

The Use of Evaluative Adjectives and the Problem of Collocation

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On defining the basic terms and overviewing a few select publications, the problem question of how the meaning of the words in a nominal word group determines the unit's foundation and stability is answered while overviewing nominal word groups, most of them collocations, and searching the answer in experiential collocations as these turn into wholly attitudinal (evaluative) collocations. As experiential collocations turn into attitudinal, so their typical deep semantic bonds happen to weaken or disappear altogether. Only weak semantic links or, mostly, semantic features relevant to an object motivate attitudinal word groups and collocations. But attitudinal nominal groups are not entirely free combinations of words because numbers of such categories as animate, inanimate, concrete, abstract, thing, phenomenon, phenomenon, mental process and others determine how the words combine in a unit and how close the interior link in them is.

Keywords: *nominal groups, collocation(s), semantically, experientially motivated units, deep semantic bond, semantic link, experiential link, semic agreement, experiential relations, relevance of a feature to an object*

Introduction

Although EvAdj + Noun collocations, which have a simple and clear structure, are central in this paper, collocation is a unit which is best defined in the integrated system of functional grammar (Halliday 2014, Tucker 1998). Michael AK Halliday discusses groups of words and phrases as those formed below the clause. In a brief generalisation, he finds a group to be “an expansion of a word” and a phrase “a contraction of a clause” (Halliday 2014, pp. 362–363). Both these units have a place “somewhere between the rank of a clause and that of a word” (Ibid, 363).

The initial term ‘collocation’ in the present paper, which is “a combination of words in a language which happens very often and more frequently than would happen by chance” (OALD 10th, 293), would be equivalent to Halliday’s ‘group’ – ‘the nominal group’ in the present pper. E.g.: (1) *a splendid view, an impressive description, a remarkable discovery, a happy end, terrific wind, sweet memories, nice words, delightful reading*, etc. To compare, here are different collocations of the same structure: (2) *a square porch, wicker chairs, a barred stove, a brass cap, a glass decanter, a secondhand shop, this new child*, etc. Michael Halliday treats the nominal groups represented in (2) as experiential structures which specify “a class of things, namely” *porch, chairs, stove, cap, decanter, shop, child*, and “some category of membership within the class”, namely: *square, wicker, barred, brass, glass, secondhand, new*. Although the adjectives in group (1) of the examples also specify a class of things (*view, descripton, discovery, end, wind, memories, words*,

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reading) and some category of membership within the class, the specifying words (*splendid, remarkable, happy, terrific, sweet, nice, delightful*) are different from the experiential specifying words (*square, wicker, barred, etc.*), as they mean generally only subjective positive qualities of the things named.

Michael Halliday found two kinds of collocations: experiential collocations (*a square porch, a glass decanter, etc.*) differ from attitudinal (*an impressive description, delightful reading, etc.*) in the meaning of adjectives they include, although structurally and in qualifying relations they are similar. Therefore attitudinal/evaluative collocations, which may also be negative, are likely to be determined differently than experiential collocations. Their semantic motivation is the focus question in the present paper. Only binominal collocations were studied and no questions of their structure asked.

Object and Subject of Research

The term evaluative adjectives was chosen as a simple common term and proposed for this conference paper before Michael AK Halliday's terminology was adopted. So, the terms evaluative and attitudinal mean the same kind of adjectives.

Gordon H. Tucker notices that collocation focuses on the syntagmatic relations of the units in it but that it is "the lexical content of the words in a collocation that decide its collocability rather than its syntax" (Tucker 1998, p. 11). So, the task in this paper is motivated.

In an abstract sense, "collocation (is) a relation within a syntactic unit between individual lexical elements" ... "used especially where words specifically or habitually go together: e.g., *blond* collocates with *hair* in *blond hair* ..." (Matthews 1997, p. 60). The question that led the present research was what keeps the words together in habitual or traditional collocations, especially when they are attitudinal. Native speakers answer this question with a remark, "Catch me say it. This is so and don't ask me why". I did ask why for years, and the present paper is about a tentative answer that I found.

The original question on which I focused years ago was the meaning of qualifying collocations and the guideline how native speakers make them. I read Michael Halliday's works (1976, 1978) much later, in the 1980s in fact, and saw that my attachment to questions of meaning was encompassed in Systemic Functional Grammar. Although putting ahead no grand project of system network relations of meaning between the structure and lexis in this paper, I minded the basic premises of Functional Grammar while questioning whether there may be deep semantic relations in qualifying binominal collocations, which would determine their character and explain their identity. This question is the problem of the present paper.

Only binominal word groups (Adj + Noun) were investigated in this paper and no questions about this structure were asked. Some consideration of their structure is relevant to clarify the focus of research. Skipping deictic and numerative qualifying functional elements as free combinations and irrelevant to

the task and material of the present paper, two kinds of qualifying elements or epithets (Halliday) often realised by adjectives, experiential and attitudinal, were considered. Michael Halliday identified two kinds of qualifying elements or epithets, experiential (*choppy waters, a large red feather, new numbers*) and attitudinal (*a really nice little town, an awfully sweet lady, splendid gardens*) epithets (Halliday 2014, p. 376). The object of research in this paper is collocation Attitudinal Adj + Noun.

Drawing an analogy with the examples quoted above, all epithets here (*splendid, impressive, remarkable, happy, terrific, sweet, nice, etc*) would be attitudinal adjectives in Michael Halliday's terms. This differentiation simultaneously defines nominal groups on the study of which the present paper is based. The nominal groups studied are nominal groups of the structure Adj+N, in which the classifying element is a noun and the qualifying element is an attitudinal adjective, and the unit consists of an evaluative Adj + Noun, in traditional terms.

In the sentence, the nominal group can function as Subject, Complement or Vocative and Adjunct (Halliday 2014, p. 362), but this question is outside the scope of the present paper. In his explanation of the logical structure of the nominal group, Michael Halliday focused on "the generalised logical semantic relations that are encoded in natural language" rather than on their interpretation in terms of formal logic (Halliday 2014, p. 388). This view is also preserved in the present paper. The core nominal group consisting of the qualifying element + NOUN (*a splendid view, old trains*) is simple to analyse structurally even when it is habitual yet often idiomatic or bound semantically.

