding through concrete exemplifications of our procedure. The section discusses the types of readings of the members of the pairs that we coded for and it gives an in-depth description of what subtypes of 1st order meanings the antonymic pairs modify and to what extent they are involved in what we have considered to be metaphorizations and metonymizations. The main purpose of this section is not to put the spotlights on *thin* and *thick* per se, but to use the pair to provide a concrete example of how the data were analyzed in order to facilitate the understanding of the results of the entire study for the reader.

Table 4 provides examples of a number of subcategories of 1st order meanings, which is the type of meaning that is most important for how *thin* and *thick* are used. Because there are considerably fewer uses of *thin* and *thick* with 2nd and 3rd order meanings, they are only discussed in the text. The quantitative patterns are also described in the subsequent sections together with all the other pairs. The majority of the 1st order nouns that combine with *thin* and *thick* fall under the subcategory of Artefacts, where their main role is to modify the calibratable dimension of volume or width, and the nominal meaning structures refer to artefacts of various different kinds of material, such as metal, plastic, paper, and textile.

The artefacts that combine with *thin* in these data, as shown in Table 4 do not only comprise entities that encompass concrete meaning facets but also qualitative aspects of concrete entities, such as *a thin report*, where *thin* modifies the CONTENT facet (not the TOME facet). The meanings are construed as metaphorizations in the sense that the property expressed by *thin* in the physical world is transferred into the mental world, and the interpretations are that the documents are lacking in substance or significance. It is not the documents as such that are *thin*, but their content. In the database, combinations of this kind are coded as 1st order meanings and as metaphorizations.

1 **Table 4:** Distribution of uses of *thin* and *thick* across 1st order meanings.

3 Subcategory	<i>thin</i>	<i>thick</i>
4 Artefacts	<i>thin cables, thin edges, thin cotton, thin anorak, thin wall, thin cardboard, thin gold chain, thin silver coating</i>	<i>thick glasses, thick make-up, thick walls, thick coat, thick book, thick layer of glass, thick material, thick cover, thick towels</i>
8 People	<i>thin woman, thin Englishman, thin face, thin lips, thin arm, thin nose, thin hand, thin legs; thin sheet of bone, thin covering of skin, thin veins, thin rivulet of blood</i>	<i>he thinks I'm thick, these councilors are so thick, stop being so thick; thick lips, thick hands, thick body, thick arms, thick lashes, thick eyebrows, thick hair</i>
13 Natural objects	<i>thin roots, thin cane, thin hedgerows; thin beech spinney</i>	<i>thick piece of deadwood, thick mamillated shells, thick rock sequences, thick snow; thick bush, thick grass of the meadow, thick undergrowth, thick cluster of trees</i>
16 Non-solids	<i>thin light, thin mist, thin air</i>	<i>thick fog, thick ice-laden cloud, thick mud</i>
18 Food	<i>thin sauce, thin beer, thin wine; thin rashers, thin bread, thin slices of coconut, thin strips of white icing</i>	<i>thick porridge, thick jam, thick soup, thick Cornish cream; thick ham-sandwich, thick slices from a loaf of bread, thick coating of milk chocolate</i>
22 Sound	<i>thin scratchy voice, his voice uncommonly thin, a thin gentle slithering sound</i>	<i>her voice thick with emotion, his voice thick with desire, her voice was thick and husky, what a snore he had strong, long thick and hard.</i>

28 The second-largest group within the 1st order combinations is *thin* and *thick*  
 29 combined with meanings related to People, including body and body parts. In  
 30 the majority of occurrences of this type, *thin* is expressing 'little flesh', and in the  
 31 vast majority of these combinations, *thin* modifies people holistically, i.e., their  
 32 constitution rather than the functions they perform. In the cases, where *thick*  
 33 refers to people holistically, the construal is one of metaphor, where *thick* means  
 34 'stupid'. Such combinations are coded as 1st order meanings and metaphoriza-  
 35 tions, because the profiled entity is the person. *Thick* modifies a mental property  
 36 of the person through metaphorization. In addition, both *thin* and *thick* modify  
 37 the calibratable dimension of volume and width of body parts. In combination  
 38 with body parts, such as arms and legs, *thin* and *thick* are used in a similar way,  
 39 but there are fewer occurrences where the role of *thick* has to do with 'excess flesh'  
 40 compared to its opposite *thin* used to refer to 'little flesh'. In the majority of

occurrences where *thick* combines with body-part meanings, it is used to modify density of parts, namely different kinds of hair.

Another fairly large group is the combination of *thin* and *thick* with Natural Objects or Phenomena, such as for example rocks, grass, shells, rime, sand, lithosphere, a pattern that is far more common for *thick* than for *thin*. This might be explained by the fact that *thick* is often used in an impartial way (Croft and Cruse 2004: 176), as in *How thick is the tree?*. The most common role of *thin* and *thick* in combination with Natural Objects, is to modify the calibratable dimension of volume or width of the objects. All but one of the uses profile the constitution of concrete entities such *thin roots*, while *thin snow* refers metonymically to the LAYER. *Thin* and *thick* also refer to sparseness/density of parts and groupings of plants and trees.

Furthermore, there are a few minor subcategories including among others Non-solids, Food and Sound. As shown in Table 4, Non-solids encompass references to entities such as liquids, vapors and light. *Thin air* is used metaphorically, in expressions such as *vanish into thin air*, *emerge from thin air*, *he had materialized out of thin air*, *faith does not feed on thin air but on facts*. In the context of Food the use of *thin* and *thick* fall into two distinct categories, one modifying consistency/or taste of liquid and the other modifying volume or width. In some cases where *thin* modifies consistency, it is used metonymically, e.g., in *thin wine* and *thin beer*, in which case *thin* does not refer to consistency as such, but to lack of smell and taste (Paradis and Eeg-Olofsson 2013). In the data set, *thin* and *thick* are also used to modify sound, mostly, but not only, the sound of voices. *Thin* denotes sound that is lacking in resonance or volume, while *thick* in combination with ‘voice’ seems to be connected with emotional states.

Only very rarely do *thin* and *thick* combine with 2nd order meanings. The majority of those uses are metaphorical. For instance, in ‘the *thin smile* turned into a grin’, the important thing in the context it occurs in is the actual concrete size of the smile. In the metaphorical uses in combination with 2nd order meanings, the meaning is one of reification of an EVENT or a STATE INTO THING, a kind of reversed metaphor. It is coded as metaphor in our data, as in ‘She did find in it some *thin satisfaction*’, ‘there are times when *love* goes very *thin*’, and ‘there was a *thin cold smile* on her face’. *Thin* in combination with STATES modifies the property expressed by the nominals *thin satisfaction*, *thin love* and *thin smile*, in a negative direction of lacking in spirit or sincerity or lacking in significance. Other examples of this phenomenon are *thin trade*, *thin distribution*, *thin attendance*, all of which involve a reification of the events, creating a summary scanned THING and the role of *thin* is to express sparseness in much the same way as it does in combinations such as *thin beech spinney*. All the uses of *thick* are metaphorical, half of which are about accent, as in *thick West Midlands drawl*, *thick Liverpool accent*,

1 *a thick English accent*. Finally, the number of occurrences where *thin* and *thick*  
2 modify 3rd order entities is also small. There is in fact only one single case with  
3 *thick*: *thick description*, and a dozen occurrences with *thin*: *thin financial margins*,  
4 *chances look thin*, *thin news coverage*, *thin theological content*, *thin historical re-*  
5 *cord*, *some years were thin*, *women were thin on the ground*.<sup>5</sup>

6

7

## 8 **6 Results**

9

10 This section presents the results of the study of all 42 adjectives. We focus both on  
11 the patterns of usage of the four parameters that we investigated one at a time,  
12 and on their interactions. Furthermore, we specifically examine the symmetry of  
13 the 21 pairs, i.e., we evaluate whether the pattern of usage of one member of an  
14 antonymic pair is similar to that of the other member. The pattern of the whole  
15 data set is not the focus of attention in this study, but rather a by-product of the  
16 within-pair design based on different dimensions. As a starting point, we look at  
17 the four parameters individually (Sections 6.1–6.4). We then continue with the  
18 overall picture (Section 6.5). All the frequencies for the individual parameters are  
19 collated and presented in Table 5.

