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Semantically complex linguistic structures have regularly presented a challenge to traditional accounts of semantics as well as cognitive semantics. In this respect, adjectival meaning has proved to be a particular challenge, which results from the mixed properties residing in the category ADJECTIVE itself. Any account of adjectives is faced with the difficulty of having to accommodate both their lexical and grammatical meanings. Traditionally, an adjective's primary function has consisted in assigning properties to the noun it premodifies. As will be shown, this is an oversimplification given that adjectives may assign different types of properties, which, inevitably, will have an impact on their construal. What is more, the findings of the corpus analysis at hand suggest that adjectival meaning cannot be restricted to adjective-noun combinations alone. Therefore, this paper sets out to demonstrate that the construal of adjectives chiefly occurs on the basis of contextual factors located outside the adjective-noun combination. It will be argued that the constraining influence of contextual input is particularly vital for the construal of adjectives with multiple meanings. The adjective new is a showcase for such an inquiry as its meaning potential reveals a complex meaning representation of two major clusters, according to which newness is either expressed in terms of temporal or categorial properties. Using corpus-based methodology, the study provides compelling evidence of highly recurrent patterns, i.e. colligations in which the adjective new is typically embedded in nominal constructions including several prepositional phrases. This important finding underlines that the construal of new relies on the contextual information available from the different layers of complex nominals. This layered (conceptual) structure of nominals manifests itself as contextual patterns including grounding elements or qualifications such as postmodifying prepositional phrases.

Keywords: Abstract nouns, adjectives, construal, context, corpus analysis, meaning potential, multiple meanings, new(ness), nominals, patterns, reification.

1. Introduction

Semantically complex linguistic structures have regularly presented a challenge to the study of meaning, including cognitive approaches. Adjectival meaning has proved to be a particular challenge in this respect, which is why it has remained under-researched. One of the reasons may be that adjectives constitute a category of mixed properties, i.e. they are deployed as content and function words, with their actual configuration depending on contextual factors. While there are a number of approaches to adjectives within a

cognitive framework (e.g. Brisard et al. 2001; Paradis 2001), there is, at present, no corpus-based study investigating the contextual factors that determine the construal of these adjectives.

It is this gap that the present study proposes to fill. Although the focus is placed on the adjective *new*, we will first look into existing classifications of adjectival uses in general. Irrespective of its theoretical persuasion, any account of adjectives is faced with the difficulty of accommodating their lexical and grammatical meaning. As a premodifier, an adjective's primary function is assumed to consist in assigning properties to the accompanying noun. However, the study of adjectival meaning cannot be restricted to adjective-noun combinations, as this property-assigning function has been called into question by domain-based approaches (e.g. Taylor 2002). Another shortcoming associated with the study of adjectival meaning within a minimal context lies in the fact that isolated adjective-noun expressions are a rare occurrence in actual discourse. On the contrary, it is a linguistic reality that adjective-nouns combinations tend to be embedded in complex syntactic constructions. As will be shown, the constructional meanings of colligations and complex NPs exercise a crucial influence on the construal of *new*.

While it is true that the inclusion of larger chunks of context reflects the layered structure of complex noun phrases, it may also undermine the validity of the analysis. Indeed, the interpretation of data may be seriously flawed by the 'inflation' of context, particularly when fostered by unconstrained methodology. In order to avoid the potential pitfalls involved in the unprincipled study of contextual factors, in this study, the relevant context will be restricted by clear corpus-linguistic principles.

In the first part of the paper, I will briefly address the major implications of the meaning representation of adjectives in general, followed by an overview of the meaning potential of *new*. Prior to analysing its construal in actual discourse, the methodology used will be explained in some detail. The main part of the paper revolves around the findings of the study, reporting on the context-dependence of the construal of *new*.

2. The Construal of Adjectives

The difficulties encountered in the construal of adjectives primarily reside in the category ADJECTIVE itself. While it is only possible to determine a number of central properties, such as gradability, none of these properties exclusively typify adjectives and frequently hold only for the central members of the category (cf. Pullum and Huddleston 2002: 528). Therefore this section aims to present an overview of the major parameters used to determine adjectival meaning.