The core nominal group may consist of a subcategorising element 'a is a subset of x' and be modified and submodified. E.g.: *splendid old electric trains; perfect capturing scenes, etc.*, which include a submodifier, modifier and head (Halliday, p. 389). Cf.: *Fantastically well-integrated; what a socially committed family we are!* Submodification may have different extensions or internal bracketing, in Halliday's terms. E.g.: *second-hand car salesman, full-time appointment, etc.* Modification itself can be positional: premodification and postmodification. E.g.: *a roadside shack made of weather board* (Halliday, p. 390). As these examples show, "the postmodifier does not itself enter into the logical structure, because it is not construed as a word complex" (Halliday, p. 390). The hypotactic relationship in the nominal group explains how long strings of nouns can form names of institutions, parts of machinery, newspaper headlines.

The head itself, which is always present in the nominal group, can be other than a single noun: one blue eye and one brow – head as Numerative. Epithets and classifiers do not normally function as Head (Halliday, p. 391). But Head can be dissociated from Thing in the nominal group when it has the form of "a prepositional phrase with of: a cup of tea" (Halliday 2014, p. 392).

I was familiar with the functional study of language from Michael Halliday's works but this paper had no major task to analyse nominal groups in the functional systemic framework.

This line of functional description was meant to show how extensively the nominal group is defined in Functional Grammar. The units studied and the scope of the present paper does not permit me to give full credit to Michael AK

Halliday's contribution to the explication of the nominal group. It is also somewhat extraneous here because the material of the present paper includes only nominal groups of the structure evaluative/attitudinal Adj + Noun, the simplest to single out and the most difficult to analyse semantically.

The Target of Research

When a researcher is concerned with “language as meaning potential – and this is a central concern of systemic functional linguistics – the thorny problem of the semantic organisation of the lexical resource cannot be avoided” (Tucker 1998, p. vii). As mentioned above, it was the question of interior semantic relations in collocations that led me and kept me busy. It is not for nothing that the approach in Functional linguistics has been chosen as the founding reasoning here, although the founding argument of functional linguistics is not integrated in this small paper. The target of research was to study the interior semantic structure of nominal groups, most of which were collocations, and to trace deeper or weaker semantic links which bound up words in collocation.

Literature Analysis

Research into English noun phrases and collocations is abundant, (cf.: Poulsen 2022, Sommerer and Keizer 2022), to mention but a few recent publications, but they are descriptive. The first book mentioned here (Poulsen 2022) is basically concerned with the definition of “noun phrases” and their structural description.

Sonja Poulsen takes a very broad view, overviews verbal and nominal phrases, questions even polysemy in words, focuses on schemas and construction types, on basic-level categories and domains of variation. This author formulates four hypotheses she intends to test in her research: **1)** the forms of conventional and entrenched collocations can be identified “by analysing the internal structure of component items and their mode of integration” in the contexts of situation. In these contexts, conventional and entrenched collocations are like other composite structures (Poulsen 2022, p. 131). **2)** In conventional and entrenched collocations consisting of a verb and a nominal object, the noun evokes the dominant frame and in collocations that are not entrenched, the verb evokes the dominant frame (Poulsen 2022, p. 131). **3)** Conventional and entrenched collocations “can be characterised in terms of the cognitive salience of the verb + nominal object construction in the frame evoked by the noun” (Poulsen 2022, p. 132). **4)** “The verb in conventional and entrenched collocations has a functional, grammaticalized, role” (Poulsen 2022, p. 132).

The analysis in terms of domains and referential range leads to a hypothesis about the internal structure of the lexical categories of the verb and noun in a verbal idiom, *to break an appointment* (Poulsen 2022, p. 279). It is shown, in the analysis of the grammatical function of the constituents of the unit, that lexically specific image-semantic structure “can be related to metaphors underlying the

conceptualisation of causation” (Poulsen 2022, p. 280). In the analysis of the cognitive salience of the verb + noun construction, construction types are outlined for both conventional and entrenched collocations. Finally, a principle of alternative conceptualization is claimed in the studied collocations because “it is never predictable exactly which subdomain” of senses will be “the source domain for a given target domain” (Poulsen 2022, p. 282).

Sonja Poulsen further specifies how a noun evokes the dominant frame in Verb + N conventional and entrenched collocations. The verb evokes the dominant frame in collocations of other types than conventional and entrenched (Poulsen 2022, p. 284). Collocations can be characterised by cognitive salience in collocation V + N constructions “in the frame evoked by the noun” (Poulsen 2022, p. 285).

Although Sonja Poulsen claims that her contribution is to a resolution of “the problem of categorization posed in the traditional approach to phraseology” (Poulsen 2022, p. 304) as opposed to functional cognitive framework, her paper does not show that she has a motivated conception of collocation and the cognitive theory from the point of view of which she could analyse her material and argue for certain consistent conclusions. On the contrary, this author continually quotes her material and makes observations which are empirical and partial and in no way systematised. The book by Sonja Poulsen (2022) may be evaluated as a publication of dissertation data, which is difficult to measure as the author herself resorts to no measurement against some ideas of a consecutive argument. The focus of the present paper is concrete and drawn from a limited concrete material. Without an integrated conception and semantic interpretation of collocability, neither Sonja Poulsen’s book wholly nor particularities of her empirical data could have been a reference for the present paper.

Numerous publications on the noun phrase and collocations include very few papers which are related and relevant to the present paper. For instance, Kristen Davidse (2022) analyses the noun phrase in context and discusses its grounding: indefinite, relative, possessive and definite. She also discusses primary and secondary determiners of the noun phrase (Davidse 2022, pp. 33–34). Against the data of previous research, she suggests three parameters of retrievability, mentioning and inclusivity in relation to the four grounding types of the noun phrase (Davidse 2022, pp. 34, 74). Her contribution is in the proposal of the notion of ‘reference mass’ (Davidse 2022, p. 74), detailing specification given in the noun phrase and explaining an extension of its cognitive context. These aspects of the noun phrase are irrelevant to the research on which the present paper is based.