20

21

### 22 **6.1 Gradability**

23

24 The majority of the adjectives in our data set are most often used as gradables.  
25 That is, they are construed on the basis of either a scalar (unbounded) or a non-  
26 scalar (bounded) structure. They are used as descriptors of a property of the nom-  
27 inal meanings they modify. As is clear from the distributions shown in Table 5,  
28 adjective gradability is most often of the scalar type. However, six adjectives are  
29 predominantly construed with a non-scalar configuration. This group consists of  
30 the three antonymic pairs: *closed–open*, *dead–alive* and *full–empty*. Among the  
31 other adjectives, non-scalar uses are rare. Some of the adjectives are used as non-  
32 gradables, primarily *little*, *young*, *old*, *fast*, *light* and *closed*. These non-gradable  
33 uses perform a subclassifying or identifying function, rather than a descriptive  
34 function, as in *big bang*, *closed shop*, *hard disk*, *little finger*, *old school*, *smooth*  
35 *muscle*, *soft drinks*, *short story*, *long run*, *hot water*, *open air*, *young lady* or *fast*  
36 *food*. For instance, *fast food* is not used to describe the food that has a particular

37

38

39 <sup>5</sup> The reader is reminded that the coding of the instances always takes the whole context into  
40 account, which means that out of context some of the occurrences may seem categorically  
ambiguous.

Table 5: Frequency distribution of the four parameters across the set of adjectives.

	Noun ontology			Adjective ontology			Figurativity			Adjective position		N
	1st	2nd	3rd	Non-gradable	Non-scalar	Basic	Metaphor	Metonym	Attributive	Predicative		
											Non-scalar	
small	359	34	105	7	0	460	19	19	439	59	498	
large	342	16	143	1	0	485	8	8	452	49	501	
little	327	56	114	250	0	323	168	6	496	1	497	
big	317	74	109	9	0	431	50	19	457	43	500	
weak	257	85	156	3	8	487	281	1	268	230	498	
strong	208	73	220	0	1	500	377	0	358	143	501	
narrow	345	12	120	2	0	475	131	2	414	63	477	
wide	246	33	222	1	6	494	305	2	406	95	501	
thin	441	15	20	6	1	469	61	8	402	74	476	
thick	457	5	2	0	0	464	411	4	325	139	464	
low	160	100	240	11	1	488	391	9	389	111	500	
high	138	123	216	36	4	437	366	5	393	84	477	
short	111	79	218	42	1	365	242	6	348	60	408	
long	195	117	260	48	19	505	319	4	502	70	572	
cold	336	40	61	45	1	391	100	12	254	183	437	
hot	372	41	57	65	0	405	73	50	303	167	470	
soft	395	47	52	62	15	417	230	3	383	111	494	
hard	176	123	184	56	3	424	337	0	293	190	483	
young	494	0	9	355	1	490	8	5	442	61	503	
old	278	11	80	138	3	350	16	3	311	58	369	
smooth	324	110	29	35	0	428	201	3	338	125	463	
rough	253	64	108	4	0	421	255	1	349	76	425	
slow	141	268	61	23	2	445	35	30	282	188	470	
fast	222	113	40	109	3	289	26	60	316	59	375	

Table 5 (cont.)

	Noun ontology			Adjective ontology			Figurativity			Adjective position		N
	1st	2nd	3rd	Non-gradable	Non-scalar	Non-scalar	Basic	Metaphor	Metonymy	Attributive	Predicative	
bad	128	114	260	0	2	500	468	15	19	331	171	502
good	149	110	174	4	1	428	422	4	7	317	116	433
ugly	329	61	72	1	0	461	296	166	0	300	162	462
beautiful	419	28	47	0	0	494	439	50	5	348	146	494
poor	156	88	106	0	1	349	89	240	21	278	72	350
rich	344	12	91	1	0	446	301	135	11	301	146	447
dark	452	15	61	8	0	520	417	94	17	447	81	528
light	232	8	17	2	3	252	245	8	4	181	76	257
(not dark)												
closed	290	26	152	123	321	24	173	293	2	393	75	468
open	246	40	124	16	320	74	151	254	5	244	166	410
empty	436	10	49	1	492	2	406	87	2	301	194	495
full	93	97	171	3	345	13	314	35	12	342	19	361
dead	367	8	35	1	403	6	325	80	5	166	244	410
alive	394	8	78	1	433	46	321	156	3	0	480	480
heavy	301	85	84	65	1	404	334	133	3	416	54	470
light	494	187	73	111	9	634	322	329	103	607	147	754
warm	368	61	64	12	0	481	305	131	57	303	190	493
cool	320	60	81	24	0	437	193	245	23	270	191	461

consistency as such, but to refer to food that is ready-made or semi-manufactured that you typically consume fast as well. *Little finger* refers to a subcategory of the fingers of the hand together with its co-hyponyms: The thumb, the index finger, the middle finger and the ring finger.

From the point of view of pairwise patterning of the adjectives, most of them feature the same proportions of gradability use. However, there are also exceptions. The most striking one is *little* in this respect. *Little* does not only deviate from *big* but also from the other SIZE adjectives (*small* and *large*). There are also quite large use discrepancies between *young-old*, *slow-fast* and *closed-open*. The main reason for the discrepancies in all these cases is due to the fact that *young*, *fast* and *closed* are more often used as non-gradables than their antonymic counterparts are. Almost all non-gradable uses of *young* are to address people, e.g., *young boy!*, *young girl!*, *young man!*, *young woman!*, while *old* is used in a variety of contexts, both for addressing people and for the classification of entities, e.g., *old man!* and *old age*. In the case of *fast*, there are only few combinations. They are *fast food*, *fast bowler/bowling*. As for the rest of the pairings, there are just minor differences with respect to gradability usage.

## 6.2 Constructional use

The results of the analysis clearly show that the adjectives pattern in a symmetrical way, e.g., *small-large*, *narrow-wide*, *low-high*, *short-long*, *young-old*, and *ugly-beautiful*. In the case of the expressions of SIZE, it deserves to be pointed out that *big* is used in a similar way as *small-large*, while *little* differs from the other SIZE adjectives; *little* is not used predicatively except in one case – in the expression *when I was little*. Also, as shown in Table 5, it is clear that there is a preference for all the adjectives in the data set to be used attributively as premodifiers. Only two adjectives (i.e., *dead* and *alive*) are used more often in predicative position. We interpret this as an indication that their usage preference is as a newsworthy element of situations. The preference for the attributive use varies across the remaining adjectives. For most of them, the preference for attributive use is fairly strong, but there are a number of adjectives with less pronounced preferences.

## 6.3 The semantics of the noun

This section reports on the use of the antonymic pairs in combination with different types of nominal meanings at the most general level, i.e., what we refer to as



1 combinations of adjectives and nouns along our three different types of nominal  
2 meanings: (i) 1st order (meanings primarily instantiated in concrete space); (II)  
3 2nd order (meanings with primarily temporal instantiation, i.e., processes and  
4 states); (iii) 3rd order (abstract matters). This parameter is concerned with the  
5 various combinatorial preferences of adjectival uses and nominal meanings and  
6 like the other parameters, it is used to examine whether the usage of the members  
7 of the antonymic pairings is symmetrical or not. The figures in Table 5 suggest  
8 that noun ontology has a more diversified distribution compared with the other  
9 three parameters. Most adjectives combine with all three nominal categories, and  
10 there are few empty cells. Table 5 does not show a completely clear pattern, but  
11 the following trends emerge. Most adjectives in the data set combine most fre-  
12 quently with 1st order nominal meanings. The exceptions to this are *low-high*,  
13 *short-long*, *good-bad*, *hard* and *full*. These adjectives frequently combine with all  
14 three types of nominal categories. Interestingly, the first six of these eight adjectives  
15 are antonym pairs, while *hard* and *full* differ from their antonyms (*soft* and  
16 *empty*) with respect to the nominal meanings they modify.