2.1 Adjectival Uses

First and foremost, the variety of adjectival uses can be classified in a systematic way on the basis of the type of property they assign. Radden and Dirven (2007) provide such a classification, distinguishing between three

types of properties: scalar, re-categorised and specifying properties. Scalar properties “may be placed along two kinds of scale: a scale of comparison and a scale of intensity” (Radden and Dirven 2007: 151). These properties are typically assigned by scalar adjectives, which are determined by an inherent norm. Secondly, the so-called ‘re-categorised properties’ are realised by two distinct adjectival uses. On the one hand, de-adverbial adjectives function like adverbs or adverbials in characterising a participant or event, which is why they are assumed to be related to adverbs.¹ In doing so, these adjectives may specify the manner, time or place of a given event or participant. A somewhat classic example, the phrase ‘an old colleague’, serves to illustrate the difference between scalar and de-adverbial uses of an adjective. Radden and Dirven (2007: 152) argue that the phrase’s ambiguity lies in its two readings ‘a colleague old in years’, which relates to an intrinsic, scalar property, and ‘a colleague of old’, i.e. a person who used to work at the same institution at some former point of time. On the other hand, denominal adjectives also assign re-categorised properties. In particular, Radden and Dirven (*ibid.*) emphasise the “distinctly categorising function” of denominal adjectives, as exemplified by adjective-noun phrases such as ‘legal advice’ or ‘financial advice’, in which the adjective determines the type of advice in question. Last but not least, adjectives also serve to specify properties. “[D]etermining adjectives have the function of specifying a thing (...) or grounding a referent” (Radden and Dirven 2007: 152). For example, the adjective *only* in ‘Dick is the only goal-getter’ provides additional information to a noun that in itself already identifies the person with the characteristics of a goal-getter.

2.2 Domain-based Approaches to Adjectives

Even though Radden and Dirven’s classification serves as a useful point of departure for the present discussion, it also reveals significant shortcomings as the property-assigning function of adjectives is not uncontested. In his critique of traditional approaches to semantic combinations, according to which the combined meaning of these expressions is regarded as the sum total of meaning 1 plus meaning 2, Taylor (2002: 70f.) invokes the notion of ‘conceptual combination’. He argues that the ‘composite view’ does not function on the conceptual level either. Complex concepts are not simply formed by joining together two or more simpler concepts. For example, “[i]n order to get the meaning of the expression red car, it is not enough [...] to activate the concept [RED], then to activate the concept [CAR]; this will not give us the complex concept [REDCAR]” (Taylor, 2002: 70). The difficulty lies in the complex semantic structures of both adjectives and nouns (Taylor, *ibid.*: 449). More precisely, a given adjective may modify “not the noun’s profile, but some entity in the noun’s base” (Taylor, *ibid.*). According to Taylor (*ibid.*) the construal of adjectives does not merely involve foregrounding certain attributes, but also includes the background (the things, relations or processes) against which profiling takes place. This is also acknowledged by Radden and Dirven (2007: 147), who state that although “the property denoted by an adjective only represents a single qualifying feature, its understanding typically involves complex background knowledge”. Yet Taylor (*ibid.*) concludes that adjectives do not assign properties in a straightforward way. Instead, he (*ibid.*: 449f.) points out that “adjectives do not simply designate a property as such, [...], but may evoke various kinds of relations

and processes, as well as things which participate in these unprofiled relations and processes". These relations and processes may well be expressed in the wider context surrounding the adjective-noun combination.

As a result, a domain-based approach to adjective-noun combinations constitutes a viable alternative framework. In Taylor's (2002: 439) understanding, a domain consists of "any knowledge configuration which provides the context for the conceptualisation of a semantic unit". As a rule, there is no one-to-one correspondence of domains and concepts, which means that semantic units are typically characterised against a number of different domains, not all of which are important and thus foregrounded at the same time. Rather, they are selectively activated depending on the context.

In her domain-based approach to adjectival meaning Paradis (2001: 50) maintains that "all adjectives are predisposed for certain properties both in the content domain and the schematic domain". This means that their construal typically occurs by virtue of the rich semantic structure in the content domain as well as by virtue of the conceptual representations in the schematic domain. Resulting from a number of cognitive processes, the attributes in the content domain may be overridden in favour of the those in the schematic domain, which can be said to be "lur[king] in the background" (Paradis 2001: 61).

It may even be the case that the schematic domain of adjectives takes over their interpretation completely. This does not only lead to polysemy, but also to the development of certain adjectives from content words to function words. In cognitive terms the difference is situated in the relative prominence of the content domain and the schematic domain. (Paradis 2001: 59)

If the schematic domain takes over the construal completely, the adjective can be said to be semantically 'bleached' (Paradis 2001: 61), i.e. there is a "kind of shift to weaker meanings of words" (Radden and Dirven 2007: 95). Importantly, the actual configuration is determined by contextual factors, which are frequently situated in the different layers of NPs or even beyond.

Furthermore, the internal complexity of NPs in itself refutes the common assumption that there is a joint meaning of adjective-noun combinations in a straightforward way. As Taylor (2002: 344) points out, noun phrases, or nominals, can indeed exhibit a considerable complexity. For this reason, he (*ibid.*: 359) invokes the layering of nominals, which derives from their 'layered' conceptual structure which is not always mapped onto linguistic structure. This means that the contextual constraints on the construal of *new* may or may not be part of the NP itself.

