Semantic relations: proper noun modifiers

Extension tasks

Task 1: *Proper noun modifier or proper noun genitive?*

Take a look at the list of real headlines below, taken from *The Guardian*.

For each headline, choose which you think is the most natural, and provide a reason why.

A: ***Johnson's/The Johnson 'jet zero' plan*** unrealistic and may make UK miss CO2 targets

B: ***Mick Jagger's/The Mick Jagger*** secret love letters up for sale

C: Kim Sherwood set to 'expand ***the James Bond/James Bond's universe'***.

D: What ***the Angela Rayner story/Angela Rayner's story*** tells us about misogyny in Westminster.

E: Ryan Gander's dolos* opens a sculpture trail for ***the Yorkshire coast/Yorkshire's coast***.

* A dolos is the name for a concrete block used to stop the sea washing a beach away.

1. Do any headlines feel equally natural with either phrase? If so, does the meaning of the headline change according to which phrase you use (and by how much)?

2. Would your answers change if these were headlines in BuzzFeed (or another online forum that you know) instead of in a national newspaper?

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Task 2: *Applying semantic relations*

Semantic relations are ways of describing the relationship between words in a construction. Here is a list of semantic relations which can be relevant to proper noun modifiers:

- Actor: e.g. Edward's affair
  'the affair that Edward committed', 'the affair that was carried out by Edward'
- Undergoer: e.g. the Kobe Bryant case
  'the case that investigates KB', 'the case that prosecuted KB'
- Possessor: e.g. Subway's sandwich shop
  'the shop that belongs to Subway'
- Location: e.g. Dartmoor scenery
  'the scenery that is found in/surrounds Dartmoor'
- Name: e.g. the Sainsbury family
  'the family that is named Sainsbury'
- Involvement: e.g. the McCrone report
  'the report that is about McCrone'
- Beneficiary: e.g. the England goalkeeper
  'the goalkeeper that plays for/represents England'

For the following sentences, fill in the gaps in the table below to describe what you think the noun phrase means. Then, use the list above to identify a potential semantic relation.

The sentences are from Breban, Kolkmann and Payne (2019). You can find more real-world data from the British National Corpus here.

Sentence 1: ***Northern Ireland's experience*** in Spain and Mexico in the last two World Cups taught them that heat can pose more problems than the opposition.

Sentence 2: ***The Malta summit*** also discussed an important American proposal to host an international conference on global warming next year.

Sentence 3: While others at Balmoral were losing sleep over ***the Fergie scandal***, Diana was up at dawn preparing for a surprise visit to terminally-ill cancer patients.

Sentence 4: Last year, I travelled on my bike through ***the California desert***.

Sentence 5: According to ***Interflora's website***: "...we are unable to carry out AM or PM deliveries."

Sentence 6: The move was regarded as a sign of US displeasure at ***Yemen's vote*** against UN Security Council Resolution 678.

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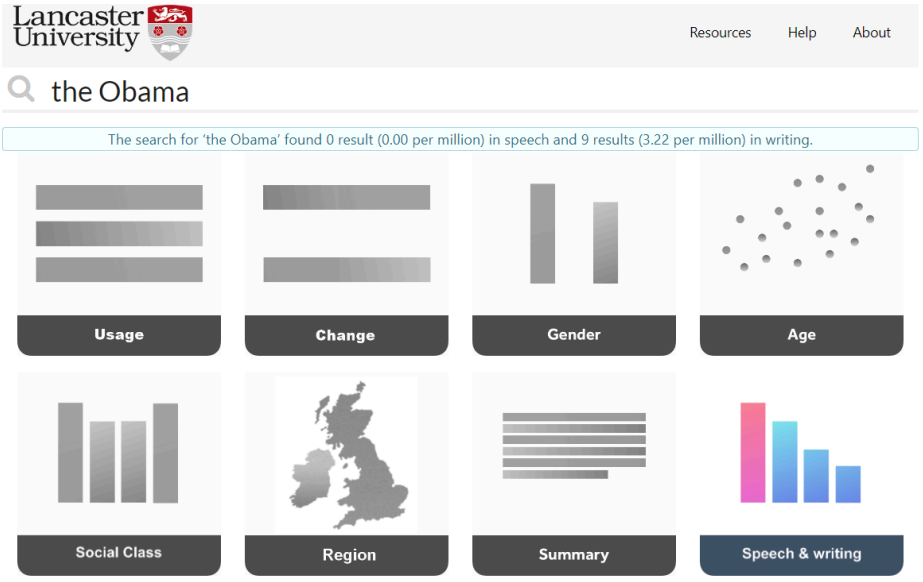
#	Definition	Semantic relation
1	The experience that _____ Northern Ireland _____	
2	The summit that _____ Malta _____	
3	The scandal that _____ Fergie _____	
4	The desert that _____ California _____	
5	The website that _____ Interflora _____	
6	The vote that _____ Yemen _____	