17

18

#### 19 **6.4 Basic, metaphorical and metonymical uses**

20

21 In this section, we take a closer look at the patterns of basic, metaphorical and  
22 metonymical uses of the antonymic pairs. It is clear from Table 5 that, across the  
23 board, metonymic use is rare and that most adjectives are most often used in their  
24 basic (non-figurative) sense. The exceptions to this are *weak*, *strong*, *wide*, *low*,  
25 *high*, *short*, *long*, *closed*, *open*, *hard*, *rough*, *poor*, and *cool*. Again, some of those  
26 are antonymic pairs (*weak-strong*, *low-high*, *short-long*, *closed-open*), while  
27 some others do not share this pattern with the other members of the pairings.  
28 From the point of view of their usage patterns across the antonymic pairs, there is  
29 a correlation between the members of the pairs in their basic/figurative usage in  
30 the sense that they tend to be used metaphorically to the same extent. This sug-  
31 gests that figurativity is a characteristic of the contentful dimension expressed by  
32 the antonymic adjectives rather than a characteristic of the individual opposite  
33 properties of that dimension. Pairs that are rarely used metaphorically are *small-*  
34 *large*, *good-bad*, *old-young*. At the other extreme we find *low-high*, *weak-strong*,  
35 *soft-hard*, *short-long* and *open-closed*, which are more often used figuratively.  
36 Metonymical use is infrequent across the board, but in cases of metonymization,  
37 the use is symmetrical across the antonymic pairs: *fast-slow*, *cold-hot*, *warm-*  
38 *cool* are used in metonymical contexts, while *weak-strong*, *narrow-wide* and  
39 *soft-hard* are not. One word pair stands out in being asymmetrical here, namely  
40 *light-heavy*.

## 6.5 The overall picture

We performed a correspondence analysis based on the figures given in Table 5. The result is shown in Figure 1. Correspondence analysis is an exploratory analysis that assists in the interpretation of contingency tables (Greenacre 2007) determining how much the rows and the columns of the table deviate from the marginal totals (the average patterns). These deviations are often represented graphically as distances between points in two-dimensional space, as shown in Figures 1 and 4 below. The plots are called biplots. They should be understood as follows. Rows or columns that deviate relatively little from the overall pattern are close to the origin. Rows or columns that deviate more are located at a greater distance from the origin.

We see the following patterns in the map in Figure 1. The horizontal axis of the plot represents adjective scalarity with the non-scalar adjectives to the left of the vertical axis and the scalar adjectives to the right. There are six adjectives that are used as non-scalars: *dead*, *alive*, *empty*, *full*, *closed* and *open*. Within this group we see relatively little vertical spreading, that is, all six adjectives stay close to the horizontal axis. The six non-scalar adjectives are easily recognized in Table 5 too due to their high frequencies as non-scalars.

The adjectives to the right of the vertical axis show considerably more vertical spreading. All the way to the top, three adjectives are represented that are used exceptionally often as non-gradable. These adjectives are *young*, *old* and *little*. Furthermore, the vertical dimension also seems to correlate with two of the other parameters that we investigated, namely metaphor and noun ontology. Adjectives that are located towards the lower end of the vertical axis (below the horizontal scale, e.g., *low*, *strong* and *high*) are used more often than average with 3rd order meanings and in metaphorical use, whereas adjectives towards the upper end of the vertical axis (e.g., *fast*, *thick* and *hot*) tend to be used more often non-metaphorically and with 1st order meanings. Finally, constructional use (attributive or predicative) does not seem to contribute much to the variation that we see among the adjectives.

In order to make it possible to see the general picture of the usage pattern of the 42 adjectives in the data set, we combined the frequencies in a new table that collates the codings of the parameters showing their mutual dependencies. Since the full table (Table 5) contains all combinations of all levels, it has many cells that contain a zero. We made two compromises: First, we merged the adjective-ontology categories *scalar* and *non-scalar* into one category *gradable*. Second, we collapsed the categories *metaphor* and *metonym* into a single category that we call *figurative*, primarily because metonymizations are comparatively rare. Gradable use, then, contrasts with non-gradable use and basic use with figurative. The result, after collapsing these categories, is shown in Table 6.

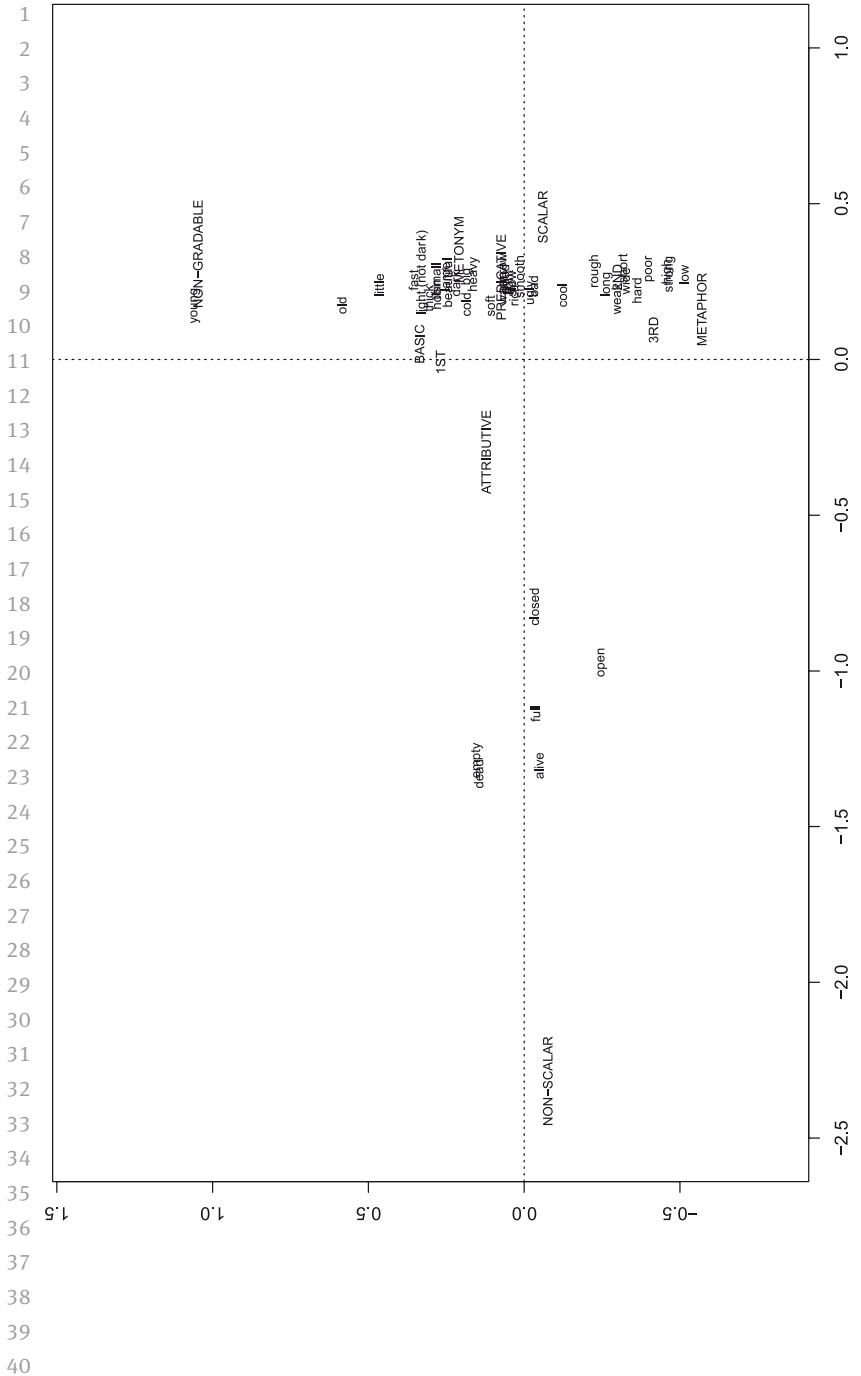


Fig. 1: Correspondence analysis biplot based on the data presented in Table 5.