In the light of the above, it seems that any adequate description of adjectival meaning will have to take on board the immediate context of the adjective-noun expression as well as the internal complexity of nominals. Prior to looking at the construal operations exemplified by the data, we will briefly outline the meaning potential of the adjective *new*.

2.3 The Meaning Potential of *New*

Having discussed the construal of adjectives in general, let us now turn to the specific case of *new*. We will first take inventory of the multiple meanings of *new* in order to illustrate its semantic complexity. For that purpose, the adjective's meaning has been defined on the grounds of the dictionary entries in the *OED* and *LDOCE*. Given the scope of this paper, we will only discuss a few illustrative examples:

- Not existing before; now made or existing for the first time.
- Of a kind now first invented or introduced; novel.
- Now known, experienced, used, etc., for the first time.
- Different from a thing previously existing, known, used, etc.; in addition to others already existing or present; succeeding another person in a specified function or position.
- Of more recent origin than, superseding, or reviving a thing of the same kind; modern, advanced in method or doctrine.
- Recently inhabited or settled.
- Having recently entered a certain state, position, etc.; unaccustomed to, inexperienced at.

It appears to be impossible to paraphrase the meaning of *new* without establishing any temporal reference (see underlined expressions). Secondly, the construal of *new* occurs on the basis of highly specific reference frames, for example, [sequence] or [comparison]. Thirdly, the pervasiveness of 'recently' as a temporal adverb already points to specific uses of *new* as a de-adverbial adjective.

In order to avoid the pitfalls of the 'polysemy fallacy', i.e. "the tendency to look for polysemy even when there is no evidence for it" (Sandra 1998: 361), there will be no a priori assumption of polysemy in the case of *new*. Instead, the discussion of whether or not these meanings are related in a systematic way will be resumed by virtue of the corpus-based evidence below. For the time being, we will assume, in following Croft and Cruse (2004: 109f.), that "the meaning potential of a word is typically not a uniform continuum: the interpretations tend to cluster in groups showing different degrees of salience and cohesiveness, (...)".

Accordingly, the total meaning potential of *new* can be subdivided into two major clusters. On the one hand, there seems to be a cluster of senses that relates to a superordinate temporal meaning, according to which newness is expressed in terms of time and origin. The meaning of *new* is profiled against concepts such as [sequence], [succession], [beginning] or [originality]. In this respect the adjectives *another*, *unprecedented*, *novel*, *first-time* or *recent* would be near-synonyms. On the other hand, newness is expressed in terms of kind and quality, the meaning of which is profiled against the conceptual bases of [improvement], [innovation], [reinvigoration] or [unusualness], all of which imply a qualitative or categorical change. The adjectives *different*, *changed*, *better*, *refreshed* or *reinvigorated* serves as quasi-synonyms, foregrounding processes and relations such as improvement, reform,

comparison or singularity.

Based on this overview of the meaning potential of *new*, it can be hypothesised that the de-adverbial uses of *new* would coincide with its temporal meaning cluster. On the other, the re-categorised properties assigned could also point to the newness in terms of kind and quality. It is here where a discrepancy between grammatical and semantic criteria suggests itself. As to the assignment of specifying properties the case is perhaps more evident because by definition, determining adjectives function as grounding elements or provide additional information for a referent that is already uniquely identified.

In the light of the above, the aim of the following corpus-based analysis will consist in investigating the possibility of “isolating different parts of the total meaning potential of a word in different circumstances” (Croft and Cruse 2004: 109). In other words, the analysis will reveal whether the multiple meanings of *new* are matter of polysemy or vagueness, i.e. “the context-dependent meanings constructed ‘on-line’” (Evans and Green 2006: 342).

3. Methodological Remarks

The preceding sections have underlined the fact that the interpretation of adjectives with multiple meanings such as *new* involves complex construal operations, which rely on a variety of contextual factors. The adjective *new* thus constitutes a genuine showcase for such an analysis, aiming to investigate the boundary construal of its senses and sub-senses in actual discourse. Prior to presenting the results of the study I will first outline the rationale of the methodological framework developed for the purpose of the analysis.

Within the corpus-linguistic framework the meanings of words can be studied on the basis of their occurrences within a clearly defined context. This way, the most frequent collocates, “the words that a target word commonly co-occurs with” (Biber et al. 1998: 35) can be identified. This is typically achieved by KWIC concordance listings that display the search word within its linguistic context, the standard context being five words to the left and right of the key word.

Our main argument implies that the construal of adjectival meaning does not entirely occur in combination with the noun’s construal, at least not in a straightforward way. The significance of this claim can be grasped by means of the following examples.

(1a) *new man

(1b) She was accompanied by her new man.

(1c) He embodies the new man like nobody else.