One paper, though, (Wolde 2022) mentions constituents of the noun phrase and argues in the terms relevant to the present paper. Elnora Ten Wolde focuses on evaluative constructions of an extended structure, (*a hell of a fine story, the devil of a McIntyre, a colourless little mouse of a woman, etc.*) and gives an overview of preceding research on the question. As the construction itself is an extended phrase, the author analyses its syntax, makes a reference to its historical development and concludes on the “semantic bleaching” of its central noun into an intensifier. The conclusion on bleaching is the only observation that is relevant to the argument of the present paper: the meaning of attitudinal or evaluative adjectives is flexible but they should not be treated as intensifiers in my material owing to their semi-free

collocation and fixed frequency. But they seem to be perceived as intensifiers by foreign speakers. If, guided by this concept, foreign speakers ignore their properties of combinability, strange collocations other than genuine English, happen to be produced.

The present paper has no problem of the complexity of construction rather than evidence of an irresponsible treatment of attitudinal/evaluative adjectives. The focus here is, therefore, directed to the interior semantic structure of Adj + Noun collocations, which is partly referred to by EM, evaluative modifier, and BI, binominal intensifier, by Elnora Ten Wolde (2022, p. 280), but not investigated further.

As authors of other articles collected in the same book (Sommerer and Keizer 2022) are committed to no less formal and little systematised analysis of noun phrases often linked to the verb, the present paper could not use it as a reference source. The present paper, in contrast, raises no formal questions of the structure of the unit. As defined above, the focus unit in the present paper is evaluative/attitudinal Adj + Noun collocations, both those recognised as conventional and free units. The task is to find out whether any semantic components may be responsible for the internal structure of these nominal groups, which would account for their identity in genuine English, as opposed to strange combinations produced by foreigners.

Material of Research

The present paper is an empirical study, which only approaches functional reasoning. It draws material from an extensive research into the phatic use of English (Drazdauskiene 1994, 2016). The founding reference in my earlier research were Michael AK Halliday's works (1973, 1976, 1978). This author defined uses of language as instances of the use of language: "there are indefinitely many uses of language, which no linguistic theory has attempted to systematise" Halliday 1976, pp. 19, 29). The phatic use of English is one of the uses of language. Research into the phatic use of English has shown that uses of language are conducive to the formation of the functions of language and so are integrated into the system of language through ultimate semantic components. But this line of reasoning is not relevant to the present paper.

Uses of language can be investigated in pragmatics as concrete realisations of communicative purposes. Although "no particular literary device can be appropriated to any one of the function of speech; it is sure to be borrowed on occasion by others" (Ogden and Richards 1960, p. 224), the recurrence of certain units can be shown to represent a particular use of language if and when it is credibly defined contextually. The phatic use of English is such a use of language. Its typical contexts are the beginning and end of speech acts, situations of leisure, advertising and promotional texts. Personal and emotive statements recur in the phatic use of English and so nominal groups, evaluative/attitudinal Adj + Noun, are intrinsic in this use of language. Thus, material of this paper is functionally and structurally defined by the purpose of the phatic use of English, which is conducive to the

functioning of compliments, pleasant responses and incentives, wholly positive superficial comments, praiseworthy statements, elaborate gratitude, apologies and similar turns of speech. Consequently, the phatic use of English is rich in evaluative collocations.

Attitudinal/evaluative adjectives, defined as the adjectives which express an opinion, value or quality of something differ from experiential adjectives in their meaning, spheres of use and collocation. Adjectives of this kind, (*wonderful, marvellous, fantastic, splendid, awful, terrible, appalling, ghastly*, etc) are most common in trivial conversation. The term ‘attitudinal’ chosen by Michael AK Halliday, is a term integrated in the functional theory. The term ‘evaluative’, which had been initially chosen in this paper, is a common word and its meaning is more obvious to common, lay readers and professional, for a reason. The terms and reasoning chosen by some authors included in the two books referred to above (Poulsen 2022, Sommerer and Keizer 2022), would hardly keep the audience’s attention at a conference for their complexity of terms and scarcity of generalisations on illustrative material. This explains the uses of simpler terminology preferred in the present paper.

Like all adjectives, attitudinal adjectives form collocations, but they also function as single units in the phatic use of English. E.g.: *It’s ages since we met! How on earth did you hear all this? You look gorgeous. Christ, what an armful! I feel wonderful. Why, Sarah, ..., how enchanting to see you, how very kind of you to come! I used to think she looked marvellous in it. God, he’s adorable! It’s lovely. You look knockout, SallyO! I couldn’t say less than, , Well, Loulou, you’re looking very beautiful yourself*, etc).

Conversation in the phatic use of English is rich in compliments and evaluative exclamations, and the syntactical structures of existential and exclamatory utterances form the context for the use of single evaluative words, as the examples above indicate. The question of their combinability does not arise at this point. But this syntactical condition also creates a psychological effect which forms a false impression that attitudinal adjectives have no restrictions on their collocation, which may turn into a problem for foreign speakers of English. Foreigners happen to use curious units, if judged by comments of native speakers and the data of corpora. E.g.: (1) *My stockings were a nightmare.* (2) *I was terribly happy to see her.* (3) *What a crazy week has just ended.* (4) *Great thanks go to our amazing team - ..., to all supportive investors, ... to our beloved Maipo team.* (5) *Thank you, amazing people of the North ...* (6) *It is such a stupid state*, etc.

The units in (4 and 6) are not recorded in either the British National Corpus (BNC) or the Corpus of Contemporary American (COCA); the units in (3 and 5) are not recorded in the BNC but recorded in the COCA and so on.

In genuine English, it is not always that attitudinal adjectives express an overstatement or inflate an utterance. It is possible to come across numerous laudatory statements in studies of literature, stylistics or sports in the referential use of English in which attitudinal adjectives are used in their direct sense. E.g.: *It is a remarkable study of style... . The breadth of vision and the depth of insight make this book a remarkable achievement of the author. This is the Sun’s headline, over a wider shot taking in more of the remarkable queue of people. We*

will also be reflecting on the remarkable phenomenon that is Roger Federer, who is set to retire from professional tennis at the end of this week.