Table 6: Frequency distribution of the four parameters combined across the set of adjectives (A = Attribution, P = Predication)

	Basic												Figurative												
	1st			2nd			3rd			1st			2nd			3rd									
	Gradable		Non-gradable	Gradable		Non-gradable	Gradable		Non-gradable	Gradable		Non-gradable	Gradable		Non-gradable	Gradable		Non-gradable							
	A	P	A	P	A	P	A	P	A	P	A	P	A	P	A	P	A	P							
small	297	37	7	0	27	2	0	0	73	17	0	0	17	1	0	0	4	1	0	0	14	1	0	0	
large	297	32	1	0	14	2	0	0	128	11	0	0	10	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	
little	164	1	104	0	7	0	14	0	23	0	10	0	8	0	50	0	8	0	27	0	36	0	45	0	
big	239	32	2	0	60	1	5	0	87	5	0	0	40	3	1	0	8	0	0	0	14	2	1	0	
weak	55	83	0	0	50	16	0	0	6	5	1	0	62	56	1	0	15	4	0	0	77	66	1	0	
strong	66	46	0	0	9	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	62	34	0	0	48	14	0	0	173	46	0	0	
narrow	277	39	0	0	2	2	0	0	22	2	0	0	23	4	2	0	5	3	0	0	83	13	0	0	
wide	105	76	1	0	5	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	59	5	0	0	25	2	0	0	205	11	0	0	
thin	343	59	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	5	3	0	9	4	0	0	14	6	0	0	
thick	300	110	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	29	0	0	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	
low	61	16	2	0	7	3	0	0	9	1	1	0	59	17	5	0	66	21	3	0	176	53	0	0	
high	52	30	4	0	7	3	2	0	7	1	0	0	33	4	14	1	98	10	3	0	161	35	12	0	
short	66	12	0	0	18	2	0	0	47	2	13	0	6	23	3	1	47	11	1	0	123	9	24	0	
long	134	42	1	1	27	1	0	0	30	10	3	0	10	6	1	0	75	2	12	0	179	8	30	0	
cold	131	128	12	1	3	10	2	0	31	7	0	0	18	28	11	7	16	0	9	0	18	2	3	0	
hot	156	106	42	3	9	19	0	0	11	1	0	0	30	17	17	1	8	3	2	0	28	17	0	0	
soft	171	61	10	0	17	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	87	36	30	0	20	3	6	0	25	10	16	0	
hard	54	8	2	0	76	4	1	0	0	1	0	0	46	30	35	1	29	9	4	0	33	137	13	0	
young	87	56	340	5	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	3	0	4	0	
old	144	27	67	27	6	0	1	2	44	1	30	1	6	0	7	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	2	0	
smooth	165	84	1	0	6	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	24	17	33	0	88	16	0	0	18	7	0	1	
rough	131	30	0	0	6	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	63	28	1	0	52	4	1	0	92	13	2	0	

Table 6 (cont.)

	Basic												Figurative														
	1st				2nd				3rd				1st				2nd				3rd						
	Gradable	Non-gradable	Gradable	Non-gradable	Gradable	Non-gradable	Gradable	Non-gradable	Gradable	Non-gradable	Gradable	Non-gradable	Gradable	Non-gradable	Gradable	Non-gradable	Gradable	Non-gradable	Gradable	Non-gradable	Gradable	Non-gradable					
<b>slow</b>	24	74	5	0	173	60	17	0	0	31	21	0	0	10	28	0	0	16	1	1	0	0	5	4	0	0	
<b>fast</b>	45	21	87	0	81	16	8	0	0	21	10	0	0	46	9	14	0	8	0	0	0	0	6	3	0	0	
<b>bad</b>	57	41	0	0	89	21	0	0	0	159	101	0	0	24	6	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<b>good</b>	85	53	0	0	96	14	0	0	0	125	46	3	0	7	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<b>ugly</b>	155	122	1	0	9	4	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	44	7	0	0	35	13	0	0	0	52	15	0	0	
<b>beautiful</b>	279	122	0	0	13	6	0	0	0	15	4	0	0	17	1	0	0	5	4	0	0	0	19	9	0	0	
<b>poor</b>	52	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	58	13	0	0	79	9	0	0	0	85	17	0	0	
<b>rich</b>	135	103	0	0	6	2	0	0	0	45	10	0	0	91	15	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	20	15	0	1	
<b>dark</b>	333	63	3	0	4	0	0	0	0	10	4	0	0	41	10	2	0	10	1	0	0	0	41	3	3	0	
<b>light</b>	157	67	2	0	4	4	0	0	0	7	4	0	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	
<b>(not dark)</b>																											
<b>closed</b>	110	44	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	46	18	72	0	13	3	1	0	0	83	9	49	1	
<b>open</b>	98	45	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	30	57	10	2	27	11	0	0	0	72	50	0	0	
<b>empty</b>	242	158	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	0	0	19	17	0	0	7	2	1	0	0	27	16	0	0	
<b>full</b>	61	15	0	0	80	0	0	0	0	158	0	0	0	14	1	2	0	15	1	1	0	0	11	2	0	0	
<b>dead</b>	123	201	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	21	22	0	0	2	5	1	0	0	18	16	0	0	
<b>alive</b>	0	317	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	76	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	75	0	0	
<b>heavy</b>	131	32	40	0	63	1	3	0	0	58	2	4	0	70	16	12	0	15	1	2	0	0	14	2	4	0	
<b>light</b>	154	61	56	1	30	4	2	0	0	11	3	0	0	133	40	49	0	121	27	3	0	0	48	11	0	0	
<b>warm</b>	149	124	1	0	8	13	0	0	0	9	1	0	0	48	36	10	0	32	7	1	0	0	45	9	0	0	
<b>cool</b>	104	57	8	0	7	6	0	0	0	5	6	0	0	49	87	14	1	40	6	1	0	0	42	28	0	0	
	<b>5989</b>	<b>2868</b>	<b>805</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>1033</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1211</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1482</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1057</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2072</b>	<b>722</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>		