In (1a), the idea of newness cannot be disambiguated completely for lack of context. The NP is not grounded and allows for multiple interpretations. For example, newness could be conceptualised in terms of time, in the sense of a recent development, perhaps even involving a substitution. Sentence (1b)

captures this meaning, pointing to a recently established relationship with a male companion, possibly replacing another or filling a gap of some description. In sharp contrast, sentence (1c) evokes a different construal of *new*, implying a qualitative change. The immediate context, however, the adjective-noun expression including *new*, is unchanged. One obvious difference lies in the choice of determiners, the possessive pronoun *our* and the definite article, both of which however establish specific reference and thus function as grounding elements. The difference in meaning can be attributed to two interrelated factors. Firstly, the construal can be argued to rely on background knowledge of the kind that is typically stored in a frame, i.e. “a knowledge structure, which is represented at the conceptual level and held in long-term memory and which relates elements and entities associated with a particular culturally embedded scene, situation or event from human experience” (Evans 2007: 85). What is more, frame-based knowledge is also associated with patterns of evaluation that are surprisingly stable. Similarly, the positive evaluation of (1c) implies that ‘the new man’ is a truly desirable species, the paragon of a reformed character. Secondly, the interpretation could be triggered by contextual factors outside the NP. Indeed, there is the comparative construction ‘like nobody else’, which highlights the singularity of the situation described. This overall construal is further corroborated by the verb ‘to embody’, which also invites positive associations. This observation is particularly significant if we compare it to another set of examples:

(2a) *new baby

(2b) My sister’s new baby has finally arrived.

The inclusion of context as in (2b) does not invariably serve to specify the construal of *new*. The adjective has a clear temporal meaning in both (2a) and (2b), resulting from the noun’s profile. On the contrary, the temporality is doubly represented: in absolute terms of a new earthling that has come into existence and the time reference of the event expressed by the verb tense.

In what follows, I will briefly outline the procedure of the twofold analysis. Based on the assumption that the identification of collocates in the corpus at hand will be an important factor in investigating of meaning of *new*, the first part is centred on the immediate context of the adjective-noun expression. As Biber et al. (1998: 35) point out:

There is a strong tendency for each collocate of a word to be associated with a single sense of meaning (although more than one collocate can be associated with that same sense). Thus identifying the most common collocates of a word provides an efficient and effective means to begin analysing senses.

In this respect, the impact of the noun’s profile and the frame-based knowledge associated with the noun are of particular interest. The second analytical stage involves extending the context to the layered structure of NPs, which is instantiated in the form of colligations. It will become clear that the construal of *new* is determined by the wider context, particularly in the form of specifying constructions.

The data source of this present study is made up of all inaugural addresses

delivered by American Presidents to date. In its entirety, the corpus consists of 132,566 words. Table 1 indicates the total of words and types for the corpus in its entirety:

	words	types	number of speeches
Corpus total	132,566	9,770	57

Table 1. Corpus description

The selection of the data was motivated by the observation that the notion of newness, alongside the concept of change (see Sing, 2010), has played a major role in American political discourse. Similarly, Safire (1993) states that “in the past century, no word stands out like new in the framing of themes for political movements”. Another advantage of a small, specialised corpus consists in the limited range of nouns that the adjective *new* is expected to pair up with.

4. Meaning Representation in Discourse: A Corpus-based Analysis of New

The results of the corpus-based analysis will now be presented and discussed in some detail. The structure of this section reflects the two analytical stages of the study, moving from the immediate context of adjective-noun combinations to the layered structure of complex NPs.

4.1 Evidence from Adjective-noun Combinations

A concordance search for *new* produced a total of 231 hits in terms of raw frequencies. The frequency count can be normalised by virtue of the average length of the inaugurals, accounting for 3.5 occurrences per speech. This figure is subject to a great deal of variability across the speeches, a fact that is interesting in itself but cannot be discussed in the context of this paper (for a more detailed discussion see Sing 2008).

	raw counts	number of hits per 2,000 words
Corpus total	231	3.49

Table 2. The relative frequency of *new*

The count does not include occurrences of *new* in proper names such as *New York* or *New Orleans*. By far the large majority of occurrences, 218 in total, can be attributed to adjective-noun combinations. This means that in almost 95 per cent of the cases the adjective *new* occurs in attributive position. As to the remaining 13 occurrences, they can be subdivided into six predicative uses and seven other uses, for example nominalisations such as “the new and the weak”. In another set of nine phrases the noun is premodified by two adjectives, exemplified in the phrase ‘a new and free government’. For

methodological reasons these adjective-noun expressions, which we termed ‘compound premodifiers’, are excluded from the discussion, which leaves us with 209 adjective-noun combination in the strict sense of the word. The meaning representation of adjectives in attributive position relies more closely on contextual factors than those of “predicative uses [which] have a more limited range of meanings (...)” (Taylor 2002: 454).