But even in the phatic use of English, the choice and use of attitudinal adjectives is not wholly random. E.g.: (7) *This was, of course, **the most fascinating remark** I had heard for weeks.* (8) *All **magnificent ego**?* (9) *I'm lucky because I can find **marvellous people** who are **brilliant makers** of the things that I appreciate...* (10) *... it's full of **fascinating stories** and **terrific insights**...* (11) ***Amazing display** of street art, theatre, music, sport and more... What **a joyous occasion!*** (12) *This must have been **a splendid house**, sir.* Further analysis will show what makes the highlighted units genuine and those quoted above (1-6) strange and un-English.

English authors happened to indicate the combinability problem of attitudinal adjectives, in fiction. For instance:

“The commander had talked at length to Norman about Amerigo, in a crackling British accent, using the words *actually*, *tremendous*, and *fantastic* in much the way Lester Atlas employed obscenities. He was looking into the possibilities of starting a new airline in the West Indies, he had told Norman.” (Wou 2013, p. 370).

Although research into nominal collocations is abundant, the collocation of Attitudinal Adjectives + Noun from the semantic point of view has not drawn the attention it deserves. References to three publications above, (see pp. 2–5, here), should have indicated the direction of such research and its formality. Collocations with experiential adjectives + Noun raise and indicate questions of their semantics at a glance. Cf, for instance: *a permanent job* & *a constant friend*; *a garish show* & *showy flowers*; *a curious boy* & *a sneaky trick*, etc. It is synonyms and their meaning that best display semantic differences between these collocations (cf.: Tucker 1998, pp. 50, 57).

The difference between the units in the illustrative examples here, which include experiential adjectives that are close synonyms and common nouns, shows in the meaning of interior semes in the adjectives and nouns which form close bonds and motivate these units. The seme of ‘stability’ bounds ‘constant’ and ‘friend’ as it is a human quality; the ‘temporal’ seme bounds ‘permanent’ and ‘job’ as temporal measurement is relevant to both a job and its continuity. Similarly, deep semantic links may be traced in the other units here. *a garish show*: whether a programme of entertainment, a collection of things for a display or a situation when something is organised, unpleasant brightness in colour may be a relevant feature to a show on the grounds of subjective evaluation; the words in *a garish show* combine by an experiential link of subjective evaluation on the grounds of the relevance of a feature to an object; the negative sense of *garish* is somewhat prominent therefore. *showy flowers*: as a colourful part of a plant on a stem picked for decoration, the colour of flowers can be magnified out of proportion. But as flowers relate to nature and beauty, their colours are an integral part. Their disproportionate brightness may be only a subjective evaluation; the words in *showy flowers* combine by an experiential link of subjective evaluation and the negative sense of *showy* is somewhat subdued in it.

Research Methods

The material in the present research was analysed by the method of modified Componential Analysis (cf.: Cruse 2011, pp. 219–234). The notion of the meaning of the word as a set of ultimate components or semes relates the present method to Componential Analysis which treated word meaning structurally in binary oppositions. Binary oppositions were ignored in the present research but components in word meaning acknowledged. My method combined, in fact, components in word meaning as recorded in The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD 10th), which is based on usage and corpus data. Definitions of polysemic words in this Dictionary actually record definite instances of the use of the word. This Dictionary defines word meaning using a restricted defining vocabulary. Thus, definitions in this Dictionary can replace the structural analysis of word meaning and make the analysis of word meaning no less precise.

My method also incorporated a contextual approach borrowed from J.R.Firth (1957) and John Lyons (1977). I treated word meaning as a relational construct while resorting to OALD definitions and comparing them with the word's contextual meaning in co-texts (cf.: Cruse 2011, pp. 215–218). This two-sided approach to word meaning permitted me to access the semantic motivation of analysed units, which were found to have overt/experiential or deep semantic bonds of different degree, clearer or vaguer motivation. This was the goal of the analysis in the present paper which seeks an answer to the question whether the meaning of the words in a unit can explain the stability of genuine common English collocations as opposed to foreigners' erratic uses.

Research Results

Even if it is not all collocations with experiential adjectives contain so obvious interior semantic bonds in them as the six collocations above that motivate the collocations, most conventional collocations appear to be semantically fixed by the interior semantic bond or frequency or both. The meaning of attitudinal adjectives and nouns in nominal groups differentiates otherwise and the interior semantic bond is harder to trace in them. Cf, for example: (13) *If they (the drawings) strike me as **culminating works**, it's because they feel rash, rough, magnetic in their doubt as well as in their confidence.* (14) *In other works, O'Keeffe exploited the contrast between materials to **smouldering effect**.* (15) *... visitors marvel at **the vibrant hues** of the season.* (16) ***The mighty monument**, running 177 miles along the England-Wales border, ...* (17) *... make your trip special by relaxing by a log fire in one of **our quaint cottages**.* (18) *So **the legendary parts** have been cut down and out.* (19) *The mighty monument, ..., offers **brehtaking views** and walks that entice you to keep going.* These examples illustrate the use of metaphoric attitudinal adjectives and they are arranged in the order of their growing subjective evaluation.

The reasoning in the present analysis can be illustrated. *Works* here, (13), mean artistic products, which are a result of much creative effort. It combines with

the adjective, *culminating*, which means a high point and quality of artistic works, in *culminating works*, on the basis of the semes which agree at the point of high intensity (works) and a high point of quality of the result (culminating). The degree of intensity and quality is the deep bond motivating the collocation, *culminating works*.

Effect, (14), which means a tentatively perceivable emotive charge that is not overtly expressed, combines with the adjective, *smouldering*, which means something existing but not expressed and rather covered, in *smouldering effect*, on the basis of an agreement between the semes of covered charge (effect) and its covered expression (smouldering). The quality of *covert*, not overtly expressed, is the deep semantic bond and a motivating seme linking the words in the collocation, *smouldering effect*.