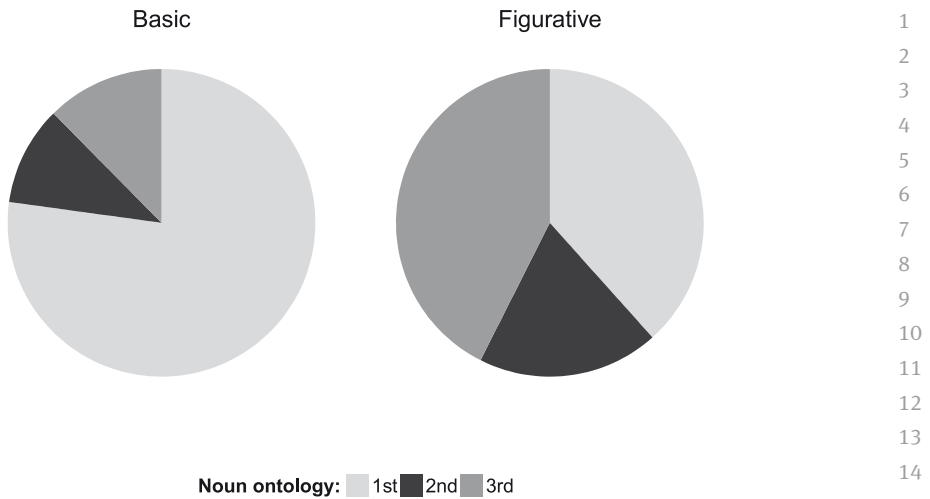
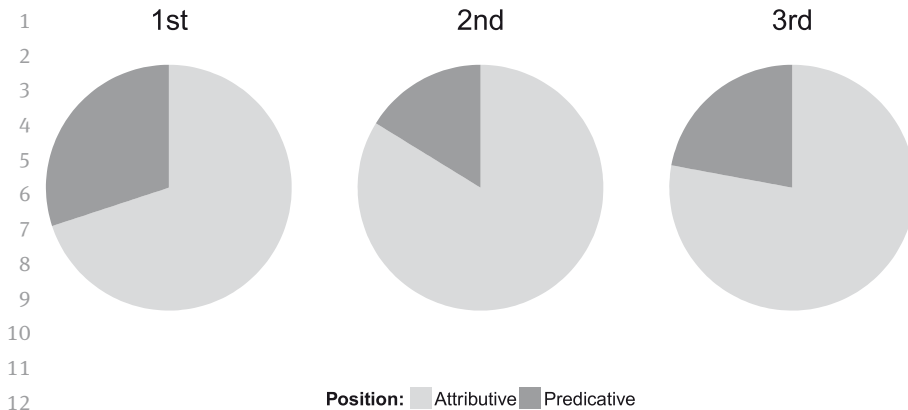


Fig. 2: Relation between figurative use and noun ontology.

The modal category, i.e., the “average adjective”, is gradable (i.e., scalar or non-scalar), combines with a 1st order nominal meaning, and is used in its basic (non-figurative) sense. Adjectives in basic uses are considerably more rarely used with 2nd and 3rd order nominal meanings than with 1st order meanings. This contrasts the basic uses with those that are used in a figurative sense. Figurative use is most common with 3rd order meanings, and to a somewhat lesser degree with 1st order meanings. The relative frequency of instances of adjectives in combination with 2nd and 3rd order meanings are considerably larger for the figurative uses, as seen in Figure 2.

As can be seen in Figure 2, there is considerable variation across basic and figurative use for combinations that express nominal 1st order meanings compared to combinations with 2nd or 3rd order meanings. While most of the individual adjectives never, or hardly ever, combine with 2nd or 3rd order meanings in basic uses, there is a small group that constitutes an exception to this pattern, in that the members of this group quite regularly do, notably, *slow*, *fast*, *bad*, *good*, *large* and *full*. A similar, though less strongly pronounced, pattern could be observed among the figurative uses. The figurative uses that tend to combine with 2nd and 3rd order nouns include *weak*, *strong*, *narrow*, *wide*, *low*, *high*, *short*, *long*, *hard*, *rough* and *poor* as well as the group of non-scalar adjectives, i.e., *open-closed*, *empty-full*, and *dead-alive*.

As for constructional use, attributive modification is more common than predicative use, across the board. The predominance of attributive use is also somewhat stronger when the adjective modifies 2nd and 3rd order nouns,



**Fig. 3:** Relation between adjective position and noun ontology.

as shown in Figure 3. This pattern is reversed for *alive*, which can only be used predicatively and *dead*, which is used predicatively in more than half of its occurrences.

In order to assist the interpretation of the figures in Table 6, we also applied a correspondence analysis to those data.<sup>6</sup> Combined, the biplot and the figures in Table 6 reveal the following patterns: The horizontal axis represents a transition from gradable use towards the left to non-gradable use towards the right. The adjectives that are often used as non-gradables are *little*, *old* and *young*, and to a lesser extent *fast*. Note that both *young* and *old* are used as non-gradables, but they differ in that non-gradable *young* occurs exclusively with 1st order nouns (19), whereas *old* combines with both 1st and 3rd order nouns, as in (20) and (21).

(19) *The young producer looked buoyant.*

(20) *To argue with the old man was pointless.*

(21) *It is a wicked old world, she concluded.*

Furthermore, there is an important difference between *little* as compared to its antonym *big*, in that *big* rarely occurs as a non-gradable adjective, while *little* frequently does. The same can be said about *fast* and *slow*. While *fast* is used more often than average as a non-gradable adjective (22), there are only few occurrences of *slow* used that way (23).

<sup>6</sup> The column figurative-2nd-non-gradable-predicative was excluded from the correspondence analysis because it contains zero cells only.

Figure 4  
No text  
citation

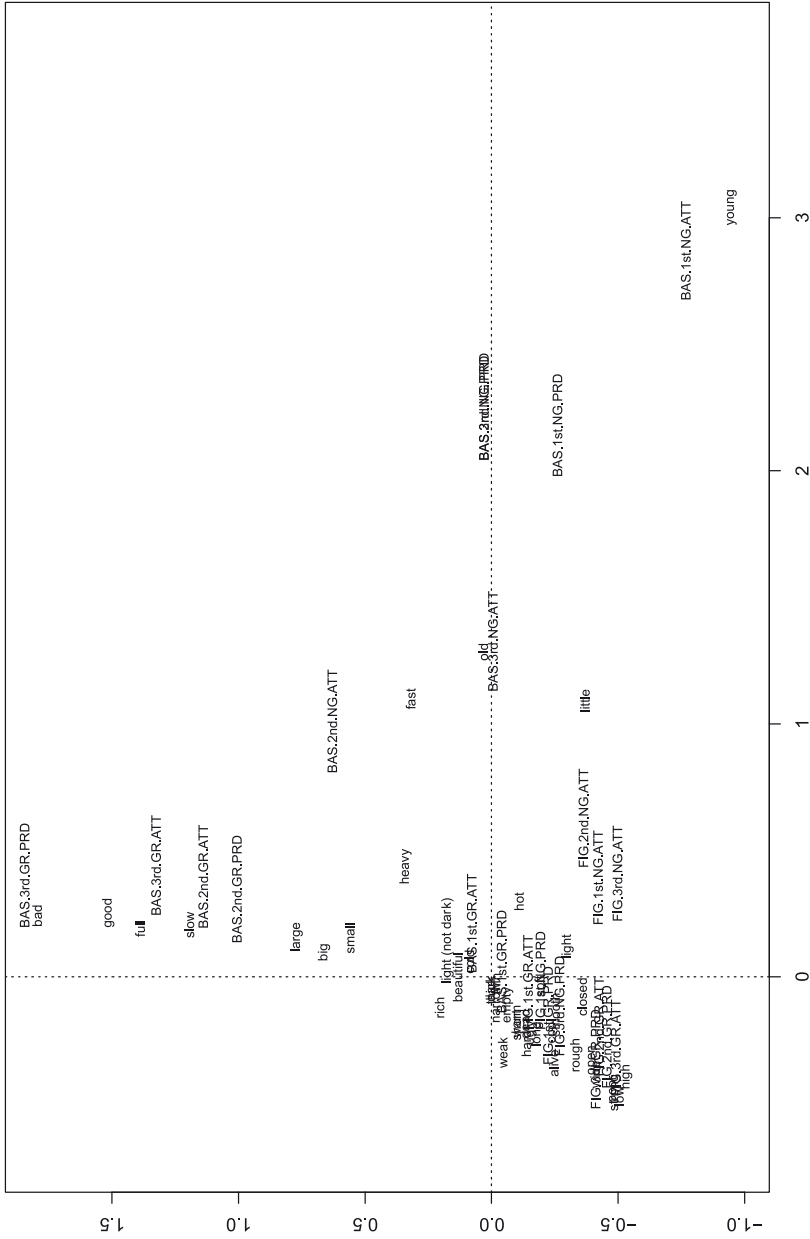


Fig. 4: Correspondence plot of the data presented in Table 6.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40



1 (22) *The Gatwick express, on the fast track to the private sector.*

2 (23) *It is like walking in slow motion, is it? laughed Molly alongside him.*

3  
4 Another adjective that stands out as strongly non-gradable is *closed*. The differ-  
5 ence between the previous non-gradable adjectives and *closed* is that the non-  
6 gradable instances of *closed* are all in figurative contexts (24). In this respect,  
7 *closed* differs from *open*, which is hardly ever used as a non-gradable adjective, as  
8 in (25), in our data set but may very well be in other samples. For instance, in  
9 contexts such as *open air*, *open source* or *open surgery*.