Accordingly, the first analytical stage involved identifying the type of nouns and the frames they relate to. As to the former, the great majority of the nouns co-occurring with *new* are abstract nouns, some of which can be further specified as ‘reified nouns’. The process of reification is thought to involve “a metaphorical shift from a relational entity into a thing” (Radden and Dirven 2007: 78), thereby establishing an ontology.

The frames to which the nouns in question relate can be grouped into six categories. There are essentially three major categories, accounting for 70 per cent of adjective-noun expressions in the data. For this reason, we will restrict our discussion to the collocates included in these important frames.

As illustrated in Table 3, approximately 15 per cent of the nouns denote periods of time while almost a quarter of all adjective-noun expressions refer to the world of politics. A third of the nouns is used to describe situations. The latter is obviously a broad category and has therefore been broken down into several subcategories on the basis of two criteria. The first criterion concerns the concept frame. More than half of the nouns express interpersonal or intergroup relations, whereas 22 out of 67 terms refer to present or future states. This is crucial with respect to the background knowledge that is assumed to influence the construal of *new* as it constrains the range of potential meanings.

Frame	No of adj-N phrases	Percentage
situations	67	32.1
politics	49	23.4
time	31	14.8
action	16	7.6
geopolitical space	14	6.6
natural phenomenon	4	1.9

Table 2. The frames of adjective-noun combinations

Another criterion is the grammatical category of the nouns concerned. Situations are typically expressed by reified nouns. The process of reification mentioned above can be further fine-grained to lay bare the type of conceptualisations involved. Radden and Dirven (2007: 81f.) propose a classification of situations that are either episodic or steady. The former are

characterised by their limited duration and tend to be conceptualised as objects, while the latter are not understood as discrete or bounded, which is why they tend to be conceptualised as substances.

In the second analytical stage, the most common collocates with a minimum frequency of three co-occurrences have been identified. The nouns listed in Table 4 are classified according to the three major frames encountered in the data. For instance, the nouns *administration*, *government*, *nations*, *order* and *states* denote political entities while *age*, *beginning*, *century* and *era* have a temporal frame of reference. The reified nouns *engagement*, *hope*, *promise* and *spirit* can be said to describe situations or states in the domain of interpersonal or intergroup relations.

In what follows, we will discuss the construal of selected collocates in more detail. The KWIC concordance search revealed that the nouns *administration* and *government* are frequent first-right collocates of *new* in the frame of politics. Although Table 5 displays the standard context of five words to the left and right of the search term, our analysis is focused on the immediate right collocate only.

Noun	Raw frequency	Frame
administration	3	politics
age	5	time
beginning	5	time
century	7	time
engagement	3	situations
era	7	time
government	6	politics
hope	3	situations
life	3	situations
nations	3	politics
order	7	politics
promise	5	situations
spirit	6	situations
states	7	politics

Table 3. The most frequent collocates per frame

1	beginning not only of a	new	administration, but of a period
2	the main policies of the	new	administration, so far as they
3	framing under it; while the	new	Administration will have no immediate
4	must change. We need a	new	government for a new century
5	of American control to the	new	government is of such great
6	The preeminent mission of our	new	government is to give all
7	the early stages of the	new	Government, when all felt the imposing
8	, and the foundations of the	new	Government laid upon principles of
9	fundamental law upon which the	new	government rests should be adapted to

Table 4. Adjective-noun combinations in the realm of the political

The nouns *administration* and *government* are in fact near-synonyms, the former denoting the government of a country at a particular time while the latter relates to the system of government of, or the group of people governing a given country. Both terms refer to a non-permanent situation which is either inherent in the noun's meaning representation, as in the case of *administration*, or it has to be inferred from frame-based knowledge, implying that a democratic government is only elected for a specific term.

Based on the assumption that senses and sub-senses can be identified by virtue of collocates, the phrases 'new administration' and 'new government' should have the same meaning in all occurrences. Although the adjective-noun expression is the same for concordance lines 1 to 3, it is evident that the construals are different. While the situative context is virtually the same for all inaugural addresses as a speech event – the ritual of investing the incoming American president – the combination of *new* plus administration or government, however, does not invariably denote the political institution that is being installed.

The major reason for this is not to be encountered within the adjective-noun combination itself. Rather, this can be attributed to the grounding elements which "serve to indicate whether or not the things talked about are identifiable to both speaker and hearer (cf. Radden and Dirven 2007: 48f.). While in lines 2 and 3 the definite article *the* establishes a reference to a specific 'new administration', the phrase 'a new administration' has non-specific indefinite reference, which means that the referent has to be singled out in online construal operations, i.e. it has to be grounded. Accordingly, a mental space is opened to indicate that this particular administration is to be distinguished from the series of administrations. Thus *new* can be paraphrased as 'another', marking the next stage in a series of related events, and thus assigns specifying properties. In sharp contrast, the referring NP 'the new administration' is grounded, and the adjective *new* assigns re-categorised properties, illustrating that the speaker refers to the recently installed administration.