Hues, (15), which means shades of colour, in *vibrant hues*, combines with the adjective, *vibrant*, which means bright shades, on the basis of agreement between shades of colour (hues) and bright shades (vibrant). The linking seme is the intensity of colour, while both the noun and the adjective include the colour seme. This is a semantically motivated attitudinal collocation.

Mighty, (16), which means large and impressive, great, in *the mighty monument*, combines with the noun, *monument*, which means a building of special historical importance, on the basis of an agreement between the semes of historical importance and greatness. The linking seme is the high quality of function (monument) and the significance (mighty) of the object, which forms a deep semantic bond and motivates this collocation.

Cottages, (17), which means small houses in the country, combines with the adjective *quaint*, which means attractive in an unusual or old-fashioned way, in *quaint cottages*, on the basis of an agreement between rural smallness and unusual attractiveness. The linking seme is visually perceivable attractiveness for size and quality, which forms a deep semantic bond and motivates the collocation.

Parts, (18), which mean components, combines with the adjective, *legendary*, which means well known and inspiring admiration, in *legendary parts*, on the basis of an agreement between well known and belonging to the whole. The linking seme is harder to pinpoint here, as the quality of being known is an independent entity and not motivated by its belonging to the whole, which may be as well known. But a supposed link of relevance of a feature to an object and its being known is possible through the concept of the wholeness of a work of art and its familiarity to specialists and connoisseurs.

Views, (19), which means something that can be seen (the countryside, here), combines with the adjective, *breathhtaking*, which means very exciting and impressive, in *breathhtaking views*, on the basis of a perceivable object and its perceivable immense impression. The linking seme is something perceivable that is very impressive. This link contains no causal semantic relations the way it was found in the collocations, *smouldering effect*, *vibrant hues* or *the mighty monument*. It is an additive semantic link, which qualifies free collocations. But what is visually perceivable (views) can combine with an immense impression (breathhtaking) on the basis of a motivated bond of what is perceivable (an object and its impression). It has to be noted that the collocation, *legendary parts* has

indicated its partial attitudinal character and the collocation, *breathtaking views*, is wholly attitudinal.

This summary analysis of deep semantic links in graded experiential collocations has shown how deeply motivated a collocation can be and how semantic bonds within the collocation become weaker when collocations become wholly attitudinal. This is going to be the focus and a weakness point in units with attitudinal adjectives analysed further.

Expressing attitudes, personal views and subjective impressions, attitudinal adjectives differ, and so do collocations with them. Some attitudinal adjectives include experiential observations while some are very personal. This decides how deeply semantically motivated a unit can be. For example, the adjective, *amazing*, means something very surprising in the way that you like and admire. Dictionary examples include the following as fixed collocations: *amazing feat/story/experience*. It is only informally that *amazing* means something very impressive and excellent, fantastic, as in: *She makes **the most amazing** cakes. It was **a pretty amazing** trip. The **amazing** thing is that it was kept secret for so long*. It is also noticeable that dictionaries limit the use of *amazing* to inanimate things and phenomena, which may be related to its primary meaning, that of surprising in an admirable way. Examples from the collected material are indicative of these senses of the adjective, *amazing*:

(20) **Amazing display** of street art, theatre, music, sport, and more...

(21) Nasa's rover collects '**amazing**' rock samples.

(22) Great thanks go to **amazing team**...

(23) Thank you, **amazing people** of the North...

(24) ... we aren't in **the most impressive era** of politics...

(25) **an impressive building** with a huge tower

(26) one of **the most impressive novels** of recent years

Display, (20), which means an arrangement of things in a public place to inform or entertain people, combines with the adjective, *amazing*, meaning very impressive and excellent, on the basis of an analogy between the seme, public arrangement to inform or entertain (*display*) and that of very impressive, fantastic (*amazing*). Semantic relatedness between the semes to be exposed to entertain or inform and to be impressive link the words in the collocation, *amazing display*, by a motivated deep semantic bond.

On the contrary, a foreigner's use of the adjective, *amazing*, as in (22-23), parts with the defining senses of this adjective, which are surprising or fantastic. Collocations in (22-23) also deviate from the criterion of the inanimate minded in collocations with the adjective *amazing*.

The attitudinal adjective, *impressive*, (24-26), which means inspiring admiration because of the size, quality or skill of something, combines with the nouns *era/building/performance* because the seme inspiring admiration (*impressive*) attaches itself relevantly to a period of time (*era*), an erected habitable construction (*building*) or a work written by an author (*novel*). These objects can make one admire them because of their size or quality. A weak semantic bond, because the

feature is only relevant, between an object and its impressiveness can be traced in the collocations, *impressive era*, *impressive building* and *impressive novels*.

The attitudinal adjective, *impressive*, also refers mainly to the inanimate. It is possible to say, *She was impressive in the interview*, but not, *She is an impressive girl*.

Turning to the use of attitudinal adjectives proper, it may be mentioned that some of these adjectives recur in new examples:

(27) *Winchcombe, with 'an appealing amount of Cotswoldiness' is a perfect example.*

(28) *She's a charming person.*

(29) *It's such a tiny charming cottage.*

(30) *... where better to marvel at (the vibrant colours of nature) than by walking through the Cotswolds and its network of charming villages.*

The noun, *amount of C* (27), meaning a section of the place, combines with the attitudinal adjective, *appealing*, which means an attractive or interesting section of C, on the basis of agreement between the seme attractive (*appealing*) and the seme of quantity (*amount of C*) because of the relevance of acceptability to a measured amount. A weak link of the acceptability of a measured amount can be traced in the collocation, *an appealing amount of C*. This is the link of free nominal groups. The link is wholly subjective.

The noun, *example* (27), which means a specimen of something, combines with the adjective, *perfect*, which means having everything necessary to be representative, on the basis of the semantic agreement between something having everything necessary to be representative (*perfect*) and a typical representative specimen (*example*). The collocation, *a perfect example*, is based on a deep semantic bond between the concepts of everything necessary to be representative and a typical representative specimen. This is a ssemantically motivated experiential collocation.

In (28), the noun, *person*, meaning an individual human being, combines with the attitudinal adjective, *charming*, on the basis of relevance of the quality of attractiveness (*charming*) to a human being.