10  
11 (24) *A closed system is a system in which there is no net gain or loss of matter in*  
12 *the system.*

13  
14 (25) *HaL is unlikely to sell its chips on the open market.*

15  
16 The adjectives towards the top of the biplot, to the right of the vertical axis, are  
17 those that differ from the ‘average’ adjective in that they more often occur in basic  
18 uses combined with 2nd and 3rd order nominal meanings. This group includes  
19 the adjectives *bad*, *good*, *full*, *slow*, *large*, *small*, *big*, and *heavy*. *Good–bad* and  
20 *large–small* are similar in this respect, while the others differ from their ant-  
21 onymic partners. Below are examples of basic 2nd and 3rd order uses in combina-  
22 tion with *slow–fast* (26) and (27), *big–little* (28) and (29), *heavy–light* (30) and (31).

23  
24 (26) *His smile was slow, almost lazy.*

25 (27) *Good looks, fast moves and ferociously competitive prices.*

26  
27 (28) *Or perhaps the recent tremor was just a prelude to the really big one.*

28 (29) *He gave a despairing little shrug and closed his eyes.*

29  
30 (30) *At home she was a queen, I never liked her to do the heavy jobs.*

31 (31) *There, passenger traffic was light, and was generally regarded as a nuisance.*

32  
33 Furthermore, *full* deviates from its antonymic partner *empty* through its high fre-  
34 quency of occurrences with 2nd and 3rd order nominal meanings in contexts  
35 such as (32) and (33).

36  
37 (32) *But before we go we must understand the full import of what we have seen.*

38  
39 (33) *The number of ways of packing is reduced since the empty volume available*  
40 *becomes more and more correlated with the molecules.*

*Heavy* falls in-between the two groups just described in that it is an adjective that is regularly used as a non-gradable adjective, but it also combines frequently with 2nd and 3rd order nominal meanings. *Heavy* differs from its antonymic partner *light* in that it more rarely than *light* occurs in figurative contexts such as (34) and (35).

(34) *But it too carries a heavy moral message.*

(35) *Their lyrics stand up as poems, good light verse in their own right.*

The remaining group of adjectives is clustered around the origo of the graph, corresponding to the average adjective, which occurs more often in basic uses and in combination with 1st order meanings. The adjectives located in the bottom left-hand corner of the graph tend to be used in figurative constructions more often. For instance, we can see that *high* and *low*, which are often used figuratively, are located towards the bottom of the cluster.

## 7 Summarizing discussion

The 21 antonymic pairs under investigation in this study are all found to be particularly felicitously opposable antonyms in the English languages (e.g., Jones et al. 2012). They are strongly canonical pairs along dimensions that are central to humans in all walks of life in our culture and presumably in all cultures (Dixon 2009). For instance, there are *small–large*, *weak–strong*, *narrow–wide* and *thin–thick* that express properties of calibratable dimensions: SIZE, STRENGTH, WIDTH and THICKNESS respectively, *ugly–beautiful* and *bad–good* that are expressive of evaluative properties along the dimensions of BEAUTY and MERIT, properties along the dimension of SPEED, *slow–fast*, and properties associated with EXISTENCE. What they all have in common are the simple contentful dimensional meanings that may be configured as bounded or scalar. For each occurrence of the individual uses of the 42 adjectives in the corpus, we have examined (i) the type of configurational structure of the adjectival meanings in the corpus, (ii) their constructional usage pattern (attributive or predicative), (iii) the semantics of the nominals modified by the adjectives, and (iv) their various uses as modifiers in constructions that are “basic”, metaphorical or metonymical. The overall patternings of the pairwise strength of symmetry across these parameters were calculated using correspondence analysis.

The main outcome of the study is that most of the antonymic partners pattern in a similar way with respect to their gradability configuration, i.e., as scalar,

1 non-scalar or non-gradable. The members of the pairs are either primarily at-  
2 tributive or primarily predicative. They modify the same type of nominal mean-  
3 ings and their usage is similar from the point of view of how they are used in  
4 terms of basic, metaphorical or metonymical meaning construals. This general  
5 finding supports the hypothesis which we set out to examine, namely that the  
6 strength of the antonymic pairings is grounded in that they pattern in the same  
7 way in text and discourse and they do so in spite of the fact that the semantic  
8 parameters of this analysis are at a general level and not geared towards the indi-  
9 vidual meaning dimensions of the antonymic pairs, which means that any one of  
10 the adjectives in this study could cluster together with any other adjective in the  
11 data set.

12 In addition, we also found some interesting more local patterns of simi-  
13 larities as well as differences. First, it is not the case that all the antonymic part-  
14 ners are symmetrical with respect to all four parameters that we measured. For  
15 instance, *little* and *big* differ considerably on the parameter of configuration.  
16 While *little* frequently occurs as a non-gradable adjective, *big* hardly ever does. A  
17 similar pattern is observed for the members of *young-old*, *slow-fast* and *open-*  
18 *closed*. According to the basic-figurative parameter, most antonym pairs most  
19 often occur with basic meanings. However, here we can also see dissimilarities.  
20 For instance, *little* occurs in figurative constructions much more often than *big*  
21 does. The same is true of *narrow-wide*, *soft-hard*, *smooth-rough*, *poor-rich*,  
22 *heavy-light* and *warm-cool*. With the exception of *dead* and *alive*, all adjectives  
23 are most often used to modify the nominal meanings attributively, but this too  
24 varies within some pairs. For instance, *weak* is used as a predicative modifier  
25 nearly as often as it is used attributively, while *strong* is not. This is also the case  
26 for *thin-thick*, *slow-fast* and *poor-rich*. Finally, most but not all antonym pairs  
27 combine most often with 1st order meanings of nouns. Incongruencies are seen in  
28 pairs such as *soft* and *hard*. While *soft* occurs predominantly with 1st order mean-  
29 ings, *hard* combines more often with 2nd and 3rd order meanings. There are three  
30 other antonym pairs that are not congruent in this respect; they are *slow-fast*,  
31 *poor-rich* and *empty-full*.

32 Moreover, as a by-product of the investigation we also observed interactions  
33 between the parameters that we investigated. Notably, both adjective position  
34 and figurativity appear to interact with noun ontology. The adjectives that com-  
35 bine with 1st order nouns occur more often in predicative position than the adjec-  
36 tives that combine with 2nd or 3rd order nouns. In other words, attribution is  
37 more common in the context of concrete nominal meanings than abstract mean-  
38 ings. We have no immediate explanation for this. Rather than speculating, we  
39 would like to refer this to future research. Also, adjectives used in figurative con-  
40 structions occur more often with 2nd and 3rd meanings than adjectives used in

basic constructions. This means that, relatively speaking, there are more cases of reification than of metaphorizations proper, where metaphorization is a mapping from a 1st order meaning into a 2nd or 3rd order meaning with an invariant configuration, while reification profiles a scanned meaning of an activity (e.g., *a jog*) or a stative abstract meaning (e.g., *love*) into THING.