As regards the second important collocate, *new government*, a similar situation presents itself. Five out of the six examples include referring NPs, with the definite article or a possessive pronoun establishing specific reference. In all instances, *new* assigns re-categorised properties,

corresponding to its de-adverbial use. If noun's profile relates to a bounded, non-permanent entity, the concept [sequence] is activated; if this is not the case, i.e. if it relates to the properties outside the noun's profile, the concept [recency] is evoked. In this context, the adjective *new* means 'recently installed' or 'replacing the old'.

Comparing the two example sentences with indefinite reference (lines 1 and 4 of Table 5), we come across another interesting finding. Instead of merely profiling the concepts [succession] or [sequence], the expression 'a new government' implies a difference in quality, which is coded in the prepositional phrase 'for a new century'. Unlike concordance line 1, where *new* functions as a grounding element, newness is understood in terms of an improvement in the sense of a different, better kind of government (see line 4). This is due to an important contrast between the two construals: witness the non-affirmative, even restrictive construction (not only ... but) in line 1 and the truly affirmative construction of line 4. In its qualitative meaning *new* assigns re-categorised properties, which are profiled against the overall affirmative and positive constructional meaning. As a result, the construal of *new* can be argued to rely on contextual factors outside the adjective-noun expression. Prior to looking at this constraining factor in more detail, another type of noun will be studied.

The first-right collocates of *new* listed in Table 6 below can be classified on the basis of the type of situation they describe (see above). The nouns *engagement* and *spirit* express steady states. Except for concordance line 1, they are all premodified by the indefinite article, establishing non-specific reference, which implies that the NP requires a grounding element or specification of another kind.

1	To the world, too, we offer	new	engagement and a renewed vow:
2	I am speaking of a	new	engagement in the lives of
3	pitching in. We need a	new	engagement, too, between the Executive
4	was reborn, when freedom gained	new	life, when America reached for
5	create upon this continent a	new	life—a life that should
6	oceans in search of a	new	life. For us, they toiled
7	responsibility is to embrace a	new	spirit of community for a.
8	new sense of responsibility, a	new	spirit of community, we will
9	may sense and proclaim that	new	spirit, but only a people
10	is now dominated by a	new	spirit. Peoples more numerous and
11	on the rise. Tapping this	new	spirit, there can be no
12	within our Government, and a	new	spirit among us all. A

Table 5. Collocates of *new* in the frame of situations

As steady situations are assumed to be unbounded, they need to be further qualified as a specific representative of this type of situation. Thus the adjective *new* assigns re-categorised properties, allowing the identification of the type of *engagement* and *spirit* concerned, hence the categorial change to another type of engagement and spirit. The noun's reification coincides with an (metaphorical) extension of the adjective category to invoke a qualitative change. Thus the freshness associated with the situation is then metaphorically extended to mean 'full of vigour'.

As regards the collocate ‘new life’ denotes an episodic situation. Concordance lines 5 to 7 illustrate the different construals, which depend on the presence of grounding elements. In lines 6 and 7 *life* is construed as ‘way of living’, which as a construct is susceptible to change, characterised by a multitude of beginnings and ends. This frame-based knowledge is invoked when life is conceptualised as a transferable object. For this reason, the adjective assigns properties in the noun’s base, highlighting the sequentiality of the situation in marking off a new stage in the life cycle. In sharp contrast, the phrase ‘new life’ relates to a steady situation, which has a different meaning from the previous example. Here the concept is understood as the state of being alive, i.e. a situation imbued with a certain degree of liveliness. Accordingly, life is conceptualised as a substance, which can be exhausted but is, in principle, renewable. The idea of renewal and reinvigoration is expressed in terms of attributes in the content domain of *new*. The metaphorical extension is supported by the process of reification according to which something that is added anew is understood as improving the quality of the entity to which it is added.

By way of conclusion, the preceding section has demonstrated that the construal of *new* is not only influenced by the knowledge structure in the noun’s domain, but also by a number of complex construal operations. As a consequence, the different contextual layers exert a constraining influence on the possible range of construal operations. The multiple meanings of *new* can frequently not be narrowed down beyond the clustering identified above while its grammatical functions largely depend on the presence of a grounding element such as a premodifier that establishes specific reference.