In (29), the noun, *cottage*, meaning a small house in the country, combines with the adjective, *charming*, on the basis of relevance of the quality of attractiveness to a small building in the country.

In (30), the noun, *villages*, which means very small towns located in a country area, combines with the attitudinal adjective, *charming*, on the basis of relevance of the quality of attractiveness to a rural town-like settlement.

No deeper semantic bond than relevance of a feature to an object can be traced in collocations (28-30). But relevance was noted as an important notion in the theory of meaning one hundred years ago (Ogden and Richards 1960, p. 76). These examples also show that a neutral, positive meaning of the attitudinal adjective, *charming*, can collocate with a group of nouns, both animate and inanimate, yet all related to man and his ways. In this case, the meaning of praise emphasising attractiveness of the object increases the number of collocations as

they are not linked by deeper semantic bonds than relevance of a feature to an object.

Similarly, free collocations like the previous dominate in examples (31-33) with other attitudinal adjectives. E.g.:

(31) *The Taj Mahal is a magnificent building.*

(32) *You've done a magnificent job.*

(33) *... a trio of magnificent charcoal drawings of banana blossoms ...*

In (31), the noun, *building*, which means a structure of a house, combines with the attitudinal adjective, *magnificent*, which means extremely attractive and impressive, deserving praise, on the basis of the relevance of praise to an impressive house. Neither the context nor the semantic analysis indicates any deeper semantic bond or a deeper motivated combination of the words in the collocation, *a magnificent building*.

In (32), the noun, *job*, meaning a particular task or piece of work that a person has to do combines with praise for it expressed by the adjective, *magnificent*, which means extremely impressive and deserving praise. The relevance of praise for a well done job is the only experiential motive for the combination of words in this collocation. There is no deeper semantic bond in it.

In (33), the noun, *drawings*, which are works of art, combines with the attitudinal adjective, *magnificent*, meaning something extremely impressive and deserving praise. This combination of words is motivated by the semantic link between attractive and impressive (drawings as art works) and deserving praise. The sense of attractiveness and impressiveness of a work of art motivates somewhat contextually the use of the attitudinal adjective, *magnificent*, but no deeper semantic bond can be traced in this collocation.

Like units with the attitudinal adjective, *charming*, collocations with the attitudinal adjective, *magnificent*, emphasise relevant praise without any deeper semantic link. The nouns in collocations (31-33) do not help to specify the motive of the praise. These nouns combine rather freely with a high degree of praise in the attitudinal adjective, *magnificent*.

Free collocations of attitudinal Adjective + Noun multiply when attitudinal adjectives meaning subjective praise increase in number. E.g.:

(34) *She's doing a terrific job.*

(35) *Black artists who banded together in 1963 and were led along different but likewise terrific stylistic tracks by the populist collage specialist R.B....*

(36) *... it's full of fascinating stories and terrific insights ...*

(37) *... on this fascinating tour of North West Scotland.*

(38) *It was a marvellous opportunity.*

(39) *I'm lucky because I can find marvellous people who are brilliant makers of the things that I appreciate, and ...*

The attitudinal adjective, *terrific*, means something excellent, wonderful, informally, in all the three contexts (34-36). In (34), the noun, *job*, as a particular

task combines with the sense, *excellent*, in the meaning of the attitudinal adjective, *terrific*. Although evaluating subjectively, *excellent*, means extremely good while emphasising the quality of a job. The meaning of high quality relates to a job as an experiential observation and forms a weak semantic link between performance and its quality. In this context, this attitudinal adjective cannot feature by its loose meaning wonderful, which it can potentially express, in which case it would inflate the collocation and make it semantically unmotivated. *terrific job*: extremely good (terrific) and a piece of work (job) = an experientially motivated semantic link.

In (35), the adjective, *terrific*, and the noun, *tracks*, are related by the meaning excellent (terrific) and a direction of a path that someone is led along (tracks). The meaning of high quality of the direction along the tracks activated in the adjective, *terrific*, motivates its link with *tracks*. The semantic link thus motivated forms a deep semantic bond of high quality in direction. The loose meaning, wonderful, in *terrific* is irrelevant here. It would destroy the semantic bond of quality. *terrific tracks*: high quality (terrific) and direction along the way (tracks) = an experientially motivated semantic link

In (36), *terrific insights*, is a similar collocation semantically. The meaning of the noun, *insights*, is an understanding as a supposition of what something is like. This mental process cannot be assessed as wonderful because the measure of high quality is relevant to a supposition. A supposition qualifies by intellectually relevant concepts. The context relates the noun, *insights*, to excellent in the meaning of *terrific*, its more concrete and definite sense. Because the semantic link is between a mental process and its excellent quality, it can be seen as a weak semantic link. As the reasoning implies, this link is experientially motivated and the collocation has no deep semantic bond. *terrific insights*: excellent (terrific) + an understanding/supposition (insights) = an experientially motivated semantic link.

Collocations with the attitudinal adjective, *terrific*, are loose yet experientially motivated. Deep semantic bonds are not formed in these collocations but they are not entirely free units.

In the highlighted collocation in (36), the attitudinal adjective, *fascinating*, which means extremely interesting, combines with the common noun, *story*, on the basis of the relevance of *fascinating* = extremely interesting as the essential impression to stories. The relevance of the concept *fascinating* motivates its combination with *stories*. This is an experientially motivated semantic link. No deeper semantic bond motivates this collocation as a habitual unit of words.

A similar link can be traced in the highlighted collocation in (37). The attitudinal adjective, *fascinating*, combines with the noun, *tour*, on the basis of the relevance of extreme interest to tours. The relevance of a feature (*fascinating*) to an object (*tour*) is the experiential semantic link that relates *fascinating* and *tour*. No deeper semantic bond can be traced in this collocation.

In the highlighted unit in (38), the attitudinal adjective, *marvellous*, which means extremely good, wonderful, combines with the noun, *opportunity*, as a very positive opinion about a particular point in time. Opinion may be deserved or not deserved, but the co-text available here does not permit this assessment. *Marvellous* combines with *opportunity* on the basis of a positive subjective evaluation. Neither an experiential link nor a deep semantic bond can be traced in this collocation. It

means subjective evaluation and high praise in an unmotivated or free combination of words.