Unlike previous corpus studies of antonym pairs, which have looked at their semantics when they are actually used to express binary opposition, i.e., from a syntagmatic perspective, this study has focused on the semantics of such pairs when they are used individually in order describe their semantic environment also from what might be referred to as the paradigmatic perspective. On the basis of semantically analyzed corpus data of English antonymic adjectives, we have examined the usage pattern in discourse in order to determine whether their strength of goodness (canonicity) of opposability and their conventionalization as antonym pairs in language (as previously shown in the literature) is also reflected in shared usage profiles across a large number of usage events in a corpus. This way we wanted to determine whether the members of the antonymic pairs are used in the same semantic contexts and in the same type of constructions in discourse, also when they do not co-occur in the same sentence. The parameters under investigation are set at a fairly general level, so as not to provide obstacles for the individual words to cluster closely together with other words in the test set that are not their antonymic partners. The general result of the study reveals that in spite of this design, it is, in the majority of the cases, the antonymic partners that turn out as partners as shown in the correspondence plots, i.e., being most similar in terms of the parameters under investigation.

Our results thus lend support to the currently rather large number of studies concerned with antonym canonicity in the literature as reported in the introduction, and it complements the antonym literature that deals with antonym co-occurrence in text and discourse (Willners 2001; Jones 2002; Jones et al. 2007; Murphy et al. 2009; Lobanova 2012). It also lends support to a similar study of adjectives restricted to the domain of SIZE carried out by Gries and Otani (2010). While their study shares the research objective with this study, namely the quest for predictors of lexical semantic relations through behavioral profiles in text, their focus is somewhat different in terms of the scope and the parameters under scrutiny. Their study is a detailed corpus study of behavioral profiles of a large number of morphological, syntactic and semantic parameters (in total 27) of 6 adjectives in the domain of SIZE, both in their base forms, and in the comparative and the superlative. Our study, on the other hand, focuses on more purely semantic parameters. Using multivariate analysis, they measure the usage patterns of the adjectives *small*, *large*, *big*, *little*, *great* and *tiny* and show that, among the 6 size adjectives investigated, *large–small* and *big–little* cluster together, while *tiny*

1 and *great* appear in different clusters (*tiny* with *smallest* and *great* with *greater*  
2 and *greatest*) and do not seem to have canonical partners. The patterning of  
3 *large–small* is the same as in our study, where we show that *big* and *little* pattern  
4 differently from *small* and *large* in terms of figurativity and gradability and in re-  
5 lation to its antonymic partner *big*, *little* is more often used in metaphorical and in  
6 non-gradable contexts.

7 Gries and Otani (2010) also bring up the long-standing controversy in  
8 antonym research between the co-occurrence hypothesis, i.e., antonym co-  
9 occurrence in the same sentence, on the one hand, and the substitutability hy-  
10 pothesis on the other. They relate the two and say that the notion of contextual  
11 representations suggested by the substitutability hypothesis ties nicely in with  
12 the basic tenet of the co-occurrence hypothesis through the notion of contextual  
13 representation. We agree with their interpretation of the implications of their  
14 work in the SIZE domain. Our findings, based on a data set of 21 such dimen-  
15 sions, speak in favor of their statement. Following up on the discussion of the  
16 two Structuralist approaches to meaning in language, i.e., the paradigmatic and  
17 the syntagmatic approaches, these results, like the results presented by Gries  
18 and Otani (2010) suggest that from an empirical point of view there is no real  
19 conflict between the co-occurrence hypothesis, i.e., two antonyms are good ant-  
20 onyms because they co-occur frequently in the same sentences (Justeson and  
21 Katz 1991), and the substitutability hypothesis, i.e., they are good antonyms be-  
22 cause they are interchangeable in most contexts (Charles and Miller 1989). The  
23 reason for this is that, if two adjectives are antonyms, they share the same mean-  
24 ing dimension and if they are relational meanings as adjectives are they then  
25 modify the same meaning structure of another element, i.e., both hypotheses  
26 are in essence contextual and syntagmatic in nature. In other words, proponents  
27 of the co-occurrence hypothesis and proponents of the substitutability hypothe-  
28 sis operationalize the effect of context in two different ways. The upshot of both  
29 views is that antonymy is a contextual construal (Jones et al. 2012). One possible  
30 reason for the controversy is that neither camp has taken the semantics of the  
31 lexical forms seriously, or been able to account for the semantics of antonymy.  
32 This has resulted in cross-purposive arguments and missed points in a conflict  
33 where there is none.

34

35

## 36 8 Conclusion

37

38 The findings presented in this study provide additional support to the currently  
39 rather large number of studies on antonyms and antonymic word meanings,  
40 using a variety of different techniques, both corpus methodologies, behavioral

and neurophysiological experiments, in that antonymic pairs judged to be mem- 1  
bers of the category are similar in all respects but one, namely that they evoke 2  
properties at opposite sides of a boundary or ends of a scale of a meaning di- 3  
mension. Canonical antonymic partners are maximally similar and minimally 4  
different. This large-scale, manually coded corpus study shows that antonymic 5  
partners appear in similar semantic environments in discourse also when they 6  
are not used to express oppositeness. These findings reduce the Structuralist 7  
debate about the two approaches to a non-question showing that their lexical 8  
relational modelling of meanings is deficient in that it does not take word mean- 9  
ing in use seriously, neither the paradigmatic nor the syntagmatic camp. 10

Instead, the usage-based claim in Cognitive Linguistics is that we understand 11  
words and constructions based on how they are used in human communication, 12  
and lexical knowledge is acquired and built up on the basis of their use in dis- 13  
course, irrespective of whether they might be seen to form a paradigm or a syn- 14  
tagm (Tomasello 2003, 2008; Bannard et al. 2009). Antonymy is grounded in sim- 15  
ilarity of usage (Paradis and Willners 2011). These findings allow us to explain the 16  
close relationship between antonyms through their pairwise similarities, which 17  
is the kind of tacit knowledge that speakers build up through life and which be- 18  
comes entrenched in memory, i.e., the total meaning and use potential of a lexi- 19  
cal item as posited by Paradis (2003, 2005, 2016). These pairwise similarities 20  
across usage events described in this article do not necessarily reflect conscious 21  
lexical knowledge but rather tacit lexical knowledge at some level that can only 22  
be uncovered through careful scrutiny of their actual use across large numbers 23  
of occurrences by analysts, or through tapping into people's minds in experi- 24  
mental settings. What this particular study contributes to the long line of previ- 25  
ous work on speakers' knowledge and assessments of antonymic couplings, ant- 26  
onym canonicity, and antonym use in language is that antonyms are in fact 27  
used in the same semantic contexts in text and discourse even when they are 28  
not used to express opposition. The approach to meaning in language and to the 29  
nature of lexical knowledge presented in this study is truly usage based, which 30  
entails that lexical knowledge both emerges and develops through language use, 31  
in which case strength of antonymy can be seen as an epiphenomenon of usage 32  
entrenchment. 33

**Acknowledgment:** This research forms part of a project on *Contrast in language,* 35  
*thought and memory*, funded by the Swedish Research Council, grant no 2007- 36  
2409. We thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful and constructive 37  
comments. 38