4.2 Evidence from Colligations and Qualifying Constructions

The impact of qualifications on the construal of *new* has been observed in connection with other constraining factors. Grammatically speaking, qualifications can be achieved by means of relations, which are typically expressed by genitive or prepositional phrases (cf. Radden and Dirven 2007: 141). This is supported by the results of the concordance search for *new*, according to which the adjective is typically part of complex constructions of several prepositional phrases, so-called layered nominals. As can be derived from Table 7, the recurrent patterns of grammatical co-occurrences, so-called colligations, are highly pervasive in the data at hand.

co-occurrences	example	raw	percentage
PREP + DET new N +	“in a new era of peace”	68	32.5%
V + (DET) new N + (PREP)	“has brought new hope to”	67	32.1%
(DET) new N + V	“a new breeze is blowing”	27	12.9%
new and ADJ + N	“a new and free government”	10	4.8 %
new N have been VERBed	“new states have been	6	2.9%

Table 6. Major patterns of colligations in the corpus

The findings summarised in Table 7 are indicative of two major patterns involving prepositional phrases that appear to have established themselves, accounting for more than 60 per cent of all occurrences of the adjective *new*.

There is a prevalence of constructions exemplified by the formula (PREP + DET new N (of)), in which the NP containing the adjective *new* is embedded into a prepositional phrase and may itself be postmodified by another prepositional phrase, as in ‘with a new dignity of national pride and spirit’, for instance. While a variety of prepositions is used in this type of colligation, the prepositional *of*-phrase is most strongly represented.

The corpus data suggest that the property-assigning functions of the adjective *new* are further specified through the schematic meanings of prepositional phrases. Similarly, Radden and Dirven (2007: 145) argue that “speakers are sensitive to the schematic meanings associated with premodification and postmodification”. Thus the intrinsic relations expressed by the postmodification constrain the range of adjectival functions and meanings.

In what follows, we will discuss a selection of illustrative examples from the corpus. In doing so, we will focus on the most frequent collocates in the frame of time. In the large majority of the occurrences listed in Table 8 below the adjective *new* is embedded in one or several prepositional-phrase constructions. In 18 out of the 25 concordance lines *new* premodifies a noun which itself is postmodified by yet another PP. Cases in point are, in line 6, ‘on this day of a new beginning’ and ‘the dawn of a new age of progress’ of line 1. The linguistic and conceptual layering of the nominals concerned directly influences the construals as it entails several layers of specification. The concepts [age] and [era] have as their conceptual base [time], which is a non-discrete, unbounded entity. Yet they profile this conceptual base as a discrete event marked off by boundary events.

However, the nouns listed in Table 8 exhibit varying degrees of discreteness. While *century* profiles a period of time of limited duration, its actual boundary events are construed online. Since the adjective-noun combination ‘new century’ is premodified by the indefinite article, establishing non-specific reference, *new* assigns specifying properties, hence grounding the referent. The indefinite article indicates that it is an entity within a series of similar entities. The qualification is achieved by the adjective *new*, which, schematically speaking, marks the onset of the century. Again, the adjective fulfils the double function of grounding the noun on the one hand (acting as determining adjective), and of assigning re-categorised properties on the other, describing the temporal progression involved. Thus no further specification is required, which is why for this type of construal the NP is not postmodified by a prepositional phrase.

On the other hand, the temporal dimension of duration is clearly foregrounded by the noun *century*, which is why *new* can also function as an evaluative adjective. In lines 15 to 17, the adjective *new* is included in the postmodifying PP, which establishes qualifying relations with the preceding NP. The expressions ‘sense of responsibility’, ‘new government’ and ‘spirit of community’ are uncontroversially positive. The qualifying relations are extended to the construal of the adjective-noun expression ‘new century’, which is re-categorised as a period of time replete with opportunities.

1	see the dawn of a	new	age of progress for America,
2	prepare the nation for a	new	age. Homes have been lost;
3	with which we face this	new	age of right and opportunity
4	meet the demands of a	new	age. All this we can
5	leading the world to a	new	age of economic expansion, we
6	on this day of a	new	beginning than to help shape
7	This inauguration ceremony marks a	new	beginning, a new dedication within
8	the productive work of this	"new	beginning" and all must share
9	But in another sense, our	new	beginning is a continuation of
10	spoke to you of a	new	beginning and we have accomplished
11	affirm old traditions and make	new	beginnings. As I begin, I
12	mass destruction, so that a	new	century is spared new horrors.
13	, for the third time, a	new	century is upon us, and
14	our beloved land into a	new	century with the American Dream
15	sense of responsibility for a	new	century. There is work to
16	a new government for a	new	century—humble enough not to
17	spirit of community for a	new	century. For any one of
18	at the edge of a	new	century, in a new millennium,
19	of science have opened a	new	era. Many sections of our
20	on the threshold of a	new	era of peace in the
21	that bind together. As this	new	era approaches we can already
22	the restoration, but for a	new	era in production, transportation and
23	that failed, so building a	new	era of progress at home
24	role in ushering in a	new	era of peace. To the
25	of us now is a	new	era of responsibility—a recognition,