The collocation, *marvellous people*, (39), is somewhat motivated. The co-text in (39) permits the analyst to assume that the high praise is deserved and so the attitudinal adjective, *marvellous*, which means extremely good, fantastic, is deserved praise. It is possible to conclude that so high praise is relevant contextually on subjective grounds. The relevance is not confirmed either experientially or contextually because the noun *people* is a general concept and it does not elicit any semantic motivation. This estimate renders only an experiential semantic link rather than a deep semantic bond in this collocation. It means subjective evaluation and high praise in an experientially motivated combination of words. *Marvellous people*: contextually motivated praise (*marvellous*) + human beings (*people*) = an experientially motivated link.

The collocation, *brilliant makers*, (39), is semantically motivated. The noun, *makers*, is a specific concrete noun and means producers of something, who may be a person, a company or a piece of equipment. In the co-text of (39), the *makers* are people who are experts in some products or artefacts. The attitudinal adjective, *brilliant*, means somebody extremely clever or impressive or very good, excellent, informally, and very intelligent or showing a lot of skill. It is the skill of or a very good, excellent producer that is meant here. Both the specific noun and the attitudinal adjective are concrete, and the praise in the subjectively evaluating collocation is motivated experientially. A specific noun and a relevant adjective of subjective praise motivate a weak semantic link in this collocation. A producer who qualifies as extremely clever, very good and excellent deserves the praise expressed. When a feature relates to a subject, the words chosen are motivated. An experientially motivated semantic link connects the words in *brilliant makers*.

Discussion

To generalise, research into the meaning of attitudinal nominal groups has given an answer to the question whether the meaning of the words in a unit can explain its stability and regularity in genuine English as opposed to foreigners' erratic uses. The semantic analysis of nominal groups, most of which were conventional English collocations and some of which were recorded in the Dictionaries as stable collocations (*an amazing feat/story/experience, a perfect example, a wonderful opportunity, a charming cottage, a magnificent building, etc*) was limited only to noun groups/collocations Attitudinal Adj + Noun, which were investigated by the method of Modified Componential Analysis. A few illustrative examples have shown that experiential nominal groups (*a constant friend & a permanent job; a garish display & showy flowers; a curious boy & a sneaky trick, etc*) reveal deep semantic bonds between the head and the qualifier as semantic motivation of respective collocations. As the experiential character of nominal groups weakens, so does their semantic motivation. Vague experiential collocations (*culminating works, smouldering effect, the vibrant hues, the mighty monument, a perfect example*) yet reveal a weak semantic link or experientially

relevant link between the head and the qualifier: *culminating works*: creative products of high intensity (= works) is related to a high point of quality of the result (= culminating); *vibrant hues*: shades of colour (=hues) relates to bright shades (= vibrant); *the mighty monument*: a building of historical importance (= monument) relates to impressiveness (= mighty); *a perfect example*: a representative specimen relates to having everything necessary to be representative (= perfect). Wholly attitudinal noun groups (*magnificent drawings, terrific insights, fascinating stories, marvellous people*, etc) reveal only the relevance of a feature to an object as weak motivation of the experiential link between the head noun and qualifier: *magnificent drawings*: works of art & extremely impressive, deserving praise; *terrific insights*: an understanding of what something is like and excellent, informally; *fascinating stories*: an account of events and people & extremely interesting; *marvellous people*: human beings & extremely good, deserving praise, only subjectively. There were a few additional categorising features, such as animate, inanimate for *amazing, impressive, mighty*, thing, emotion, action, mental process for *terrific* and others, which differentiated the head and the qualifier and stabilised the motivation of a collocation.

Having been started in a blind pursuit of an answer to the question what makes genuine English collocations lucid and singularly apt, I was guided by the concept of language as a meaning potential of Michael Halliday. But I read wider and familiarised myself with a major work of Gordon H. Tucker after my research work was finished. Although my observations may be no discovery to the audience who are essentially familiar with Michael Halliday's and Gordon Tucker's works, Gordon Tucker's notion that "the thorny question of the semantics of lexis" is unavoidable in a systemic functional work (Tucker 1998), confirmed that my choice of the semantic analysis of collocations was correct. The weak and subjective meaning of attitudinal adjectives was noticed by Gordon Tucker, with which I complied unaware of the precedent idea. The methodological interpretation of meaning in my paper was also confirmed by the analogous interpretation of similar or identical examples (*strong force, powerful force*) by Michael Halliday and Gordon Tucker, like a few other observations and generalisations which did not part with the statements of these major authors.

In terms of collocation, the findings of the presented research indicate that the meaning of the words in collocation defines the bonding of the words rather than the structure of the collocation (cf.: Tucker 1998). The lucidity and aptness of the collocation is decided by the precision of the words chosen in the collocation: the agreement of the semes is essential and is a feature of both of experiential and few attitudinal collocations; the semantic bond in attitudinal collocations is rare; attitudinal collocations are mostly motivated experientially and so contain only weak experiential links or semantically unmotivated links. The agreement of the experiential factors such as animate, inanimate, concrete, abstract, etc are the supporting criteria in choosing the words in collocation and so are other such factors. The relevance of a feature to an object is a no less important criterion than a semic agreement of the words in collocation as it becomes the only observable factor motivating a weak bonding of the words in attitudinal collocations. This is a feature of attitudinal collocations. Additionally, the frequency of collocations

decides their commonness and spread, and tend even to influence their semantic motivation.