39

40

## References

- 1  
2  
3 Bannard, Colin, Elena Lieven & Michael Tomasello. 2009. Modeling children's early  
4 grammatical knowledge. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 106.  
5 17284–17289.
- 6 Boas, Hans. C. 2008. Determining the structure of lexical entries and grammatical  
7 constructions in Construction Grammar. *Annual Review of Cognitive Linguistics* 6. 113–144.
- 8 Charles, Walter & George Miller. 1989. Contexts of antonymous adjective. *Applied*  
9 *psycholinguistics* 10(3). 357–375.
- 10 Croft, William & D. Alan Cruse. 2004. *Cognitive linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University  
11 Press.
- 12 Cruse, D. Alan. 1986. *Lexical semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 13 Cruse, D. Alan. 2002. The construal of sense boundaries. *Revue de Sémantique et Pragmatique*  
14 12. 101–119.
- 15 Crutch, Sebastian J., Paul Williams, Ged Ridgeway & Laura Borgenicht. 2012. The role of polarity  
16 in antonym and synonym conceptual knowledge: Evidence from stroke aphasia and  
17 multidimensional ratings of abstract words. *Neuropsychologia* 50. 2636–2644.
- 18 Dixon, Robert M. W. 2009. Adjective classes in a typological perspective. In Robert M. W. Dixon  
19 & Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald (eds.), *Adjective classes: A cross-linguistic typology*, 1–49,  
20 Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 21 Fillmore, Charles. 1982. Frame semantics. *Linguistics in the morning calm*, 111–138.  
22 Seoul: Hanshin.
- 23 Gärdenfors, Peter. 2000. *Conceptual spaces: The geometry of thought*. Cambridge, MA:  
24 MIT Press.
- 25 Goldberg, Adele. 2006. *Constructions at work: The nature of generalization in language*.  
26 Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 27 Greenacre, Michael. 2007. *Correspondence analysis in practice*. New York: Chapman &  
28 Hall/CRC.
- 29 Gries, Stefan Th. & Naoki Otani. 2010. Behavioral profiles: A corpus-based perspective on  
30 synonymy and antonymy. *ICAME Journal* 34. 121–150.
- 31 Jones, Steven. 2002. *Antonymy: A corpus-based perspective*. London: Routledge.
- 32 Jones, Steven, Carita Paradis, M. Lynne Murphy & Caroline Willners. 2007. Googling for  
33 opposites: A web-based study of antonym canonicity. *Corpora* 2(2). 129–154.
- 34 Jones, Steven, M. Lynne Murphy, Carita Paradis & Caroline Willners. 2012. *Antonyms in English:  
35 Construals, constructions and canonicity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 36 Justeson, John S. & Slava M. Katz. 1991. Co-occurrences of antonymous adjectives and their  
37 contexts. *Computational Linguistics* 17. 1–19.
- 38 Kostić, Nataša. 2011. Antonymous frameworks in Serbian written discourse: Phrasal contexts  
39 of antonym co-occurrence in text. *Poznań Studies in Contemporary Linguistics* 47(3).  
40 509–537.
- Lakoff, George. 1987. *Women, fire and dangerous things*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago  
Press.
- Langacker, Ronald. 1987. *Foundations of cognitive grammar*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University  
Press.
- Langacker, Ronald. 1999. *Grammar and conceptualization*. Berlin & New York: Mouton  
de Gruyter.

- Lobanova, Anna. 2012. *The anatomy of antonymy: A corpus-driven approach*. Groningen: University of Groningen dissertation. 1  
2
- Lobanova, Anna, Tom van der Kleij & Jennifer Spenader. 2010. Defining antonymy: A corpus-based study of opposites by lexico-syntactic patterns. *International Journal of Lexicography* 23. 19–53. 3  
4
- Lyons, John. 1977. *Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 5
- Mohammad, M. Saif, Bonnie J. Dorr, Graeme Hirst & Peter D. Turney. 2013. Computing lexical contrast. *Computational Linguistics* 39(3). 555–589. 6  
7
- Murphy, Gregory L. 2002. *The big book of concepts*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. 8
- Murphy, Gregory L. & Jane M. Andrew. 1993. The conceptual basis of antonymy and synonymy in adjectives. *Journal of Memory and Language* 32. 301–319. 9
- Murphy, M. Lynne, Carita Paradis, Caroline Willners & Steven Jones. 2009. Discourse functions of antonymy: a cross-linguistic investigation. *Journal of Pragmatics* 41(11). 2159–2184. 10  
11
- Panther, Klaus-Uwe & Thornburg, Linda. 2012. Antonymy in language structure and use. In Mario Brdar, Milena Žic Fuchs & Ida Raffaelli (eds.), *Cognitive linguistics: Between universality and variation*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars. 12  
13
- Paradis, Carita. 2001. Adjectives and boundedness. *Cognitive Linguistics* 12(1). 47–65. 14
- Paradis, Carita. 2003. Is the notion of linguistic competence relevant in Cognitive Linguistics? *Annual Review of Cognitive Linguistics* 1. 247–271. 15
- Paradis, Carita. 2004. Where does metonymy stop? Senses, facets and active zones. *Metaphor and Symbol* 19. 245–264. 16  
17
- Paradis, Carita. 2005. Ontologies and construals in lexical semantics. *Axiomathes* 15. 541–573. 18
- Paradis, Carita. 2008. Configurations, construals and change: Expressions of degree. *English Language and Linguistics* 12(2). 317–343. 19  
20
- Paradis, Carita. 2012. Cognitive grammar. In Carol A. Chapelle (ed.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*, 690–697. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. 21  
22
- Paradis, Carita. 2016. Meanings of words: Theory and application. In Ulrike Hass & Petra Storjohann (eds.) *Handbuch Wort und Wortschatz* [Handbook of word and lexicon] (Handbücher Sprachwissen-HSW Band 3). Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. 23  
24
- Paradis, Carita & Mats Eeg-Olofsson. 2013. Describing sensory experience: The genre of wine reviews. *Metaphor and Symbol* 28. 22–40. 25  
26
- Paradis, Carita & Caroline Willners. 2006. Antonymy and negation. *Journal of Pragmatics* 38(7). 1051–1080. 27  
28
- Paradis, Carita & Caroline Willners. 2011. Antonymy: From convention to meaning-making. *Review of Cognitive Linguistics* 9(2). 367–391. 29  
30
- Paradis, Carita & Caroline Willners. 2013. Negation and approximation as configuration construal in SPACE. In Carita Paradis, Jean Hudson & Ulf Magnusson (eds.), *The construal of spatial meaning: Windows into conceptual space*, 287–31. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 31  
32  
33
- Paradis, Carita, Caroline Willners & Steven Jones. 2009. Good and bad opposites: using textual and psycholinguistic techniques to measure antonym canonicity. *The Mental Lexicon* 4(3). 380–429. 34  
35  
36
- Rakova, Marina. 2003. *The extent of the literal: Metaphor, polysemy and theories of concepts*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan. 37
- Tomasello, Michael. 2003. *Constructing a language: a usage-based theory of language acquisition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 38  
39
- Tomasello, Michael. 2008. *Origins of human communication*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. 40



- 1 Traugott, Elizabeth & Richard Dasher. 2005. *Regularity in semantic change*. Cambridge:  
2 Cambridge University Press.
- 3 Sahlgren, Magnus. 2008. The distributional hypothesis. *Rivista di Linguistica* 20(1). 33–53.
- 4 Schütze, Hinrich & Jan Pedersen. 1993. A vector model for syntagmatic and paradigmatic  
5 relatedness. In *Making sense of words: Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Conference of the*  
6 *UW Centre for the New OED and Text Research*, 104–113. Oxford: England.
- 7 van de Weijer, Joost, Carita Paradis, Caroline Willners & Magnus Lindgren. 2012. As lexical as  
8 it gets: The role of co-occurrence of antonyms in a visual lexical decision experiment.  
9 In Dagmar Divjak & Stefan Th. Gries (eds.), *Frequency effects in language representation*,  
10 255–279. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- 11 van de Weijer, Joost, Carita Paradis, Caroline Willners & Magnus Lindgren. 2014. Antonym  
12 canonicity: temporal and contextual manipulations. *Brain and Language* 128(1). 1–8.
- 13 Willners, Caroline. 2001. Antonyms in Context. A Corpus-based Semantic Analysis of Swedish  
14 Descriptive Adjective. *Travaux de l'Institut de Linguistique de Lund* 40. Lund: Dept.  
15 of Linguistics, Lund University.
- 16 Willners, Caroline & Carita Paradis. 2010. Swedish opposites: A multi-method approach to  
17 antonym canonicity. In Petra Storjohann (ed.), *Lexical-semantic relations from theoretical*  
18 *and practical perspectives* (Linguisticæ Investigationes Supplementa). Amsterdam &  
19 Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25
- 26
- 27
- 28
- 29
- 30
- 31
- 32
- 33
- 34
- 35
- 36
- 37
- 38
- 39
- 40

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40