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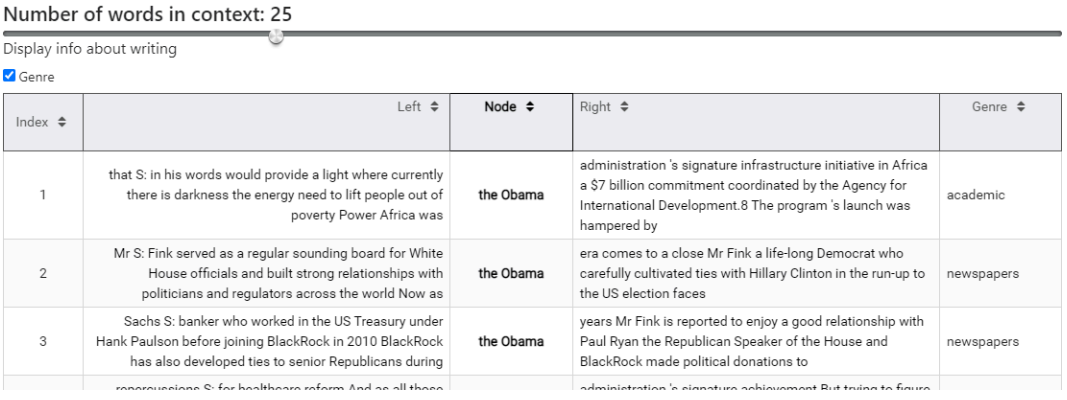
Task 3: *British National Corpus Tutorial*

The British National Corpus (BNC) contains two corpora of spoken and written English in the UK created in 1993/2014 (BNC Consortium, 2007; Love et al., 2017). The BNC website provided by Brezina et al. (2018) provides a quick way to get data from both corpora.
You can watch a video of this tutorial on the case study webpage.

Step 1: Try searching for a word or phrase at the top of the page. If any results are found, it will show you how frequent the use of this phrase is across the corpus in speech and writing. You can look at individual examples by clicking on the 'Speech & writing' button:



Step 2: At the top of the results page is a graph showing where examples are taken from. Scroll down to see the surrounding context of the search term in each example:



Index	Left	Node	Right	Genre
1	that S: in his words would provide a light where currently there is darkness the energy need to lift people out of poverty Power Africa was	the Obama	administration 's signature infrastructure initiative in Africa a $7 billion commitment coordinated by the Agency for International Development.8 The program 's launch was hampered by	academic
2	Mr S: Fink served as a regular sounding board for White House officials and built strong relationships with politicians and regulators across the world Now as	the Obama	era comes to a close Mr Fink a life-long Democrat who carefully cultivated ties with Hillary Clinton in the run-up to the US election faces	newspapers
3	Sachs S: banker who worked in the US Treasury under Hank Paulson before joining BlackRock in 2010 BlackRock has also developed ties to senior Republicans during	the Obama	years Mr Fink is reported to enjoy a good relationship with Paul Ryan the Republican Speaker of the House and BlackRock made political donations to	newspapers

1. Why do you think we have used the search term 'the Obama' in our example?

2. What search term would you use to find 'matching' examples of proper noun genitives?

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Extension

What other pairs of constructions (where meaning may or may not overlap) could you test in an experiment based on examples from the BNC?

There are lots more resources for using the BNC at http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/corpusforschools/

References

BNC Consortium (2007). The British National Corpus, XML Edition. *Oxford Text Archive.* Retrieved from http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/.

Breban, T., Kolkmann, J., & Payne, J. (2019). The impact of semantic relations on grammatical alternation: An experimental study of proper name modifiers and determiner genitives. *English Language & Linguistics*, *23*(4), 797-826.

Brezina, V., Gablasova, D. & Reichelt, S. (2018). BNClab. http://corpora.lancs.ac.uk/bnclab [electronic resource], Lancaster University.

Love, R., Dembry, C., Hardie, A., Brezina, V. and McEnery, T. (2017). The Spoken BNC2014: designing and building a spoken corpus of everyday conversations. In *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics, 22*(3): 319-344. DOI: 10.1075/ijcl.22.3.02lov

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