With reference to a question of Dr Liontas, following my presentation at the 18th International Conference of IPrA at the Université Libre de Bruxelles on the 13th of July 2023, concerning the definition of collocation and the classification of the unit, *marvellous monument*, it has to be said here that collocation is a combination of words that occur together more frequently than those words would by chance and so collocation is a habitual unit of words. Dr Liontas's extension of his question to the identity of the word combination, *marvellous monument*, I can reiterate that this unit is an occasional unit rather than a collocation. But a unit analysed in this paper, *magnificent monument*, is a collocation. The words in it habitually occur together. Moreover, *magnificent monument*, may be shown to have a weak semantic link between the words. The attitudinal adjective, *magnificent*, which means something extremely impressive and deserving praise, combines with the noun, *monument*, which means a building or art work built to remind people of a famous person or event, on the grounds of the relevance of the feature impressive, deserving praise, to a structure built to commemorate somebody or something important. The relevance here is experientially motivated but the same impressive, deserving praise, in *magnificent*, relates to the same commemorative, in *monument*, on the basis of a weak semantic link, too. So, this collocation is based on a weak semantic link between the words, which also confirms its status as that of a habitual unit of words. Like experiential nominal groups, attitudinal collocations have a stronger or weaker semantic link in them, which confirms their identity in addition to frequency and habitual use of the words. Most of the illustrative examples in this paper are collocations as they have been taken from authentic texts and their stability confirmed by dictionary and corpora data.

In terms of help to foreign language learners, this study does not offer much. The semantic bond/link/relevance of a feature to an object are not general enough and too detailed criteria to be recommended in teaching or learning. But semantic analysis would not have been relevant to teaching anyway even if it gave definite and conclusive results. Semantic analysis is too detailed to be conceivable as a teaching or learning aid. What teachers can do is to comment occasionally and accurately on concrete units and collocations to help the learners notice and perhaps be interested. But most importantly, to make clear that collocations are to be learned and remembered as habitual units which can multiply, breed sensitivity to habitual units and develop a quasi linguistic instinct for a foreigner.

Prospects for Further Research Development

As has been mentioned earlier, this study did not pursue a major project with the view to produce an overall system network for the semantic potential of attitudinal adjectives. This is a minor study which is preliminary to any major project, but its results appeared to be in line with the thinking and notions of the major authors in systemic functional linguistics. Yet further research into analogues

materials may give supporting and particularising data about the semantic structure of attitudinal collocations. I have no intention to pursue a project of a similar plan that Gordon Tucker has done. Yet, the concept of language as a meaning potential is so broad and inclusive that there may be an opening for an original project within the systemic functional framework to which Michael Halliday himself had no objections. Tucker (1998) dedicated a section in his book to fixed units, so that the published major research works indicate possible directions for further research into nominal groups and attitudinal collocations, especially if the habitual occurrence of words in and the stability of collocation are taken into account.

Conclusions

The semantic analysis of nominal groups treated as collocations has given an answer to the question whether the semantic structure of a nominal group, **evaluative/attitudinal Adjective + Noun**, may give clues to knowledge why the given words are chosen in nominal groups to form stable collocations. This analysis has shown that semantic combinability of experiential collocations does reveal a deep semantic bond between the head and the qualifier. The semantic analysis of nominal groups treated as collocations has given an answer to the question whether the semantic structure of a nominal group, evaluative/attitudinal Adjective + Noun, explains why the given words are chosen in the units to form habitual units or collocations. This analysis has shown that the semantic combinability of experiential collocations does reveal a deep semantic bond between the head and the qualifier. As experiential collocations turn into attitudinal ones, their semantic bonding weakens and becomes weak semantic links or only experientially motivated links, typically recognised as free combinations of words.

As weak experiential collocations turn into wholly attitudinal collocations, no deep semantic bonding can be traced in them. It is only experiential collocations, which form experiential or weak semantic links or both and the criterion of relevance of a feature to an object that form the notion of a link in collocation, in most cases experiential (*culminating works, vibrant hues*) and, in some cases, weak semantic links (*a perfect example, brilliant makers*).

Yet, such categorising features as animate and inanimate, thing and emotion, action and mental process and a few others differentiate the head and the qualifier in some collocations, which creates the notion of a vague semantic bond in them. These features are important as they may be decisive in how native speakers, who have intuitive and very delicate sense of the meaning of the words, choose the words subconsciously minding these categories as criteria. On the contrary, foreigners, who have only a vague sense of the meaning of the words in a foreign language, cannot exploit any meaning differentiating categories with equivalent delicacy. And this is where foreigners fail in their selection of attitudinal adjectives in collocations. Foreigners are also ignorant of the factor of frequency in the use of common collocations.

This research also suggests that even experiential links in nominal groups, both experiential and attitudinal, do not permit to treat them as free combinations of words. Such factors as animate, inanimatae, concrete, abstract, thing, concept, phenomenon, action, process, polysemy, metaphoric meaning and others determine the choice and use of words in habitual and relatively free units, and can change the unit and its meaning. Results of the presented analysis confirm that the concept of the casual use of words and the treatment of some adjectives as intensifiers is a fallacy. Nothing is casual or really random in a natural human language. Even attitudinal collocations of evaluative/attitudinal Adjectives + Nouns expose semantic or experiential links between the words in collocations and nominal groups. There can be no excuse for irresponsible and casual use of evaluative/attitudinal adjectives by foreigners. Every speaker of a foreign language has a duty to be responsible for his choice and use of the words of the foreign language. Accuracy and appropriateness should be the guiding rules to foreigners.

The problem of collocation is related to the actual use of language, but the stability and lucidity of common collocations, primarily of attitudinal collocations, is decided both by the factor of their experiential or experiential and partly semantic motivation and by the factor of the frequency of the currency of the collocations. The semantic analysis of common attitudinal collocations has not given a conclusive answer yet whether the semantic structure of a collocation can explain its stability and lucidity, but it shows that semantic relations within the collocation explain its motivation and the tightness of its semantic bond. Whether experiential or attitudinal, the combination of words in collocation is not entirely free or arbitrary. It includes deep semantic bonding in most experiential collocations; weak semantic links and bonding through categorial meaning (kinds/types of a noun/thing, the referential meaning of adjectives, the relevance of a feature to an object/thing, etc) in most attitudinal collocations. The modified semic analysis has confirmed the idea that it is the meaning of the words in collocation rather than its structure that can explain both the interdependence of words in a nominal group, in a functional model of grammar, in Gordon H. Tucker's conception, and rules in the use of language.

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