Table 7. Patterns of colligations relating to the time frame

All in all, the collocates of *new* that form part of the patterns of colligations illustrated in Table 8 above, profile time as a discrete event, foregrounding those attributes that serve to construe boundary events. As such, they are sequential terms whose boundaries are construed by assigning specifying properties, i.e. *new* functions as a determining adjective. At the same time, the idea of newness as a qualitative change is evoked by the unprofiled part of the temporal concepts. As time-induced changes are frequently conceptually linked with [progress], *new* is then used as an evaluative adjective. These concepts are both grounded and introduced as novel, alluding to a process of substitution. Newness invokes the idea of difference, the precise nature of which is expressed in the postmodifying PP. The following examples taken from Table 8 will illustrate this important point:

- (3) this new age of right and opportunity
- (4) a new age of economic expansion
- (5) a new era of responsibility

In examples 3 to 5 the novelty of the situation is further specified by the postmodification. Again the foregrounding of the qualitative meaning cluster of *new* is supported by the qualifying relation expressed by the postmodifying *of*-phrase. The expressions 'right and opportunity', 'economic expansion' and 'responsibility' open up a mental space of positive associations that are identified with the changed times. While prepositional phrases in general are

assumed to express qualifying relations, which may be temporary or permanent (cf. Radden and Dirven 2007: 145), the preposition *of* has a special status as it assigns intrinsic relations whereby two noun phrases are conceptually linked, which means that the relations expressed are in fact restrictive (cf. Radden and Dirven 2007: 159).

5. Summary

As we hope to have shown, the adjective *new* is a highly versatile linguistic tool. Its multiple uses in discourse are manifestations of its complex conceptual structure. First and foremost, the corpus-based analysis of its construal has revealed that there is indeed no straightforward assignment of properties. It became evident that the adjective pairs up with a narrow range of nouns, relating to only a few specific frames. Having said that, the frames identified in the corpus contain rather complex knowledge structures.

As regards the adjective-noun combinations, the nouns are characterised by attributes such as (un)boundedness, discreteness or by their limited duration, which implies that boundary construal is of utmost importance. Cases in point are the limited duration of the nouns *government* and *administration* on the one hand or the contrast between episodic and steady situations on the other.

Therefore, a major finding of this present study lies in the fact that the adjective *new* predominantly assigns specifying properties, which serve to ground a referent. Alternatively, in instances where the referent is already grounded, *new* is used to categorise a given entity, assigning re-categorised properties.

Concerning the question of how these uses relate to the adjective's meaning potential, the following scenario could be identified. By and large, the two meaning clusters outlined above could be corroborated by the findings of the corpus analysis. More precisely, the temporal meaning of *new* is chiefly profiled against the concepts [sequence] and [recency], derived from properties in the schematic domain. The use of *new* as a determining adjective is grounded in an understanding of boundedness according to which time is conceptualised in terms of CONTAINMENT. This image-schematic construal is either present in the noun's base or can be inferred from frame-based knowledge. The extent to which these attributes are foregrounded is also constrained by the linguistic context. As could be demonstrated at the level of colligations, the schematic meanings that serve to qualify a given entity or participant can be located in the layered structure of nominals.

However, the schematic meanings can also be backgrounded in favour of two types of category extensions. On the one hand, in the event of a grounded referent, the adjective *new* assigns re-categorised properties, which open up a mental space that allows for a re-categorisation of the entity at hand. This categorising function frequently entails a qualitative change in the entity concerned. Again, the understanding of newness in terms of quality is context-dependent and may be determined by a prepositional phrase as exemplified in 'we need a new government for a new century'. If the noun in question is, on

the other hand, itself the product of reification, the metaphorical extension appears to also affect the adjective's construal. Cases in point are 'a new engagement' or 'a new spirit', both of which imply an improvement.

All in all, the findings suggest that *new* is rarely used as a scalar adjective, which may also be due to the specialised corpus at hand. Thus it would be interesting to conduct the study using a much larger corpus, for example. Moreover, it was beyond the scope of this paper to consider a broader range of restrictive constructions or other types of qualifications such as relative clauses. Despite these limitations, we may conclude that the adjective *new* has yet another important (discourse) function, which appears to be highly relevant to, at least, political discourse: the use of *new* as an evaluative adjective.

Notes

- ⁱ Traditionally a distinction is made between inherent and non-inherent adjectives (Greenbaum/Quirk 1990: 146). For example, the adjective *solid* in the expression "a solid ground" applies to the referent directly, meaning ground that is solid enough to tread on. In contrast, in the expression "solid evidence" there is no such inherent connection, since it refers to the ability of a person to provide facts that are dependable and trustworthy. In the former case the adjective would relate to an intrinsic property of the ground whereas the latter sense would be non-inherent, corresponding to its de-adverbial sense.

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